
MEDIA: ROMANIAN PRESIDENT TO POSTPONE ANNOUNCING DATE FOR REFERENDUM ON JUSTICE

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Romanias President Klaus Iohannis will postpone announcing a date for the referendum on justice, in which Romanians will have to answer if they want the fight against corruption to continue, local daily Adevarul reported, quoting political sources. The President will call the referendum only if the Social Democratic Party (PSD) makes a new attempt to change criminal codes to prevent the fight against corruption, according to the same source.

The idea of a referendum on justice emerged as the PSD-ALDE Government led by Sorin Grindeanu adopted an emergency ordinance that changed some provisions in the Criminal Code and partly decriminalized some corruption offences such as abuse of office.

The Government repealed the ordinance on February 5, after the biggest street protests Romania has seen in the last 25 years and pressure from the European Commission. The Parliament then voted a law that rejected the emergency ordinance on justice (OUG 13).

The law doesnt stipulate an exact time period in which the President would be compelled to announce the question asked in the referendum and a date, according to Radu Carp, a constitutional law professor quoted by Adevarul. What is stipulated is that the Government needs to establish the measures needed for organizing the referendum within 10 days since the President calls the referendum.

The referendum is considered valid if at least 30% of the citizens included in the permanent electoral lists participate. A total of 15.6 million people are included on these lists. The result of the referendum can be declared valid if at least 25% of the total citizens included in the permanent electoral lists vote for one of the options. This means a total of 4.7 million valid ballots need to be cast. Even if the referendum is a consultative one, its results are compulsory, meaning it can point to legislation changes in accordance to the expressed will of the voters and MPs need to take it into account, Adevarul reports.

The total cost of a referendum would be some RON 250 million (EUR 55 million).

The PSD had previously asked the president to give up on the idea of the referendum on justice, arguing it would be pointless after the emergency ordinance that aimed to change the Criminal Code was cancelled. The Democratic Magyar Union (UDMR) also sees the referendum as a pointless expense, but the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Save Romania Union (USR) support it.

Photo: The Romania Journal

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