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World | EU

The days of tolerance towards Bulgaria are over

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Sofia. Obviously, Bulgaria is different from other EU member states, and this fact became evident during the last European Parliament elections. Voter turnout in the whole EU lost 3 percentage points, due to disappointment caused by the global crisis and the mistakes committed by the authorities of some countries, but in Bulgaria it gained 9 percentage points. There is a general negative tendency defined as a crisis of democracy, but Bulgarian leaders triumph, believing they gave an example of functioning democracy. How should Bulgaria perceive the criticism coming from older democracies, that the Bulgarian democracy has a permanent problem? As fair, that is how.

Increased voter turnout does not indicate the awakening of civil consciousness, but the deepening of a general vice – the contempt of the high class towards core democratic values. Bulgaria convinced Europe that it has a reason to criticize it for the deficit of order in its legislative system and its lack of authority.

On June 8 Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov decorated Franco Frattini with the Stara Planina Order, First Class, for "exceptional merits in the process of Bulgaria's accession to EU, notably in justice and home affairs". Frattini did not receive this recognition in his capacity of Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, but as the former Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security. Brussels must have been shocked, since Frattini was the one to disgrace the European Commission in June 2007 when in the last moment he candied over the critical report for Bulgaria on "justice and home affairs" and forced the President Jose Barroso to hide from reporters and avoid their questions. And what they wanted to ask was if he was aware of Frattini's connection to the former Minister of Internal Affairs Rumen Ovcharov that had organized a thrilling ski holiday for him in the Borovets resort only two months earlier. After he left his post as Commissioner, in order to be appointed as Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs, his successors wrote the most critical report for Bulgaria, based on elementary EU membership principles he had turned a blind eye to.

Bulgaria keeps emitting wrong signals to Brussels that can only make its position as an EU member less fortunate after the new European Parliament is elected.

In an expression of socialist solidarity, the Party of European Socialists (PES) was the only to back statements of Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev (leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party /BSP/) for "double standards" in the EU. The new configuration in the European Parliament caused by the Rightist "tsunami" that swept the elections has dramatically reduced Bulgaria's chances to resist the pressure for lawfulness. The European Green Party also gained power and among its members are some of the most serious critics of Bulgaria's politics. Extreme Rightists "rushed in" the European Parliament, like the Dutch, that insist for the exclusion of Bulgaria and Romania from the EU, since they are lagging behind other members of the bloc.

Bulgaria can not expect any tolerance from the new European Commission, since it would be entirely dependable on the European Parliament that will provide it with funding. The President Jose Barroso will become his own successor, but his mandate would not permit him to make gestures of tolerance as he did in February 2008, when he delayed critics towards Bulgaria for the next report. The document might be revealed as late as September, after Barroso's re-election to his post.

It is about time that Bulgaria was brought to its senses and changed its EU strategy. Bulgarian criminals are costly, but they are not priceless. The state must not risk loosing the last euro granted by the EU on their account.

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