Beat: Politics

Roberta Metsola on ECJ ruling: "Rule of law is non-negotiable"

Now is European Commision's time

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USPA NEWS - On 16 February 2022 the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled to dismiss requests by the Polish and Hungarian governments and maintain the legal force of the budget conditionality regulation. The regulation aims to protect EU funds from being misused by national governments that breach the rule of law. It entered into force on 1 January 2021, but so far the Commission has not yet applied it.

The ruling confirms the European Parliament's long-standing position to protect the European Union's budget from misuse by national governments that are in breach of the rule of law. On this occasion, President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, said: “The European Parliament now expects the Commission to apply the conditionality mechanism swiftly. Conditionality of EU funds linked to respect of the rule of law is non-negotiable for the European Parliament.”

“The rule of law is the basis on which our Treaties are built. It is fundamental that all Member States adhere to the Treaties they all signed up to when they joined the European Union. Values matter, and citizens have the right to know how common funds are used”, underlined President Metsola.

The regulation, strongly supported by the European Parliament, was adopted in December 2020. Following parliamentary resolutions, the European Parliament submitted in October 2021 a lawsuit to the Court of Justice against the European Commission for its failure to apply the Conditionality Regulation.

Following the European Court of Justice’s decision to uphold the Rule of Law conditionality regulation, lead MEPs call on the Commission to act without delay. Petri Sarvamaa (EPP, FI) said: "The last remaining obstacle for the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation has now been removed. Parliament’s message goes straight to the Commission, and I want to be very clear: it is high time to start implementing the regulation. The clock cannot be restarted to play for time, but the Commission must now act promptly and definitively."

"The facts are undisputed. We all know how the rule of law situation has been deteriorating for too long, not only in Hungary and Poland but also in some other Member States," he concluded.

Eider Gardiazabal Rubial (S&D, ES) said: “We hope the Commission has been working all this time and has done its homework to be ready to implement the regulation today”. And added: “This ruling is a turning point and represents support for a European project based on shared values. It is a clear message to authoritarian governments that, in the EU, the rules of the game must be respected,” she added. “With its judgment the Court legally endorses the political message behind the rule of law mechanism and endorses the serious work of the EU institutions.”

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