



TRADE UNION OF EMPLOYEES IN PRISONS IN BULGARIA
4400 the city of Pazardzhik, Ivaylovgradsko shose street – the prison

e-mail : sszb@abv.bg

TO
MR NICOLAS SCHMIT,
EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR JOBS AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

TO
MR DIDIER REYNDERS,
EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR JOBS AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

DEAR COMMISSIONER SCHMIT,
DEAR COMMISSIONER REYNDERS,

The Trade Union of Employees in Prisons in Bulgaria is an organization working to promote and protect the human, labor, trade union and social rights of employees in the Ministry of Justice in the Republic of Bulgaria. We hereby wish to inform you and express serious concern about violations by the authorities of the Republic of Bulgaria in terms of guaranteeing the freedom to protect these interests through trade union actions and more specifically - punishments and dismissals of trade union leaders and members because of their peaceful exercise of the right of association and the right to protest, both of which are protected by domestic and international law.

In the last few months, the MD "Enforcement of Punishments" at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria has imposed punishments on many employees and dismissed a trade union activist, because of disciplinary practices that are based on the motive of "revenge", in cases of using the basic freedoms granted them from the Bulgarian constitution and the international conventions ratified by Bulgaria, allowing the expression of opinion and the right to demand better working conditions and decent pay.

With these actions, the MD "Enforcement of Punishments" under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria compromises attempts to exercise the right to organize, since, especially in the case of the dismissed employee, it not only deprives others of their representative, but also achieves an intimidating effect on other employees who perform or could take over union functions or simply join labor disputes and protest actions.

This case is not a precedent, but it may further encourage employers in Bulgaria, and in this particular case - state institutions, to ignore poor working conditions, social dialogue, and potentially lead to a process of revoking hard-earned professional rights and social benefits in the security sector of the Republic of Bulgaria.

That is why we, being part of the Trade Union of Employees in Prisons in Bulgaria, ask for your intervention and support before the situation has changed irreversibly, by reminding the authorities in our country that to be a member of a trade union is not a crime and that fundamental freedom must be protected even when it is exercised in pursuit of demands with which the governments of EU countries or other public administrations do not agree.

At the same time, we request a meeting with you or with your representative, as we believe that when having meetings with representatives of the institutions you do not learn enough about the working conditions in Bulgarian prisons as well as about the serious criticism from authoritative international organizations.

We express our hope that this letter will merit attention and that you will intervene and express a position with which Bulgaria will begin to appreciate the importance of the role that trade union organizations play in the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy and to create a safe environment for their representatives, to work freely and without fear of any consequences.

Respectfully yours,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Trade Union of Employees in Prisons in Bulgaria.

The city of Sofia
04.10.2023

Yasen Todorov:
(Chairperson of the BM of the TUEPB)

