

Pressure mounts on Bulgaria to withdraw its EU nominee

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EU pressure on the Bulgarian government to withdraw its candidate for the European Commission grew today as S&D leader Martin Schulz mounted a fierce attack on Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, reports the S&D group.

Commission nominee Rumiana Jeleva faces rejection by a cross-party majority of MEPs following her poor performance at a parliamentary hearing in Brussels earlier this week.

Said Mr Schulz: "I have informed Commission President Jos  Manuel Barroso that aside from serious allegations of financial impropriety against Ms Jeleva, my group considers that she is not good enough for the job. It is now for him to reflect on this matter and draw the necessary conclusions."

Mr Schulz hit out at offensive remarks directed at left-wing MEPs by premier Borisov yesterday, including a reference to them as troublemakers in Brussels. "The former bodyguard of the former communist dictator of Bulgaria has no right to attack us in such a way," he said.

"Ms Jeleva is an element of Borisov's strategy to put his style of attacking everybody who disagrees with him as a communist or whatever. I ask Mr Barroso to reject clearly such a style. Ms Jeleva and her incompetence are what represent the Borisov government."

Mr Schulz said that Ms Jeleva would have to face a second parliamentary hearing if she remained a Commission nominee. "But I fear that a second hearing will be worse than the first," he said. "Her performance showed beyond doubt that she is incompetent."

Bulgarian delegation leader in the S&D Group Ivaylo Kalfin joined the condemnation of his country's candidate and Mr Borisov's attitude. "He is making an even bigger mistake than when he sent her to Brussels by reacting to the criticisms in the way he has," he said.