

Poroshenko Bloc MPs stalled approval of anti-corruption court bill, activist says

Ukraine

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Analyst: "We still expect the legislation's approval in line with Western requirements. If that doesn't happen and Ukraine fails to qualify for the IMF loan tranche, we don't think Poroshenko will succeed in shifting the blame to parliament. In that scenario, we expect his poll ratings, already collapsing, will be irreparably ruined."

KYIV, May 11, 2018 - Members of parliament belonging to the president's Poroshenko Bloc faction have stalled the review of amendments to legislation - some required by Western institutions - creating an independent anti-corruption court, Concorde Capital informed its clients today. The information was based on a statement that Vitaliy Shabunin, the head of the AntiCorruption Action Centre, wrote on his pravda.com.ua blog on May 10. The parliamentary committee on legal policy and justice, headed by Poroshenko Bloc MP Ruslan Kniazevych, has yet to begin discussing the amendments - numbering about 2,000 in total - in the five committee meetings held since the legislation's first reading passed on March 1, Shabunin pointed out. Nor has it even created a working group, he reported. Kniazevych has been among the president's trusted lawyers in the past, while 14 of the committee's 32 members belong to the Poroshenko Bloc. "Poroshenko's lawyer clearly isn't rushing, whether it's because he wasn't informed about the president's promises for the bill's quick approval, or whether Kniazevych is well aware about the insincerity of such promises, which is more likely," Shabunin wrote, referring to Kniazevych. "Of course, the president can keep thinking that he is outsmarting everyone and blame everything on the Verkhovna Rada. But it's worth considering how quickly MPs approved other bills that were advantageous for him." Recall that Western institutions criticized the legislation approved by parliament creating the High Anti-Corruption Court, demanding amendments to ensure it meet the standards set by the Council of Europe. At the time, Parliamentary Speaker Andriy Parubiy assured the public the necessary amendments would likely be approved by May. However, the president has been much more reserved in his remarks, repeatedly warning that any amendments must conform with Ukrainian legislation and that parliament will ultimately be responsible. At a May 10 press conference in Germany, Poroshenko told journalists that parliament could end up approving his sponsored legislation - which was criticized by Western authorities. "The bill is in parliament and I am sure that parliament is capable of approving and supporting the proposals, or the president's bill that was submitted," he said. Poroshenko indicated no concern about delays in reviewing the amendments. "They found for themselves work for at least a week," he said, referring to the MPs reviewing them. "But ultimately it's exceptionally important that the law is approved in the nearest future." Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: "It does seem as though the president is creating a backup plan to shift blame for the legislation's failure on parliament, also taking into account his remarks setting up the scenario. But we can't imagine that he will go to the extent of sabotaging legislation which Ukraine's very future statehood is dependent upon. So we still expect the

legislation's approval in line with Western requirements. If that doesn't happen and Ukraine fails to qualify for the IMF loan tranche, we don't think Poroshenko will succeed in shifting the blame to parliament. In that scenario, we expect his poll ratings, already collapsing, will be irreparably ruined.

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