

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001534/24
to the Commission
Mariusz Kamiński (ECR)
(21 August 2024)**

Subject: Commission's adoption of Russian narrative to justify attack on Poland in 'rule of law' report

In its 2023 'rule of law' report ⁽¹⁾, the Commission levelled allegations against Poland regarding press freedom and media pluralism. The Commission has habitually failed to recognise the structural problems of media ownership in Poland, which is largely under the control of people from the communist secret services and owned by foreign capital — mainly German. The Commission cited the February 2022 detention of Russian spy Pablo Gonzalez, describing him as an 'independent journalist', as confirmation of the thesis of alleged restrictions on freedom of expression.

On 1 August 2024, the largest exchange of spies between Russia and the United States, along with allied countries, took place since the end of the Cold War. The list of intelligence officers accepted by Russia included the alleged journalist and actual GRU officer Pavel Rubtsov ⁽²⁾, who was personally greeted by Vladimir Putin, who publicly thanked him for his service and recognised him as a hero ⁽³⁾.

It is therefore clear that in its report on the rule of law in Poland, which persists in making unfounded attacks on the Polish Government, the Commission preferred to rely on false information provided by close associates rather than trust the institutions of the Polish State.

1. Will the Commission draw any conclusions from this debacle and bring consequences to bear?
2. When does the Commission plan to apologise to Poland and explain its mistake to the public by withdrawing its phony document?
3. Who was behind the repetition of the Russian narrative in the Commission report and which organisations and individuals did the Commission consider more credible than the Polish Government, and on what grounds?

Submitted: 21.8.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(6 January 2025)**

The Commission has strongly condemned Russia's espionage, hybrid threats and disinformation campaigns. There can be no doubt of the Commission's position in this regard.

The country chapter for Poland of the 2023 Rule of Law Report ⁽¹⁾, to which the Honourable Member refers, briefly mentions the case of Pablo González under the pillar of media freedom. It factually reports on his arrest by the Polish Security Services and the charge of illegal espionage on behalf of Russia without taking a position.

The case of Pablo González, who at the time was believed to be a freelance journalist, had been brought to the attention of the Commission by different organisations expressing concern over his arrest and the length of his pre-trial detention.

There was also an alert published on the Council of Europe's platform and the Commission usually refers to such alerts in its Rule of Law Report in relation to all Member States.

The Commission is aware of the outcome of the case and considers it important and pays careful attention to any references to individual cases in the Rule of Law Reports.

On media ownership, to which the Honourable Member also refers, the country chapter for Poland of the 2024 Rule of Law Report ⁽²⁾ notes that the 2024 Media Pluralism Monitor has reported some progress as regards media ownership transparency.

The Commission is committed to further strengthening the Rule of Law Report, as expressed in the Political Guidelines. The Commission is also committed to implement the European Media Freedom Act ⁽³⁾.

¹ ¹Commission 2023 Rule of Law Report, Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Poland, https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2023-rule-law-report-communication-and-country-chapters_en

² ²<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/08/01/world/who-are-detainees-russia-us-prisoner-swap-intl/index.html>

³ ³<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-greets-russians-returning-moscow-after-prisoner-swap-news-agencies-say-2024-08-01/>

⁽¹⁾ ⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/b576c76e-0755-4690-9266-7895c4294433_en?filename=48_1_52627_coun_chap_poland_en.pdf

⁽²⁾ ⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9c081f05-688d-4960-b3bc-ea4fc3b2bafb_en?filename=48_1_58078_coun_chap_poland_en.pdf

⁽³⁾ ⁽³⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL_202401083