

**Empowering EU against State Capture through a New Monitoring Tool:
SceMaps - State Capture Estimation and Monitoring of Anticorruption Policies at the
Sectoral Level**

NEWS ON CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Bulgaria

- **Money Laundering Scheme Uncovered in Plovdiv ([BTA.bg, 22 January 2021](#); [bntnews.bg, 22 January 2021](#))**

Plovdiv city police uncovered a money laundering scheme based on importing shoes from Turkey without paying taxes. It has been operating for three years, and has made a revenue of up to BGN 700 000 (EUR 357 925). Until the moment 10 people have been arrested, and one is still at large.

- **Three Defendants in the Investigation against Bobokovi Pleaded Guilty ([bntnews.bg, 20 January 2021](#))**

Gabriel Savov, Vasil Bogdanov and Aygun Eminov have pleaded guilty to the waste affair, in which businessmen, Bobokovi, are also being investigated. The defendants have concluded an agreement with the prosecutor's office and it is expected that the Specialised Criminal Court would approve it, determining the sentences.

- **The Czech Republic investigates how CEZ sold the Varna power station to the Bulgarian politician Dogan ([dnevnik.bg, 29 January 2021](#); [seznamzpravky.cz, 29 January 2021](#))**

At the end of 2020, the Czech police has initiated an investigation on the acquisition of the Varna power station in 2017 by a company with no experience in the sector, owned by Bulgarian politician Ahmed Dogan. According to the whistle-blower, the Pirate Party, the Czech company has lost billions from the deal. The Czech investigation comes after a Bulgarian one, which failed to find any irregularities, despite many evidences provided by journalists, NGOs and foreign politicians.

- **The Chief prosecutor Geshev has been requested on investigation on the PM Borissov's audio tapes by the EU Parliament ([segabg.com, 24 January 2021](#))**

The LIBE commission at the EU Parliament has requested information on how high-level scandals are investigated, including *Barcelonagate*, the audio tapes with the voice of the Prime Minister, and the golden bars and bundles of money in Borissov's drawer. The EU MEPs would like to dig into the practice of the Bulgarian Chief Prosecutor to instruct or revoke other prosecutors' decisions. His accountability is another issue MEPs are concerned with. Among the questions of the EU delegates are the media pluralism and ownership, the gender-based discrimination legislation, the failed new constitution and Government's response.

- ***The Eight Dwarfs* showed which news are missing on Bulgarian television ([dnevnik.bg, 10 January 2021](#))**

In 2020 two of the main Bulgarian TV channels, bTV and NOVA failed to put attention on *the Eight Dwarfs* investigation. The main source of information for Bulgarians is TV, thus if a topic is not mentioned there, no public attention is draw to it. Despite the public importance of the large-scale corruption scheme uncovered, both TV stations provided 42 minutes in total on the topic.

- **Court: Bozhkov's company *New Games* is bankrupt, due to legislator's irreparable damage (dnevnik.bg, 13 January 2021)**

The lottery company of oligarch and businessman Vasil Bozhkov, considered the richest man in Bulgaria was declared bankrupt. With the 2020 changes of the Gambling law the legislator made impossible for people who have won on the scratch lottery cards to claim their awards. Sofia court judges point out that those law changes did not foresee any transition period, which made it impossible for the company distributor to reorganize.

Italy

- **Italy Targets Violent 'Ndrangheta Clan in Biggest Mafia Trial in Decades (euractiv.com, 13 January 2021)**

One of the largest clan mafia trials started on 13 January 2021, with more than 320 suspected mobsters and their associates facing charges for extortion, drug trafficking, theft and others. Many of the accused are white-collar workers, including lawyers, accountants, businesspeople, local politicians and policemen.

Spain

- **The former Popular Party treasurer confesses former PM Rajoy knew of party wrongdoing and offers collaboration with justice, in a letter to the Spanish Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (elpais.com, 04.04.2021)**

The former Popular Party (PP) treasurer Luis Bárcenas, sentenced to 29 years in prison under the Gürtel case, has sent a letter to the Spanish Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office six days before the start of the trial on the illegal funding of PP. In the letter Bárcenas confesses wrongdoing involving prominent former party leaders - including the former prime minister Mariano Rajoy - and promises to collaborate with authorities in ongoing investigations. Bárcenas claims in his statement of confession that in some specific cases public contracts were awarded to businessmen in exchange for donations, during José María Aznar's time in government.

- **Cifuentes Attributes Exclusively to the University Rey Juan Carlos the Initiative to Falsify Her Graduate Diploma (eldiario.es, 22 January 2021)**

The ex-President of the Madrid autonomous region has stated during the hearing of the trial for her forged graduate diploma certificate that the University was responsible. She admitted, however, she did not defend her graduate thesis.

Romania

- **Corruption Investigation Against Former PM in Romania (reuters.com, 13 January 2021)**

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis allowed a criminal investigation against former prime minister and senate speaker Calin Popescu Tariceanu for suspected bribe-taking. Prosecutors have said Tariceanu received political consultancy services commissions during 2007-2008 paid by an Austrian company in exchange for passing government bills in its favor.

- **Liviu Dragnea Prosecuted by the National Anticorruption Directorate for the visit made to the USA in 2017 (spotmedia.ro, 14 January 2021)**

The former head of PSD and president of the Chamber of Deputies, which already serves a sentence in jail, is investigated in a new criminal case related to his visit in the United States for trafficking in influence and use of state authority to obtain benefits. The visit, that cost around a quarter of a million EUR, was covered by a person in exchange for help with his business.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES

Bulgaria

- **OLAF Signs Cooperation Agreement with Bulgarian Prosecutor (ec.europa.eu, 20 January 2021)**

An agreement was signed by OLAF Director General Ville Itälä and the Prosecutor General of Bulgaria Ivan Geshev which provides a framework for cooperation on fighting fraud, corruption and other illegal activities involving EU funds.

- **Sofia Court Finds the Detention of Businessman Plamen Bobokov Unlawful (bta.bg, 18 January 2021, mediapool.bg, 18 January 2021)**

According to the Court he has been detained unlawfully, against European Convention on Human Rights. With this decision two out of three charges against Bobokov ended up falling before constituting as a crime and reaching Court proceedings.

- **The Supreme Judicial Council Rejects GERB's Project to Create a Prosecutor to Investigate the Chief Prosecutor (svobodnaevropa.bg, 21 January 2021)**

The proposal to create a new Special Prosecutor to investigate the Prosecutor General has been rejected by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC). The initial proposal envisaged for the new special prosecutor to have a mandate of seven years and be nominated by the prosecutors' college of SJC. The latter however could be influenced by the Prosecutor General. The ruling party (GERB) MEPs proposed an edited version of the legal change which allows all members of SJC to propose a candidate for Special Prosecutor, with mandate reduced to five years. Nevertheless, this new project was also rejected, as the SJC believes the recommendations of the Venice Commission and European Court of Human Rights are still not met. It is not clear if the Special Prosecutor would work alone or in a team. The SJC further highlights that the investigation of the Prosecutor General cannot be done by one of his subordinate prosecutors.

Romania

- **The Senate rejected the PSD legislative proposals to amend the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure ([Digi24.ro](https://digi24.ro), 1.02.2021)**

The Senate rejected the legislative proposals to amend the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure initiated by the Social Democrat Party in the previous legislature, deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. Among the proposed amendments were reducing the statute of limitation for criminal liability for serious crimes or halving the sentence thresholds for some corruption and office offenses.

EVENTS AND PUBLICATIONS BY SCEMAPS MEMBERS

Bulgaria

- **TurkStream: Energy Security and Corruption Risks (csd.bg, 16 December 2020)**

In December 2020, CSD presented its policy brief on TurkStream and the Russian Economic Influence in Europe, underlining the need of EU and the U.S. cooperation for diversification of energy supply. TurkStream and Nord Stream II have fueled local corrupt networks and democratic back-sliding in Europe. Some European business interests profit from a closer cooperation with Russia, but also key political players in Western Europe lobbied to ensure EU-Russian pipelines success, even when those do not make economic sense and go against corporate governance standards. Thus, the EU push for gas diversification has fallen prey to the private interests of European energy companies, financial institutions, construction firms and industrial behemoths that have benefited from Gazprom-led projects.

Italy

- **Organized Crime and Covid: How the Mafias Exploit the Pandemic (ecrime.unitn.it, 30 December 2020)**

Organized crime is grabbing advantages from the Covid emergency, which made many other activities typical of the mafia more lucrative and more attractive. While in the past human organs sells could be found on the *dark web*, now vaccines are on Mafia's focus. Criminals have been detected to sell anti-Covid drugs via Internet resellers and the *dark web*.

Romania

- Database on political financing released

Expert Forum released the database www.banipartide.ro which reflects party and campaign financing, spanning from 2006 to 2020. The platforms illustrated insights related to the sources of funding and the expenses of the political parties and highlights irregularities.