

EU's cities and regions share European Commission concerns over Polish government's changes to laws on the judiciary

□The European Committee of the Region has voiced its support for a decision by the European Commission to invoke Article 7 of the EU treaty against Poland, as there is “a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law”. In a resolution adopted on 1 February, the EU's assembly of local and regional politicians noted that the concerns raised by the Commission – about the adoption of laws that it believes have resulted in the lack of an independent and legitimate constitutional review and judicial independence – are of “direct and immediate relevance” to local and regional authorities.

At the same time, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) urged the EU's decision-making bodies not to suspend EU funding for Poland's cities and regions if the national government fails to address the EU's concerns. The CoR said that local and regional authorities should not “be held hostage to policies pursued by national governments”.

Under Article 7 of the EU treaty, and with the support of 22 of 27 member states and two-thirds of the European Parliament, the EU could strip Poland of its voting rights.

The CoR's resolution called on Poland and the Commission to engage in a “constructive dialogue”, warning of potentially “harmful spill-over” into debate about the future of EU spending after 2020. Polish cities and regions are major beneficiaries of the EU's cohesion policy and its associated structural and investment funds.

The resolution was adopted at the first plenary of the CoR since the European Commission invoked Article 7 on 20 December 2017. The Commission has given Poland three months to address its concerns.

The eight-point resolution, which was passed with 77 votes in favour, 39 against and 26 abstentions, will now be sent to the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

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