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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Political pluralism and democracy undermined in Bulgaria

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Clement SHOPOV and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

On 7 July 2023, the Bulgarian Parliament disregarded national law and rejected a petition – signed by over 604 000 citizens (10% of the active population) – calling for a referendum on postponing Eurozone accession. This figure far exceeded the legal threshold. Furthermore, after Parliament refused to adopt a resolution, the Bulgarian President declined to schedule the referendum. The refusal sparked widespread protests across Bulgaria, which were met with political repression, undermining democracy and eroding public trust.

Following one of the demonstrations, Bulgarian police detained six citizens. At the request of the Prosecutor's Office, four of the protesters were held for over a month. The Prosecutor's Office also sought to lift the immunity of several Members of Parliament and demanded their arrest due to their participation in the protests.

These flagrant violations of freedom of assembly and political pluralism are of grave concern in light of Articles 5 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5, "the Convention. The prolonged detention of protesters has effectively rendered them political prisoners.

The disproportionate inspections conducted by institutions under the influence of the ruling majority, targeting individuals and private enterprises supporting the protests are also alarming. Such actions violate the State's obligation to refrain from interfering in economic and political pluralism. Bulgarian authorities must cease all politically motivated prosecutions aimed at silencing dissent – a fundamental right guaranteed by the Convention in any democratic society.

Given that referendums are the ultimate expression of direct democracy, the Parliamentary Assembly should call on the Bulgarian Parliament to comply with the law and initiate a national referendum on postponing Bulgaria's accession to the Eurozone until at least 2043, ensuring the full exercise of political freedoms. It should also continue to monitor further developments on potential political oppression of opposition activists and representatives.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ECPA: European Conservatives, Patriots and Affiliates
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group