

„Жан Моне“ Център за високи постижения в изследването на европеизацията на държавите от Югоизточна Европа



Jean Monnet Center of Excellence for Teaching and Research on the Europeanization of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe

# WE ARE DANCING “RACHENITSA” UNDER THE BENEVOLENT EXTERNAL MONITORING

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Since last Wednesday the central media in Bulgaria have started the traditional two-day frolic to cover - not so much the content of the latest monitoring report of the European Commission under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, as the partisan politicians' reactions. According to custom, the representatives of the ruling coalition were competing to encounter parallaxes where from to have the reasons to boast (for example, “the most positive report of all the previous ones” or “significantly more positive than the report on Romania”). The opposition, of course, does the same but with the negative inclination – they are searching for reasons for interpreting the report as if it

is a reprimand (for example, they are counting the critical remarks and the unaccomplished previous recommendations that are mentioned). In general, the entire exercise is as if we are politically under-age and we are expecting the evaluation of the adult to make out whether we act properly.

Actually, the recurrent reports of the EC are nothing but appliance instructions, accompanying each newly bought home device (because for countries such as Bulgaria and Romania the rule of law and the mechanisms for fighting corruption are imported goods for extraordinary local use). But nobody reads these instructions as an evaluation of the appliance owner's capabilities, do they?



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On the contrary, nobody from the government or opposition representatives has made even an attempt to name practical actions which will lead to fulfilment of the recommendations, i.e. there hasn't even been stated an intention the appliance to be used, which was provided to us as early as in January 2017.

And essentially, the EC says in a straightforward manner that there is no sense new recommendations to be made because the probable accomplishment of the already given ones (the measures in the January report) would be enough for the qualitative change that could eliminate the necessity for the very monitoring mechanism itself.

But if we were careful not just about the content of what is said, but also about the very specific way in which it is stated by the EC, we would notice some key peculiarities. In the report it is repeated twice:

*„ [...] the Commission remains of the opinion that, with a continued political steer and a determination to advance the reform, Bulgaria should be able to fulfil the remaining outstanding CVM recommendations in the near future.” (p. 1)<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission – Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Progress in Bulgaria under the Co-operation and Verification Mechanism, Brussels, 15.11.2017 COM(2017) 750 final,

*„[...] the Commission ... remains of the opinion that, with a continued political steer and a determination to advance the reform, Bulgaria should be able to fulfil the remaining outstanding CVM recommendations in the near future.” (p. 10)*

Coming straight to the point: „if you wanted, you would progress enough.” Which, you must admit, is a very diplomatic way to say: „We are completely aware of the reasons why you don't achieve progress...”

We would not be right, however, if we suspect EC in a special effort to make the message readable for the wide or, at least, for the intelligent public. However, on the other side, probably the behaviour of the Bulgarian and Romanian authorities during the last decade makes the reports to sound like Oprah Winfrey narrating her audience of housewives in front of the TV: she s-p-e-e-a-a-k-s s-l-o-o-o-w-l-y-y-y and repeats the important message several times.

Exactly like the Commission. Because it is namely the behaviour of the successive governments in the two countries that doesn't leave place for any impressions that they are fast progressing.

Don't you believe?

([https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/comm-2017-750\\_en\\_o.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/comm-2017-750_en_o.pdf) ). All the references are from this document.

Here are some recent examples:

*„Overall, Bulgaria has taken concrete steps to address recommendation 4 to meet the objectives of benchmark two.” (p. 5)*

*„Overall, Bulgaria has taken further steps to address the four recommendations under benchmark three. (p. 7)*

*„Overall, Bulgaria has taken further steps to address the four recommendations of the January report under benchmark four.” (p. 8)*

*„Overall, Bulgaria has taken steps to address the three recommendations of the January report under benchmark five.” (p. 9)*

*„Overall, Bulgaria has taken steps to implement recommendations 16 and 17 under benchmark six.” (p.10)*

When reading such reports, the ordinary Bulgarian is right to wish our government to find money for a grant for Mr. Juncker to send his employees to a creative writing course. But on the other side, if the EC acts like a single team, it is him who is right to hopes that, after so many initial steps, the addressee of the recommendations would surely get somewhere.

We, the Bulgarians, make all kinds of steps – both very fast and very tiny, and even with squats from time to time<sup>2</sup>, but without going

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<sup>2</sup> This is the specificity of the typical folk dance “rachenitza”. It is performed usually in pairs. (Translator’s note).

anywhere. We just stay in touch with our folklore. And we know very well that the most important thing in the rachenitsa dancing is to outperform the competitor. S/He will get tired first and in 2019 - as latest - will remove the monitoring mechanism out of exhaustion. I-hu-hu-u<sup>3</sup>!

<sup>3</sup> “I-hu-hu-u” is a joyful exclamation supplementing the rachenitza dancing as an expression of the victory expectation. (Translator’s note).