

Beat: Politics

Countries that threaten the rule of law will lose European money

Agreement of the European Parliament

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USPA NEWS - The European Union should do more to promote democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights across the EU, including through support to civil society organisations. This is the agreement reached on Thursday by the Plenary of the European Parliament, which considers the possibility of withdrawing European funds to countries of the Union that do not promote democracy and respect for Human Rights.

MEPs endorsed on Thursday the position of the Civil Liberties Committee to triple the funds allocated in the long-term EU budget (2021-2027) for the Rights and Values Programme, up to 1.834 billion euros - the European Commission had proposed €642 million - Parliament's mandate to start negotiations with EU ministers was approved with 426 votes to 152 and 45 abstentions.

With a general objective to protect and promote the rights and values enshrined in Article 2 of the EU Treaty through support to civil society organisations at local, regional, national and transnational level, the Programme seeks to promote equality and non-discrimination, encourage citizens "engagement and participation in the democratic process, and fight violence. MEPs decided to specifically mention the protection and promotion of democracy and the rule of law as the main aim, as these are a prerequisite for protecting fundamental rights and for ensuring mutual trust among member states and of citizens" trust in the European Union, says the text.

Regarding the activities to be funded with EU money, Parliament suggests awareness-raising campaigns on European core values and the rights and obligations derived from EU citizenship. Initiatives to reflect on the factors that lead to totalitarian regimes occurring and to commemorate their victims were also suggested. MEPs also want to support town-twinning projects, Human Rights defenders and whistle-blowers, measures countering hate-speech and misinformation, and protection of victims of violence, among others.

MEPs agreed that, in exceptional cases, when there is a serious and rapid deterioration of the situation in a member state and the founding values are at risk, the European Commission may open a call for proposals, under a fast-track procedure, to fund civil society organisations to facilitate and support the democratic dialogue in the country.

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