**INTERVIEW “SPOTMEDIA” (Romania)**

**1. Mrs. President Metsola, according to the resolution voted here, in the European Parliament, and the report of the European Commission which requested that Romania and Bulgaria be accepted in the Schengen Area, this was blocked by Austria and the Netherlands. What does this mean for the institutions of the European Union, for their legitimacy?**

The decision by the Council of the EU to delay further Romania and Bulgaria’s accession to the Schengen Area is very disappointing. The European Parliament believes Romania’s admission to Schengen should no longer be delayed.

The Parliament, with an overwhelming majority, and the Commission have endorsed this accession 11 years ago.  Despite of the fact that Bulgaria and Romania successfully accomplished their respective Schengen evaluation processes in 2011, which was also recognized by the Council in June 2011, no political decision was taken on the lifting of the internal controls. This can and must be fixed as soon as possible. There is no justifiable reason not to admit Bulgaria and Romania.

The more we delay a positive decision for Romania and Bulgaria the worse the impact becomes on the integrity of the Schengen Acquis. I hope that a positive decision is taken very soon.

**2. What more can the EU institutions do so that their decisions are respected? In regards to this specific case, of Schengen’s enlargement.**

Let me be clear once again. The citizens of Bulgaria and Romania deserve to be fully part of Schengen. We need to maintain the pressure on the Council to keep the matter on the agenda and the next Presidency needs to engage in facilitating a compromise, thus ensuring the abolition of checks on persons at all internal borders for both of those Member States. This was also my clear message to the Member States leaders at the last European Council.

It is only when all EU Member States become members of the Schengen Area, we will be truly united.

**3. It was speculated that Russia would win from this situation. Do you agree?**

I don't like to engage in speculation, but there are external actors who want to see the EU weakened and divided.

Let me reiterate, Bulgaria and Romania should join Schengen. Both countries fulfil all the conditions for it, and this measure would be positive for the EU as a whole.

**4. Since we are talking about attitudes and actions that defy the EU institutions, we cannot ignore Viktor Orban. One major difference is that Mr. Orban just won the home elections. What is the best attitude towards the Orban government, from the point of view of the EU institutions, but also of the Hungarian citizens?**

The attitude towards the Orban government is the same as towards any EU government. We are an organisation with the same rules for all, and we apply the same rules to all in order to ensure that the EU values and principles are respected. It is important that all Member States also respect and implement our common rules.

In particular, it is important to remember that compliance with the rule of law is non-negotiable, neither for the European Parliament nor for the EU as a whole.

**5. Europeans show signs of what is called war fatigue. How can solidarity with Ukraine be encouraged and what is the worst case scenario?**

The support for Ukraine remains very strong in Europe. But we need of course to avoid any tendance of war fatigue. We have been at war for almost 10 months but we cannot forget for a moment what is happening on our continent. Our main priority remains to end this war, and to win this war. The European Parliament will always be on the side of peace: peace with liberty, peace with dignity, peace with security.

I believe that all European citizens shares this goal and maintain day after day an enormous solidarity towards the Ukrainian people, as it happens in countries such as Romania.

The European citizens support for Ukraine and our sanctions against Russia is strong. Citizens understand that defending freedoms and peace comes at a cost that is sometimes very high.

This is why we also must take urgent measures to alleviate the impact that increasing energy prices and inflation have on our people and businesses.