

Minister of Justice: Magistrates must enjoy freedom of expression, not remain silent and not be afraid

The right to free expression is fundamental and, even if they have the obligation to exercise reserve regarding all issues related to their profession and activity, magistrates must enjoy freedom of expression, Justice minister Stelian Ion said on Friday.

"In recent years, the courageous positions of magistrates on the topic of the amendments to the Laws of Justice and criminal law have greatly contributed to the avoidance of slippages that would have seriously affected the rule of law and thrown us decades ago. Pressure on magistrates or intimidation meant to discourage them from speaking freely about the problems of the judiciary can bring nothing good. They only increase tensions in the judiciary. If we all choose to remain silent and pretend we don't see the real problems, those problems will escalate and overwhelm us," the Justice minister wrote on his Facebook page on Friday.

He added that in the draft amendments to the Laws of Justice he proposed strengthening the magistrates' right to freedom of expression.

"I also did not like the idea that the Minister of Justice could exercise disciplinary action against magistrates. Also, although I received, in my turn, some criticism of the activity of the minister from some magistrates, not always in an appropriate language, even if it was unpleasant, I didn't think these blunt approaches should be punished in any way. I tried to put aside the unpleasant packaging and pick up the idea. We cannot eavesdrop on what the magistrates are saying to each other, and we cannot tolerate, as a society, for magistrates to be pursued, tailed in their free time," stressed Stelian Ion.

The Minister of Justice calls on the magistrates "not to be silent and not to be afraid".

"They should do their duty with professionalism and good faith, but also speak up about the problems and dangers of the judiciary. They should do it objectively, with arguments, with balance and elegant language, as befits some magistrates," the Minister of Justice further said.