

**Question for written answer E-002200/2025
to the Commission
Rule 144
Jean-Paul Garraud (Pfe)**

Subject: Democratic criteria and respect for the rule of law in candidate countries

The rule of law, separation of powers and fundamental freedoms leave much to be desired in several EU candidate countries.

Ukraine in particular has recently taken a number of alarming steps; for example, it has placed limits on opposition parties and the independent press, and made a series of controversial top judicial appointments.

Moldova and the Western Balkans also have major shortcomings, which are often flagged by NGOs and international institutions. In Moldova, accusations of judicial politicisation and media interference raise questions, while in the Western Balkans, some countries are still blighted by structural corruption and unresolved interethnic tensions, and have seen troubling democratic backsliding.

Against this background:

1. What specific criteria and targets did the Commission set to assess the rule of law and democratic safeguards in these countries?
2. Why is it keeping accession negotiations open despite these obvious failings?
3. Is it planning to suspend accession negotiations if it notes democratic backsliding?

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