

# EU TO CRITICISE ROMANIA AND BULGARIA ON CORRUPTION

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Published at: 26-06-2007

Source: [Portal Europe](#)

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## ***European Commission will criticise Romania and Bulgaria for failing to fight systemic corruption and organised crime.***

The European Commission will criticise Romania and Bulgaria in a report on Wednesday for failing to meet EU targets for improving justice and fighting systemic corruption and organised crime, EU officials said quoted by Javno-Croatia and Reuters.

They said the European Union executive would stop short of triggering sanctions against the Black Sea neighbours, which joined the bloc in January, since it was too early after just six months, but they would spell out more detailed benchmarks.

"At this stage we do not foresee any safeguards, but we do not exclude the possibility for the future if necessary," one official said after a final preparatory meeting on Monday.

The officials said three commissioners -- Romania's Leonard Orban, Meglana Kuneva of Bulgaria and Franco Frattini, the Italian vice-president in charge of justice and security -- had expressed reservations about aspects of the report.

Frattini objected to some of the criticism of Bulgaria and sought to soften the language, they said.

The sources said the report noted progress made in several areas, notably in Bulgaria's adoption of a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary.

It highlighted the absence of convictions in high profile corruption cases and the long wait before suspects were brought to justice.

"We try to be fair and give credit where credit due, but not shy away from saying there has been insufficient progress on some of the bigger problems," another official said.

Both have revamped their justice systems and passed laws to set up graft-fighting institutions, in line with EU demands. But observers say results are stymied by hesitant policymakers, political feuds and ineffective state administration.

For the first time, the report compiled by the secretary-general of the Commission, Catherine Day will set out indicators within each benchmark for specific measures to be taken.

A majority of commissioners backed the tone of the report and said the Commission must be tough and rigorous to uphold the credibility of the EU's enlargement policy, while offering the new member states targeted assistance to meet the goals.

The officials said the paper would be slightly redrafted before Wednesday's full Commission meeting, but the balance would not be changed.