

## Press release – Rule of law in Poland: MEPs to discuss how the EU should respond



[Juan Fernando López Aguilar](#) (S&D, ES) will present to the committee his draft interim report on the December 2017 [European Commission's proposal](#) to act in view of the perceived threats to the independence of the judiciary in Poland. [Parliament agrees](#) with the Commission that rule of law is at risk in the country, but the Council has so far not taken a formal step in that regard.

On Monday, MEPs will also look in particular into the issues over judicial independence, after listening to the views of the President of the European Association of Judges, José Igreja Matos, and a representative of the Polish judges association IUSTITIA, Joanna Hetnarowicz-Sikora.

Legal changes adopted by the Polish government during current health crisis, regarding electoral law, regulation of hate speech and LGBTI rights, are another source of concern for many MEPs.

**When:** Monday, 25 May, from 14.05 to 15.30

**Where:** Jozsef Antall 4Q2, European Parliament in Brussels, and via [videoconference](#)

### **Background**

According to [Article 7 of the Treaty of the EU](#), following a request by one third of the Member States, by the Parliament or by the Commission, the Council may determine that there is a clear risk of a serious breach of EU values in the countries concerned. Before doing so, ministers shall hear the views of the national authorities. The Polish authorities defended themselves in front of the Council on three occasions, between June and December 2018.

At a later stage, the European Council may determine, by unanimity and with the Parliament's consent, that there is a serious and persistent breach of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights. This could eventually lead to sanctions, including suspension of voting rights in the Council.

In its resolution of 17 April, [about the EU's response against COVID-19](#), the European Parliament pointed to recent moves by the Polish authorities to change the electoral code, to hold Presidential elections in the middle of a pandemic. MEPs warned this may "undermine the concept of free, equal, direct and secret elections as enshrined in the Polish Constitution".