

Press release – Rule of law in Poland: “overwhelming evidence” of breaches



The EP Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee approved on Thursday the [draft interim report](#) by chair [Juan Fernando López Aguilar](#) (S&D, ES) with 52 votes for, 15 against and no abstentions, as [amended](#) at Tuesday's voting session.

The text focuses on the continuing deterioration of the situation in Poland as regards the functioning of the legislative and electoral system, the independence of the judiciary and the rights of judges, and the protection of fundamental rights. It “calls on the Council and the Commission to refrain from narrowly interpreting the principle of the rule of law, and to use the procedure under [Article 7\(1\) TEU](#) to its full potential [...] for all the principles enshrined in [Article 2 TEU](#), including democracy and fundamental rights”. Noting that the last hearing in the Council “was held as long ago as December 2018”, it urges the Council “to finally act [...] by finding that there is a clear risk of a serious breach by the Republic of Poland of the values referred to in Article 2 TEU, in the light of overwhelming evidence thereof”.

Read more about the contents of the report [here](#).

You can watch recordings of the debates on the report [here](#) and on the vote on the amendments [here](#).

Quote

After the vote, the rapporteur Mr López Aguilar said: *“In view of recurring allegations by PiS and the Polish authorities that they are facing double standards, this report concludes that there is no comparable case in Europe – other than Hungary, which is also subject to an ongoing Article 7 procedure. Over a period of just five years, the ruling majority has produced a cascade*

of acts using expedited parliamentary procedures, with no concessions to parliamentary opposition nor to any minority, severely affecting rule of law values. Furthermore, no other government is facing four infringement procedures for ignoring CJEU rulings. Abiding by EU law is what being a Member State is all about."

Next steps

The interim report is scheduled to be debated and voted on in plenary in September 2020.


Background

According to [Article 7 of the Treaty of the EU](#), the Council may determine that there is a clear risk of a serious breach of EU values. Before doing so, ministers shall hear the views of the national authorities. The Polish authorities have presented their position 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.

International drug trafficking network dismantled

The Hague, 16 July 2020

 **Judicial and law enforcement authorities in Romania, with Eurojust support and the cooperation and assistance of national authorities from several countries, have dismantled an organised criminal network responsible for drug trafficking. 15 people were indicted and almost 2 tons of cocaine, with an estimated value of €600 million, were seized.**

15 suspects were indicted earlier this week in Romania for international drug trafficking and the setting up of an organised crime group (OCG).

The OCG members smuggled over 3 tons of cocaine from Brazil to Romania by sea, storing the drugs in Romanian territorial waters with the aim of transporting and distributing them to Western Europe and the Western Balkans. 1.8 tons of cocaine with an estimated value of approximately €600 million were seized by the Romanian authorities. The majority of the remaining drugs were lost by the criminal network during transport by sea.

The Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and Terrorism – Central

Structure initiated the investigation into the OCG and led the operation in Romania. Given the complexity of the case and its international dimension, with members of the criminal network being of various nationalities (Romanian, Lebanese, Brazilian, Spanish, Serbian and Ukrainian) and operating in different parts of the world, the case was referred to Eurojust in May 2019.

In July 2019, a joint investigation team (JIT) was established between Romania and Serbia and benefited from financial and operational support from Eurojust.

The majority of the suspects were active in Romania, where the drugs were brought, and were coordinating the transport of the merchandise to the Western Balkans and other countries in Europe with a criminal cell in Serbia. Some of the suspects fled to Spain after losing an important cargo of the drugs (a ship smuggling approximately 1 ton of cocaine further inland sank in the Danube Delta in Romania). The OCG member in charge of purchasing the drugs from different providers in Latin America and smuggling them from Brazil to Europe was located in Brazil.

In addition to the financial and operational support of the JIT, Eurojust assisted the national authorities with the organisation of a coordination meeting, where team members exchanged crucial information about the case.

Eurojust also facilitated the execution of a Mutual Legal Assistance request to Brazil, relying on the support of the Eurojust contact point in this country. This also enabled the direct exchange between the Romanian authorities and their counterparts in Brazil, carrying out the hearings and other investigative activities promptly.


Furthermore, Eurojust facilitated the execution of multiple European Investigation Orders and Mutual Legal Assistance Requests in Spain, the execution of a European Investigation Order in Bulgaria (which resulted in a transfer of proceedings to Romania) and a Mutual Legal Assistance request in Ukraine.

Europol contributed to the operation by providing analytical support.

Photo © Shutterstock

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Article – Medicine shortages in the EU: causes and solutions



Parliament had already called for better traceability of research and development costs, public funding and market expenditure to make medicines more affordable in a [resolution adopted in 2017](#).

The [Commission issued guidelines](#) to tackle shortages due to the coronavirus outbreak in April. It called on member states to lift export bans and avoid stockpiling; increase and reorganise production; ensure optimal use in hospitals by reallocating stocks; consider alternative medicines; and optimise sales in pharmacies.

EU pharmaceutical strategy

The report calls on the Commission to address the issue of medicine availability and accessibility and import dependency in the upcoming [EU pharmaceutical strategy](#).

It is expected to propose measures to help improve and accelerate access to safe and affordable medicines, support innovation in the EU pharmaceutical

industry, fill market gaps (for example [new antimicrobials](#)) and reduce direct dependence on raw materials from non-EU countries.

Next steps

MEPs are expected to vote on the report during the September plenary session.

[‘A deal is essential. Now is the time’ – Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their meeting on 17-18 July 2020](#)



On Friday, for the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, we will be able to meet again here in Brussels.

The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed many lives across Europe and dealt a serious blow to our economies and societies. It continues to impact our lives. All our efforts must focus on building a sustainable recovery. To that end, our meeting this week will be dedicated to the Multiannual Financial Framework and the Recovery Plan.

Since our last summit in June, we have worked intensively with all of you and taken due note of your concerns. On that basis I have put forward a proposal to address the key difficulties and to build bridges between the different positions. Finding agreement will require hard work and political will on the part of all. Now is the time. A deal is essential. We will need to find workable solutions and come to an agreement, for the greater benefit of our citizens.

Our meeting will start on Friday at 10.00 a.m. with the traditional exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli. We will then hold our first working session and take it from there.

I look forward to welcoming you again in Brussels!

[Visit the meeting page](#)