

JusMin Ion: I wonder who of our neighbours has an interest in us not joining Schengen

**Justice Minister Stelian Ion asked himself on Tuesday, in a televised TVR dispute with the leader of UDMR (Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania) deputies, Csoma Botond, on the subject of the dissolution of the Section for the Investigation of the Crimes in Justice (SIIJ), which neighbouring country has an interest that Romania does not enter the Schengen area.**

"We are not alone. We are partners in a European Union, in which we have entered voluntarily, accepting certain rules. In this European Union we must respect the treaties, the legislation. Here, we're going to get European money. If we do not respect the rule of law, if we do not respect and go down the road that Hungary, Poland have taken, where there are real problems with observing the rule of law, and there have been very clear alarm signals in this sense, and we are somehow distancing ourselves from our partners in the EU, we will have a big problem. It's possible that we may no longer draw European funds, the CVM (Control and Verification Mechanism) may not be lifted if we do not keep our promises that no one else has made but we have made by voting in Parliament in the programme of government. If the CVM is not lifted, we may not join the Schengen area. I wonder who has the interest among our partners or our neighbours for Romania not to join Schengen. (...) We must know very clearly what the consequences of our actions are and keep the promises that we have not made by force, we have willingly assumed: the dissolution of the SIIJ, the restoration of DNA [National Anti-corruption Directorate] competence," Stelian Ion said in a public television broadcast.

"In 2017-18, the UDMR voted together with the PSD to establish the Special Section. Unfortunately they haven't changed this speech, they are still talking about abuses against citizens, judges, conducted by DNA. I say there was a speech and a permanent attack in those years against DNA," Stelian Ion said.

"UDMR argued that the magistrates need certain guarantees, in addition to the guarantees that all citizens have, and the amendment they supported was this one, which I consider very serious, because it breaks the competence of DNA. (...) The maintenance of the Special Section means a blow given to DNA, it means a blow given to the fight against corruption and this is against Romania's interests. (...) This issue of DNA abuses has been used for years in certain areas to affect this institution. (...) UDMR continues its 2017-18 speech with the PSD (Social Democratic Party). If they chose to join this coalition, they should have adapted to the situation. We do not accept the things that have happened in 2017-18, when Justice was simply trampled on, to take place in Romania. This Section was a stump thought by the PSD at the time, together with the UDMR and with whoever else supported it, against the magistrates. The rest are stories," Stelian Ion said.

On the other hand, the leader of the UDMR deputies, Csoma Botond, told Stelian Ion to deal with the problems in Justice and not the situation in Hungary or Poland.

"I would ask the minister to look in his own backyard and be a minister in Romania, not to deal with the problems in Poland and Hungary, because he is not Minister of Justice in Poland or Hungary," said Csoma Botond.