

**Priority question for written answer P-002016/2024
to the Commission**
Rule 144
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Subject: Concerns over procurement procedure for Bulgarian customs financed by EU CCEI grant

The Bulgarian Customs Agency (BCA) has terminated a transparent public procurement procedure for scanning equipment (CCEI: 2021-BG-BCROSS 101079791), funded primarily by the EU Customs Control Equipment Instrument (CCEI) grant. Instead, the BCA has opted for a secretive procedure involving direct negotiations with an undisclosed partner, which raises serious concerns about Bulgaria's commitment to the rule of law and its prospects for becoming a full member of the Schengen area. This has also raised legitimate security concerns due to the lack of transparency regarding the equipment supplier.

The BCA is adamant that all procedural steps are in line with EU and Bulgarian law. However, it did deviate from the transparency obligations outlined in Directive 2014/24/EU¹, citing national security reasons. The BCA also asserts that it coordinated the process closely with the Commission.

Given the foregoing:

1. Does the Commission agree that the acquisition of CCEI-funded scanning equipment can justify a secretive procedure without transparency for intelligence purposes?
2. Why is the derogation for national security interests applicable here, when similar equipment has been acquired transparently under other CCEI procedures?
3. How will the Commission ensure that potentially illegal actions of BCA officials do not endanger Bulgaria's prospects of joining the Schengen area and harm taxpayers' interests?

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¹ OJ L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 65, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/24/oj>.