

DNEVNIK: "Sofia Brags of Success against Crime and Corruption in front of Brussels"

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By Dnevnik newspaper. ***All institutions in Bulgaria have been seriously activated by the critical report of the European Commission and have already noticed tangible success and concrete results in the fight against corruption and in the judiciary reform. Those are some of the conclusions drawn by the progress reports on the implementation of the judiciary and internal affairs mechanisms, presented to the European Commission on Monday by the minister of European Affairs Gergana Grancharova and prosecutor general Boris Velchev.***

In 10 pages the report describes and analyses what the authorities have accomplished between June and September on each of the six benchmarks of the monitoring mechanism. It evaluates fight against high-level corruption to be a main challenge, but also states that Bulgaria "has materialized the lack of 'political umbrella'". The report states that 38 persons have been convicted on charges of high-level corruption from June until September, citing the case of Georgi Radkov, former head of Economic Police at CDCOC who faced a bill of indictment for abuse of power.

The interim report highlights that in the past few months the most significant accomplishments has been achieved in fight against organized crime. The document announces: "The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Agency for National Security and the Prosecutor's office have already specified the main organized crime groups in the country as well as those, who represent them". At the moment new operational data is being investigated and the main players are being observed. In addition "the control over security of classified information has increased and the quality of information and data analysis has improved".

50 persons have been convicted and 28 of the sentences on charges of organized crime have come into effect between June and September. One of the examples mentioned was the case of Erzhan "Rocko" Rashid whose properties were confiscated as well as the sentences of Budimir Kuyuvich and the former deputy director of CDCOC Ivan Ivanov who had disclosed information to criminal offenders. The report also refers to "tangible success" in the field of fight against corruption on the borders and with the local authorities. The government still admits that they need yet to find a solution against buying of votes, corruption in public procurement and in exchange of realties.

Reports with similar data were presented by the government before each of the preceding reports of the European Commission. All the enumerated accomplishments bluntly counterpoint with the yet more critical evaluations of Brussels. One of the common criticisms of the Commission concerns the questionable quality of the information provided by Bulgarian authorities. "Nobody questions the political will in Bulgaria, but more concrete results are what are necessary" Gergana Grancharova stated. She recommended that the next report show "a positive trend in the country" because "Bulgaria would have difficulties coping with a second strongly critical report." Experts from the European Commission will visit

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Sofia on December, 1st to prepare the assessment which would be the basis for the next Brussels report in February.

The discussions on the meeting with secretary-general of the European Commission Catherine Day did not mention the issues with European funding or the State Agency for National Security. The Commission insisted on stating more clearly the authorities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Agency for National Security and the Prosecutor's office.