Ireland

Member State Contribution

European Commission Annual Rule of Law Report 2026

23 January 2026

Ireland's 2025 Country Chapter Recommendations

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report.

<u>Recommendation #1</u>: Take forward the legislative work aimed at reducing litigation costs to ensure effective access to justice, taking into account European standards on disproportionate costs of litigation and their impact on access to courts.

The Review of the Administration of Civil Justice (Kelly Report) was published in 2020 and made over 90 recommendations on: civil procedure in the courts; discovery; multi-party litigation; litigation costs; facilitating court users; technology and e-litigation; and judicial review. The aim of the Kelly Report is to streamline the administration of civil justice to improve access to justice for the public and reduce litigation costs.

Government approval was obtained on the 15th of July 2025 for a General Scheme of the Civil Reform Bill. The draft General Scheme was brought to Government in December 2025 and approved for publication. A copy of the draft General Scheme is available here. Drafting of the Civil Reform Bill is currently progressing and it is anticipated that the Pre-Legislative Scrutiny process will begin in Q1 2026.

The Civil Reform Bill is a key implementation measure of the Kelly Report that will address various topics including judicial review, discovery, civil procedure in the courts, as well as the monetary jurisdiction of the Circuit and District Courts and implementation of a number of recommendations of the Report of the Sheriff Review Group 2024.

The Civil Reform Bill includes provisions to;

- Place **Judicial Review** on a statutory basis, with a public interest test at the centre of the process ensuring balance and protection of the common good. This reform of the judicial review mechanism will result in greater transparency and a more streamlined review process ensuring that the system cannot be misused on purely technical grounds, costs are reduced where possible, and litigants have sufficient standing to properly challenge decisions.
- Prevent abuse of the **discovery** process by introducing a new production regime that will be more effective, efficient and lead to lower costs. Production will be restricted to documents which are relevant and material to the outcome of the proceedings, reasonably likely to be relied on at trial, and where production of those documents is necessary for the administration of justice. These more stringent criteria should minimise both delay and cost in the conduct of civil litigation in the State and achieve greater equality between parties.
- Raise **monetary limits on the jurisdiction of the Circuit and District Courts**, reducing legal costs by allowing more non-complex cases to be heard in lower courts.
- Additional **civil procedure reforms**, aimed at streamlining processes and creating efficiencies across the court system while reducing costs where possible, include;
  - the creation of case conduct principles;
  - presumption against granting of adjournments;
  - pre-action protocols extended beyond clinical negligence proceedings;
  - limiting the term of a Lis Pendens;
  - deemed discontinuance of civil actions;
  - plaintiffs in personal injuries actions to distinguish between pre-existing injuries and those which are the subject of the claim; and
  - extension of rules committees' remit to include rules of evidence in civil proceedings.

With regard to resources of the judiciary, the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2025 was enacted in late 2025 and facilitates the appointment of 20 additional judges across the District Court, Circuit

Court and High Court. This is further to the 24 additional judges appointed in recent years following the recommendations of the Judicial Planning Working Group.

<u>Recommendation #2</u>: Continue efforts to strengthen the existing ethics framework, including the monitoring and enforcement capacity of the Standards in Public Office Commission, and to strengthen and digitalise the asset declarations system.

The 2025 Programme for Government contained a commitment to 'update the Ethics in Public Office legislation'. This followed a similar commitment in the 2020 Programme for Government to 'reform and consolidate' the Ethics legislation.

The Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER) is working to fulfil the Programme for Government commitment by preparing a general scheme of legislation for reform for Government's consideration. The draft legislative proposal is informed by a comprehensive review of the statutory framework undertaken under the last government, the Report of which was published in February 2023. The Review recommended *inter alia* that Ireland 'Strengthen the existing ethics framework, including on codes of conduct, asset declarations, revolving doors and lobbying, and in particular as regards the monitoring and enforcement capacity of the Standards in Public Office Commission'. The draft proposal is also informed by Government's previous initiative for comprehensive reform in this area, the 2015 Public Sector Standards Bill, which did not complete the legislative process and lapsed in 2020.

The aim is to provide for a uniform and consolidated values-based normative framework covering *inter alia* the ethical conduct of members of parliament and addressing various situations of conflicts of interest (gifts and other advantages, accessory activities, and post-employment situations etc.). The reform proposals envisage a significant strengthening of the legal obligations on public officials to disclose as a matter of routine, actual and potential conflicts of interest and a complementary increase in the monitoring and enforcement capacity of the Standards in Public Office Commission. They would also seek to provide a mandate by which digital solutions in respect of the declarations process can be developed and favoured. The Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation is examining the outstanding policy issues and engaging with officials to determine the most appropriate way to move forward on the Programme for Government commitment.

In tandem with this work, the Department has undertaken a comprehensive review and update of the regulations under the current statutory framework that designate the roles in the Civil Service and the wider public service that are subject to disclosure of interest obligations. This was required to reflect personnel and organisational changes within the public service and to take account of the creation or dissolution of public bodies and ensure that the Ethics regime remains comprehensive.

The updated Ethics in Public Office Regulations (the first update since 2018) were made by secondary legislation in December 2025 and took effect on 1 January 2026. Covering over 650 public bodies and over 2,500 roles or classes of role, they enable the Ethics regime to operate effectively by ensuring that all relevant public officials are required to disclose their interests under the Ethics Acts.

<u>Recommendation #3</u>: Complete the reform to provide funding for public service media that is appropriate for the realisation of its public service remit while guaranteeing its independence.

The Defamation (Amendment) Bill 2024 was passed by Dáil Éireann (Ireland's lower House of Parliament) on 2 July 2025 and, after extensive debate at Committee Stage, is now at Report and Final Stage in Seanad Éireann (Upper House). It is expected to be enacted and commenced in the coming weeks. The Bill aims to reduce legal costs and delays for all parties in defamation proceedings; to support easier access to justice both for those whose reputations are unfairly attacked and for those subject to unfounded defamation proceedings; and to provide enhanced protection for responsible public-interest journalism and public participation.

Key reforms include the abolition of juries in High Court cases, measures to encourage dispute resolution, new and amended defences including for live broadcasting and publication in the public interest and the introduction of safeguards to prevent abusive proceedings against public participation (SLAPPs) in defamation cases.

The Bill will allow those subject to abusive defamation proceedings against public participation to seek early dismissal of manifestly unfounded proceedings, to recover more generous costs and to obtain damages for any harm suffered as a result of SLAPP proceedings. The Bill goes beyond the Anti SLAPP Directive (EU) 2024/1069 as it applies protections to domestic as well as cross-border proceedings.

Recommendation #4: Finalise the reform of the Defamation Act to improve the professional environment for journalists taking into account European standards on the protection of journalists.

As confirmed in the last update, a legislative proposal to *inter alia* enhance safeguards for the independence of public service media and strengthen the governance of public service media (RTÉ and TG4) in Ireland is going through the legislative process.

The revised General Scheme of the Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill, which will give effect to these reforms, was submitted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport for pre-legislative scrutiny. Following the commencement of pre-legislative scrutiny, the Joint Committee held oral hearings from May to July 2025, hearing from the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, Coimisiún na Meán (the media regulator), industry, NGOs and other stakeholders. Subsequently, on 17 September 2025, the Committee published a pre-legislative scrutiny report containing 85 recommendations. Following receipt of this report, the legislation is currently being finalised with to view to Government approval and subsequent publication of the Bill in Q2 2026.

Recommendation #5: Continue ongoing efforts to address legal obstacles related to access to funding for civil society organisations, as part of the reform of the Electoral Act.

The Electoral Act 1997 encompasses provisions relating to donations and expenditure of all political parties and candidates, by individuals and corporate bodies in Ireland, as well as prescribing the donation limits made to civil society organisations. It is a broad piece of legislation, and any review will, of necessity, be required to consider all aspects.

An Coimisiún Toghcháin is keenly aware of the issues that have arisen in relation to the provisions for 'third parties' and the definition of 'political purposes'. These issues have been highlighted by the Standards in Public Office Commission since 2003 and have been the subject of Oireachtas debates since 2018. An Coimisiún Toghcháin is firmly committed to progressing this matter and has worked steadfastly over the past year.

Nonetheless, a full review cannot treat distinct proposals in isolation. Concerns in relation to civil society organisations will be included in the wider considerations of the financial aspects of politics and democracy in Ireland. Moreover, An Coimisiún Toghcháin is keenly aware of the rapidly evolving landscape in the democracy space, particularly with regard to international developments in technology and artificial intelligence.

The EU Democracy Shield is a key international initiative, which any new Irish electoral reforms will take into consideration. An Coimisiún Toghcháin is carefully examining the implications of the recently announced EU Strategy for Civil Society along with the Digital Omnibus and will ensure that there is alignment between the overall aims of the Shield and those of any renewed political finance regime in Ireland. It is within this context that the issues relating to civil society arise and that work continues apace. An Coimisiún Toghcháin fully affirms the recommendation of the European Commission regarding the continuation of this work.

I. Justice System

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding the justice system

1. Appointment and selection of judges, prosecutors and court presidents (incl. judicial review)

The Judicial Appointments Commission Act 2023, which was enacted on 8 December 2023 was fully commenced on 1 January 2025. The Act is available at Judicial Appointments Commission Act 2023, Schedule (irishstatutebook.ie).

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

The new system is up and running and all judges are being appointed under it. No issues or difficulties have emerged to date.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

Staff of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) are civil servants and the ODPP is an independent civil service body. Prosecutors are appointed to our Office through an open competition. The process commences with an application and shortlisting. Those applicants that are selected at shortlisting are invited to attend a competency-based interview by a board made up of specialists with an external board member. Boards also are gender balanced. Successful candidates are placed on a panel in order of merit. As vacancies arise within the Office, candidates are offered the position of Prosecutor. As a civil service body, all competitions are run in compliance with the Code of Practice for Appointments to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service. The Codes of Practice are published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments (www.cpsa.ie). If a candidate is dissatisfied following a selection process, they have a right under the Code to request an informal or formal review of a decision made during the process or make a complaint that the selection process followed was unfair.

2. Irremovability of judges; including transfers (incl. as part of judicial map reform), dismissal and retirement regime of judges, court presidents and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

There are no new developments in this area.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

New hire Prosecutors are offered a one-year probationary contract. During this first year, performance and behaviour is reviewed on a quarterly basis. Prosecutors who successfully complete their probation have their appointment confirmed. Prosecutors that do not complete a satisfactory probation period will not be approved for a permanent position as a Prosecutor for the ODPP and either one of the following will apply:

- Employment will cease for the new employee; or
- The employee will revert to their previous grade should they have been made a permanent employee of the Civil Service immediately prior to being promoted to the role of Prosecutor.

These decisions can be appealed by the employee up to and including the grade of Principal Prosecutor.

The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour applies to all Prosecutors. Any Prosecutor in breach of the Code could be dismissed under Circular 19 of 2016 Civil Service Disciplinary Code. Employees have a right to Appeal a decision in accordance with the appeals process, set out in Part 4 of the Code.

All Prosecutors are members of a Civil Service Pension Scheme. The minimum retirement age of a Prosecutor is dependent on their pension scheme. Most Prosecutors must retire at age 70 with an exception to members of the New Entrant Scheme 2004 where any Prosecutors hired between 2004 - 2012 have no compulsory retirement age.

3. Promotion of judges and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

Under the new Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2023, all judges, including those applying for promotion will be required to be interviewed by the new Judicial Appointments Commission.

Previously, judges expressing an interest in promotion, were not required to attend for interview.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

Senior prosecutor roles are filled through open or internal competition with the most senior being through open competition only in line with the rules in relation to the recruitment of senior civil servants (see further details below). The process commences with an application form and/or CV which are then shortlisted. Those applicants that are selected at shortlisting are invited to attend a competency-based interview by a board made up of specialists. All boards will have an external board member and are gender balanced. For senior roles, a 2nd round interview is required and, in some cases, a psychometric test is applicable. Following the selection process, successful candidates are placed on a panel in order of merit. As vacancies arise within the Office, candidates are offered a position.

As a civil service body, all competitions are run in compliance with the Code of Practice for Appointments to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service. The Codes of Practice are published by the CPSA (www.cpsa.ie). If a candidate is dissatisfied following a selection process, they have a right under the Code to request an informal or formal review of a decision made during the process or make a complaint that the selection process followed was unfair.

In regard to the Deputy Chief Prosecutor and higher roles, open competitions are run by the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Office in line with the process of the Top Level Appointments Commission (TLAC). TLAC are the body that has oversight of the Civil Service Senior positions, full details on the operations of TLAC can be found at: gov.ie - Top-Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) (www.gov.ie).

The Director of Public Prosecutions is a government appointment also filled through open competition which is done by TLAC.

4. Allocation of cases in courts

No update on last year’s return

5. Independence (including composition and nomination and dismissal of its members), and powers of the body tasked with safeguarding the independence of the judiciary (e.g. Council for the Judiciary)

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

There is no change to our previous response to this question as the Judicial Council continues to have as one of its functions under Section 7(1)(e), to promote and maintain respect for the independence of the judiciary. The Judicial Council is an independent body whose members constitute a separate branch of government. It is not the body tasked with safeguarding judicial independence – this is provided for under the Constitution.

The Judicial Council continues to actively engage with and participate in the ENCJ (the European Network of Council for the Judiciary) which works with other jurisdictions to achieve the objective of Section 7(1)(e).

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour applies to all Prosecutors employed by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. On appointment to our Office Prosecutors are required to familiarise themselves with the Code and sign a confirmation document to confirm they have done so. Anyone found in breach of the Code can be disciplined under Circular 19 of 2016 Civil Service Disciplinary Code. Under Part of the Code employees have a right to Appeal the outcome. Prosecutors are also obliged under Section 18 of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 to make an annual written statement in respect of their interests and those of their spouse, civil partner, child or stepchild which could materially influence them in the performance of their official duties.

As well as civil service accountability, all prosecutors are bound by the Guidelines for Prosecutors and the Code of Ethics which can be viewed at: Publication Category: Guidelines for Prosecutor - Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (dppireland.ie).

In addition to the above, prosecutors are either qualified solicitors or barristers and are bound by the standards of their professional bodies: The Law Society of Ireland or Legal Services Regulatory Authority.

6. Accountability of judges and prosecutors, including disciplinary regime and bodies and ethical rules, judicial immunity and criminal/civil (where applicable) liability of judges (incl. judicial review)

The 2024 Annual Report of the Judicial Conduct Committee published in June 2025 is the most recent public data available relating to judicial complaints. The total number of complaints for consideration in 2024 was 296 which was a 26% increase on the corresponding figure in 2023. Of these complaints considered, none were deemed admissible. Overall, the key insight from the year (2024) is that complainants continue to make complaints in the erroneous belief that, in doing so, the outcome of their court case can be changed. In addition, where a complaint calls into question a judge's conduct, the experience was that the matters complained of fell short of the threshold to be considered judicial misconduct. A significant majority of the complaints made during the period continued to be made by litigants, almost all of whom had represented themselves in court proceedings.

To note, two lay members were recruited to the Judicial Conduct Committee in late 2025.

7. Independence of the prosecution service

Independence/autonomy of the prosecution service

The ODPP previous submissions on this remains the current position. By way of assistance in understanding the prosecution service in Ireland, and the roles of the ODPP, State Solicitors and An Garda Síochána in terms of prosecuting crime, we refer to the following document: Prosecution Service in Ireland.

8. Independence of the Bar

The ongoing work in respect of the Barriers Implementation Plan, to remove barriers to entry to the legal professions, is intended to lead to greater diversity, representation and a stronger independent barrister profession. Similarly, the work of the Section 16 Education & Training Committee will broaden the availability of legal education and training in terms of providers and ensure that high standards are maintained in the provision of that education and training.

9. Independence of the judiciary

Significant developments capable of affecting the perception that the general public has of the independence of the judiciary

No update

Topic: Quality of Justice

10. Accessibility of courts (e.g. court fees, legal aid, language)

An upgrade of the court's website, www.courts.ie was launched in September 2025 as part of the Courts Service Modernisation Programme. The main purpose of this upgrade was to improve the journey of users of the website and to increase accessibility in compliance with the EU Web Accessibility Directive by making content easier to read and understand. Content on Small Claims, Civil Restraining Orders, Licensing, Personal Insolvency and Personal Injuries applications was published using a "plain language" approach and now includes detailed instructions on completing applications. In Family Law, new user-friendly application forms in Domestic Violence, Maintenance and Guardianship were made available online for the first time.

Digital Rules of Court for all court jurisdictions which allow for end-to-end digitalisation of court processes and make online filing and tracking of court documents possible, were published in 2025. These Digital Rules underpin the digital interaction with the Courts Portal which went live in June in the Dublin Family Law Circuit Court. Since December 2025, the Courts Portal can accept Family Law applications online for every circuit court office in the country. 2025 also saw the expansion of the Courts Portal to allow for filing of applications to the Probate Office online on a pilot basis.

11. Resources of the Judiciary (human/financial/material)

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

There is currently a total of 198 professional judges' posts across all jurisdictions which is an increase from 169 at the beginning of 2023. At the end of Q3 2025 there were 193 posts filled across all jurisdictions. Competitions are being run for the five vacancies.

This increase follows recommendations from the Judicial Planning Working Group and the passing of the Courts Act 2023 which paved the way for the appointment of up to 44 new judges by the end of 2024. 24 of these 44 posts were filled in 2023. All judicial posts are full time appointments.

With regard to resources of the judiciary, the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2025 was enacted in late 2025 and facilitates the appointment of 20 additional judges across the District Court, Circuit Court and High Court. This is further to the 24 additional judges appointed in recent years, following the recommendations of the Judicial Planning Working Group.
The total of non-judge staff at the end of Q3 2025 was 1,357 including court registrars, judicial assistants and administrative staff. There is also a team of Research Support Associates based in the Legal Research and Library Service which provides a single point of contact to all members of the judiciary for legal research.

The Courts Service Estate consists of 103 individual buildings, each of which houses at least one court jurisdiction and several of which house more than one court jurisdiction. The Courts Service Estates Strategy 2022-2025 aims to ensure that our buildings and facilities properly serve the needs of users and at the same time support the modernisation and digitalisation of the organisation and also includes a Climate Action plan and details of how this plan will be fulfilled. The Estates Strategy is based on the vision of a fit-for-purpose estate that facilitates access to justice for all users and is responsive to our future ways of delivering services.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

€40,208 - €100,530 - 2% or €1,000, whichever is greater, with effect from 1st March 2025. Gov.ie Circular 06-2025 - Application of 01 March 2025 Pay Adjustment

€40,610 - €101,535 - 1% pay increase, with effect 1st August 2025 under Gov.ie Circular 16-2025 - Application of 01 August 2025 Pay Adjustment

12. Training of justice professionals (court staff)

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

The Learning and Development Strategic Plan supports Courts Service staff across Ireland, building staff capability, capacity and commitment. The Learning and Development Unit works with subject matter experts, both within the organisation as well as external experts, to assist staff in their work supporting the judiciary and providing excellent service to court users. The unit uses a blended learning approach to training, which is delivered either in a virtual or traditional classroom.

In 2025, the first online training courses in Crime were made available to Circuit and District Court staff nationwide across all grades, including staff in support offices. Also this year, customised training was rolled out for staff assigned to the Central Office of the High Court to assist in dealing with the challenges of that particular work environment. We have continued to deliver career support for Clerical Officers, Executive Officers and Judicial Assistants, including induction training and in-person development courses. A redesign of Development Pathways from Clerical Officer to Assistant Principal to ensure that training aligns with Civil Service capabilities was launched in Q3. Training is provided to members of the judiciary and court staff across a range of digital tools, including video conferencing, remote working tools, etc.

The Judicial Council develops, delivers, and funds training programmes supporting access to justice and the rule of law. The training can be divided into three key areas: substantive law (e.g.EU legislation, National and Case law), judgecraft (skill development and court management) and the social context of judging (society and access). During 2025, topics covered included the fundamentals of EU law, civil legal aid, conduct and ethics, case management, human rights, neurodiversity and the Barnahus Model (child-centred justice). In addition, funding was made available to judges to attend training provided by national and international institutions and agencies, including programmes focused on Artificial Intelligence and digitalisation.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

In Service Training

The annual learning & development (L&D) programme for legal staff is overseen by the Legal Training Steering Group (LTSG). Members of this group include the Chief Prosecution Solicitor (Head of the Solicitors Division, the Legal Research and Knowledge Management and Training Officer, the Head of HR-OD and legal representatives from all the legal units in the Office. The LTSG meet approximately 4 times per year.

Examples of the 2025 programmes included but are not limited to:

- Seminar series in relation to interventions and supports for young and vulnerable people engaging with the Criminal Justice System highlighting the necessary special measures required to assist them;
- Trial Practitioner and District Court Programmes;
- Internal Advocacy Programme delivered collaboratively with NGOs;
- A range of ad hoc across a range of legal topics; and
- Ongoing learning comes in the form of weekly/ monthly section briefings. Guidance on unusual cases and new rulings.

Legal Staff regularly attend external courses, seminars and conferences with the Law Society, external providers, the ERA (Academy of European Law), the International Association of Prosecutors and other domestically and international bodies. The Office also hosts an Annual National Prosecutors Conference, which is attended by legal staff from the Office and members of the criminal justice system including but not limited to barristers who act on our behalf, state solicitors, members of the various investigative agencies e.g. Revenue, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, Health and Safety Authority (HAS). The Office also has legal staff sitting on cross divisional working groups and committees with members from across the criminal justice sector e.g. Court Users Group, Criminal Justice Strategic subcommittees.

Another element of prosecutor training is Knowledge Management (KM). Our KM system is a SharePoint-based internal database and is a tool to capture, store and disseminate knowledge, experience and expertise. Knowledge Management training is offered annually in an effort to improve engagement with this system and to promote self-development and learning.

The HR-OD Unit source, design, deliver (some programmes) and evaluate programmes as well as coordinating attendance and monitoring Continuing Professional Development. For example, the HR-OD team designed workshops for new managers on probation and performance management. The HR-OD Unit proposes and/or designs the management programmes that are delivered to the legal staff at management grades and also oversees external leadership programmes available to non-managerial legal staff.

Where appropriate, in relation to all the above, the Office engages external facilitators and presenters.

Prosecutors can participate in courses offered by One Learning (the L&D provider for the Irish Civil Service). These courses include courses in management and leadership skills, project management and practice management skills.

Induction

In relation to the Induction of Prosecutors, there is a bespoke Prosecutors and Legal Executive Induction that sits in the overall Induction Programme. A Revised Induction Programme was piloted in a number of legal sections and will be assessed in Q1 2026. The end goal is that there will be consistency with legal induction delivered across the sections. As part of Induction, newly appointed prosecutors receive training in relation to broad range of topics, including but not limited to case management system, data protection, security, the role & ethos of being a prosecutor. Knowledge Management is also a separate module in our overall Induction Programme.

Further Higher Education
The Office operates a "Refund of Fees Scheme" whereby staff can receive financial assistance and study and exam leave to complete third level and professional courses in their own time, once the knowledge and skills are deemed of relevance to the work of the Office. These courses are offered by external providers such as universities or other third level institutions, as well as the Law Society of Ireland and the Honorable Society of King's Inns.

Professional Development Requirements of lawyers
The following general information in relation to the learning and continuous professional development of solicitors and barristers in Ireland may also be of assistance:

- Prosecutor grade staff employed by the Office are either solicitors or barristers.
- To practice as a solicitor, it is required to be admitted to the Roll of Solicitors. To be admitted, it is required to carry out Professional Practice Courses organised by the Law Society of Ireland and complete in-office training.
- The Law Society of Ireland – CPD Compliance 2025 Cycle
- To qualify as a barrister, it is required to complete and be admitted to the barrister-at-law degree at the Honorable Society of King's Inns and be called to the Bar. Practising barristers must "undertake the continuing education and professional development necessary to ensure an adequate level of knowledge and competence in his area(s) of practice". A Practising Barrister must also comply with any minimum requirements for continuing education and professional development as may be prescribed by the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (see paragraph 3.32, Legal Services Regulation Authority, Code of Practice for Practising Barristers).

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority have made recommendations in relation to legal practitioner education and training which may be of assistance - for more see here.

13. Digitalisation (e.g. Use of digital technology including electronic communication and AI tools within the justice system and court users, access to judgments online)

In 2020, the Courts Service embarked on a ten-year modernisation programme, "The Courts Service Long-Term Strategic Vision to 2030: Supporting Access to Justice in a modern, digital Ireland", which aims to better support access to justice in a modern digital Ireland. Since the start of this programme, we have invested in our foundational capability and capacity in digital transformation. Along with successfully building these foundations we have also delivered concrete improvements using digital technology.

The rollout of the Unified Case Management System (UCMS), which was introduced in 2023, continued into 2025. Significant progress was made on the introduction of the Courts Portal which is the public facing view of UCMS and allows for online applications and filings. The Portal was launched in Circuit Court Family Law in Dublin in June and since December 2025, has become available nationwide. In November, the portal was expanded to include online applications for Probate on a pilot basis. In the next few years across Civil and Family Law, the Portal will allow for e-filing, e-serving, making e-payments and the collection of digital orders. The Courts Service website provides online access to judgments in both civil and criminal cases.

There is a project in place to roll out an AI based speech to text system for court recordings to allow greater access into court proceedings for judges and support staff.

The Criminal Law and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill was published on 9 January 2026. The provisions providing an enabling basis for remote hearing and electronic documents were not in the Bill as published and continue to be developed with a view to their being introduced as amendments to the Bill as it progresses through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

14. Use of assessment tools and standards (e.g. ICT systems for case management, court statistics and their transparency, monitoring, evaluation, surveys among court users or legal professionals).

The Court Service consistently monitors operations and compiles court statistics, for example as published in our Annual Report. The processes, tools and systems that are used to track cases and operational activity are a mixture of those that are automated, semi-automated and manual. Due to an aging and fragmented digital and data infrastructure and due to local variations in process design, there are known challenges with the provision of real-time, granular, and high-quality data to assist in the monitoring and evaluation of policies, processes, and operational activity in general.

The Unified Case Management System (UCMS) for the High Court, which went live in 2023, is a modern, highly secure and user-friendly system. Work is now underway to amalgamate all versions of Circuit Court Family Law into one centralised system, improving the case management experience for all users. Once UCMS is rolled out to all Circuit Court offices, we will introduce a self-service portal which will allow the public to track their cases online 24/7.

The Open Data Portal available on courts.ie. is a central hub for the publication and sharing of Courts Service data. We also launched a new Data Retention Portal and data retention tools which are available to all staff and provide guidance to staff on efficient management of records. This initiative is essential in creating a healthier, safer, and more organised workplace.

15. Geographical distribution and number of courts/jurisdictions ("judicial map") and their specialisation in particular specific courts or chambers within courts to deal with fraud and corruption cases.

No changes to 2025 return

16. Quality of justice

Specialisation (of judges/specific courts/chambers within courts) and training for the judiciary to deal with commercial cases, as well as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and mediation as regards commercial cases.

The Judicial Council provides funding for judges dealing with commercial cases to participate in specialist training programmes offered by EU institutions and agencies.

Developments related to efforts to improve the efficiency of the justice system (e.g. as regards length of proceedings) – Length of proceedings

An independent assessment process to implement the right established by the Court Proceedings (Delays) Act 2024 on delays in court proceedings is under preparation. Enacted on 1 May 2024, the Act creates a statutory right to the conclusion of court proceedings within a reasonable time, providing for a declaration, and where appropriate compensation, in cases where people experience unjustified delays in the justice system. The Act is not yet commenced.

The Act provides for the establishment of an independent assessment process, under the aegis of the Department of Justice, to assess claims for breaches of the right contained in section 11 to the conclusion of proceedings within reasonable time. Work is ongoing to implement the assessment scheme, which is expected by June 2026. Commencement of the Act will coincide with the scheme becoming operational.

*Note: this update is linked to the text on page 16/17 of the 2025 IE Chapter re leading judgments of the ECtHR pending implementation (McFarlane case).

Protocol for dealing with murder and rape cases involving children

In February 2025 a protocol was launched by the Minister for Justice for dealing with murder and rape cases involving children. This protocol was developed by representatives of various agencies and organisations including the ODPP, AGS, Department of Justice and members of the judiciary, and was chaired by Ms Justice Caroline Biggs of the Central Criminal Court. The protocol was designed to support children through the criminal justice process as both victims and defendants of crime and recognises the detrimental effect on children which delays in the system cause. There were 16 signatories from across the various bodies who marked their commitment to promote and respect the rights of children by setting out the objective of expediting cases involving child victims and defendants. The protocol sets out a proposed timeline of 52 weeks in total (from the initial statement to the final verdict) in cases of murder and rape.

Other – Any significant developments since January 2025

Court Proceedings (Delays) Act 2024 (not yet commenced). The purpose of the Act is to provide remedies to people who experience excessive delays in court proceedings. The Courts Service is in consultation with DJHAM on the practicalities of commencement of the Act.

II. Anti-corruption Framework

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding the anti-corruption framework.

17. The institutional framework capacity to fight against corruption (prevention and investigation / prosecution)

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, HOME AFFAIRS AND MIGRATION

As of 31 October 2025, Garda member numbers were:

- Total: 14,290
- Male: 10,190 (71%)
- Female: 4,100 (29%)

As of 31 October 2025, Garda staff numbers were:

- Total: 3,657
- Male: 1,145 (31%)
- Female: 2,512 (69%)

Total Garda Reserve numbers as of 31 October 2025 was 291

The establishment of the Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption was one of the recommendations made in the Review of Structures and Strategies to Prevent, Investigate and Penalise Economic Crime and Corruption, published in December 2020. The Advisory Council was set up in May 2022 and is chaired by James Hamilton, a former Director of Public Prosecutions. The Council advises and makes proposals on strategic and policy responses and is responsible for developing a multi-annual strategy to combat economic crime and corruption. The Advisory Council has 19 members plus the Chair. 13 members represent the relevant government departments and enforcement and regulatory agencies from across the public sector. The remaining six ordinary members represent the business and financial sector, academia, and civil society. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration provides the secretariat to the Advisory Council.

Ireland is fully supportive of OLAF (the European Anti-Fraud Office) and cooperates as required.

As a non-participating Member State, Ireland is fully committed to cooperating with the EPPO. Negotiations concerning the working arrangements between EPPO and Ireland are ongoing.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

The Special Financial Unit in the ODPP currently comprises 8 legal officers, of which four are senior lawyers. One clerical officer is assigned to the unit. Further resources have been sought for 2026.
The Special Financial Crime Unit within the ODPP met with OLAF in 2024 and 2025 to discuss matters of general mutual interest. A Senior Principal Prosecutor also delivered presentations to the EU Anti-Corruption Network and Transparency International.

The ODPP has engaged in extensive work of inter-agency working groups in preparation for Ireland joining EPPO. These working groups are facilitated by the Department of Justice and the ODPP continue to engage with any developments in advance of a formal Government decision to join EPPO. The Director met with The European

Chief Prosecutor in November 2025 as part of her visit to Irish stakeholders and two representatives of the ODPP will travel to Luxembourg in January 2026 to visit the EPPO offices for a number of meetings and presentations on the operation of EPPO.

18: *Safeguards for the functional independence of the authorities tasked with the prevention and detection of corruption.*

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, HOME AFFAIRS AND MIGRATION

No updates on last year's return

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

Section 2(5) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1974 provides that the Director of Public Prosecutions shall be independent in the exercise of his/her functions.
Our Guidelines for Prosecutors sets out the following:

- Chapter 3.6 (Code of Ethics) at (a) states that the prosecutor's responsibilities include upholding the rule of law.
- Chapter 3.6 (Code of Ethics) continues at (h) that prosecutors shall 'give due attention to the prosecution of crimes of corruption, abuse of power, violations of human rights and other crimes recognised by international law, in particular offences which may have been committed by public officials.
- Chapter 7.5 sets out that An Garda Síochána cannot charge for corruption or bribery without submitting a file for direction to the ODPP.

Our Strategy Statement 2025-2027 identified independence as a core value of the Office. It sets out what to be independent means. This includes 'acting impartially without fear, favour, bias or prejudice, in line with the Guidelines for Prosecutors and Code of Ethics' as well as 'remaining unaffected by individual or sectional interests and public or media pressure, having regard only to the public interest.

19: *Information on the implementation of measures foreseen in the strategic anti-corruption framework (if applicable). If available, please provide relevant objectives and indicators.*

The Hamilton Review and the establishment of the Advisory Council

In December 2020, the Minister for Justice published a cross-government report which examined how best to tackle economic crime and corruption in Ireland, the "Review of Structures and Strategies to Prevent, Investigate and Penalise Economic Crime and Corruption", also known as the Hamilton review.

An all-of-government implementation plan to progress the recommendations in the report was published in April 2021.[1] It sets out 22 actions to enhance enforcement and prevention capacity in the criminal justice sphere. The majority of the actions have been completed in full, with the remainder significantly advanced.
The review recommended the establishment of an Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption. This Advisory Council was established in May 2022 and is chaired by a former Director of Public Prosecutions with considerable expertise in this field. In addition to representatives of various public sector bodies, there are two academics, two business representatives, and two civil society representatives on the Council.

[1] Department of Justice, "A review of structures and strategies to prevent, investigate and penalise economic crime and corruption" hamilton-review-group-implementation-plan.pdf

The function of the Advisory Council is to provide strategic and policy advice, proposals, and recommendations relating to economic crime and corruption to the Government through the Minister for Justice. One of the major recommendations arising from the Hamilton Report is for the Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption to develop a multi-annual strategy to combat economic crime and corruption and an accompanying action plan.

Multi-annual Strategy to combat Economic Crime and Corruption
A key recommendation made in the Implementation Plan was the development of a Multi-Annual Strategy to combat Economic Crime and Corruption ("the Strategy"). In Q4 2025, the Advisory Council agreed and adopted a Multi-Annual Strategy to combat Economic Crime and Corruption. The Strategy will be presented to the Minister for Justice Home Affairs and Migration for agreement and will subsequently be brought to government for approval to publish.

The Strategy is intended to facilitate a cohesive multi-body and cross-departmental approach to combatting economic crime and corruption, and to provide a benchmark for measuring progress. Development of the Strategy was informed by a process of public consultation and stakeholder engagement, which involved an open call for written submissions, an in-person stakeholder event and bilateral engagement between the Advisory Council and key stakeholders and relevant European and international organisations and counterparts. The Strategy assists in identifying gaps in existing legislative frameworks and measures that should be updated to reflect emerging threats, particularly in relation to cybercrime and cross-border crime.
The Strategic Objectives set out in the strategy include -

- Strategic Objective 1: Data capture and threat assessment;
- Strategic Objective 2: Information exchange and public private partnership;
- Strategic Objective 3: Improving the enforcement and prosecution toolkit;
- Strategic Objective 4: Asset recovery and confiscation; and
- Strategic Objective 5: Prevention, education, and awareness.

Economic Crime and Corruption Forum
Ireland also established an Economic Crime and Corruption Forum comprised of senior representatives from the relevant operational bodies in June 2021, following the recommendations in the Hamilton review. The Forum has a more operational focus and meets on a quarterly basis to exchange information, look at issues of shared concern and provide support to the work of the Council, where relevant.

20. Prevention of corruption

Measures to enhance integrity in the public sector in particular as regards high-level officials (including as regards incompatibility rules, revolving doors, codes of conduct, ethics)

Note: Please also provide information and figures on their application/enforcement, such as number of detected breaches/irregularities of the various rules in place and the follow-up given (investigations, sanctions, etc.).

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour applies to all civil servants including Prosecutors employed by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. On appointment to our Office Prosecutors are asked to familiarise themselves with the Code and sign a confirmation document to confirm they have done so. Anyone found in breach of the Code can be disciplined under the Civil Service Disciplinary Code (Circular 19 of 2016). Under Part 4 of the Code, employees have a right to Appeal the outcome. Prosecutors are also obliged under Section 18 of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 to make an annual written statement in respect of their interests and those of their spouse, civil partner, child or stepchild which could materially influence them in the performance of their official duties.

As well as civil service accountability, all prosecutors are bound by the Guidelines for Prosecutors and the Code of Ethics

All Prosecutors are either qualified solicitors or barristers and are bound by the standards of their professional bodies: The Law Society of Ireland and the Legal Services Regulatory Authority.

Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

Policy in Ireland for the prevention of corruption and promotion of integrity among elected and appointed senior public officials is set out in a number of pieces of legislation including the Ethics Acts (Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001), the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 as amended by the Regulation of Lobbying and Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) (Amendment) Act 2023 and the Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Act 2018 (which provides for the forfeiture of office, position or employment by an Irish official following conviction or indictment for certain corruption offences under this Act).

The Ethics Acts

The Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 are cited together as the Ethics Acts. This statutory framework covers both elected and appointed public officials and its principal objective is to demonstrate that those who are participating in public life do not seek to derive personal advantage from the outcome of their actions. To achieve this, the legislation provides for the disclosure of interests, regulation of gifts, and personal appointments (of special advisers) and for oversight of this regime by the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO) or the Select Committee on Members' Interests in each House of the Oireachtas. The legislation also contains a requirement that tax clearance certificates be furnished on election/nomination to either House of the Oireachtas, appointment to judicial office or senior office.

Codes of Conduct

Section 10 of the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 provides for codes of conduct to be drawn up for certain specified categories of person. The codes, which are published by SIPO, set out the standards of conduct and integrity expected to be observed by the persons to whom they relate in the performance of their official duties and connected matters. A person to whom a code of conduct relates is obliged to have regard to and be guided by the code in the performance of his or her functions, and in relation to any other matters to which the code relates (sections 10(6) and (7), 2001 Act). The principal codes published by SIPO are as follows:

(i) The Code of Conduct for Office Holders (as prescribed under the Ethics Acts) includes Ministers of Government, the Attorney General and Ministers of State.

(ii) The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour includes Secretaries General and Special Advisers as well as other staff of Government Departments and agencies.

(iii) The Codes of Conduct for Senators and TDs.

Investigations

In circumstances where SIPO holds an investigation in relation to the conduct of a relevant person under the Ethics Acts, the investigation hearings are generally held in public and the investigation reports are published in the public domain with an accompanying press release. SIPO also reports on its activities in its Annual Report, which includes information on compliance with the requirements of the Ethics Acts, as appropriate.

Advice and Training

SIPO gives advice to office holders, on a confidential basis, on the interpretation of their obligations under the Ethics Acts. Office holders are required to act in accordance with the advice given (section 25, 1995 Act). In addition, advice is to be given on request to an office holder in relation to the application or otherwise of the

Code of Conduct for Office Holders to any particular case or circumstance relating to him/her or to any conduct or proposed conduct of the person (section 10, 2001 Act). Office holders may also seek more informal guidance, which is not binding. Where SIPO is of the view that there has been or may be a breach of the Acts by an office holder, it may decline to give advice.

SIPO has agreed to provide training to all Members of Parliament in concert with already scheduled training initiatives for Members under electoral legislation. The parliamentary authorities have included SIPO as part of a training program for the induction of new members and facilitate SIPO to host annual information sessions for both the Ethics Acts and the Electoral Act.

A general election was held in November 2024 and in January 2025 SIPO staff provided training to both new and existing Members of Parliament. Training covered relevant aspects of the ethics, political finance and lobbying legislation. Ongoing training is planned to take place annually hereafter. SIPO also provided training on ethics and lobbying legislation as part of the induction of new and continuing Special Advisers in February 2025.

Lobbying

In relation to lobbying, the Regulation of Lobbying and Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) (Amendment) Act 2023 (the 2023 Act) was enacted in June 2023.

The provisions in the 2023 Act that relate to updating and improving the lobbying register commenced on 1st January 2024. The remaining provisions which relate to new sanctions, including those relating to contravention of the section 22 post term employment cooling off provisions, commenced on 1st June 2024. The changes have been bedding in for two years, with no impact on the functioning of the register.

As part of commitments made in the 2020 Programme for Government, the lobbying register was extended by Statutory Instrument in September 2024. These changes took effect on January 1st 2025. The scope of the register has been extended so that the lobbying of senior officials in bodies such as the Central Bank, the National Transport Authority and the Health Service Executive, which have significant policymaking or development functions, will be reported on the same basis as central and local government.

Institutional framework

The Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO) is an independent non-partisan body established under the Standards in Public Office Act 2001. Its membership is composed of the Chairperson and five ordinary members. The Chairperson must be a judge or former judge of the High Court, Court of Appeal or Supreme Court, who is appointed by the President following a resolution passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas. There are four *ex-officio* members - the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Clerk of Dáil Éireann and the Clerk of Seanad Éireann. The final member is a former member of either Dáil Éireann or Seanad Éireann, who is appointed by the Government following a resolution passed by both Houses of Parliament.

SIPO has supervisory roles under four separate pieces of legislation: the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995, as amended by the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 (Ethics Acts), the Electoral Act 1997 (as amended), the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Act 2014, and the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 as amended by the Regulation of Lobbying and Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) (Amendment) Act 2023.

SIPO's principal functions under the Ethics Acts are to publish guidelines, to give advice and to investigate and report in relation to possible contraventions. These functions relate to office holders (including Ministers and Ministers of State), the Attorney General, special advisers and public servants.

SIPO's principal functions under the Electoral Act 1997, as amended, are to publish guidelines, to give advice, to report on returns provided concerning political donations, election expenses, political parties' statements of accounts, and statements of expenditure of funding provided to parties under the Electoral Act, and to refer possible contraventions for prosecution.

SIPO's principal functions under the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Act 2014 are to report on statements of expenditure of the Parliamentary Activities Allowance provided to parties and to independent Members of the Oireachtas under the Act.

SIPO's principal functions under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 as amended by the Regulation of Lobbying and Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) (Amendment) Act 2023 are to oversee lobbying registrations and returns, to maintain the online Register of Lobbying, to decide on requests to waive or reduce the post-employment cooling off period for specific categories of designated public officials, and to conduct investigation and enforcement activities.

The SIPO Commission is supported by a secretariat composed of civil servants, which is provided by the Office of the Ombudsman. That office also provides shared services. Funding to SIPO is provided through the vote of the Ombudsman, which is also managed by that Office. While it does not report to a Minister, its funding comes from government budget processes (rather than directly from parliament). SIPO's Annual Report is provided to the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation for noting by Government and tabling in the Oireachtas.

Question 21. Prevention of corruption: Measures to enhance general transparency of public decision-making (including rules on lobbying, asset and interest disclosure rules, gifts policy, transparency of political party financing)

Ethics

See response to Question 22 in respect of asset and interest disclosure rules and gifts policy.

Lobbying

The Regulation of Lobbying and Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) (Amendment) Act 2023 (the 2023 Act) was enacted in June 2023. All provisions were commenced by June 2024. This Act amends the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) in order to build on the existing strong legislative foundation and further strengthen Ireland's lobbying laws, thus ensuring that the regulation of lobbying framework remains up to date and fit for purpose.

The following changes were made to the 2015 Act:

- extended the time period between statutory reviews from three to five years to allow for the impacts of any policy/legislative changes to become clear;
- brought certain business groups, regardless of number of employees, within the scope of the 2015 Act and requires that members of such groups be named on lobbying returns to ensure the groups do not avoid the requirement to register;
- extended the 2015 Act's scope to include non-remunerated office-holders to capture all relevant lobbying activity;
- provided for an exemption for registration for communications made by political parties to their members who are DPOs (Designated Public Officials) only in their capacity as members of the party;
- introduced legislative provisions to improve the operation of the Lobbying Register;
- introduced a new 'relevant contravention' in the 2015 Act covering the taking of any action by a person that has the intended purpose of avoiding the obligations to either register or submit lobbying returns to the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO);

- amended the 2015 Act to make failure to comply with the cooling-off provisions of section 22 of the 2015 Act a 'relevant contravention' under the 2015 Act. A system of civil and administrative sanctions, operated by SIPO, has been introduced in this regard. The sanctions include: a caution or reprimand, a monetary penalty of up to €25,000 and a prohibition from lobbying of up to 2 years; and

- clear timelines in the 2015 Act for the processing of section 22 applications made to SIPO by former relevant DPOs have been set out.

Question 22. Prevention of corruption: Measures to prevent conflicts of interest in the public sector. Please specify the features and scope of their application (e.g. categories of officials concerned, types of checks and corrective measures depending on the category of officials concerned)

Conflicts of Interest: The Ethics Acts

As outlined in the response to **Question 20** above, the broad focus of the Ethics Acts is to provide for disclosure of interests, including material interests, that could influence a Government Minister or Minister of State, members of parliament, the Attorney General, a board member of a public body or a public servant (including Special Advisers) in performing their official duties.

Disclosure obligations arise for the following categories:

> **Oireachtas:** Member of the Dáil or Seanad (the lower and upper Houses of Parliament)
>
> **Office Holders:** i.e. Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Ministers, Ministers of State, a member who is Attorney General, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of either House and chair of a Committee of one or both Houses.
>
> **Public Bodies and Civil Service:** Designated Director e.g. chairman of a Board of a public body; Designated Position of Employment e.g. positions of employment at or above Principal Officer Grade level in the civil service, and below that level where the work area could produce conflicts of interest (e.g. procurement); special advisers.

In the case of members of the Oireachtas, statements of interests are furnished annually to the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO), which passes them on to the Clerks of either House, who compile the Registers of Members' Interests, which is publicly accessible.

Registrable interests are in summary:

- A remunerated profession (exceeding €2,600),
- Shares or other investments (value exceeding €13,000)
- A directorship of any company
- Interest in land or in any contract for the purchase of land (exceeding €13,000)
- Certain gifts (excluding personal) (any gift over €650)
- Below cost supply of travel facilities and entertainment
- Remunerated position as political lobbyist or consultant
- Certain contracts in relation to supply of goods and services to a public body
- Below cost supply of property or a service
- Voluntary disclosure of any other interests that could materially influence the person in his or her official functions

In addition to the statement of registrable interests, an Oireachtas member must also declare any material interest in proceedings of a House or Committee. There are different procedures depending on whether the member (a) intends to speak or (b) intends to vote but not speak. This obligation extends beyond personal interests and includes the material interests of a "connected person" i.e. a relative, anyone in partnership, a trustee and controller of a company.

Members must also provide evidence of tax compliance to SIPO.

Office Holders: As members of the Oireachtas, office holders have the same obligations as non-office holding Oireachtas members concerning:

- tax clearance;
- annual disclosure of registrable interests; and
- the disclosure of a material interest in the proceedings of a House or Committee.

However, as office holders, there is the additional requirement to:

- furnish a statement of additional interests;
- surrender and disclose gifts received by virtue of office; and
- disclose a material interest in a function of office.

'Additional interests' are the interests of a spouse or civil partner, child or child of a spouse or civil partner that could materially influence the office holder in his or her official functions so as 'to confer on or withhold from the office holder or the spouse or civil partner or child a substantial benefit'. There is a separate interests form for additional interests. The statement of additional interests is furnished to the Clerk of the House of which the office holder is a member. The additional interests form is private whereas the statement of registrable interests form is public as personal registrable interests are published in the registers of members' interests (see above). There is an obligation to furnish an additional interests form even if the person is no longer an office holder or no longer an Oireachtas member. Once a person has been an office holder at any time during a year they must comply with the requirements on additional interests for that year. There is no requirement for the monetary value of the statement to be specified.

Declaration of a material interest in a function of office: Where an office holder intends to perform a function of office, and has actual knowledge of a personal material interest in that function, or of a material interest of a connected person, another office holder, or a person connected to another office holder, then a statement must be made of the facts and nature of the interest concerned. Statements are furnished to An Taoiseach and SIPO or by An Taoiseach to the Chairman of SIPO.

Analogous declaration requirements apply to the holders of designated directorships and designated positions of employment in the public and civil service.

Review of the Statutory Framework

As outlined in our response above in respect of the recommendations received in the 2025 Report on the anti-corruption framework, the review of the statutory framework published in 2023 made preliminary recommendations that disclosure obligations be revised based on the seniority and autonomy of the public official concerned and that disclosure arrangements be underpinned by electronic rather than paper-based reporting.

While the proposed reform of the statutory framework envisages an extension of disclosure requirements on public officials, it will also, instead of the current paper-based system, seek to provide a mandate for a more streamlined and efficient process for the submission of periodic statements of interests and reformed investigations procedures.

Conflicts of Interest: Lobbying

In relation to lobbying, the Regulation of Lobbying and Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) (Amendment) Act 2023 (the 2023 Act) was enacted in June 2023, and provisions commenced in two phases; the first phase was in January and the final in June 2024. This Act amends the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) in order to build on the existing strong legislative foundation and further strengthen Ireland's lobbying laws, thus ensuring that the regulation of lobbying framework remains up to date and fit for purpose.

In particular, the 2023 Act makes failure to comply with the post-term employment restrictions set out in section 22 of the 2015 Act a relevant contravention under the 2015 Act and introduces significant civil and administrative sanctions for anyone contravening this element of the legislation. The post term employment restrictions are set out in the 2015 Act and apply to Ministers, Ministers of State, Special Advisers and Senior Civil Service and Local Authority Public Officials.

Question 23. Prevention of corruption: Measures to ensure whistleblower protection and encourage reporting of corruption, including their application (i.e. number of reports received and the follow-up given)

Ireland has had a comprehensive statutory framework for the protection of whistleblowers in place since 2014 in the form of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. On foot of the adoption of Directive (EU) 2019/1937 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law ("the Whistleblowing Directive"), Ireland has taken the necessary steps to transpose this Directive into Irish law. The Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022 commenced operation on 1 January 2023.

The Protected Disclosures Act sets out rules protecting workers from penalisation when they raise concerns about wrongdoing in the workplace. A worker is broadly defined in the Act as a person who is or was an employee, but the definition also includes volunteers, job applicants, board members and shareholders. The Act provides for a number of different options for workers to make reports of wrongdoing. They can report internally to their employer. They can also report externally to a number of prescribed persons, who have regulatory functions in the areas where the alleged wrongdoing occurs. As a last resort, subject to more stringent conditions, a worker can make a public disclosure. Public sector workers have the additional option of reporting to a relevant government Minister. The definition of wrongdoing is also broad and can encompass a multitude of different activities that may not amount to corruption.
Further to this, the Act sets out that there must be dedicated channels for workers to use to make reports, either internally or externally, to ensure confidentiality, and that employers and prescribed persons have designated competent and impartial individuals to follow-up on reports. The Act sets out the minimum standards for the operation of these channels and sets out the timeframes for appropriate follow-up and feedback. While the exact nature of any follow-up given depends on the nature and method of the report, the Act provides for acknowledgement of the report, feedback within a reasonable period in the medium chosen by the reporting person and timely updates if an investigation into the wrongdoing is ongoing.

Policy developments

On foot of the commencement of the new legislation, the official guidance for public bodies on the implementation of the Act has been revised and published. The revisions to this guidance include template internal and external reporting policies to assist public bodies in establishing their channels to drive consistency across the public service. The guidance also provides instructions on the mandatory reporting requirements laid out in the Act, which includes instructions to collect numbers of reports and the follow-up given.

Under the Act the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER) has the power to designate competent authorities as prescribed persons. This list of prescribed persons was updated by Order in May 2025. The Protected Disclosures Unit in DPER will be reviewing and updating the list of prescribed persons on a rolling basis to ensure complete regulatory oversight.

Funding for Transparency International Ireland (TII) for the operation of its free Speak Up Helpline and Legal Advice Centre has been increased from €285,000 in 2022 to €368,500 in 2024. As a result of funding by the Department, TII was able to complete its second Integrity at Work Survey which was published in 2025. The previous survey was published in 2017.

Reporting

Under the Act, all public bodies are required to publish annual reports on the number of protected disclosures they have received.

Area of reports	Number of reports received in 2023	Number of reports received in 2024
Total internal reports received by public bodies	173	Pending publication of DPEIPSRD Annual Statistical Report
Total external reports received by public bodies	989	See response above
Total reports internal and external	1162	See response above
Number of these reports deemed as requiring further follow up	734	See response above
Number of reports referred for further proceedings	161	See response above
Number of these reports stated to be breaches of EU Laws	211	See response above
Estimated amounts recovered following investigations or proceedings of reports of wrongdoing	€3,700,000	See response above
Total number of reports received by the Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner	283	See response above

Source: Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

Under the requirements of the new Act, public bodies, prescribed persons and the Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner must provide a detailed breakdown of the numbers of reports received in the calendar year, the action taken to follow up, what matters were investigated as a result of a report, how many reports were made anonymously and how many legal proceedings were initiated and concluded.

This information was collated and published by the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure Public Service Reform and Digitalisation for the first time in January 2025. The second annual report detailing the number of protected disclosures received in 2024 is due to be published in early 2026. While the data for 2024 is yet to be published approximately 1500 internal and external reports were received by public bodies in 2024. 200 of this total were internal reports and approximately 900 reports were deemed to require further follow up.

Developments related to the independent authorities

The amended legislation provided for the establishment of the Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner to support certain aspects of the implementation of the Protected Disclosures Act. Ireland's national Ombudsman was appointed as the Protected Disclosures Commissioner.

The primary role of the Commissioner is to act as a "clearing house" for external disclosures made to competent authorities or "prescribed persons" as they are described in the Protected Disclosures Act. Over 100 statutory bodies are designated as prescribed persons under the Act and this list is being continuously updated. In some cases it is not clear who the most appropriate prescribed person to report to is. The Commissioner can receive reports and direct them to the most appropriate person to deal with the matter raised.

The Commissioner also acts in a similar capacity in respect of any reports made to Government Ministers. Under the new Act, all such reports must be transmitted to the Commissioner who will forward them to the most appropriate person to deal with the matter concerned.

In cases where the Commissioner is unable to identify a person with the competence to handle a particular report, the Commissioner may, as a last resort, accept the report and follow-up directly on the matter concerned. Appropriate investigative powers have been provided in the new legislation in this regard.

Topic: Prevention of corruption

24. Prevention of corruption
&
25. Measures for the prevention of corruption in relation to the issuing of official permits (e.g. related to environment, energy, service provision and various types of construction)

Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

There is no evidence to support that EU funding is a high risk sector in Ireland and there has been no recorded instances of fraud or corruption in C&AG, Commission or ECA audits.

In relation to Cohesion funds:

- Circular 09/2023 'Management and Control Procedures for the Cohesion Policy Funds encompassed by the European Common Provision Regulation (CPR) Programmes 2021-2027 is the overarching document that sets out the responsibilities of the various CPR programme authorities and the relevant Departments. It includes the measure requiring written confirmation from Secretaries General of the relevant Departments, that their Department, and Agencies/Bodies under the aegis of their Department, involved in the implementation of Cohesion Policy Funds projects/operations that are co-funded by the EU, have been informed of, and are bound by that Circular, and also informed of and bound by the relevant Regulations and satellite legislation and decisions pertaining to their EU fund.
- Each fund also have their own Eligibility Rules with which the funds must be in compliance.
- EU funding must also be administered in compliance with Circular 13 of 2014 on the Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds, as for ERDF funding is initially made available from the Exchequer, and so must meet with Exchequer requirements, and may also be subject to C&AG examination.
- In addition, each fund has an Audit Authority which audits EU funds.
- With regard to ERDF specifically, both of the ERDF Managing Authorities have an anti-fraud strategy in place, as do each of the Intermediary Bodies in relation to implementation of ERDF schemes.
- All funds may also be subject to DAC and ECA audits. As noted, no evidence of fraud has been detected in ERDF funding for which DPER has primary responsibility in recent years.

Public Procurement

Public procurement is a matter for each contracting authority; the procurement directives set out the legal framework and obligations on contracting authorities in awarding contracts which are framed to ensure transparency as well as equal treatment and non-discrimination of potential bidders.

DPER is supporting the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission's work in relation to bid rigging.

DPER also publishes a suite of resources for public buyers, and delivers value for money, transparency and accountability through greater and more consistent usage of central solutions.

Department of Defence

On an annual basis, Dáil Éireann votes funds for government departments and offices to spend on the provision of public services. At the end of the year, departments and offices prepare an account of their expenditure and receipts, i.e. the Appropriation Account, which is signed by the Accounting Officer, as part of their Accounting Officer Role. These accounts are compiled in accordance with robust internal financial management procedures and are subject to detailed external scrutiny, in various formats, by, inter alia, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee along with an independent Internal Audit Unit operating in the Department.

The Finance Branch of the Department of Defence assists with the overall management of the financial affairs of the department including advice on the essential need for compliance with overarching public financial procedures. The internal controls in place include a system of financial delegation and accountability, segregation of duties, and a monthly process of examination and reporting of expenditure. In addition, all Defence staff are guided in their conflict-of-interest decision-making processes by the Civil Service Code of Conduct with Defence Forces personnel receiving further guidance through sectoral Defence Forces Regulations together with a range of internal directives and advisory documents.

The additional existence of an independent Internal Audit Section, trained in accordance with professional auditing standards, further strengthens Defence governance practices through the provision of risk-based based, objective assurance, advice and insight. On an annual basis, the Internal Audit Unit undertake a high volume of audits to ensure adherence to management policies / directives and compliance with the appropriate regulations and statutes; to evaluate the effectiveness of the risk management processes in operation; to evaluate the means of safeguarding assets against losses, including those arising from fraud or irregularity, and to incorporate value for money considerations of economy, efficiency and effectiveness in all audit examinations.

In respect of procurement, the Infrastructure Guidelines/Public Spending Code published by the Department of Public Expenditure Infrastructure Public Service Reform and Digitalisation sets out the obligations applying to each department in spending public money, and in particular at all stages of the expenditure process i.e. where expenditure is under consideration (appraisal), where expenditure is in progress (monitoring and management), and following expenditure (review and evaluation). It applies to both capital and current expenditure and sets out what is required of public service managers at each point of the expenditure lifecycle.

In that regard, Defence procurement policies, procedures and applicable legislation are designed to ensure that the highest standards of integrity, fairness, legality, confidentiality, and disclosure of interest are applied to all procurement related transactions. All relevant procurement regulations including those set out in the Public Procurement Guidelines – Competitive Process are applied to ensure that competition is promoted, value for money secured and openness and transparency assured. In addition, the procurement of defensive equipment is carried out in accordance with EU Defence and Security Directive 2009/81/EC. This is a specific Directive relating to the award of contracts dealing with defence and security which was transposed into Irish law by way of implementing Regulation S.I. No 62 of 2012.

Funding provided to Defence has increased significantly since 2022, from €836 million to €1.17 bn in 2026. Funding for capital projects has also seen a significant increase with a record allocation of €1.7 billion for the period 2026-2030. The increase in Ireland's budget for defence reflects an acknowledgement of the necessity to respond to an increasingly complex set of challenges for the world.

Strategic investment in anti-corruption measures within the defence sector is essential to safeguarding national security. Targeted capital investments being made in this domain include:

- a towed sonar capability to be used for monitoring and surveillance in the subsea domain;
- a Joint Cyber Defence Command, which will be capable of conducting the full spectrum of cyber defence operations at home and overseas, to enhance national cyber defence capabilities;
- a Military Radar Programme which will include three elements - Land based Long Range Primary Radar; Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) systems, to include a Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (C-UAS) capability; and Maritime (ship-borne) Radar.

Significant targeted funding for capital projects will continue to be utilised effectively to address long-standing capability gaps, modernise core infrastructure needs, and ensure that Ireland continues to deliver on its defence responsibilities and international commitments.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

DAFM Risk Office – Anti-Fraud Measures only

DAFM Risk Office measures to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability in DAFM include the following:

DAFM Fraud Policy

The scope of the recently revised 2025 version of the DAFM Fraud Policy covers fraud perpetrated against the Department by persons internal or external to the Department and includes:

- The guidance and direction in the policy applies to all staff of DAFM and to all other personnel who are working on behalf of DAFM in carrying out DAFM related functions, either in DAFM buildings or elsewhere.
- As per DAFM Protected Disclosures Policy and Procedures, retired staff and some other categories may also report cases of fraud under this policy.
- Where the Department is responsible for the disbursement of funds to state bodies under the aegis of the Department, these bodies should have their own anti-fraud measures in place which are equivalent to or comply with the general principles contained in this document.
- Service Providers engaged by the Department for the provision of service should have appropriate counter fraud arrangements in place, in relation to functions that could affect the Department, which are equivalent to or comply with the general principles contained in the policy.

As part of the Department's continuation and improvement of Risk Management, the policy aims to provide a framework for promoting the Department's policies and measures to prevent and detect fraud, and to provide guidelines for staff and others on their responsibilities in relation to fraud, as follows:

- Identifying areas where the risk of fraud exists;
- Detecting fraud which has already occurred;
- Investigating all reports of fraud/suspected fraud in a consistent way
- Taking firm action against the perpetrators; and
- Designing systems to prevent fraud in all its forms.

DAFM Fraud Register

The Risk Office in DAFM maintain a register of all reported fraud cases in DAFM. The register includes details of the fraud / potential fraud such as who reported the fraud, the lead division assigned to the case, the loss of monies due to the fraud, if the fraud has been reported to An Garda Siochana. The register is updated regularly to closure of the cases.

There have been two Anti-Fraud subgroups established within divisions in DAFM to monitor and investigate cases of suspected fraud before cases are placed on the Fraud Register.

DAFM Fraud Policy eLearning Module

In January 2024 the Risk Office rolled out the DAFM Fraud Policy eLearning Module. This training is compulsory for all DAFM staff members and contractors. This training module is currently being revised and is expected to be rolled out to all staff again in January 2026, and every two years to follow.

DAFM Finance Division measure to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability in DAFM include the following:

Annual Publication of CAP Beneficiaries

In accordance with EU Regulations 1306/2013 and 2116/2021 Member States are required to ensure the annual ex-post publication of all beneficiaries of CAP funding. Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 908/2014 and 2022/2118 state that this information shall be published by 31 May each year for the preceding financial year. In accordance with legislation, the information shall remain available on the website for two years from the date of its initial publication.

The publication is available on the DAFM website and is also available on the Open Data Platform in a machine-readable format that satisfies the Open Data Directive.

DAFM HR measures to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability in DAFM include the following:

Conflict of Interest

The Department's policy on Conflict of Interest (COI) is informed by Section 14 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, which forms part of the Terms and Conditions of employment of all Civil Servants.

Given the varied nature of the work of this Department, the Department implements an internal policy whereby all Department staff are obliged to make an annual declaration of any potential or actual Conflicts of Interest that they may have. Staff members are required to submit that declaration to their Head of Division, so that senior Divisional management are aware of any potential or actual conflicts of interest that may affect their areas of responsibility. Where a potential or actual conflict of interest is declared by a staff member, it is a matter for the Head of Division to address that matter and ensure that mitigating measures are put in place.

Compliance and follow ups are performed.

Prior to COI request, staff attention is brought to the standards expected of them in the conduct of Departmental business and specifically referring to COI.

- Request conflict of interest returns from all staff annually by which they declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest that they have.

- This is accompanied by advice from HR Division on what may constitute a conflict of interest and how to avoid a conflict of interest in a Departmental setting

- Issue reminders up to the due date.

- Establish what staff members have not submitted a return by the due date and follow-up directly with them.

- Where staff members remain non-compliant after direct follow-up from HR Division refer their names to their Head of Division for action.

Ethics

DAFM Ethics returns process is in conjunction with SIPO and their deadline. HR Division issue a request to all staff for returns and provide an information note to staff informing them of their statutory obligations of staff in Designated Positions.

Similar procedures are in place for Ethics in relation to compliance. Reminders are issued and follow ups are performed to non-compliant staff.

COI and Ethics returns are made on a digital form and are recorded on a central database controlled by HR Division.

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is an independent statutory body established under the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992. It carries out its functions independently in accordance with this legislation and subsequent amendments to the Act. The Agency consists of a Director-General and five other Directors. A Deputy Director-General is appointed by the Agency from the Directors and the Director-General and Directors are appointed by Government in accordance the procedures set out in the EPA Act 1992. The EPA licenses, regulates and controls activities for the purposes of environmental protection. The Director-General, Directors and other members of the EPA are subject to a declaration of interests in relation to property interests, business dealing regarding land, or relevant professional or business dealings.

The EPA has a comprehensive Corporate Governance framework and is subject to external oversight in the execution of its statutory functions. The effectiveness of its structures are subjected to regular external review by internal and external auditors, including the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG); external review bodies, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and Committees, such as the EPA's Audit and Risk Committee.

The MARA is an independent statutory body established under the MAP act. It carries out its functions independently in accordance with this legislation and subsequent amendments to the Act, reporting to its Board. It must also comply and demonstrate compliance with the Code of Governance for State bodies and other corporate requirements as set out in the Act, including through MARAs Audit and Risk Committee and the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG); to ensure transparency in the authorisation, compliance and enforcement systems all communication between an applicant and MARA is by way of formal notice/communication only.

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

The Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) was a pathway for non-EEA nationals to secure immigration permission to Ireland on the basis of long-term investment of a sum of money in a project that has been approved for that purpose by the Department of Justice and other Government stakeholders. The Programme was introduced in 2012 when the struggling Irish economy needed investment. The Government closed the Immigrant Investor Programme to further applications on 15 February 2023 as it had fulfilled its purpose and was no longer considered a good fit for the needs of a thriving economy and society. Arrangements in relation to the orderly winding down of the Programme have been put in place. Given the volume of applications on hand, it is expected to take a number of years to process all remaining applications to final decision.

All IIP investor applications are subject to an enhanced due diligence process which includes Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Know Your Client (KYC), Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) and Sanction checks. As part of the application process, the Department undertakes a comprehensive examination of the sources of proposed funding and requires significant supporting documentation attesting to the source of the funds and appropriate independent verification of documentation from suitably qualified legal advisors in the relevant jurisdictions. Additionally, the Department engages in data sharing with the Revenue Commissioners in accordance with the OECD common reporting standards. All IIP project applications are submitted to an independent Evaluation Committee for consideration and recommendation, and both project and investor applications are submitted to the Minister for a decision. The Evaluation Committee comprises key officials from the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Department of Finance, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland who have appropriate corporate expertise in this area. The Department continues to monitor all IIP projects going forward for delivery and compliance with IIP requirements.

Department of Health

The Department of Health is a civil service department that acts on behalf of the Minister for Health to aid in the delivery, regulation, and oversight of health services in Ireland. There are 19 state bodies under the aegis of the Department of Health. The Department works with its aegis bodies, together with a wide range of other stakeholders, to deliver health and social care services to the people of Ireland on an equal basis, subject to clinical need.

Under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016), state bodies are required to confirm to the Minister that they comply with all provisions in the Code. State bodies under the Department of Health are subject to a number of measures which uphold accountability, integrity, and transparency, including but not limited to, the requirement to comply with legal and regulatory obligations, parliamentary questions (PQ) process, ethics returns, and audits by the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General. Furthermore, State bodies are governed by a Board and a comprehensive oversight process via the Department of Health.

All procurement within the Department must be carried out in compliance with relevant national and EU policy and legislation, DPER guidelines on public procurement and the further summary guidance for this Department set out in this Departments Procurement Policy which is available to all staff in Healthnet. Staff in the Department with any role in respect of procurement should be familiar with all these requirements.

Furthermore, all procurement carried out by the Department is governed by the following key principles:

- the achievement of best value-for-money
- compliance with EU and National Law and National guidelines
- the maximum use of centrally established framework agreements
- to promote an increasing sustainable approach to procurement activities in terms of environment, social and financial considerations within applicable legislative constraints.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Section 587 and 588 of the Planning and Development Act 2024, introduce procedures to deal with "spurious" planning submissions, appeals and JRs. Section 587 prohibits requesting payment in consideration of not opposing a development. A person shall not request a payment in request of agreeing not to make a submission or observation on an application, appealing an application or taking a judicial review or to withdraw such submission/observation, appeal or judicial review and to do so would be an offence.

The High Court may give a direction to a planning authority or the An Coimisiún Pleanála to disregard a submission or observation and may direct An Coimisiún Pleanála to dismiss an appeal where it is satisfied that it was made for the purpose of receiving payment.

Section 588 provides that a submission or observation on a planning application or an appeal of a planning application must be accompanied by a statutory declaration stating that it is not being done for the purposes of delaying a development, or for receiving a payment. A similar declaration must be made when taking a judicial review. A declaration must also be made when withdrawing a submission/observation, appeal or judicial review. It is an offence to submit a false declaration.

In the Planning And development Act 2024, Conflict of Interest Prevention Section 523 deals with declarations of interest for An Coimisiún Pleanála and section 524 outlines offences in relation to such. Section 561 deals with the prohibition on disclosure of information relating to functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator. Section 571 deals with the duty of a planning body to be independent and impartial. Section 572 and 574 deal with codes of conducts and disclosure of beneficial interests for planning authorities. Section 586 also sets a limitation on Ministerial power.

Office of the Planning Regulator

The Office of the Planning Regulator, also known as the OPR, is an independent public body which was established on 3 April 2019 in line with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The Act sets out the OPR's mandate, functions and powers.

The OPR's three main statutory functions, in summary are:

1. Evaluation of Statutory Plans - Responsibility for the independent assessment of all local authority forward planning and regional assembly forward planning, including development plans, local area plans and regional spatial and economic strategies;
2. Planning Reviews and Examinations - Reviewing the organisation, systems and procedures used by any planning authority, including An Bord Pleanála, in the performance of any of their planning functions under the Act;
3. Education, Training and Research - Conducting national education and training programmes for members and staff of planning authorities and regional assemblies in relation to proper planning and sustainable development; and also conducting research on matters relevant to the OPR's functions and such other matters as may be requested by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (the Minister)

The OPR exists to ensure the quality of Ireland's planning process is founded upon the implementation of agreed policies and that the delivery of planning functions is efficient, effective, outcome focused and participative.

One of the core functions of the OPR is to undertake the independent evaluation of statutory plans to ensure that such plans under preparation are consistent with national and regional planning policy and legislation, as required by the Act.

* Recommendations are made by the OPR on matters considered to constitute a potential material breach of legislative or policy requirements and which may affect the co-ordination of national, regional and local planning requirements.

Topic: Anti-corruption repressive measures

26. *The legal framework on the criminalisation and sanctions for corruption and related offences, including foreign bribery.*

No update on the criminal legal framework on the criminalisation and sanctions for corruption and related offences, including foreign bribery. There has been no amending legislation in 2025.

27. Anti-corruption repressive measures

Official data on the number of investigations, prosecutions, final judgments, and the application of sanctions for corruption offences (differentiated by offence if possible). Please indicate whether the cases: involve legal persons; are related to the implementation of EU or national funds; involve high level corruption. Please indicate which data is publicly available and how policy-making is informed by the data.

Note: Please include, if available the number of (data since 2022 or latest available data): indictments; first instance convictions, first instance acquittals; final convictions; final acquittals; other outcomes (final) (i.e. excluding convictions and acquittals); cases adjudicated (final); imprisonment / custodial sentences through final convictions; suspended custodial sentences through final convictions; pending cases at the end of the reference year.

Note: For MS participating in the EPPO, data on cases related to EU funds does not encompass investigations and prosecutions carried out by the EPPO.

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

For the referenced years sought, there are 18 ongoing investigations and 16 investigations that have been closed. One of these cases concerns the implementation of EU funds, and all cases involve natural persons, with two cases involving Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs). This information is publicly available through published reports such as Publications - European Commission.

In terms of prosecutions, two cases have been initiated, resulting in one final judgment. No sanctions have been applied for corruption offences. There are two indictments, but no first-instance convictions or acquittals, and no final convictions or acquittals. One case was withdrawn by the Director of Public Prosecutions as a final outcome. There have been no custodial or suspended sentences imposed through final convictions. At the close of the reference year, one case remains pending, currently being dealt with before the courts.

Policy development in this area is undertaken by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

The table relates to investigations carried out by Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation (GNBCI) in the reference period, i.e. 2022 – 2025.

Case No.	Case Status	Summary of Case	Legal Person(s)	Related to EU or National Funds	Involves High Level Corruption	Data Publicly Available
1	Conviction	A number of foreign nationals fraudulently procured Irish passports by false pretences. This fraud was allegedly facilitated by a public servant. An investigation resulted in the conviction of thirteen (13) persons, including the public servant, for offences under the Passports Act, 2008 and Theft and Fraud Offences Act, 2001. A range of sanctions were imposed on the convicted persons, from imprisonment to Probation.	Yes	No	No	Yes
2	Conviction	A serving police officer corruptly obtained monies from at least 33 members of the public by charging them fees for carrying out licensing duties he was involved in. The police officer was convicted of offences of Corruption and Deception and sentenced to 3.5 years imprisonment.	Yes	National funds	Yes	Yes
3	Conviction	Three persons convicted in a case where they were involved in fraudulently obtaining genuine passports using false identities. It is alleged that a police officer played a role in facilitating this fraud. One of the convicted persons was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment; the second to 16 months imprisonment; and the	Yes	No	No	Yes

		third was given a suspended 2-year prison sentence. The police officer and three other persons are awaiting trial for their alleged involvement in these offences.				
4	Conviction	One person was convicted of obtaining confidential personal data from a police officer. This person was given a suspended 12-month prison sentence. The police officer and a third person have also been charged with related offences and are awaiting trial.	Yes	No	No	Yes
5	Conviction	One person was convicted of corruptly making payments to a civilian police employee in order to obtain confidential information from a police IT system. This person was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment. The civilian police employee was convicted of corruption in 2022 and sentenced to 2.5 years imprisonment.	Yes	No	No	Yes
6	Prosecution	A serving police officer allegedly sought and received a significant payment in exchange for confidential information concerning an investigation that was being carried out by the Criminal Assets Bureau. The police officer and the person who allegedly made the payment to him have been charged with	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

		corruption and are awaiting trial.				
7	Prosecution	A senior police officer and four other police officers are charged with Perverting the Course of Justice in relation to a number of instances wherein the prosecution of offences was not pursued in accordance with law. The accused persons are awaiting trial in respect of these charges.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
8	Prosecution	Three serving police officers are charged with Perverting the Course of Justice in relation to a number of instances wherein the prosecution of offences were not pursued in accordance with law. The accused persons are awaiting trial in respect of these charges.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
9	Prosecution	It is alleged that a police officer sought payments in return for providing confidential information relating to police matters. The police officer and a person who allegedly facilitated the payments to him have both been charged with a number of counts of Corruption and are awaiting trial.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
10	Investigation	It is alleged that three police office officers corruptly provided confidential information relating to police matters to an organised crime group. A file is with the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide if	Yes	No	Yes	**No**

		a prosecution should ensue.				

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Data provided in previous reports relates to previous years. We have set out some further data available in relation to 2025.

Currently, our records show that 8 corruption charges were directed by the ODPP in 2025, however, as indicated previously, this office often prosecutes alternative offences such as perverting the course of justice or offences under the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001. Our current case management system does not have capacity to collect this data. We are currently in the process of procuring a new case management system with improved data capture capabilities.

In 2025, the Special Financial Unit and Garda Corruption Unit in the office have prosecuted a number of Gardai (Irish Police) for offences related to corruption. We have outlined some details in relation to these cases below. Further trials are listed in 2026 for police corruption.

Case 1 - DPP v EON and 4 others (35 counts of corruption related offences)
Facts: All five accused are members of An Garda Síochána (the Irish Police Force). In 2018 A superintendent (high ranking member of the police force) is alleged to have communicated with other members of the force with the intention of perverting the course of justice in relation to motorists known to him by instructing that summons for driving offences such as speeding, holding a mobile phone, not wearing a seat belt etc. be withdrawn in court and therefore not prosecuted.

All accused are currently being prosecuted for the offence of perverting the course of justice, contrary to common law.

This trial started on 10 November and is due to complete in January 2026. The matter took time to get to trial because the main accused appealed to the Supreme Court a Court of Appeal decision admitting inculpatory phone evidence into the case. This appeal was unsuccessful.

Case 2
A police officer is due to stand trial in January charged with a number of offences under the Corruption Act 2018. The allegations arise from surveillance evidence which details the payment of a significant sum of money to the accused in return for investigative information in relation to a suspect.

Is data publicly available?
These cases have been widely reported on by the media.

How is policy making informed by the data?
The SFCU sits on the Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption (See response to Q 29). The function of the group is to make proposals to Government on strategic and policy responses to corruption. At the moment, there are insufficient corruption cases directed on to generate meaningful data to shape policy.

The importance of accurate data is something that the Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption has prioritised in its first draft Strategy. This is due to be finalised in early 2025. A public consultation (inviting written submissions, as well as a later in-person event) in relation to the Strategy was organised by the Department of Justice in late 2024. A member of the ODPP Serious Financial Crime Unit (SFCU) attended this event.

29. Information on effectiveness of criminal and non-criminal measures and of sanctions (e.g. recovery measures and administrative sanctions) on both public and private offenders.

The **Garda National Economic Crime Bureau** wishes to advise as follows in relation to Question 29:

An Garda Síochána considers Ireland's anti-corruption repressive measures to be effective, and proportionate. An Garda Síochána plays a central role in the detection, investigation, and enforcement of corruption-related offences in Ireland. Corruption offences are treated as serious criminal matters, whether committed by public officials or private sector actors, and are addressed through a combination of criminal sanctions and asset recovery measures.

The principal legal framework is the Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Act 2018 as amended, which consolidated and modernised Ireland's corruption laws. The Act criminalises:

- Active and passive corruption
- Active and passive trading in influence
- Corruption in relation to office, employment, position or business
- Giving gift, consideration or advantage that may be used to facilitate offence under this Act
- Creating or using false document
- Intimidation
- Corruption occurring partly in State
- Corruption occurring outside State
- Offences under this Act and bodies corporate

The Act applies to natural and legal persons, enabling the prosecution of companies as well as individuals, and provides for extraterritorial jurisdiction, strengthening Ireland's capacity to respond to cross-border corruption.

Upon conviction, sanctions include:

- Imprisonment of up to 10 years,
- Unlimited fines,
- Mandatory forfeiture of bribes or corrupt gains.

From a policing perspective, these penalties are considered effective and proportionate, acting as a credible deterrent, particularly when combined with asset seizure and confiscation powers. Garda investigations routinely target both the corrupt act and the financial benefit derived, reinforcing the punitive and preventive impact of prosecutions.

The principal act also provides for the seizure of seizure of suspected bribes. Additional legislative powers available to assist with the seizure and forfeiture provisions are also available under:

- The Criminal Justice Act 1994, and
- The Proceeds of Crime Act 1996.

The **Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation** wishes to advise as follows in relation to Question 29:

In respect of cases of corruption that are subject to criminal investigation, the provisions of Section 17 of the Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Act, 2018 have proved to be effective with regard to sanctions and recovery measures. In addition to providing for penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment and an unlimited fine for persons convicted of certain offences of corruption under the Act, Section 17 also provides for "the forfeiture of any gift, consideration or advantage accepted or obtained in connection with the offence or, in the alternative, the forfeiture of land, cash or other property of an equivalent value to such gift, consideration or advantage".

Additionally, Section 17(4) provides that "the court in imposing sentence on the person for the offence concerned may order the forfeiture of any office, position or employment as a relevant Irish official held or occupied by that person." The Court can make a further order "prohibiting the person from seeking to hold or occupy any office, position or employment as an Irish official… for a specified period not exceeding 10 years".

These provisions were put into effect in respect of case #2 outlined below, wherein the Court made an Order under Section 17(4) of the Act, which led to the dismissal of the convicted person from An Garda Síochána. The Court further ordered that the convicted person compensate the victims from whom he corruptly took monies.

Case No.	Case Status	Summary of Case	Legal Person(s)	Related to EU or National Funds	Involves High Level Corruption	Data Publicly Available
2	Conviction	A serving police officer corruptly obtained monies from at least 33 members of the public by charging them fees for carrying out licensing duties he was involved in. The police officer was convicted of offences of Corruption and Deception and sentenced to 3.5 years imprisonment.	Yes	National funds	Yes	Yes

Other - Any other significant developments since January 2025 falling under the type of information outlined in section II.

The ODPP is an active member of the Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption. The Council was established by Irish Government in 2022 with a mandate to provide strategic and policy advice, proposals and recommendations relating to economic crime and corruption to the Government.

One of the principal tasks of the Council is to draft a multi-annual strategy for combatting economic crime and corruption, together with an accompanying action plan.

While the ODPP is an independent office per the terms of the 1974 Act and therefore does not have a legislative role, the ODPP provided recommendations and input on a cross organisational basis for the Council. The ODPP has provided detailed input on a regular basis into the legislative process when invited by the Dept. of Justice to do so and also provides practical insights into prosecutorial issues that are encountered in prosecuting complex financial criminal offences.

Since January 2025 the ODPP has identified its top priorities for the Council's most recent recommendations, namely for:

1. The ratification of the Council of Europe the Conventions and Directives set out in the recommendations in short, all EU measures that have an impact on the detection, investigation and prosecution of economic crime and corruption, including the seizing of assets. Included in this is the setting up of a Asset Management Office.
2. A review Ireland's corporate liability framework – The is a priority as it impacts on Ireland's obligations under EU Conventions.
3. A review of the Criminal Justice Act 1994 – This in interconnected with 1 above.

III. Media Pluralism and Media Freedom

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding Media Pluralism and Media Freedom.

30: Measures taken to ensure the independence, enforcement powers and adequacy of resources (financial, human and technical) of media regulatory authorities and bodies

<u>Independence</u>
Section 8 of the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Act, as required by Article 30(1) of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), provides that Coimisiún na Meán, formally established under the OSMR Act, is independent in the performance of its functions under the legislation.

On 17 February 2024, the Government designated An Coimisiún as Ireland's Digital Services Coordinator under the Digital Services Act. The implementing legislation in Ireland provides, at Section 8, that An Coimisiún is independent in the performance of its functions as part of this role.
On 30 November 2023, through secondary legislation, Coimisiún na Meán was designated as a competent authority under the Terrorist Content Online Regulation. Again, under this secondary legislation, An Coimisiún is independent in the exercise of its related functions.

<u>Enforcement Powers</u>
The Acts referred to above provide for a range of investigative and enforcement powers for Coimisiún na Meán, including to audit certain services, require the provision of information and periodic reports, appoint authorised officers to investigate and report in cases of suspected non-compliance and to impose financial sanction of between 4% and 10% of turnover or up to €20 million, in cases of non-compliance, depending on which legislation is not being complied with.
Under the OSMR Act, An Coimisiún may also, under certain circumstances, seek to hold senior managers within certain designated services criminally liable and can also seek court approval to block access to a service in Ireland.

<u>Adequacy of Resources</u>
In 2023, funding of €10.5 million was provided to Coimisiún na Meán with sanction to bring its staffing from 44 to 164, an additional 120 posts. In 2024, €11.9 million was provided to support the implementation of An Coimisiún's functions and An Coimisiún further increased its staffing level to approximately 200. In 2025, Coimisiún na Meán received sanction to increase its staffing complement to 303, giving it additional capacity to meet its legislative responsibilities. From 2025, An Coimisiún is funded by way of levy on regulated services across its range of functions, ensuring that resources are sufficient to enable the exercise of its functions.

31: Conditions and procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the head / members of the collegiate body of media regulatory authorities and bodies

No relevant updates.

32: Existence and functions of media councils or other self-regulatory bodies

No relevant updates.

Safeguards against government or political interference and transparency and concentration of media ownership

33: Measures taken to ensure the fair and transparent allocation of state advertising

The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), including Article 25 on state advertising, will be implemented in Ireland primarily through the Media Regulation Bill. The Bill, which was approved by Government in July 2025, is in the final stages of drafting and is expected to be published in early 2026.

34: Safeguards against state / political interference, in particular:

- ***safeguards to ensure editorial independence of media (private and public)***

- ***specific safeguards for the independence of heads of management and members of the governing boards of public service media (e.g. related to appointment, dismissal), safeguards for their financial and operational independence (e.g. related to reporting obligations and the allocation of resources) and safeguards for plurality of information and opinions***

- ***information on specific legal provisions and procedures applying to media service providers, including as regards granting/renewal/termination of licences, company operation, capital entry requirements, concentration, and corporate governance***

Safeguards to ensure editorial independence of public service media
As confirmed in the last update, a legislative proposal to *inter alia* enhance safeguards for the independence of public service media and strengthen the governance of public service media (RTÉ and TG4) in Ireland is going through the legislative process.
The revised General Scheme of the Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill, which will give effect to these reforms, was submitted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport for pre-legislative scrutiny. Following the commencement of pre-legislative scrutiny, the Joint Committee held oral hearings from May to July 2025, hearing from the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, Coimisiún na Meán (the media regulator), industry, NGOs and other stakeholders. Subsequently, on 17 September 2025, the Committee published a pre-legislative scrutiny report containing 85 recommendations. Following receipt of this report, the legislation is currently being finalised with to view to Government approval and subsequent publication of the Bill in Q2 2026.

Information on specific legal provisions and procedures applying to media service providers, as regards concentration
Part 3A of the Competition Act 2002 provides the framework for the assessment of media mergers. Under the current framework the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport is responsible for the assessment of media mergers and may block a merger on media plurality grounds. The proposed Media Regulation Bill will amend the Competition Act to bring Ireland's media merger regime in line with the requirements under EMFA. In particular, it will transfer responsibility for the assessment of media mergers from the Minister to Coimisiún na Meán. The Bill, which was approved by Government in July 2025, is in the final stages of drafting and is expected to be published in early 2026.

35: Transparency of media ownership and public availability of media ownership information, including on direct, indirect and beneficial owners

As noted in previous updates, Coimisiún na Meán currently funds a media ownership database (mediaownership.ie). However, the Media Regulation Bill will establish a statutory obligation for Coimisiún na Meán to maintain such a database in line with the requirements of Article 6(2) of EMFA. The Bill, which was approved by Government in July 2025, is in the final stages of drafting and is expected to be published in early 2026.

Framework for journalists' protection, transparency and access to documents

36: Rules and practices guaranteeing journalists' independence and safety, including as regards protection of journalistic sources and communications, referring also, if applicable, to follow-up given to alerts lodged with the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists.

No relevant updates.

37: Law enforcement capacity, including during protests and demonstrations, to ensure journalists' safety and to investigate attacks on journalists

No relevant updates.

38: Access to information and public documents by public at large and journalists (incl. transparency authorities where they exist, procedures, costs/fees, timeframes, administrative/judicial review of decisions, execution of decisions by public authorities, possible obstacles related to the classification of information)

Department of Culture, Communications and Sports

No relevant updates.

Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

Access to information and public documents is legislated for by the Freedom of Information Act 2014. The Act covers approximately 450 bodies and provides that new public bodies, as they are established, will automatically be subject to the legislation.

The FOI mechanism allows any interested party to make a request for any record they believe to be held by a public body covered by the legislation. There is no obligation to state a reason or interest to justify release, and in general, the motive of the requester or any reasons they choose to give for making the request cannot be a basis for refusal.

Where a valid FOI request is submitted, it must be responded to within four weeks, subject to extension in limited circumstances. Ireland does not operate a system of classification of documents. However, release under FOI is subject to exemptions set out in the legislation, which in the public interest protect the interests of third parties in relation to confidential, personal and commercially sensitive information, as well as providing necessary protections for the work of public bodies.

Where a requester is dissatisfied with the decision they receive, they are entitled to seek a review. The first stage is internal to the body concerned, which involves the consideration of the decision by another official at a higher level and a further formal decision within three weeks. If the requester remains dissatisfied following internal review, they may seek an independent review by the Information Commissioner. In either case, there is no obligation on the requester to make any arguments or provide any reasons that the decision should be changed. In the case of review by the Commissioner, the onus falls entirely on the body to justify its decision to his satisfaction.

The Commissioner is fully independent in the performance of his functions both by law and in practice. Decisions of the Commissioner are binding on the body concerned unless appealed to the High Court. There have been no instances of non-compliance with a decision of the Commissioner in the time that the current legislation has been in operation.

Since 2014 no application fee has applied to any first instance FOI request. Only the process of searching for and retrieving records can be charged for. The legislation sets out a clear and structured process for calculating and applying this fee where required, with secondary legislation specifying the rates that can be charged, including a strict limit of €20 per hour for staff time.

No fee applies to any request for personal information, or any other request where the process of identifying and gathering relevant records takes less than five hours as a rule of thumb. These two scenarios account for most FOI requests in most given years.
In most cases where a requester seeks a clearly defined and discrete set of records, they would not expect to pay any fee in the first instance. In addition, public bodies are obliged under the legislation to assist requesters to re-frame their requests in a more precise way such that they will not attract a fee if one is found to apply in the first instance.

In general, search and retrieval fees will only apply in cases where a particularly resource-intensive request has been submitted and can usually be reduced or eliminated by submitting a more focused request or brought before the Information Commissioner free of charge for an independent review if it is felt the approach taken by the public body is unreasonable.

Modest application fees of €30 and €50 apply to the two review stages of an FOI decision for material that is not personal to the requester. This applies in only a limited number of cases. In general, internal reviews tend to be sought in 3-4% of cases annually, while reviews by the Information Commissioner are sought in 1-2% of cases. No application fee applies to reviews regarding personal information relating to the requester, which can be estimated as accounting for about half of review applications.

The FOI legislation makes it mandatory for public bodies to create a "publication scheme" and publish information in relation to their functions and procedures, as well as other designated classes of information relating to procurement, finances, and the outcomes of previous FOI requests.
Aside from ensuring general administrative transparency through enabling access to records and requiring publication in appropriate instances, the legislation additionally creates a specific right to seek a statement of reasons for an administrative decision affecting an individual.

Although there is scope for improvement and modernisation, overall, the Freedom of Information (FOI) system is operating well, providing a solid footing from which to move forward. The legislation has been in place since 1997. The latest update in 2014 widened the scope of FOI to take in approximately 450 bodies. Following these reforms, FOI usage expanded dramatically, with the annual number of requests almost doubling from 2014 to a peak of 41,658 requests received by public bodies in 2024.

A further comprehensive review of the legislation is almost complete. Almost 2,400 responses have been received to different elements of the review. The purpose of the review is to strengthen the existing statutory framework and to further enhance the operation of transparency in the public service. The final review report is intended to be presented to Government for consideration in 2026.

While the recommendations have not been finalised, the main themes emerging from the review are:

a) The need for a more coherent approach to information governance and access
b) The need to supplement formal freedom of information requests, and
c) The need for improvements to the request process.

39: Lawsuits (incl. SLAPPs - strategic lawsuits against public participation) and convictions against journalists (incl. defamation cases) and measures taken to safeguard against manifestly unfounded and abusive lawsuits

No relevant updates.

IV. *Other institutional issues related to checks and balances*

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding the system of checks and balances.

Questions 40 and 41

The Oireachtas may be approached separately by the Commission directly for their input to this question

42. The process for preparing and enacting laws

Safeguards to ensure legal certainty, the stability of the legal framework and non-discrimination

No updates

43. The process for preparing and enacting laws

Rules and application of states of emergency (or analogous regimes), including judicial review and parliamentary oversight.

<u>Expression of Government Intent to Repeal the Offences Against the State Acts and Special Criminal Court</u>:
In May 2025, Minister for Justice Home Affairs and Migration, Jim O'Callaghan, informed Government of his acceptance of the recommendations of the majority report of the Independent Review of the Offences Against the State Acts. These recommendations include repealing the Offences Against the State Acts, and the Special Criminal Court. However, they also include recommendations to re-enact select elements of the Offences against the State Acts in a modern legislative framework and to establish a new non-jury court to try serious criminal offences.

Meanwhile, the Offences Against the State Act 1939, providing for the establishment of Special Criminal Courts, remains in force and applicable. Furthermore, the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act, 2009, both considered emergency legislation were due to lapse on the 29th of June 2025. However, their operation was renewed until 29 June 2026 by a resolution passed by each House of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) in June 2025.

The Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act, 2009 provides for additional measures targeted at combating organised crime including the possibility for the Special Criminal Courts to hear trials for certain serious, organised crime offences under Part 7 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006. These offences include directing a criminal organisation, participating in or contributing to the activities of a criminal organisation and committing an offence for a criminal organisation. The Offences against the State (Amendment) Act 1998, enacted in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing, contains a number of anti-terrorism offences including the offences of directing an unlawful organisation, training persons in the making and use of firearms, and withholding of information.

<u>The Office of the Independent Examiner of Security Legislation:</u>
Part 7 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, providing for the establishment of the Office of the Independent Examiner of Security Legislation, came into force, by order, on 2 April, 2025. According to section 234(2)(a) one of the primary functions of the holder of the Office of the Independent Examiner of Security Legislation is to "keep under review the operation and effectiveness of security legislation". This review

includes examining whether the security legislation is effective and proportionate in its objectives, necessary and contains sufficient safeguards for the protection of human rights. Security legislation is defined as including emergency legislation such as the Offences against the State Acts 1939 to 1998.

Plan for Emergency Planning Legislation:
The Government intends to enact emergency planning powers enabling the Government to designate certain infrastructure projects as projects of "national importance" to fast-track them through development. Additionally, the government intends to reform the judicial review of planning decisions. For instance, only people who are directly impacted by a proposed project may apply for the judicial review of that project. These changes are intended to be made through the enactment of a Critical Infrastructure Bill and Emergency Powers Legislation and were outlined in early December in the following report: Accelerating Infrastructure - Report and Action Plan

44. The process for preparing and enacting laws

Regime for constitutional review of laws

On 6 January 2026, the General Scheme of the Civil Reform Bill, to reform the Judicial Review mechanism and streamline other key courts processes, was published. An application for Judicial Review may challenge the constitutionality of a decision. This bill will place Judicial Review on a statutory footing with a public interest test at the centre of the process. This Bill will also introduce a new regime for the production of documents.

45-46 Independent authorities

No updates

47 Independent Authorities

Safeguards to ensure the effective independence of supervisory and regulatory authorities with a direct impact on economic operators such as national economic oversight, enforcement and competition authorities.

"Section 9(5) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act') states that, subject to relevant statutory provisions, the CCPC "shall be independent in the performance of its functions". Section 20 of the 2014 Act states that the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment may issue a direction to the CCPC requiring it to comply with such policies of the Government as are specified in the direction. However, this provision excludes a number of functions of the CCPC from the scope of the direction, including the functions to investigate breaches of competition and consumer protection law and to make determinations in respect of mergers or acquisitions.

We have not experienced any challenges in regard to the independence of the organisation or inappropriate influence being exercised in respect of the appointment of the Chairperson (head of authority). The experience of the CCPC is that its independence is generally respected. Indeed, the 2025 Rule of Law Report found that 75% of companies perceive the level of independence of the CCPC as very or fairly good."

Topic: Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

48. Transparency of administrative decisions and sanctions (incl. their publication and rules on collection of related data)

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

This question relates to the Administrative Law branch of the legal system, dealing with government decision making bodies (tribunals, local authorities, government agencies). Unlike other member states, Ireland does not have an administrative law branch of their legal system.

Although it is not currently possible to report on decisions on questions of administrative law as a result, discussions have begun on how these cases can be captured and monitored in the future.

Officials from the Courts Service and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (DJHAM) and officials from the (Council of Europe) European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) in late 2025 to confirm that it is our intention to be able to report on Administrative Law matters in the future, and that we are not in a position to do so as yet – our systems cannot produce verifiable data on such cases.

Internal discussions have also taken place within the Courts Service, looking at how we might in the future be able to report on Administrative Law case in the future.

<u>Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation</u>

Apart from the powers of the Courts to annul or amend any administrative decision on foot of judicial review, the Office of the Ombudsman, established under the Ombudsman Act 1980, has a role in testing administrative decisions.

The Ombudsman examines complaints from members of the public who believe they have been unfairly treated by certain public service providers.

The Ombudsman also examines complaints about failures by public bodies to provide accessible buildings, services and information, as required under Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005.

The Ombudsman is independent and provides a free public service that is open and accountable.

Investigation of any relevant matter by the Ombudsman's Office will involve inter alia a full clarification and justification of the basis on which relevant administrative decision(s) have been taken.

49. Judicial Review of administrative decisions - short description of the general regime (in particular competent court, scope, suspensive effect, interim measures, and any applicable specific rules or derogations from the general regime of judicial review).

A General Scheme for a Civil Reform Bill was published in December 2025 and includes proposals to put the judicial review process on a statutory basis. A copy of the draft General Scheme is available here.

50. Judicial Review of administrative decisions – Rules and practices related to the application by all courts, including constitutional jurisdictions of the preliminary ruling procedure (Art 267 TFEU)

<u>Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration</u>

No practice directions or Rules of Court relating to the preliminary ruling procedure are in place in the Irish courts system. Typically, parties in a case may request a judge to make a reference for a preliminary ruling in the parties' pleadings. Alternatively, a judge may decide based on his or her hearing of the pleadings that a reference for a preliminary ruling is warranted and will request submissions from the parties on this subject. Subsequently, the judge will write and publish his or her reference for a preliminary ruling and then await a response from the CJEU before issuing a judgment on the case.

A decision by a court to refer a question to the CJEU under Art. 267 may not be appealed to a higher court (*Campus Oil Ltd v. Minister for Industry and Energy* [1983] I.R. 82, and more recently, *Data Protection Commissioner v. Facebook Ireland* [2018] IEHC 236).

Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

Ireland provides effective non-judicial safeguards against administrative decisions in the IP field through structured administrative review, opposition, and appeal mechanisms available within the Intellectual Property Office of Ireland or through the courts.

While access to judicial review remains fully available, the key challenges here are not related to legal availability but to cost, duration, and court capacity, which are being addressed in line with the broader justice reforms noted in the Rule of Law Report.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

One of the functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator, (OPR) established in 2019 is to review the organisation, systems and procedures used by any planning authority, including An Coimisiún Planeála, in the performance of any of their planning functions.

51. Implementation of Final Judgments by the public administration and State institutions to supranational judgments, including decisions from the ECHR as well as available remedies in case of non-implementation

In the Irish legal system, the court is not, in general, involved in the enforcement of a court order. Where there is default in giving effect to a court order by a party against whom a court order is made, enforcement is primarily a matter for the successful party.

52 - 53 Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

No updates

54 The enabling framework for civil society

Measures regarding the framework for civil society organisations and human rights defenders (e.g. legal framework and its application in practice incl. registration, transparency and dissolution rules)

Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: the five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland: 2019-2024 set out a long-term vision for our communities in Ireland. A successor strategy is in development and is due for publication in Q3 2026.

Outputs from the Strategy, include
The adoption by government in 2022 of a set of agreed Values and Principles, co-developed with representatives of the Community and Voluntary sector are a key achievement of the five-year Strategy, designed for use by all Government Departments and Agencies as a basis for their collaboration and partnership working with the Community and Voluntary Sector in the pursuit of the best outcomes achievable.

A monitoring report on the application of the “Values and Principles” was published in November 2023 and is available on gov.ie

In order to enhance and facilitate dialogue between the State and Community and Voluntary sector, the National Civic Forum for dialogue with the community and voluntary sector was developed has taken place annually since 2022, with approximately 100 attendees from across the State and C&V sector attending the 2025 Forum. Post event reports are available on gov.ie

55. The enabling framework for civil society

Rules and practices having an impact on the effective operation and safety of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. This includes measures to protect them from attacks – verbal, physical or on-line –, intimidation, legal threats incl. SLAPPs, negative narratives or smear campaigns, measures capable of affecting the public perception of civil society organisations, etc. It also includes measures to monitor threats or attacks and dedicated support services, as well as available remedies.

No updates

56. The enabling framework for civil society

Organisation of financial support for civil society organisations and human rights defenders (e.g. framework to ensure access to funding, and for financial viability, taxation/incentive/donation systems, measures to ensure a fair distribution of funding)

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

In 2025, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage allocated a budget of €1 million to implement a range of measures aimed at promoting increased participation amongst women and diverse candidates in local democracy.

This budget is used to fund key civil society partners (who undertake vital training and capacity building work among potential candidates), and initiatives to support gender balance and the inclusion of under-represented groups in local authorities and political parties.

Funding was also offered to local authorities to support the upgrade of Council chambers for the running of hybrid meetings, allowing for more flexible participation in local democracy, especially for those with caring responsibilities.

Q. 56 The enabling framework for civil society

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Part 9 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 facilitates the introduction measures to reduce the high costs associated with planning judicial reviews, including a scale of fees for legal costs arising from these proceedings as well as an Environmental Legal Cost Mechanism, to ensure that the costs to applicants taking a Judicial Review will not be prohibitively expensive, in line with Ireland’s commitments under the Aarhus Convention.

Both cost provisions will be regulated through secondary legislation currently being progressed by the Minister for the Climate, Energy and the Environment. A public consultation will commence shortly on the scale of fees.

The introduction of a scale of fees will reduce costs for all parties in what is acknowledged to be an extremely high cost legal landscape. These reforms will improve access to justice and regularise judicial review costs for all parties.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Ireland supports Transparency International’s Secretariat in its Holding Power to Account – A Global Strategy Against Corruption 2021-2030. In this global programme, Transparency International’s Secretariat leads evidence-based global advocacy campaigns and support reforms on a variety of cross-cutting anti-corruption themes, while channelling the collective power of the TI Movement (comprised of independent national Chapters and partners in over 100 countries including Ireland). The work contributes to advancing institutional checks and balances against the concentration of power; accelerating the enforcement of anti-corruption standards for accountability; and activating social oversight to protect the common good. Specific areas of intervention include fostering a culture of the rule of law by expanding civic space for accountability and building community leadership against corruption.

Q. 57 Initiatives to foster a rule of law culture

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Rule of Law

The Planning and Development Act 2024 was enacted on 17 October 2024. The Bill was underpinned by a 15-month review led by the Attorney General, informed by dozens of key stakeholder voices in the planning arena; subject to an extensive three month pre-legislative scrutiny process and was been discussed for over 175 hours in the Dáil and Seanad. The Bill was reviewed and amended to ensure that it robustly aligns to our European and environmental obligations while also protecting public participation, which is a hallmark of our planning system.

It is important to note that Ireland has one of the most open and participative planning systems in Europe with significant opportunity, even for third parties, to engage with the planning process. All the rights contained in the Planning and Development Act 2000 are maintained in the Planning and Development Act 2024 whilst improvements to the planning judicial review processes will improve access to justice and lower costs, which can be prohibitively expensive.

The Planning and Development Act 2024 provides that both the National Planning Framework and National Planning Statements are subject to Government approval. Certain secondary legislation require Oireachtas approval before it can be made.

Development Plans and planning applications are subject to public observation and submissions.

Part 9 of the Act includes updated procedures for Judicial Review and can be as:

- Improvements to processes, which either have the potential to speed up or cut costs on planning judicial review;
- Clarification of language and parameters regarding standing; which both remove ambiguity; improve transparency in the system, whilst protecting rights defined in European law;
- Reduction of costs, both to the State and applicants, through the introduction of a Scale of Fees and the availability of an Environmental Legal Costs Financial Assistance Mechanism, which protects applicants from prohibitively expensive costs.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

In 2025, nine Irish Embassies provided support totalling €270,688 to 23 projects supporting the Rule of Law via local organisations in 11 countries under the In-Country Micro Projects Scheme of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Enlargement and European Fundamental Values (EEFV) Fund was established in 2024 in response to the renewed momentum in EU enlargement policy, and the ongoing trend of backsliding on fundamental values across Europe. The fund enables Ireland to enhance our influence and capacity to promote core values across the EU and the European neighbourhood, including support for the rule of law. In 2025, funding was awarded to 32 projects across 15 countries in Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe and the Caucasus. The grants for 2025 included 19 projects primarily supporting EU enlargement, and 13 projects primarily supporting European fundamental values (including 5 projects for the Council of Europe). A number of successful projects addressed both of the fund's primary objectives. Several projects relate to the wellbeing and rights of LGBTQI+ persons, which is often the first community targeted as part of the repression of fundamental values.

IPA PROGRAMME

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland has funded a three-year "Ireland for EU Enlargement" programme, which seeks to assist officials from EU candidate and potential candidate countries in aligning with EU standards over a three-year period by supporting capacity building across their public administrations. Recognising the central importance of adherence to the Rule of Law to the enlargement process, Ireland has included "justice, integrity, rule of law and governance" as one of the three learning pillars for officials participating in this programme.

DFAT was pleased to welcome two separate delegations of members of the Ukrainian judiciary in January and December 2025, as part of DFAT-supported study visits to develop relations between the Irish and Ukrainian judiciaries.

With funding from DFAT, the visits were organised and facilitated by the Irish Rule of Law International (IRLI) in cooperation with the EU Assistance Mission (EUAM) in Ukraine. The trips involved meetings with high-ranking members of the judiciary and academia from Ireland and Northern Ireland, including the Chief Justice and Lady Chief Justice in Dublin and Belfast respectively.

On 9 December, the delegation was hosted by the DFAT SG and the International Security Policy Director in Iveagh House, alongside colleagues from the Peace and Stability Unit, European Neighbourhood Unit and Legal Division. The discussion focused largely on the investigation and prosecution of war crimes in Ukraine, an area where Ireland (via DFAT as seconding authority) provides significant support to EUAM in the form of seconded experts with critical expertise.

Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

The 2020 Review of Structures and Strategies to Prevent, Investigate and Penalise Economic Crime and Corruption, led by James Hamilton, former Director of Public Prosecutions, recommended *inter alia* the establishment of an Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption.

The Advisory Council was established in 2022 and comprises 19 members and an independent Chairperson. Its role is to advise and make proposals to Government on strategic and policy responses to economic crime and corruption. One of its primary tasks has been to develop a multi-annual strategy to combat economic crime and corruption and an accompanying action plan. The multi-annual strategy is expected to be published in 2026. The Advisory Council also serves as an Irish 'centre of excellence', one which coordinates research and analysis, training, public education and awareness raising, and promotes best practice.

Both the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO) and the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation are represented on the Advisory Council and participating in the development of the multi-annual strategy and accompanying action plan.