

Commission reports on progress in Romania under the Co-operation and Verification Mechanism

Today's report looks concretely at the progress made to meet the 12 recommendations issued by the Commission in its January 2017 CVM Report.

First Vice-President Frans Timmermans said: *"We have seen progress in some areas but there is still more work to be done. Romania has met some of our recommendations, but there is not enough progress yet on others. I count on the Romanian Government to pursue the necessary reforms, and to avoid backtracking, so that we can work together towards the goal of ending the CVM under this Commission's mandate."*

The Commission's last report in January 2017 took stock of overall progress in the past ten years and identified 12 specific recommendations which would help Romania move towards fulfilment of all CVM benchmarks. Today's report notes that progress has been achieved on a number of these recommendations, in particular the recommendation to set up a system for checks on conflicts of interest in public procurement (PREVENT) has been satisfactorily implemented. The Commission also notes progress on other recommendations, subject to practical implementation. At the same time, the Commission notes that the overall reform momentum in the course of 2017 has stalled, slowing down the fulfilment of the remaining recommendations, and with a risk of re-opening issues which the January 2017 report had considered as closed. Challenges to judicial independence are a serious source of concern.

The Commission cannot yet conclude that any of the CVM benchmarks are at this stage satisfactorily fulfilled, though progress has brought some benchmarks closer to this point. The Commission remains of the opinion that with loyal cooperation between State institutions, a political steer holding firm to past achievements and with respect for judicial independence, Romania will be able to fulfil the outstanding recommendations, and therefore satisfactorily meet the CVM benchmarks, in the near future. The Commission will assess progress again towards the end of 2018.

Background

On 1 January 2007, the Commission established the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism to assess progress against the commitments made by Romania in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption. The Commission reports on progress in these areas on a regular basis. The Commission issued its first report on 27 June 2007. The reports have benefitted from contacts with Member States, civil society, international organisations, independent experts and a variety of other sources. The Commission's conclusions and the methodology of the CVM have consistently

enjoyed the strong support of the Council of Ministers.

In the previous CVM report of January 2017, the Commission took stock and gave an overview of the achievements of the past 10 years and the remaining steps needed to achieve the CVM's objectives. It defined 12 recommendations, most of them focusing on the responsibility and accountability required from the Romanian authorities and the internal safeguards needed to ensure the irreversibility of the results. The report highlighted that the speed of the process would depend on how quickly Romania will be able to fulfil the recommendations in an irreversible way and also on avoiding negative steps which could call into question the progress made in the past 10 years.

Today's report concerns the period since January 2017. It contains the Commission's assessment of how the Romanian authorities have followed-up on the 12 recommendations, and is complemented by a staff working document which sets out the Commission's detailed analysis, drawing on continuous dialogue between the Romanian authorities and the Commission services.

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