

# 2025 Rule of Law Report - targeted stakeholder consultation

Fields marked with \* are mandatory.

## Introduction

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The annual Rule of Law Report lies at the centre of the Annual Rule of Law Cycle, which acts as a preventive tool, deepening multilateral dialogue and joint awareness of rule of law issues. So far, five editions of the Rule of Law Report have been published since 2020.

As every year, the Commission would like to invite the stakeholders to provide contributions to the 2025 Rule of Law Report. On the basis of these contributions and on-going developments, further targeted questions may be shared at a later stage of preparation of the 2025 Rule of Law Report, in particular in the context of country visits, or bilateral contacts.

The Commission invites stakeholders to provide contributions which include:

- (1) information on measures taken to implement the recommendations addressed to the Member State in the 2024 Rule of Law report, as well as developments with regard to the points raised in the respective country chapter and**
- (2) any other significant developments since January 2024<sup>[1]</sup> and up to the date of submission falling under the ‘type of information’ outlined below.**

The input should consist of a short summary, if possible in English, covering the areas referred to below. Legislation or other documents may be referenced with a link. Contributions should focus on significant developments since the last Rule of Law Report both as regards the legal framework and its implementation in practice.

If you would like to provide further specific **input related to the single market dimension in the Rule of Law report**, you can also respond to the additional targeted consultation available [here](#).

<sup>[1]</sup> Unless the information was already submitted in the input for the previous Rule of Law Reports.

## Type of information to be included:

Under each of the four pillars, the replies should include references to the following types of information:

### **A) Legislative developments**

- Newly adopted legislation
- legislative drafts currently discussed in Parliament
- legislative plans envisaged by the Government

## B) Policy developments

- Implementation of legislation
- evaluations, impact assessment, surveys
- white papers/strategies/actions plans/consultation processes
- follow-up to reports/recommendations of Council of Europe bodies or other international organisations
- important administrative measures
- generalised practices

## C) Developments related to the judiciary / independent authorities

- important case law by national courts
- important decision/opinions from independent bodies/authorities
- state of play on terms, nominations and expired mandates for high-level positions (e.g. Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Council for the Judiciary, Prosecutor General, heads of independent authorities included in the scope of the request for input[2])

## D) Any other relevant developments

- National authorities are free to add any further information, which they deem relevant; however, this should be short and to the point.

Please also indicate whether the developments reported are linked to the implementation of reforms and investments under the RRP, where applicable. To simplify your answers to the questionnaire, **if there are no developments, it is sufficient to indicate this** and the information covered in the contributions for the previous Rule of Law Reports does not need not be repeated.

[2] Such as: media regulatory authorities and bodies, national human rights institutions, equality bodies, ombudsman institutions, supreme audit institutions and, where they exist, transparency authorities.

## About you

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\* I am giving my contribution as

- ☐ Academic/research institution
- ☐ Business association
- ☒ Civil society organisation/NGO
- ☐ International organisation
- ☐ Judicial association or network
- ☐ Media organisation or association
- ☐ Public authority or network of public authorities

☐ Other

\* Organisation name

250 character(s) maximum

Oxygen for Democracy

Main Areas of Work

- ☒ Justice System
- ☒ Anti-corruption
- ☐ Media Pluralism
- ☒ Checks and Balances
- ☐ Other

Please insert an URL towards your organisation's main online presence or describe your organisation briefly:

500 character(s) maximum

<https://oxygono.org/en/>

Transparency register number

Check if your organisation is in the transparency register. It's a voluntary database for organisations seeking to influence EU decision-making

\* Country of origin

Please indicate the country of origin of your organisation

- ☐ Austria
- ☐ Belgium
- ☐ Bulgaria
- ☐ Croatia
- ☒ Cyprus
- ☐ Czechia
- ☐ Denmark
- ☐ Estonia
- ☐ Finland
- ☐ France
- ☐ Germany
- ☐ Greece
- ☐ Hungary
- ☐ Ireland
- ☐ Italy
- ☐ Latvia
- ☐ Lithuania
- ☐ Luxembourg
- ☐ Malta

- ☐ Netherlands
- ☐ Poland
- ☐ Portugal
- ☐ Romania
- ☐ Slovak Republic
- ☐ Slovenia
- ☐ Spain
- ☐ Sweden
- ☐ Other - please specify

First name

Surname

Email Address of the organisation

**\* Publication of your contribution and privacy settings**

You can choose whether you wish for your contribution to be published and whether you wish your details to be made public or to remain anonymous.

- ☐ Anonymous - Only your type of respondent, country of origin and contribution will be published. Organisation name, URL, transparency register number, first name and surname given above will not be published. **To maintain anonymity, please refrain from mentioning the name of your organisation and any details from which your organisation can be identified in the rest of your contribution.**
- ☒ Public - Your personal details (name, organisation name, transparency register number, country of origin) will be published with your contribution).
- ☐ No publication - Your contribution will not be published. Elements of your contribution may be referred to anonymously in documents produced by the Commission based on this consultation.

☒ I agree with the personal data protection provisions.

[Specific privacy statement targeted stakeholder consultation 2025 rule of law report.pdf](#)

## Questions on horizontal developments

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In this section, you are invited to provide information on general horizontal developments or trends, both positive and negative, covering all or several Member States. In particular, you could mention issues that are common to several Member States, as well as best practices identified in one Member State that could be replicated. Moreover, you could refer to your activities in the area of the four pillars and sub-topics (an overview of all sub-topics can be found below), and, if you represent a Network of national organisations, to the support you might have provided to one of your national members.

## Overview topics for contribution

[List of topics - 2025 Rule of Law Report.pdf](#)

Please provide any relevant information on horizontal developments here

5000 character(s) maximum

## Questions for contribution

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Under each pillar, you are invited to provide information on measures taken to implement the recommendations addressed to the Member State in the 2024 Rule of Law report, as well as developments with regard to the points raised in the respective country chapter of the 2024 Rule of Law Report and any other significant developments since January 2024 and up to the date of submission[3]. Please always include a link to and reference relevant legislation/documents (in the national language and/or where available, in English). **Significant developments** can include challenges, positive developments and best practices, covering both legislative developments or implementation and practices.

Information provided in reply to the first question under each pillar, related to the follow-up to the recommendations, does not need to be repeated in subsequent parts of the questionnaire, but can be cross-referenced in the subsequent questions, where relevant. All other questions are not limited to the recommendations, but as in previous years, cover the entire scope of the Report.

[3] Unless already covered in the input for the previous Rule of Law Reports.

Member State/enlargement country covered in contribution [only one choice possible]

**If you wish to submit information concerning several Member States/enlargement countries, please fill in the questionnaire separately for each country. There is no limit to the number of contributions submitted by a single participant.**

- ☐ Albania
- ☐ Austria
- ☐ Belgium
- ☐ Bulgaria
- ☐ Croatia
- ☒ Cyprus
- ☐ Czechia
- ☐ Denmark
- ☐ Estonia
- ☐ Finland
- ☐ France
- ☐ Germany
- ☐ Greece
- ☐ Hungary
- ☐ Ireland
- ☐ Italy

- ☐ Latvia
- ☐ Lithuania
- ☐ Luxembourg
- ☐ Malta
- ☐ Montenegro
- ☐ Netherlands
- ☐ North Macedonia
- ☐ Poland
- ☐ Portugal
- ☐ Romania
- ☐ Serbia
- ☐ Slovakia
- ☐ Slovenia
- ☐ Spain
- ☐ Sweden

## I. Justice System

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Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2024 Report regarding the justice system (if applicable)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The 2024 Rule of Law Report for Cyprus highlighted several critical recommendations aimed at improving the justice system. While there have been some developments, significant challenges persist in addressing the recommendations, leaving key areas of concern unresolved. One of the central issues identified in the report was the need to address judicial inefficiencies, particularly the excessive delays in case resolution. According to the EU Justice Scoreboard 2024, Cyprus continues to record the longest average resolution times for court cases in Europe. Despite some progress in reducing the backlog of pending cases, the first-instance courts still take an average of 800 days to resolve cases, and second-instance cases take approximately 1,700 days. The slow pace of justice undermines public trust in the judiciary and erodes confidence in the system's ability to deliver timely resolutions. To address these delays, reform measures have been implemented, including new judicial laws aimed at streamlining court processes. However, these efforts have yet to yield significant results due to the judiciary's persistent challenges, including understaffing, inadequate infrastructure, and the absence of a fully functional computerized case management system. The launch of the e-Justice platform in early 2024 was intended to address these inefficiencies. However, repeated technical failures led to the platform's termination in October 2024, delaying critical digitalization efforts. The report also emphasised the importance of ensuring transparency and fairness in the appointment and evaluation of judges. While procedural reforms have been introduced, the judiciary continues to face criticism for a lack of transparency in judicial appointments, which remain heavily influenced by the Supreme Court. The absence of clear, documented criteria for appointments has fueled perceptions of bias and limited accountability within the system. Addressing this issue requires implementing robust guidelines and ensuring that the selection process is open, transparent, and based on merit. The lack of adequate resources for the justice system remains a significant obstacle. Courts are overburdened, and judicial officers lack the necessary support to handle their caseloads efficiently. Insufficient infrastructure, including inadequate facilities and storage space, further compounds these challenges. Efforts to increase staffing and improve working conditions have been slow, limiting the system's ability to deliver timely and effective justice. The problems of the justice system are discussed every year in our annual event together with the Procedural Law Unit at the University of Nicosia (<https://www.unic.ac.cy/school-of-law/plu/>).

Whistleblower protection has seen some legislative progress, with amendments to the 2022 Law on the Protection of Persons Reporting Violations of Union and National Law. The amendments, passed in February 2024, aim to strengthen protections for whistleblowers, enhance public awareness, and ensure the Ministry of Justice and Public Order actively informs the public about these measures. However, these changes have not been accompanied by significant improvements in the system's ability to act swiftly and effectively on whistleblower reports, highlighting the need for further capacity building. The treatment of high-profile and high-level corruption cases remains an area of concern. Delays and inefficiencies in investigating and prosecuting such cases reflect systemic weaknesses in the justice system. For instance, investigations into allegations related to the controversial "golden passports" scheme and other high-profile corruption cases have progressed slowly, reinforcing public perceptions of judicial ineffectiveness. Efforts to improve coordination between law enforcement and judicial authorities have seen limited success. The lack of specialized units to handle corruption cases and financial crimes hampers the system's capacity to address complex and high-stakes cases. While international collaborations, such as the partnership with the FBI, have provided some support, these efforts are not sufficient to overcome the systemic issues facing the justice system. In summary, while Cyprus has taken steps to address the recommendations outlined in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, the justice system continues to face significant challenges. Delays in case resolution, lack of transparency in judicial appointments, insufficient resources, and systemic inefficiencies undermine the effectiveness of the judiciary. Reforms such as judicial digitalization, enhanced whistleblower protections, and international collaborations are positive steps but require more robust implementation and support. To achieve meaningful progress, Cyprus must prioritize comprehensive reforms

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

*(The reference to 'judges' concerns judges at all level and types of courts as well as judges at constitutional courts)*

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The appointment and selection of judges, prosecutors, and court presidents in Cyprus are primarily managed by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC). The process has been criticized for lacking transparency, objective criteria, and public accountability. While recommendations have been made to improve the selection and promotion of judges, these reforms remain incomplete. The criteria for appointments, though announced in 2019 based on expert input, are not published or uniformly applied, creating perceptions of inconsistency and opacity. Judicial review of the SJC's decisions has been strengthened following judicial reforms. For the first time in 2024, the Supreme Constitutional Court reviewed and overturned some SJC decisions regarding judicial appointments, citing procedural deficiencies and inadequate investigations into candidates' qualifications. This intervention introduced a layer of accountability and transparency to the selection process. For prosecutors, the Attorney General plays a central role, with significant authority over prosecutorial appointments and decisions. Proposed reforms aim to separate the advisory and prosecutorial functions of the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General, creating independent offices for the Public Prosecutor and Deputy Prosecutor. These reforms also include mechanisms for reviewing prosecutorial decisions, but they are still awaiting parliamentary approval. Despite these developments, the judiciary faces significant public distrust due to delays in implementing reforms, inefficiencies in the judicial system, and perceptions of political interference. Judicial appointments remain under scrutiny for lacking clear and consistent documentation of the process. Furthermore, while judicial review has improved transparency, the broader system still requires substantial reforms to ensure fairness, independence, and meritocracy in the appointment and selection of judges, prosecutors, and court presidents.

## 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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

In Cyprus, the irremovability of judges is constitutionally protected to ensure judicial independence. Judges can only be removed for misconduct or incapacity, and the process requires strict adherence to formal procedures. The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) is the body responsible for overseeing judicial conduct and managing dismissal cases, providing a safeguard against arbitrary removal. In 2024, the Supreme Constitutional Court exercised its judicial review powers in cases involving dismissal and appointment decisions of the SJC. For example, it reviewed appeals against decisions of the SJC for judicial appointments and upheld or overturned them based on procedural compliance and proper investigation. This mechanism serves as an additional layer of accountability and helps reinforce public trust in judicial independence. Regarding transfers, there is no explicit mention of widespread judicial map reforms or the transfer of judges. However, any changes to judicial assignments are handled internally by the judiciary, adhering to established procedural guidelines to maintain impartiality and avoid undue influence. The retirement regime for judges, court presidents, and prosecutors is governed by constitutional provisions and applicable laws, ensuring clear guidelines on tenure. Judges are generally expected to serve until the mandatory retirement age unless removed for cause. Recent controversies, such as the dismissal of the Auditor General for misconduct, have highlighted the judiciary's role in upholding accountability. The decision, supported by the Supreme Constitutional Court, was based on findings of inappropriate behavior, reflecting the judiciary's commitment to maintaining ethical standards within public institutions. While formal structures are in place to protect the irremovability of judges, broader concerns about transparency and efficiency in the judicial process persist. Efforts to modernise the system, including judicial review of decisions related to appointments, dismissals, and tenure, indicate progress, but significant challenges remain in ensuring trust and effectiveness in these processes.

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The promotion of judges and prosecutors in Cyprus is overseen by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), which holds exclusive authority over these decisions. While the process is intended to ensure meritocracy and judicial independence, it has faced criticism for lacking transparency and clear, objective criteria. Efforts to reform the system and introduce structured guidelines were initiated in 2019, following recommendations from Irish experts, but these guidelines have not been fully implemented or published. This absence of clarity contributes to concerns about fairness and consistency in promotions. Judicial review of promotion decisions has been strengthened following recent reforms. In 2024, the Supreme Constitutional Court reviewed appeals regarding promotion decisions made by the SJC. In one case, the Court upheld the SJC's decision, noting that the minutes provided sufficient justification for not advancing a candidate to the next stage of consideration. In another case, the Court overturned a decision, finding that a negative recommendation about a candidate was not adequately investigated. These instances demonstrate the increasing role of judicial review in ensuring accountability and procedural correctness in promotions. Despite these developments, public trust in the promotion process remains low, primarily due to the lack of transparency and the absence of a detailed record of the criteria and processes used for decision-making. The promotion of prosecutors, like judges, is similarly governed by internal processes that lack comprehensive public documentation. Proposed reforms to separate the roles of the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General, and to establish independent prosecutorial offices with defined oversight mechanisms, aim to address these systemic issues, but these reforms remain pending parliamentary approval. Overall, while judicial review provides a mechanism to address procedural issues in promotions, the broader system requires further reforms to enhance transparency, establish clear criteria, and build public confidence in the integrity of the promotion process for judges and prosecutors.

## Allocation of cases in courts

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The allocation of cases in Cyprus courts is managed internally by the judiciary, with the aim of ensuring fairness and impartiality. However, the process lacks transparency and publicly available criteria, leading to concerns about potential biases or inefficiencies. Case allocation is typically overseen by court presidents or senior judges within each jurisdiction, who are responsible for assigning cases among judges. The absence of a fully digitalized case management system exacerbates challenges in the allocation process. Despite plans to modernize the judiciary through an e-Justice system, this initiative has faced significant setbacks. After multiple failures and delays, the government terminated the e-Justice contract in 2024, which had aimed to streamline processes, including case allocation. Efforts are now being redirected to upgrade the existing i-Justice platform, but progress has been slow, leaving the allocation process reliant on traditional methods. There are no documented mechanisms for judicial review specifically related to case allocation decisions. This gap leaves little room for accountability or redress in instances where allocation might be questioned on procedural or fairness grounds. Overall, while case allocation in Cyprus courts operates within the judiciary's internal framework, the lack of transparency and reliance on outdated systems continue to hinder its efficiency. Modernization of the case management process and the establishment of clear, publicly available criteria are necessary steps to ensure fairness and build trust in the judicial system.

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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

This has been analysed above.

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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The accountability of judges and prosecutors in Cyprus is primarily overseen by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), which holds exclusive authority over disciplinary matters. Judges are subject to ethical rules and a disciplinary framework intended to uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary. Prosecutors, similarly, are governed by internal codes of conduct under the Attorney General's Office. The disciplinary regime for judges includes provisions for addressing misconduct, incapacity, or violations of ethical standards. Complaints against judges are reviewed by the SJC, which has the power to impose sanctions ranging from reprimands to removal from office in severe cases. However, the lack of transparency in the disciplinary process and the criteria applied has drawn criticism, as the public and legal community often remain uninformed about the proceedings and outcomes. Prosecutors are accountable to the Attorney General, who exercises significant control over prosecutorial decisions and disciplinary matters. This centralized authority has raised concerns about the lack of independent oversight and potential conflicts of interest. Proposed reforms to separate the advisory and prosecutorial roles of the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General aim to enhance accountability and create more independent oversight mechanisms, but these reforms are still pending parliamentary approval. Judges in Cyprus enjoy judicial immunity for actions taken in the course of their official duties, which is essential to safeguard judicial independence. However, they can be held accountable for criminal or civil liability in cases of gross misconduct or actions outside the scope of their judicial responsibilities. These matters are subject to review by the SJC, and in some cases, by the Supreme Constitutional Court. Judicial review has played a limited but growing role in addressing issues of accountability. For instance, the Supreme Constitutional Court recently reviewed decisions of the SJC regarding judicial appointments and promotions, which indirectly reflects on the accountability and procedural compliance of the judiciary. However, judicial review specifically targeting disciplinary actions or ethical breaches is not prominently documented. While a framework for accountability exists, public trust in the system remains low due to perceptions of opacity and inefficiency. Enhancing the transparency of disciplinary processes, establishing independent oversight mechanisms for prosecutors, and ensuring consistent application of ethical standards are critical steps needed to reinforce accountability within Cyprus's judiciary and prosecutorial services.

Independence/autonomy of the prosecution service

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The independence and autonomy of the prosecution service in Cyprus are primarily vested in the Office of the Attorney General, which operates as an independent constitutional authority. The Attorney General has the exclusive authority to initiate, conduct, or terminate prosecutions, ensuring that prosecutorial decisions are insulated from political influence. The Deputy Attorney General supports these functions, with both roles constitutionally protected to maintain their independence. However, the dual role of the Attorney General, combining advisory responsibilities to the government and prosecutorial authority, has raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest. This concentration of power has led to criticism that the prosecution service lacks sufficient checks and balances to ensure full autonomy in its decision-making processes. Reforms have been proposed to address these concerns, including the separation of the Attorney General's advisory and prosecutorial functions. The reforms aim to establish distinct offices for the Public Prosecutor and Deputy Public Prosecutor, with mechanisms to review prosecutorial decisions to enhance transparency and accountability. These reforms, however, remain pending parliamentary approval, delaying efforts to strengthen the autonomy of the prosecution service. The independence of individual prosecutors within the Attorney General's Office is generally respected, but their work is subject to hierarchical oversight by the Attorney General. This structure, while maintaining overall accountability, has led to perceptions that individual prosecutorial discretion may be limited, particularly in politically sensitive cases. In practice, the prosecution service faces challenges related to resource limitations, high workloads, and bureaucratic delays, which can impact its effectiveness and perception of autonomy. The reliance on independent investigators and external expertise for complex cases highlights gaps in internal capacity and underscores the need for further institutional strengthening. While the constitutional framework provides strong protections for the independence of the prosecution service, structural reforms, increased resources, and the separation of prosecutorial functions are essential to address existing limitations and reinforce the autonomy and effectiveness of the prosecution service in Cyprus.

#### Independence of the Bar (chamber/association of lawyers) and of lawyers

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The ex officio President of the Legal Council, responsible for important issues regulating lawyers, including trainee lawyers exams etc, is the Attorney General. This might pose a conflict of interest sometimes. Also, member of the board of the Bar Association (perhaps not the current ones), might promote their own agenda instead of the interests of the majority of lawyers.

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Several significant developments in Cyprus have impacted public perceptions of the judiciary's independence, both positively and negatively. The most notable development was the exercise of judicial review by the Supreme Constitutional Court in 2024 concerning decisions of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on judicial appointments and promotions. In one case, the Court overturned an SJC decision, citing insufficient investigation into a candidate's negative recommendation. This intervention marked a step towards greater accountability and transparency, positively influencing public perception by showing that judicial processes can be scrutinized and corrected when necessary. However, it also highlighted deficiencies in the transparency and rigor of the initial decision-making process. On the other hand, public confidence in the judiciary has been undermined by delays and inefficiencies in the judicial system. Cyprus continues to have some of the longest case resolution times in Europe, averaging over 800 days at the first instance, according to the EU Justice Scoreboard. These delays, coupled with the recent failure of the e-Justice system and the slow progress in its replacement, have exacerbated perceptions of a lack of efficiency and modernity in the judiciary. The dismissal of the Auditor General by the Supreme Court in 2024 for misconduct further complicated public perceptions. While the decision was framed as necessary to uphold institutional integrity, critics viewed it as an attack on a prominent anti-corruption figure, fueling concerns about the judiciary's susceptibility to political or institutional pressure. Surveys presented in 2024 revealed a growing distrust towards the judiciary, attributed to a lack of transparency in appointments, promotions, and case management. Public criticism also stems from perceptions of political interference in high-profile cases and the judiciary's limited capacity to handle corruption and other complex issues efficiently. In summary, while judicial review and reform efforts have introduced elements of accountability and transparency, delays, inefficiencies, and controversies surrounding high-profile dismissals have collectively reinforced public skepticism about the independence of the judiciary in Cyprus. Comprehensive reforms, increased transparency, and the timely resolution of cases are essential to improving the judiciary's public image and restoring trust.

## B. Quality of justice

*(Under this topic, you are not required to give statistical information but should provide input on the type of information outlined in the introduction)*

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Court fees remain the same since a long while ago. They could be increased so that this is demotivating for litigious people who go to court for no reason and overburden the judicial system and at the same time increase legal aid mechanisms and enhance litigation funding processes for securing access to justice for impecunious people.

Resources of the judiciary (human/financial/material), remuneration/bonuses/rewards for judges and prosecutors, including observed changes (significant and targeted increase or decrease over the past year)

*(Material resources refer e.g. to court buildings and other facilities. Financial resources include salaries of staff in courts and prosecution offices.)*

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The Independent Court Service project is in a standstill since a long while. The Supreme Court should not have the upper hand in managing the new service, but more professionals, technocrats etc should be involved in its board.

Training of justice professionals (including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court staff, clerks/trainees)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The School of Judges is responsible for training of judges but more work could be done regarding behaviour and uniformity in judgments.

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The Supreme Court, responsible for the administration of justice according to the Constitution, is extremely conservative regarding the use of electronic communication and AI. They think that these belong to the future (not the present).

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The use of ICT systems and standards for case management and judicial processes in Cyprus has faced challenges and partial progress. The i-Justice platform was enhanced to incorporate functionalities originally planned for the failed e-Justice project, which faced significant technical and legal issues. Despite these enhancements, public access to court statistics and transparency in case management remains limited, as statistical data is often unavailable or difficult to obtain. Announcements about progress, such as on backlog reduction, are sporadic and lack detailed public reporting. Surveys on the quality of justice are primarily conducted through EU or CoE initiatives, with limited national surveys available. A survey presented at the Cyprus Bar Association's symposium highlighted increasing public distrust in the judiciary due to a lack of transparency and objectivity in judge selection and evaluation processes. Current statistics on case handling are not widely accessible, which impacts evidence-based policymaking. Efforts to digitize judicial processes include proposed legislation for the digital recording of criminal court proceedings, supported by EU funding. However, the cancellation of the e-Justice project resulted in delays and setbacks in digital transformation. Although the government paid over €1 million for the project, it was terminated, and disputes remain unresolved. Despite these issues, the Deputy Ministry of Innovation has initiated efforts to modernize the i-Justice system, ensuring the continuation of electronic judicial services and attempting to meet funding conditions under the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Public access to monitoring tools is limited, with no official surveys conducted directly by the judiciary. The judiciary's challenges include insufficient digital infrastructure, lack of transparency in data sharing, and no dedicated mechanisms to gather feedback from court users or legal professionals. The implementation of ICT systems in Cyprus remains incomplete, and significant efforts are needed to improve transparency, provide public access to judicial data, and integrate modern technologies into court operations.

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.

*5000 character(s) maximum*

## C. Efficiency of the justice system

*(Under this topic, you are not required to give statistical information but should provide input on the type of information outlined under section*

*2)*

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Efforts to improve the efficiency of the justice system in Cyprus have seen some developments, though challenges remain. A significant focus has been placed on addressing the length of proceedings, particularly in light of Cyprus having one of the longest case resolution times in Europe. According to the EU Justice Scoreboard, the average time to resolve cases at the first instance is approximately 800 days, and around 1,700 days for cases at the second instance. Despite efforts, these delays continue to undermine public confidence in the judicial system. The judiciary has been implementing reforms to reduce backlogs and streamline processes. Notably, the Supreme Court has been actively involved in monitoring and reporting on backlog reduction efforts as part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. The President of the Supreme Court recently reported progress in surpassing targets set for clearing pending cases, though detailed data on this achievement has not been made widely available. Transparency in the reporting of judicial efficiency remains a concern, as updates on progress are sporadic and often limited to high-level announcements. The digitalization of the judicial system has been another key area of focus. Following the collapse of the e-Justice system and its subsequent termination due to technical failures and legal disputes, efforts shifted to enhancing the existing i-Justice platform. The Deputy Ministry of Innovation and the Judicial Service have committed to upgrading this platform to include functionalities initially intended for e-Justice, such as audio recording of court proceedings. These upgrades aim to modernize the judicial process while avoiding delays associated with re-tendering the e-Justice project. However, the delays caused by the failed project have already impacted progress, with over €1 million spent on the terminated system. Legislative developments are also in motion to support digitalization and efficiency. A proposed bill seeks to amend the law to allow for digital recording of criminal court proceedings. This aligns with EU-funded efforts to introduce modern technologies in Cypriot courts. While these measures are a step in the right direction, they remain in the early stages, and their full implementation is still pending. Resource constraints further affect judicial efficiency. The judiciary continues to face challenges in terms of staffing, infrastructure, and training. Despite ongoing reforms, the lack of specialized personnel and digital tools hinders the timely resolution of cases. Additionally, public engagement and awareness about the progress of these reforms remain limited, contributing to continued skepticism about the justice system's ability to improve. Overall, while efforts to enhance efficiency in the justice system are underway, significant structural and operational challenges persist. Addressing these requires sustained investment in digital infrastructure, transparent reporting on reform progress, and comprehensive resource allocation to meet the demands of a modern judicial system. Without these, the lengthy proceedings and backlogs are likely to remain persistent issues in Cyprus's justice system.

**Any other developments related to the justice system - please specify**

*5000 character(s) maximum*

## II. Anti-Corruption Framework

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*Where previous specific reports, published in the framework of the review under the UN Convention against Corruption, of GRECO, and of the OECD address the issues below, please make a reference to the points you wish to bring to the Commission's attention in these documents, indicating any relevant updates, changes or measures introduced that have occurred since these documents were published.*

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2024 Report regarding the anti-corruption framework (if applicable):

*5000 character(s) maximum*

In response to the recommendations from the 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus has implemented several measures aimed at strengthening its anti-corruption framework. One of the most notable developments is the full implementation of the Transparency in Public Decision-Making Processes Law 20(I)/2022, which became fully operational in March 2024. This legislation requires individuals intending to engage in public decision-making to register in a Lobbyist Registry and submit detailed reports following their meetings with public officials. The law represents a significant step toward ensuring transparency in lobbying and minimizing opportunities for corruption. Complementing this, public officials must now verify the registration of individuals they interact with, ensuring compliance with the new transparency rules.

Asset declaration laws have also been strengthened. In July 2024, Parliament approved two bills mandating regular, comprehensive, and electronic submissions of declarations by public officials and politically exposed persons (PEPs). These declarations cover assets both within and outside Cyprus, including detailed reports of income and expenditure to monitor changes in net wealth. Importantly, these declarations are publicly accessible for a period of 12 months after an official leaves office. These legislative changes aim to improve monitoring and enhance accountability, with stricter penalties introduced for false reporting.

To address the long-standing issue of the concentration of power in the Attorney General's Office, the government has prepared bills that aim to separate the prosecutorial and advisory roles of the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General. These proposals include the establishment of distinct offices for the Public Prosecutor and Deputy Public Prosecutor, as well as mechanisms to oversee their decisions. Additionally, reforms to the Auditor General's role, including the introduction of fixed terms for both the Auditor General and Deputy Auditor General, are expected to enhance accountability and reduce the potential for conflicts of interest.

Moreover, the government has promoted the adoption of a framework for effective and timely consultation with stakeholders during the legislative process and ensured its implementation. This includes the implementation of the e-Consultation platform, which allows citizens to review and discuss government bills before their submission to Parliament.

Partnerships with international bodies have also been prioritized. The signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation with the FBI in April 2024 reflects a strategic move to bolster investigative capacities, particularly in tackling financial crimes and money laundering. This collaboration has been instrumental in providing specialized expertise and tools to Cypriot authorities, addressing historical challenges in the investigation of suspicious financial activities.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist. For instance, the Independent Authority Against Corruption continues to face resource constraints, with a reported 2.5% decrease in its 2025 budget compared to the previous year. Moreover, no significant progress has been made in areas like transparent advertising expenditure or the independent governance of public service media. These gaps highlight the need for a more comprehensive and well-resourced approach to implementing the recommendations of the Rule of Law Report.

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

List any **changes** as regards relevant authorities (e.g. national agencies, bodies) in charge of prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption and the resources allocated to each of these authorities (the human, financial, legal, and technical resources as relevant), including the cooperation among domestic and with foreign authorities. Indicate any relevant measures taken to effectively and timely cooperate with OLAF and EPPO

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The anti-corruption landscape in Cyprus has undergone structural and operational changes in response to persistent challenges. The Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) remains at the center of the country's efforts to combat corruption, but its capacity is hindered by limitations in its mandate and resources. While tasked with preventing and investigating corruption, the IAAC does not possess prosecutorial powers, relying instead on the Attorney General's Office for prosecution. Legislative amendments have been proposed to reclassify the IAAC as a public law entity, granting it autonomy to set its operational rules, establish its own staffing guidelines, and initiate private prosecutions. These changes are expected to address critical gaps in its independence and operational flexibility, but they have yet to be fully implemented.

Another significant development is the establishment of a Unified Supervisory Authority, approved by the Council of Ministers in February 2024. This authority aims to streamline the supervision of professional services in Cyprus, addressing vulnerabilities in the system that have historically facilitated corruption, particularly in sectors like finance and real estate. By consolidating supervisory roles and enforcing stricter compliance measures, this initiative seeks to enhance oversight and restore public confidence in the country's professional services sector.

The Cyprus Police have faced scrutiny over their ability to effectively handle corruption cases. The force suffers from resource constraints, including insufficient staffing, lack of specialized training, and inadequate equipment. These issues are compounded by internal inefficiencies and allegations of corruption within the force itself. Recent leadership changes, including the dismissal of senior officials, have signaled an intent to reform the police. However, these changes have not yet translated into measurable improvements in the handling of corruption cases. The absence of a dedicated anti-corruption unit within the police force remains a glaring gap, limiting its capacity to conduct specialized investigations.

The judiciary continues to grapple with systemic challenges, including excessive case backlogs, delays in case resolution, and insufficient infrastructure. According to the 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard, Cyprus has the longest case resolution times in Europe, with some cases taking over 800 days at the first instance. Efforts to address these issues include judicial reforms and digitization initiatives, such as the introduction of an e-Justice system. However, technical failures have plagued the system, and its full implementation has been delayed. The inefficiency of the judiciary undermines public trust and hampers the effective prosecution of corruption cases, especially those involving high-profile individuals.

International cooperation has been a key focus for Cyprus in its anti-corruption efforts. The country has partnered with the FBI to enhance its investigative capacity, particularly in financial crimes. This collaboration has provided Cypriot authorities with specialized tools and expertise to address complex cases of financial corruption and money laundering. Additionally, Cyprus has sought to strengthen ties with the United Kingdom to combat illicit financial flows, particularly those linked to Russian entities.

The prosecution services in Cyprus face similar challenges, including heavy workloads, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and resource shortages. These factors contribute to delays in the resolution of cases and undermine the overall effectiveness of the anti-corruption framework. The IAAC often relies on independent criminal investigators, including foreign experts, to conduct investigations due to its limited capacity to hire specialized staff. This reliance highlights the need for more robust institutional support and resource allocation.

Resource allocation remains a recurring issue across all relevant authorities. The IAAC reported a 2.5% decrease in its 2025 budget compared to the previous year, affecting its ability to process the increasing

number of complaints it receives. For instance, the IAAC received 315 complaints in 2024, of which 90 were investigated, and only 5 were concluded. The lack of sufficient funding and personnel hampers the Authority's ability to fulfill its mandate effectively.

## Safeguards for the functional independence of the authorities tasked with the prevention and detection of corruption

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The independence of anti-corruption authorities in Cyprus has improved in recent years, but critical gaps persist, limiting their ability to operate autonomously and effectively. The Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) is a cornerstone of the country's anti-corruption framework, yet its functional independence is undermined by its limited mandate. The IAAC has investigative powers but no prosecutorial authority, relying on the Attorney General's Office to proceed with cases. This dependency creates potential vulnerabilities to external interference. To address this, proposed legislative reforms aim to reclassify the IAAC as a public law entity, granting it autonomy to establish operational guidelines, hire specialized staff, and initiate private prosecutions. However, these reforms have not yet been implemented, leaving the IAAC constrained.

Resource limitations further compromise the IAAC's independence. The authority's 2025 budget saw a 2.5% decrease compared to the previous year, despite an increase in complaints. In 2024, the IAAC received 315 complaints but only investigated 90 cases and completed five. Insufficient staffing and funding prevent the authority from fulfilling its mandate effectively. Without the resources to recruit skilled personnel or conduct thorough investigations, the IAAC's capacity to act independently remains limited.

The judiciary also faces systemic challenges that threaten its independence. Long delays in case resolution, averaging over 800 days at the first instance, hinder the prosecution of corruption cases. The absence of a transparent process for appointing and evaluating judges raises concerns about political influence. Although judicial reforms and digitization initiatives, such as the e-Justice system, have been introduced, technical failures have delayed their implementation, further undermining efficiency.

Law enforcement agencies, including the police, struggle with similar issues. The police force is understaffed, lacks specialized training, and does not have a dedicated anti-corruption unit. Internal corruption and inefficiencies within the force have eroded public trust, while leadership changes have yet to yield measurable improvements. Without specialized units or enhanced training, the police's ability to detect and prevent corruption remains inadequate.

The dismissal of the Auditor General in 2024 has raised questions about the independence of oversight bodies. The decision, upheld by the Supreme Constitutional Court, was perceived by some as politically motivated, leading to public protests. This incident highlights the need for safeguards, such as fixed terms for the Auditor General and Deputy Auditor General, to protect these roles from undue influence. Proposals to establish an Audit Council aim to strengthen oversight mechanisms and enhance accountability, but these measures are still pending.

Legislative gaps also weaken the independence of anti-corruption authorities. The IAAC cannot compel other institutions to cooperate with its investigations, and its inquiries can be interrupted if parallel investigations are initiated by other bodies. While proposed amendments seek to address these limitations, their implementation is crucial for ensuring the IAAC's autonomy. Similarly, the lack of a unified legal framework to prevent conflicts of interest and enforce ethical conduct among public officials undermines institutional integrity. Existing codes of ethics for MPs and judges are non-binding and lack enforcement mechanisms, limiting their effectiveness.

Public trust is essential for the independence of anti-corruption authorities, but delays in resolving high-profile cases, such as the "golden passports" scandal, have eroded confidence. To rebuild trust, authorities must prioritize transparency, including publishing detailed investigation findings and enforcing stricter asset declaration laws. Enhanced whistleblower protections are also vital to encourage reporting and protect those who expose corruption.

International cooperation has bolstered the capacity of Cypriot authorities to address corruption. The 2024 Memorandum of Cooperation with the FBI has provided specialized expertise and tools, strengthening investigative capabilities.

In conclusion, while Cyprus has made strides in improving the independence of its anti-corruption authorities, significant challenges remain. Legislative reforms, increased resource allocation, and strengthened oversight mechanisms are critical to ensuring functional independence. These measures, combined with enhanced public trust and international collaboration, are necessary to create a robust and effective anti-corruption framework.

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The implementation of measures outlined in Cyprus's strategic anti-corruption framework has been characterized by progress in certain areas, although gaps remain in achieving full operationalization and effectiveness. The framework aims to enhance transparency, institutional capacity, and public engagement while addressing long-standing issues like resource limitations, inefficiencies, and public distrust. Key developments, objectives, and indicators are discussed below.

A core component of the anti-corruption framework is the Transparency in Public Decision-Making Processes Law 20(I)/2022, which became fully operational in March 2024. This law establishes a comprehensive framework for transparency in lobbying activities, requiring all participants in public decision-making to register in a Lobbyist Registry and submit detailed post-meeting reports. Public officials are similarly obligated to verify the registration of lobbyists before engaging in discussions. These measures aim to curb undue influence and ensure accountability in decision-making processes. As an indicator of success, the Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) has reported steady compliance with the registry requirements and a phased rollout of related processes.

Another significant measure is the enhancement of asset declaration laws. In July 2024, Parliament passed legislation requiring detailed, electronic submissions of asset declarations by public officials and politically exposed persons (PEPs). The declarations, which include personal and professional assets both inside and outside Cyprus, are subject to audits by the Commissioner of Taxation. They are also publicly accessible for up to 12 months after officials leave office. These measures aim to strengthen financial transparency and reduce opportunities for corruption, with indicators of success including the number of declarations audited and any sanctions imposed for non-compliance.

The Independent Authority Against Corruption has taken steps to improve its operational capacity despite resource constraints. In 2024, the Authority received 315 complaints, of which 90 were investigated, and 5 were completed. To enhance its effectiveness, legislative amendments have been proposed to reclassify the IAAC as a public law entity. This change would allow the Authority to set its own staffing rules, hire specialized personnel, and initiate private prosecutions. Indicators of progress include the number of complaints handled, the completion rate of investigations, and the resolution of legislative amendments aimed at empowering the IAAC.

Additionally, cooperation with international organizations has played a vital role in implementing the framework. In April 2024, Cyprus signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the FBI, which has provided expertise and tools to strengthen the investigation of financial crimes. This partnership is a critical component of the framework, aimed at addressing systemic corruption and money laundering. Indicators of success include the number of cases investigated with FBI assistance and the tangible outcomes of these collaborations.

The anti-corruption framework places significant emphasis on digitalization and public participation as tools to enhance transparency and accountability. The launch of the e-Consultation platform allows citizens to review and comment on proposed legislation before it is submitted to Parliament. This initiative promotes inclusivity and transparency in the legislative process, with indicators such as the number of consultations

conducted, the volume of citizen participation, and the incorporation of public feedback into legislative outcomes.

Efforts to digitize judicial processes have also been prioritized, although the implementation of the e-Justice system has faced significant delays due to technical failures. Initially expected to become fully operational in early 2024, the system crashed shortly after its launch, leading to the termination of the e-Justice contract in October 2024. The delayed rollout of this system remains a significant setback for the framework's objectives of improving judicial efficiency and transparency.

Public procurement has been identified as a high-risk sector for corruption, and reforms in 2024 have sought to address these vulnerabilities. The General Accounting Office implemented new tools and procedural reforms aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability in procurement processes. Proposed legislative amendments to strengthen procurement regulations are currently under discussion. Indicators of success in this area include the reduction of irregularities in public procurement, the number of audits conducted, and the successful implementation of new procedural tools.

## B. Prevention

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Cyprus has implemented several measures to enhance integrity in the public sector, addressing critical areas such as incompatibility rules, revolving doors, codes of conduct, and ethical standards. However, despite notable progress, challenges in enforcement, compliance, and public trust remain significant barriers to fully achieving these objectives. The existing legal framework for incompatibility rules is primarily governed by the 2008 Law on the Incompatibility with the Exercise of Duties of Certain Officials in Certain Professional and Other Activities. This legislation establishes restrictions on public officials, preventing them from engaging in professional activities that may conflict with their public duties. These measures are designed to ensure impartiality and maintain public confidence in the integrity of officials. While the provisions are a step in the right direction, the enforcement mechanisms are weak, and the legal framework remains fragmented. For example, the regulation of conflicts of interest in public procurement processes falls under the 2016 Law on the Regulation of Procedures for the Conclusion of Public Contracts, which provides general guidelines but lacks detailed provisions for addressing conflicts when they arise. This fragmented approach results in uneven implementation and monitoring, with no immediate plans to introduce a unified and stringent framework. The phenomenon of the revolving door, where individuals transition between public office and private sector roles, is another area where Cyprus has sought to promote integrity. The 2007 Law on the Control of Employment of Former Public Officials and Certain Former Public Sector Employees in the Private Sector regulates this issue. Under the law, former public officials, including judges and senior employees, must obtain approval from an independent special committee before taking up private sector employment related to their prior duties. The committee reviews applications and can impose restrictions or deny approval if it determines that such employment could compromise the public interest. While violations of these provisions are treated as criminal offenses, with penalties including fines or imprisonment, enforcement remains a challenge. The lack of data on the number of applications, approvals, or prosecutions under this law suggests a need for greater transparency and public awareness to ensure its effectiveness. The integrity framework in Cyprus also includes several codes of conduct designed to guide the ethical behavior of public officials. These codes apply to members of the government, parliamentarians, judges, and other public servants. For example, the Code of Ethics for Members of the Government was approved in 2023, and the Code of Principles and Rules of Ethics for Members of the House of Representatives governs the conduct of MPs. The Guide to Judicial Conduct and the Code of Police Ethics address the ethical responsibilities of judges and police officers, respectively. To strengthen the implementation of these codes, the government appointed George Arestis, a former Supreme Court judge,

as a Special Advisor on Ethics in 2024. Arestis advises on the application of the government's Code of Ethics, aligning with recommendations from the GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) Committee. His role, offered on a pro bono basis, reflects a commitment to enhancing ethical standards at the highest levels of government. Despite these efforts, the codes of conduct in Cyprus are largely non-binding and lack robust enforcement mechanisms. Violations often result in minimal consequences, such as written apologies, which are insufficient to deter unethical behavior. For instance, the Code of Ethics for Members of the House of Representatives only "encourages" MPs to disclose conflicts of interest but does not impose binding obligations or penalties for non-compliance. This leniency undermines the effectiveness of the codes and limits their ability to instill a culture of accountability. Recent legislative initiatives aimed at improving transparency and ethical governance include enhanced asset declaration laws, which were passed in July 2024. These laws require public officials to electronically declare their personal and professional assets, including those held abroad, with the submissions audited by the Commissioner of Taxation. The declarations are publicly accessible for up to a year after the official leaves office, promoting financial transparency and accountability. These measures aim to address weaknesses in previous frameworks, which were criticized for their lack of thorough audits and ineffective penalties for non-compliance.

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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Cyprus has taken meaningful steps toward improving transparency in public decision-making, with efforts focusing on lobbying regulations, asset and interest disclosure rules, the transparency of political party financing, and policies on gifts. While these measures indicate a strong commitment to enhancing public accountability, challenges in enforcement and practical application still impede their full impact. A significant development in lobbying regulation was the implementation of the Transparency in Public Decision-Making Processes Law of 2022. By March 2024, the law was fully operational, requiring anyone wishing to engage in lobbying activities to register with the Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC). Registrants are mandated to disclose detailed records of their meetings with public officials, including the topics discussed. Public officials, in turn, must report these interactions, creating a traceable record of lobbying activities. This system is designed to prevent undue influence on policy decisions, ensuring transparency in the legislative process. However, the IAAC's limited resources constrain its ability to monitor compliance effectively. Although the registry's completion is a step forward, the public's awareness of this system remains relatively low, and many lobbying activities risk going unregistered. On the issue of financial transparency, the introduction of new asset and interest disclosure rules in 2024 was another key initiative. The updated laws now require public officials, including politically exposed persons (PEPs), to submit detailed electronic declarations of their assets and income, including holdings abroad. These declarations, which must also include the assets of dependent family members, are audited by the Commissioner of Taxation. For the sake of public accountability, the declarations are made accessible to the public for up to a year after an official leaves their role. These reforms aim to address long-standing concerns about inconsistencies and lax enforcement in the previous framework. Stricter penalties for non-compliance, including financial fines, have been introduced to bolster accountability. However, the exclusion of certain officials, such as Supreme Court judges, has raised questions about the law's comprehensiveness. Additionally, while audits are mandatory, the IAAC's capacity to conduct thorough investigations remains limited due to budgetary and staffing constraints. Policies addressing the acceptance of gifts by public officials are another area that requires attention. Although general principles exist to prohibit officials from accepting gifts that may influence their decisions, these rules lack specificity. There are no clear thresholds for permissible gift values, nor are there robust mechanisms for reporting and auditing gift acceptance. This leaves room for subjective interpretation and creates gaps that could be exploited. A more detailed and enforceable framework would go a long way toward addressing these vulnerabilities. The transparency of political party financing remains a contentious issue in Cyprus. According to the Political Parties Law of 2012, political parties can receive both public

funding and private donations, with annual private contributions capped at €50,000 per donor. While these contributions must be nominal and legal, the law does not provide for detailed public disclosure of donor identities, leaving a gap in accountability. In July 2024, political parties published lists of private contributions exceeding €500, which is a positive step, but the lack of stringent auditing mechanisms weakens the effectiveness of these measures. Furthermore, sponsorships and indirect contributions, such as services donated by corporations, remain largely unregulated, creating additional opportunities for undue influence. Currently, a legislative proposal is under discussion to ban political financing by companies involved in gambling. This measure aims to address concerns about undue influence from entities in these sectors, which are perceived to be particularly vulnerable to ethical conflicts and corruption. If enacted, this proposal would represent a significant step toward strengthening the integrity of political financing and reducing the risks of inappropriate corporate influence on political parties. The issue of transparency extends to public procurement processes, which remain highly vulnerable to corruption. In 2024, the General Accounting Office introduced new tools to improve transparency and accountability in procurement, alongside procedural reforms to ensure fair competition. These changes are aimed at addressing inefficiencies and irregularities that have plagued procurement processes for years. While promising, the reforms require consistent application at all government levels, particularly in municipalities and local councils, which often face oversight challenges.

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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Cyprus has implemented measures aimed at preventing conflicts of interest in the public sector, but these efforts are often fragmented and lack comprehensive enforcement. Existing legal provisions address specific situations, but the absence of a unified framework creates gaps in regulation and oversight. While some progress has been made, the measures in place fall short of fully safeguarding public trust in the impartiality of public officials. The prevention of conflicts of interest in Cyprus is addressed through a patchwork of laws and guidelines, most notably the Law on the Regulation of Procedures for the Conclusion of Public Contracts and Related Matters of 2016 (73(I)/2016). This legislation governs procurement processes and defines conflict of interest as any situation where public officials involved in the process have a financial, economic, or personal interest that could impair their impartiality. The law applies to all officials engaged in public procurement, including contracting authorities and service providers, and aims to ensure that decisions are made transparently and in the public interest. However, the provisions are general in nature and do not provide detailed guidance on identifying and resolving conflicts when they arise. The lack of explicit corrective measures further limits the law's effectiveness, leaving enforcement largely discretionary. Another significant piece of legislation is the Incompatibility with the Exercise of Duties of Certain Officials of the Republic in Certain Professional and Other Activities Law of 2008 (7(I)/2008). This law prohibits certain categories of officials, including ministers, members of Parliament, and senior public servants, from engaging in professional activities that conflict with their official duties. For instance, officials are barred from holding directorships in private companies or engaging in business activities that could influence their decision-making in public office. These incompatibility rules are intended to prevent situations where officials might prioritize personal or financial interests over their public responsibilities. However, enforcement mechanisms remain weak, with limited monitoring and oversight to ensure compliance. At the parliamentary level, conflicts of interest are addressed through a non-binding Code of Ethics for Members of the House of Representatives. The Code encourages MPs to disclose any potential conflicts before participating in debates or votes on related matters. While this measure promotes transparency, the voluntary nature of the disclosures undermines their reliability. There are no penalties for failing to disclose conflicts, and the absence of an independent body to verify the disclosures further weakens the system. This creates a reliance on individual integrity, which is not always sufficient to prevent unethical behavior. Asset declaration

laws also play a role in mitigating conflicts of interest. Revised in 2024, these laws require public officials, including politically exposed persons (PEPs), to declare their financial interests, both domestically and abroad. The declarations must include details about personal and professional assets, as well as those held by dependent family members. These submissions are audited by the Commissioner of Taxation to identify discrepancies and potential conflicts of interest. However, certain categories of officials, such as Supreme Court judges, are exempt from these requirements, raising questions about the fairness and comprehensiveness of the system. Furthermore, while the legislation mandates audits, the lack of resources and technical capacity within the auditing authority limits its ability to conduct thorough and timely reviews. A notable weakness in Cyprus's conflict of interest framework is the absence of a unified and binding legal framework that covers all public officials. Different laws and guidelines address specific situations or categories of officials, but the lack of coherence creates inconsistencies in enforcement and oversight. For example, while procurement officials are subject to detailed rules under procurement laws, other public servants may not face similar scrutiny, even when their roles involve significant decision-making authority. This fragmented approach leaves gaps that can be exploited by individuals seeking to circumvent accountability. Corrective measures for addressing conflicts of interest are similarly underdeveloped. In cases where conflicts are identified, there are no clear protocols for resolving them, such as recusal procedures or penalties for non-compliance. The lack of formalized corrective actions often means that conflicts are either ignored or addressed informally, which can undermine public confidence in the integrity of decision-making processes.

--> For the three previous points, **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.)

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Cyprus has taken important steps to protect whistleblowers and encourage the reporting of corruption, particularly with the enactment of the Law on the Protection of Persons Reporting Violations of Union and National Law of 2022 (Law 6(I)/2022). This legislation establishes a legal framework to safeguard whistleblowers from retaliation and outlines procedures for reporting corruption and other violations. While these measures represent progress, challenges in enforcement and public awareness limit their full effectiveness. The whistleblower protection law applies to individuals who report violations in both public and private sectors. It covers a wide range of offenses, including corruption, fraud, abuse of power, and violations of EU and national law. The law explicitly prohibits retaliation against whistleblowers, such as dismissal, demotion, or other adverse actions that could jeopardize their professional or personal status. If retaliation occurs, whistleblowers have the right to seek legal redress, including compensation for damages. Employers found guilty of retaliating against whistleblowers face significant penalties, which are designed to deter such behavior and ensure compliance with the law. A key feature of the law is the establishment of confidential reporting channels to ensure the anonymity and security of whistleblowers. Reports can be submitted through internal channels within organizations or externally to designated authorities, such as the Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC). The law also mandates the creation of secure mechanisms within organizations for handling reports, including the appointment of whistleblower officers to manage complaints and ensure follow-up. These provisions aim to build trust in the system and encourage individuals to come forward with information about wrongdoing. The implementation of the law has been supported by amendments introduced in February 2024, which strengthen its provisions and improve enforcement mechanisms. The amendments include enhanced public awareness campaigns, led by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, to inform citizens and employees about their rights and protections under the law. Additionally, the amendments impose stricter requirements on public and private entities to

establish whistleblower systems and ensure that reports are properly handled. Despite these improvements, the application of whistleblower protections in practice remains uneven. The police department tasked with implementing the law has established a dedicated unit to handle whistleblower complaints, but resource constraints and a lack of specialized training hinder its effectiveness. Public confidence in the whistleblower system is further undermined by high-profile cases of corruption where whistleblowers have faced harassment or have seen little follow-up on their reports. For example, the IAAC reported receiving 315 complaints in 2024, of which 230 were named reports and 85 were anonymous. While 90 complaints were investigated, only 5 investigations were completed, indicating delays in the processing and resolution of cases. The low completion rate reflects broader issues within the system, including insufficient staffing and the need for technical expertise in investigating complex corruption cases. Public trust in whistleblower protections is also limited by a perceived lack of transparency in the handling of reports. Whistleblowers often express concerns about whether their identities will remain confidential and whether their reports will lead to meaningful action. While the IAAC and other authorities are legally required to protect whistleblower anonymity, lapses in communication and follow-up with whistleblowers can create uncertainty and discourage future reporting. Strengthening communication between authorities and whistleblowers, including providing regular updates on the status of investigations, could help build trust in the system. Another challenge is the lack of comprehensive data on the outcomes of whistleblower reports, which makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the system. While the IAAC provides general statistics on the number of complaints received and investigated, there is limited information on the nature of the cases, the sectors involved, or the penalties imposed on offenders. Greater transparency in reporting these outcomes would enhance accountability and demonstrate the tangible impact of whistleblower reports in combating corruption. The government's efforts to collaborate with international organizations and partners are a positive step toward improving whistleblower protections. For instance, Cyprus has engaged with EU bodies to align its whistleblower framework with European standards, including the EU Whistleblower Directive. This alignment not only enhances legal protections but also facilitates cross-border cooperation in investigating corruption cases with international dimensions.

Specific measures to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability in sectors with high risks of corruption, with a view to monitor and prevent corruption and conflict of interests, and where applicable measures to prevent and address corruption committed by organised crime groups.

*Such high-risk sectors could include: public procurement, including construction, transport/infrastructure, defence, cohesion, agriculture, environment, healthcare, citizen/residence investor schemes, large-scale investments of national interest and the spending of EU funds, urban planning.*

*5000 character(s) maximum*

## C. Repression

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The available data on investigations, prosecutions, final judgments, and sanctions for corruption offenses in Cyprus highlights several challenges. According to the Independent Authority Against Corruption, 315 complaints were submitted, of which 230 were named and 85 anonymous. Of these, 90 complaints were investigated, with five investigations completed and six ongoing. The data do not specify the types of corruption offenses or whether they involve legal persons, EU or national funds, or high-level corruption cases. Publicly available statistics on corruption cases are limited. The lack of transparency in this regard undermines the ability to conduct evidence-based policymaking. While the Special Eurobarometer 548 and reports from Transparency International provide some insights into public perceptions of corruption, these are not substitutes for comprehensive national data. For instance, the Eurobarometer indicates that 96% of businesses perceive corruption as widespread, with public procurement being identified as a particularly problematic area. The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Cyprus 49th out of 180 countries, reflecting ongoing concerns about systemic corruption. A notable complaint was filed on March 21, 2023, with the Independent Authority Against Corruption, alleging that a political party in Cyprus received funding from a Russian influence group aiming to promote resolutions in national parliaments concerning Crimea. On May 16, 2024, the Authority confirmed that it would proceed with an investigation into the matter. However, no detailed updates regarding the progress or outcomes of this investigation have been made publicly available. This case underscores broader concerns about transparency and accountability in political party financing in Cyprus. Existing legislation on political contributions lacks comprehensive measures to ensure clear reporting and auditing, creating opportunities for potential misuse and foreign influence. High-profile cases illustrate additional challenges in addressing corruption. A complaint filed in 2022 against the former President of the Republic and his involvement in the "golden passport" scheme remains in its initial stages, over two years after submission. Similarly, allegations made in a book by a journalist against the former President are being investigated by the Independent Authority Against Corruption with the involvement of foreign experts to ensure impartiality. The lack of dedicated resources and personnel, combined with delays in investigations and prosecutions, further hampers progress. For example, a criminal prosecution against a former Minister of Transport related to the "golden passports" scandal is scheduled to begin only in January 2025. These delays highlight inefficiencies in addressing high-level corruption cases. Public policy is minimally informed by available data, as comprehensive and transparent reporting mechanisms are lacking. The absence of detailed, regularly updated statistics hinders the ability to identify trends, allocate resources effectively, and develop targeted anti-corruption measures. Current efforts to improve transparency and accountability, while ongoing, require significant reinforcement to achieve meaningful results. The investigation into political funding, alongside other cases, highlights the urgent need for robust mechanisms to address corruption effectively and transparently.

Potential obstacles identified in law or in practice to the investigation and prosecution of high-level and complex corruption cases (e.g. political immunity regulation, procedural rules, statute of limitations, cross-border cooperation, pardoning)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The investigation and prosecution of high-level and complex corruption cases in Cyprus face several significant obstacles, both in law and practice, with particular challenges concerning the capacity of the Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC). Procedural delays are a persistent issue, often leading to extended timelines for the resolution of cases. This undermines the effectiveness of the judicial system and

public trust in its ability to address corruption. A notable structural challenge is the IAAC's lack of prosecutorial powers. It cannot independently pursue legal action based on its investigations, as decisions to prosecute are handled by the Attorney General's Office. This dependency creates a bottleneck, particularly in politically sensitive cases, and raises questions about the efficiency and impartiality of the process. Moreover, the IAAC cannot hire its own personnel, relying instead on secondments from other agencies or outsourcing specific tasks. For example, foreign investigators have been brought in for specialized cases due to the IAAC's inability to recruit its own staff. This lack of autonomy over staffing hampers the Authority's ability to build institutional expertise and maintain operational continuity. Cross-border cooperation also remains a challenge, as highlighted by investigations involving international elements, such as the case of alleged political party funding by a Russian influence group. The IAAC announced its intent to investigate this complaint filed on March 21, 2023, but no detailed updates on the investigation's progress have been made publicly available. Delays in obtaining evidence and coordinating with international partners further hinder such cases. Statutes of limitations and procedural inefficiencies contribute to dismissals or delays in high-profile cases. For instance, the "golden passport" scandal involving allegations against a former President of the Republic remains in its initial stages, over two years after a complaint was filed. Similarly, a criminal case against a former Minister of Transport in connection with the scandal is only set to begin in January 2025. In terms of resources, the IAAC struggles with understaffing and insufficient financial allocations, which limit its ability to investigate all complaints effectively. Out of 315 complaints received during the reporting period, only five investigations were completed, and six remain ongoing. This performance reflects the gap between the public's expectations and the IAAC's constrained capacity. Political immunity regulations and the lack of streamlined procedures for lifting immunity present additional barriers to prosecuting high-ranking officials. Moreover, weak inter-agency coordination exacerbates delays and reduces the effectiveness of investigations. Despite these obstacles, legislative efforts are underway to address some of the IAAC's limitations. A proposal seeks to reclassify the IAAC as a public law entity, enabling it to establish its own staffing rules, operational guidelines, and potentially initiate private criminal prosecutions. However, these reforms remain pending, leaving the IAAC reliant on external authorities and ill-equipped to address systemic corruption effectively. Public policy is minimally informed by available data due to a lack of comprehensive and transparent reporting mechanisms. Efforts to improve transparency and accountability are ongoing but require significant reinforcement. Addressing the IAAC's structural weaknesses—granting it prosecutorial powers, enabling direct hiring of specialized personnel, and improving inter-agency coordination—will be critical to enhancing its effectiveness in combating corruption in Cyprus.

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

**Any other developments related to the anti-corruption framework - please specify**

*5000 character(s) maximum*

### III. Media pluralism and media freedom

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2024 Report regarding media pluralism and media freedom (if applicable)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The 2024 Rule of Law Report highlighted several recommendations for improving media pluralism and media freedom, and Cyprus has taken some steps to address these issues, though progress has been uneven. The Transparency in Public Decision-Making Processes Law 20(I)/2022 was fully implemented in March 2024, introducing measures to enhance transparency in public decision-making. This includes a Lobbyist Registry requiring individuals engaging in these processes to register and report their activities. While this initiative strengthens overall transparency, its impact on media freedom specifically is limited. Efforts to establish independent governance for public service media remain incomplete. Draft legislation aimed at modernizing the legal framework for state television has yet to be submitted to Parliament, and consultations with media stakeholders continue. Similarly, there has been no significant progress in addressing the recommendation to ensure transparent allocation of advertising expenses by the state and state enterprises. Despite the ongoing discussions, these gaps highlight a lack of urgency in implementing critical reforms to support media pluralism.

The government has also proposed legislation to address "fake news," but this remains at the consultation stage without substantive developments. Stakeholders from the media sector are being included in discussions, reflecting an effort to incorporate diverse perspectives. However, these consultations have yet to yield concrete outcomes that would directly address the challenges highlighted in the report.

In summary, while Cyprus has made some efforts toward transparency and stakeholder engagement, the broader structural and legislative reforms needed to improve media pluralism and independence are still lacking. The limited implementation of recommendations underscores the need for stronger commitments and faster action to promote a free and independent media environment.

## A. Media authorities and bodies

*(Cf. Article 30 of Directive 2018/1808)*

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The independence, enforcement powers, and adequacy of resources for media regulatory authorities in Cyprus have been safeguarded through various legal and institutional measures. Media bodies such as the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA) and the Cyprus Media Ethics Committee (CMEC) operate under frameworks that emphasize their autonomy and neutrality. These frameworks ensure decisions are made free from governmental, political, or commercial interference. For instance, the appointment processes for regulatory authorities prioritize professional qualifications and merit, reducing the risk of political bias or undue influence. The CRTA and CMEC operate transparently, and their decisions are subject to public reporting, ensuring a balance between independence and accountability. To effectively oversee media practices, these bodies have been equipped with enforcement powers, enabling them to impose fines, suspend licenses, or mandate compliance with broadcasting and ethical standards. CRTA, for example, has jurisdiction over private radio and television stations, ensuring they adhere to legal requirements and maintaining standards of impartiality, decency, and accuracy. Similarly, the CMEC enforces the Code of Media Ethics, which promotes responsible journalism and ethical media practices by addressing issues such as hate speech, sensationalism, and breaches of privacy. The effectiveness of these regulatory authorities is influenced by the availability of financial, human, and technical resources. While government funding is allocated to these bodies, it is not without challenges. The CMEC, for example, operates with limited permanent staff and often relies on part-time support and volunteers, which can limit its capacity to manage an increasing workload. Similarly, the CRTA has made strides in upgrading its technological infrastructure to monitor digital broadcasting, but financial constraints have hindered the full realization of these initiatives. Despite the robust enforcement frameworks, regulatory bodies face challenges, including the need for sustained financial support, technological modernization, and enhanced staffing. Addressing these issues is

critical to ensuring that regulatory authorities can effectively respond to the evolving media landscape, particularly the challenges posed by digital platforms and new forms of media. Additionally, fostering greater public trust through enhanced outreach and education campaigns can strengthen collaboration with media stakeholders and the broader community.

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

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The conditions and procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the head and members of media regulatory authorities in Cyprus are governed by clear legal frameworks aimed at ensuring transparency, accountability, and independence. The relevant processes are structured to prevent undue influence and promote merit-based selection, reinforcing the impartiality of these bodies. The appointment process involves multiple stakeholders to ensure fairness and competence. Candidates are typically nominated based on their professional qualifications, expertise, and integrity. For instance, appointments to the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA) are made following public calls for candidates, where nominations are reviewed against strict criteria. This process often includes consultations with relevant stakeholders, such as parliamentary committees or civil society organizations, ensuring a balanced and transparent approach. The legal frameworks governing these appointments, such as the Radio and Television Stations Law, specify the qualifications required for candidates. They emphasize the importance of selecting individuals who can uphold the principles of media independence and regulatory neutrality. Final decisions on appointments are usually taken by the Council of Ministers, with certain high-level positions requiring additional parliamentary approval. The procedures for dismissal are equally well-defined and aim to prevent arbitrary or politically motivated decisions. Dismissals can occur only under specific circumstances, such as misconduct, inability to perform duties, or violations of legal or ethical responsibilities. In such cases, investigations are conducted to substantiate the grounds for dismissal. The individual concerned is given the opportunity to respond to the allegations, ensuring a fair and transparent process. Final decisions on dismissals are typically made by the Council of Ministers and may require additional oversight or approval depending on the position. In alignment with European Union directives, these procedures are designed to maintain the independence of media regulatory authorities while ensuring accountability. For example, dismissal decisions must be justified, notified in advance, and made publicly available, as required by EU standards transposed into Cypriot law.

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

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Media councils and self-regulatory bodies play a significant role in maintaining ethical standards and fostering accountability within the media landscape of Cyprus. The Cyprus Media Ethics Committee (CMEC) is a key institution in this domain, established to promote ethical journalism and ensure compliance with the Code of Media Ethics. Operating independently of governmental and judicial authorities, CMEC serves as a platform for addressing complaints related to media practices, including issues of accuracy, fairness, and privacy. Its independence enables it to act impartially and uphold the principles of press freedom while fostering trust between media entities and the public. CMEC's functions extend beyond adjudicating complaints. It is responsible for enforcing a comprehensive Code of Media Ethics, which outlines the obligations of journalists and media organizations in areas such as avoiding hate speech, respecting privacy, and ensuring balanced reporting. The committee also engages in educational initiatives, raising awareness among media professionals and the public about the importance of ethical journalism and responsible media consumption. In addition to CMEC, the Cyprus Union of Journalists (CUJ) functions as a professional body advocating for the rights and integrity of journalists. It enforces a Code of Conduct among its members, promoting standards of objectivity and professionalism in reporting. CUJ also mediates disputes related to

professional conduct and organizes training sessions to enhance the skills and knowledge of media practitioners. The Cyprus Advertising Regulation Organization (CARO) is another important self-regulatory entity, focused on maintaining ethical standards in advertising. CARO ensures that advertisements adhere to its Code of Advertising Ethics, which aligns with international principles of decency, honesty, and legality. It also provides a mechanism for consumers to lodge complaints about advertisements, further supporting accountability within the media sector. These self-regulatory bodies work in tandem with governmental entities like the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA), complementing their regulatory roles. While CRTA oversees the licensing and operation of broadcasters, self-regulatory bodies focus on ethical standards and professional conduct, ensuring a comprehensive governance framework for the media.

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

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

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In Cyprus, the allocation of state advertising is governed by policies intended to ensure fairness and transparency, although challenges remain in fully implementing these principles. The legal and administrative frameworks emphasize the importance of equitable distribution of advertising resources to avoid favoritism and undue influence on media outlets. However, there has been limited progress in establishing robust mechanisms to enhance transparency and prevent potential political or governmental interference. Currently, state advertising allocation is guided by general principles rather than specific, binding legislation. While certain procedural safeguards exist, such as requirements for open calls or tenders for significant advertising campaigns, these practices are not consistently applied across all government departments or state entities. The absence of standardized criteria for allocating advertising funds can result in perceived or actual biases, particularly favoring outlets aligned with political or governmental interests. Efforts to improve transparency include increased scrutiny by oversight bodies and civil society organizations, which advocate for clearer guidelines and reporting mechanisms. Calls have been made to establish binding regulations requiring detailed disclosures of state advertising expenditures, including the amounts allocated to specific media outlets and the criteria used for distribution. This would enhance public confidence in the process and ensure accountability in the use of public funds. Although discussions on reforming the framework for state advertising have been initiated, significant legislative action has yet to materialize. Stakeholders, including media organizations and watchdog groups, continue to push for reforms that would include mandatory reporting of advertising expenditures, independent oversight mechanisms, and strict adherence to non-discriminatory principles in fund allocation.

### 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 licenses, company operation, capital entry requirements, concentration and corporate governance

*5000 character(s) maximum*

In Cyprus, a combination of legal and institutional safeguards exists to protect editorial independence and prevent state or political interference in both private and public media. These measures aim to uphold media freedom, ensure fair competition, and promote plurality of opinions. For private and public media, editorial independence is protected under the Constitution and national legislation, which guarantee freedom of expression and press autonomy. Media outlets operate under a framework that prohibits interference from state authorities or political entities. Journalistic practices are further guided by ethical codes established by bodies like the Cyprus Media Ethics Committee (CMEC), which ensure that editorial decisions are free from external influence and aligned with professional standards. However, challenges persist in fully safeguarding this independence, particularly when it comes to financial pressures or implicit political influences. Public service media, such as the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CYBC), are governed by specific safeguards to ensure their independence. The appointments of heads of management and members of governing boards are regulated by transparent and merit-based processes. These positions are typically filled through nominations that prioritize professional expertise, with additional oversight to minimize political interference. Dismissals are similarly subject to strict legal standards, requiring justified and documented reasons, thus providing security of tenure to leadership positions. Financial and operational independence of public service media is supported through a combination of public funding and regulatory provisions. Budgets for public broadcasters are allocated to ensure sufficient resources for independent operations while being subject to accountability mechanisms, such as audits and public reporting. These measures aim to prevent financial dependency from compromising editorial freedom or operational autonomy. The licensing and regulatory framework for media service providers is overseen by the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA). This body ensures compliance with national and EU directives, applying rigorous criteria for granting, renewing, or terminating licenses. Applicants must meet standards related to operational transparency, technical capacity, and financial stability. The process is designed to prevent monopolistic practices and encourage a diverse media landscape. Additionally, CRTA oversees issues related to capital entry, corporate governance, and ownership concentration, ensuring compliance with regulations designed to promote plurality and prevent undue control by any single entity or interest group.

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

For years, the lack of transparency in media ownership in the Republic of Cyprus has kept the country's global ranking in media pluralism significantly lower than expected for a European Union member state. More importantly, it has tarnished the integrity of the journalism produced. The absence of a comprehensive legal framework for digital media, combined with the outdated 1989 Press Law, has failed to ensure transparency in media ownership for both print and digital platforms. While there is a legal framework for audiovisual media, its lack of coherence hampers the ability of the Cyprus Radio and Television Authority to regulate effectively. The 2024 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Cyprus 65th globally, a position that reflects these systemic challenges. Additionally, the European University Institute's Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom assessed Cyprus's media ownership transparency as "High Risk," with a score of 84%. Most recently, the European Commission's 2024 Rule of Law Report on Cyprus observed no improvements in media pluralism, highlighting the stagnation in addressing these critical issues. In an effort to tackle the pressing issue of ownership transparency, the Cyprus Investigative Reporting Network (CIReN) conducted a study aimed at revealing and improving transparency in media ownership. CIReN operates as an independent, non-profit news platform committed to the highest professional and ethical standards of quality journalism on matters of public interest. The platform supports professional journalists across Cyprus by providing an independent space for investigating and publishing reports on social, economic, environmental, political, and institutional misconduct. Despite such efforts, 2024 saw no significant changes in the legal and regulatory landscape for media ownership and pluralism. Key recommendations from the European Commission's Rule of Law Report, such as establishing

independent governance for public service media and ensuring transparent allocation of state advertising expenditures, remain unimplemented. Consultations on proposed legislation addressing “fake news” are ongoing, but no tangible outcomes have been achieved. Furthermore, discussions regarding the modernization of public service media laws have yet to result in draft legislation being submitted to Parliament. These challenges underscore the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to ensure greater transparency in media ownership and strengthen media independence in Cyprus. The persistent gaps in legal and regulatory frameworks, coupled with the lack of progress in 2024, continue to hinder efforts to create a media environment that upholds the principles of transparency, pluralism, and accountability. Without immediate and effective action, the country's commitment to media freedom will remain under question, undermining public trust and the integrity of journalism.

## C. Framework for journalists' protection, transparency and access to documents

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

In Cyprus, the legal and institutional framework provides several guarantees for the independence and safety of journalists, emphasizing the protection of their sources and communications. These safeguards are essential to upholding press freedom and ensuring that journalists can perform their duties without fear of interference or reprisal. The protection of journalistic sources is enshrined in national law and aligns with European standards. Journalists in Cyprus are not compelled to disclose their sources unless mandated by a court under specific, justified circumstances, typically involving serious public interest or national security concerns. This ensures that journalists can report freely and maintain the trust of their sources. Similarly, the confidentiality of journalistic communications is safeguarded, with strong legal protections against unauthorized surveillance or interception. These measures are reinforced by Cyprus's adherence to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which enshrines the right to freedom of expression and press independence. Regarding journalists' safety, the Cypriot authorities have established mechanisms to address threats or attacks. Law enforcement agencies, including specialized units, are tasked with investigating incidents involving journalists and ensuring accountability for perpetrators. These units are trained to handle cases involving media professionals, particularly during protests or demonstrations where risks are heightened. However, challenges remain in ensuring rapid and effective responses to such incidents, and further training and resources may be required to strengthen these capabilities. Cyprus also actively engages with the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, addressing alerts lodged by the platform. When an alert is raised, the government and relevant authorities take steps to investigate the issue and provide follow-up action. For instance, reported cases of threats, harassment, or violence against journalists are examined thoroughly, and efforts are made to resolve them through legal and administrative channels. These actions demonstrate Cyprus's commitment to maintaining a secure environment for journalists and responding to international concerns regarding press freedom. Despite these safeguards, ongoing vigilance is required to address emerging risks in the digital era, including cyberbullying, online harassment, and threats to digital communications. Enhancing public awareness of the importance of press freedom, increasing transparency in media regulation, and fostering collaboration with international bodies can further protect journalists and ensure their independence and safety in a dynamic and often challenging media landscape.

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

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In Cyprus, law enforcement plays a critical role in ensuring journalists' safety during protests and demonstrations and investigating attacks against them. A legal and procedural framework exists to safeguard the rights of journalists and allow them to perform their duties without fear of violence or intimidation. The protection of journalists during public gatherings, including protests and demonstrations, is mandated by the Cypriot Constitution and the Criminal Code, which explicitly criminalize attacks or threats against media professionals. Law enforcement agencies are tasked with balancing public order and the protection of journalists, ensuring that media professionals can report on events without obstruction or harm. In practice, police officers deployed at such events are trained to recognize the distinct challenges journalists face in these situations, such as the need to access sensitive areas or conduct interviews under potentially volatile conditions. To bolster their capacity, law enforcement agencies have established specialized units that handle cases involving media professionals. These units investigate attacks or threats against journalists and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. In the digital sphere, the Cyprus Police's dedicated Cybercrime Unit addresses online threats and harassment targeting journalists, ensuring a comprehensive approach to their safety. Investigations into incidents involving journalists are conducted systematically, with a focus on ensuring accountability and transparency. Law enforcement agencies follow established protocols to gather evidence, interview witnesses, and bring cases to justice. In cases of violence or harassment during protests, police review video recordings, witness statements, and other evidence to identify those responsible. Despite these efforts, challenges such as delays in investigations or resource constraints can hinder effective enforcement, emphasizing the need for continuous improvements. While Cyprus has demonstrated its commitment to safeguarding journalists, ongoing efforts are needed to address gaps in capacity and coordination. Providing additional training for law enforcement officers, particularly on media rights and protest dynamics, can strengthen their ability to protect journalists effectively. Moreover, fostering collaboration between police, media organizations, and civil society can improve communication and trust, ensuring that journalists are better supported during their work. Through a combination of robust legal frameworks, specialized training, and proactive measures, Cyprus is working to enhance the safety of journalists. However, sustained investment in resources, training, and accountability mechanisms is essential to further strengthen the country's commitment to press freedom and the protection of media professionals in all contexts.

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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

In Cyprus, the right to access information and public documents is legally recognized and reinforced by legislation aimed at promoting transparency and accountability. The Law on the Right of Access to Public Sector Information (Law 184(I)/2017) provides a comprehensive framework for ensuring that journalists and the public can access information held by public authorities. This law aligns with European standards and emphasizes the principles of openness and transparency in governance. Under this framework, individuals, including journalists, can request access to public documents through a formal application process. Requests must be processed within specified timeframes, typically within 30 days, ensuring timely responses. Extensions may be granted in complex cases, but these are subject to strict justification. To facilitate access, public authorities are required to designate officers responsible for handling information requests and maintaining compliance with the law. The procedure for accessing information is designed to be straightforward and user-friendly. While most requests are processed free of charge, nominal fees may be imposed for administrative tasks such as photocopying or extensive document searches. These fees are regulated to ensure affordability and prevent financial barriers to accessing information. In cases where access is denied, applicants can seek administrative or judicial review of the decision. The Commissioner of Data Protection serves as an independent oversight authority, empowered to investigate complaints,

mediate disputes, and enforce compliance with the law. Applicants can escalate unresolved issues to the courts, ensuring an additional layer of accountability. Despite these provisions, challenges remain in the practical implementation of the law. Obstacles include delays in processing requests, inconsistent application of transparency principles across public authorities, and limited awareness among officials and the public about the right to access information. Additionally, the classification of certain information as confidential or sensitive, particularly in areas such as national security, can limit accessibility. These classifications are subject to specific criteria, but concerns have been raised about the potential for overuse or misuse to restrict access unnecessarily. Efforts to improve access to information in Cyprus have included public awareness campaigns, training for government officials, and the introduction of digital platforms for submitting and tracking information requests. However, further investment in resources and technology, as well as enhanced oversight, is needed to ensure full compliance with transparency obligations. To strengthen access to information, Cyprus should prioritize reducing delays, ensuring uniform application of the law, and increasing public and institutional awareness of transparency rights and obligations. By addressing these areas, the country can reinforce trust in public institutions and support the essential role of journalists and the public in holding authorities accountable.

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

In Cyprus, journalists often face legal challenges, including defamation lawsuits and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), which can undermine press freedom and discourage investigative reporting. While legal frameworks exist to balance the protection of individual reputations with freedom of expression, there are ongoing efforts to address abusive lawsuits and provide stronger safeguards for journalists. Defamation laws in Cyprus are governed by the Civil Wrongs Law, which allows individuals to file suits against media outlets or journalists for alleged harm to their reputation. Although these laws are legitimate in addressing genuine grievances, they can also be misused to intimidate journalists or suppress critical reporting. High-profile cases often involve public figures or corporations seeking to silence media investigations into issues of public interest. SLAPPs have become a growing concern, as these lawsuits are often filed not with the intent to win but to burden journalists with legal costs and protracted proceedings, ultimately deterring them from pursuing sensitive stories. In response, Cyprus has taken initial steps to address this issue. Courts are empowered to dismiss cases deemed abusive or manifestly unfounded, a crucial mechanism for protecting media professionals from being unfairly targeted. However, the consistent and effective application of these protections remains a challenge. To safeguard against abusive lawsuits, Cyprus has implemented measures such as requiring plaintiffs to demonstrate substantial harm to their reputation and providing journalists with legal protections under freedom of expression guarantees in the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Additionally, organizations like the Cyprus Union of Journalists (CUJ) provide legal support and advocacy for journalists facing SLAPPs or defamation suits, ensuring they are equipped to defend their rights. Despite these safeguards, gaps persist in the legal framework. Calls have been made for legislative reforms to introduce explicit anti-SLAPP measures, such as penalties for filing abusive lawsuits and expedited dismissal procedures for baseless cases. Public awareness campaigns and training for judges and legal professionals are also needed to foster a better understanding of SLAPPs and their implications for press freedom. In addressing defamation and SLAPP cases, Cyprus has made progress but must continue to strengthen its protections for journalists. Ensuring access to legal support, implementing robust anti-SLAPP legislation, and enhancing judicial awareness can create a more secure environment for media professionals. These efforts are essential for upholding the principles of free expression and investigative journalism, which are vital to a democratic society.

## Any other developments related to media pluralism and freedom - please specify

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2024 Report regarding the system of checks and balances (if applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

The 2024 Rule of Law Report highlighted several recommendations regarding the system of checks and balances in Cyprus. While some progress has been made in addressing these issues, significant challenges remain, and many of the recommendations are still pending implementation. One of the key areas identified was the separation of duties and control over the Attorney General's decisions. In response, the government prepared draft legislation to reform the roles of the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, and the Auditor General. These bills propose separating the advisory and prosecutorial roles of the Attorney General, establishing the positions of Public Prosecutor and Deputy Public Prosecutor, and creating a mechanism for reviewing their decisions. Additionally, the reforms include the creation of an Audit Council and the introduction of fixed terms for the Auditor General and Deputy Auditor General. Despite these proposals, the bills have not yet been submitted to Parliament, and the recommendations remain partially implemented. The Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) was highlighted in the report as a key institution for strengthening accountability. Although its establishment marked an important step, the IAAC continues to face resource constraints, limiting its effectiveness. An amendment bill was introduced in October 2024 to reclassify the IAAC as a public law entity, granting it greater autonomy and the ability to initiate private criminal prosecutions. However, this measure has not been finalized, and the authority remains underfunded and understaffed, which hampers its ability to carry out its mandate. The 2024 report also emphasized the need for increased transparency and stakeholder involvement in legislative processes. While some progress has been made with the implementation of an e-Consultation platform, which allows citizens to review and discuss government bills before submission to Parliament, the legislative process remains opaque in certain areas. There is no equivalent mechanism for legislative proposals initiated by Members of Parliament, creating a gap in public participation and transparency. Judicial reforms were also a focal point of the recommendations. While some advancements have been made to address delays in the judiciary, including reforms to reduce the backlog of pending cases, significant challenges persist. The court system is burdened by outdated infrastructure, insufficient staffing, and the absence of a fully computerized case management system. The e-Justice system, introduced in early 2024, encountered significant technical failures and was ultimately terminated by the government in October 2024, further delaying digitalization efforts. The process for appointing judges remains another area of concern. While procedural reforms have been implemented, the system still lacks transparency, with decision-making heavily centralized within the Supreme Court. There is a growing demand for clearer criteria and documentation in the appointment process to ensure fairness and accountability. Finally, the lack of transparent rules for the allocation of state advertising expenditures, as well as the absence of reforms to ensure independent governance of public service media, highlights ongoing deficiencies in maintaining a balanced system of checks and balances. These areas remain unaddressed, with no tangible progress reported in 2024. Overall, while some steps have been taken to address the recommendations of the 2024 Rule of Law Report, many critical areas require further attention. Structural reforms, resource allocation, and greater transparency are necessary to strengthen the system of checks and balances in Cyprus and uphold the principles of accountability and good governance. The lack of significant progress in several key areas underscores the need for sustained and coordinated efforts to implement the recommended measures effectively.

## A. The process for preparing and enacting laws

Framework, policy and use of impact assessments and evidence based policy-making, stakeholders'[1]/public consultations (including rules and practices on the transparent participation of civil society to policy development and decision-making processes), and transparency and quality of the legislative process both in the preparatory and the parliamentary phase

[1] This includes also the consultation of social partners

5000 character(s) maximum

The 2024 Rule of Law Report highlighted several areas requiring improvement in Cyprus's policymaking and legislative processes, particularly in relation to impact assessments, evidence-based policymaking, public consultations, stakeholder engagement, and the transparency and quality of the legislative process. While there have been some advancements, key gaps persist, limiting progress toward more inclusive and transparent governance. The framework for conducting impact assessments and evidence-based policymaking remains inconsistent. Although legally mandated for legislative proposals, impact assessments are often not utilized effectively, and their quality varies significantly. This undermines their potential to improve legislative outcomes by ensuring decisions are grounded in robust evidence and analysis. Public consultations have shown some progress, particularly through the introduction of the e-Consultation platform. This tool enables citizens to review and comment on government-initiated bills prior to their submission to Parliament, promoting greater public participation. However, this mechanism excludes legislative proposals introduced by Members of Parliament (MPs), leaving a significant gap in transparency and inclusivity. Public consultation for legislative proposals by MPs, similar to the process for government bills, is a significant legislative gap that needs addressing to ensure consistent public input across all legislative processes. Civil society organizations (CSOs) often struggle to contribute meaningfully, as consultations lack structure and regularity. Parliamentary committees have made efforts to involve stakeholders in the legislative process by inviting them to participate in discussions on proposed laws. This practice reflects an effort to include diverse perspectives and foster broader consensus. While positive, these invitations lack a formalized framework to ensure consistency and transparency, reducing their overall effectiveness. Live streaming of Parliamentary Committees has also been proposed as a measure to enhance transparency. By allowing the public to witness decision-making processes and debates, live streaming fosters trust in government actions and promotes accountability, as committee members are aware their discussions are broadcasted. This increased visibility can lead to more thoughtful and responsible decision-making. Furthermore, live streaming enhances accessibility, enabling individuals unable to attend in person to stay informed and engaged, and encouraging greater civic participation by providing citizens with a deeper understanding of the legislative process and opportunities to influence public discourse. Another related development is the implementation of the Transparency in Public Decision-Making Processes Law 20(I)/2022, which introduced regulations for lobbying activities. This law aims to enhance transparency in interactions between decision-makers and stakeholders. It requires individuals or organizations participating in public decision-making to register in a Lobbyist Registry and report their activities. Additionally, public officials must disclose scheduled meetings with lobbyists to the Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC). This framework helps address concerns about undue influence in the policymaking process and promotes accountability. Despite these efforts, the legislative process remains opaque in several areas. Legislative drafting often occurs without sufficient public oversight, and parliamentary committee debates are not consistently accessible to the public. Procedural irregularities also undermine confidence in the system, as demonstrated in December 2024, when a constitutional amendment vote proceeded despite failing to meet the required majority.

The modernization of legislative processes through digital tools has also faced challenges. The e-Justice platform, intended to improve transparency and efficiency, encountered significant technical failures after its launch in early 2024. The system was eventually terminated in October 2024, delaying progress in streamlining legislative operations.

Rules and use of fast-track procedures and emergency procedures (for example, the percentage of decisions adopted through emergency/urgent procedure compared to the total number of adopted decisions)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Regime for constitutional review of laws

*5000 character(s) maximum*

The regime for constitutional review of laws in Cyprus involves several processes and checks to ensure compliance with the Constitution. For example, when constitutional questions arise, such as the inclusion of the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General in asset declaration laws, the President referred the matter to the Supreme Constitutional Court. The Court ultimately rejected the referral, emphasizing its role in resolving such disputes. The Supreme Constitutional Court plays a crucial role in interpreting constitutional provisions and maintaining accountability. An example is its decision to dismiss the Auditor General for misconduct following a request by the Attorney General. The Court highlighted issues of bias and improper behavior, demonstrating how it enforces constitutional standards even in politically sensitive cases. There is an ongoing challenge in balancing transparency with judicial independence. For instance, Supreme Court judges were exempted from asset declaration requirements, sparking debates about fairness and the independence of the judiciary. Another example of constitutional review involves procedural adherence in legislative processes. In one instance, the Parliament attempted to amend a constitutional article, requiring a two-thirds majority. However, only 37 out of 38 necessary votes were secured, yet the Speaker proceeded with the approval, raising concerns about procedural violations and the integrity of the constitutional process.

## B. Independent authorities

Independence, resources, capacity and powers of national human rights institutions ('NHRIs'), of ombudsman institutions if different from NHRIs, of equality bodies if different from NHRIs and of supreme audit institutions

(Cf. the website of the European Court of Auditors: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/SupremeAuditInstitutions.aspx#>)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

In Cyprus, the independence, resources, capacity, and powers of institutions such as the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), ombudsman, equality bodies, and the supreme audit institution face both achievements and challenges. The ombudsman, which also functions as the NHRI, has a legal framework that supports its independence. However, its operational autonomy can be constrained by insufficient resources and its dependence on government funding, which limits its ability to handle complaints, conduct investigations, and raise public awareness of human rights effectively. Equality bodies in Cyprus are often integrated into the ombudsman's functions and face similar challenges. While they have investigatory powers to address cases of discrimination, they lack the enforcement authority to impose penalties or ensure compliance. Limited financial and human resources further hinder their ability to carry out their mandates

comprehensively, which restricts progress in promoting equality and combating discrimination. The supreme audit institution plays a vital role in uncovering corruption and financial inefficiencies. However, its independence has been questioned, especially following the dismissal of the Auditor General by the Supreme Constitutional Court in 2024. This decision raised significant concerns about potential threats to the institution's autonomy. Furthermore, the lack of predetermined term limits for the Auditor General and the Deputy Auditor General has been highlighted as an outdated provision. Efforts to address this issue include a proposed bill to establish an Audit Council and introduce fixed terms for these positions, but broader structural challenges persist. Resource limitations and a lack of modern tools and systems also affect the institution's ability to function effectively. Capacity constraints are a recurring issue across these institutions. The ombudsman and equality bodies are both understaffed and face challenges in recruiting specialized personnel. This shortage affects their ability to address the high volume of complaints and implement broader initiatives. Similarly, the supreme audit institution's capacity is hindered by outdated infrastructure and limited resources, which impact the efficiency of its audits and investigations.

Statistics/reports concerning the follow-up to recommendations by National Human Rights Institutions, ombudsman institutions, equality bodies and supreme audit institutions in the past two years

*5000 character(s) maximum*

## C. Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

Implementation of final judgments by the public administration and State institutions and follow-up given to supranational judgments, including decisions from the European Court of Human Rights, as well as available remedies in case of non-implementation

*5000 character(s) maximum*

## D. 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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

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

*5000 character(s) maximum*

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)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

## E. Initiatives to foster a rule of law culture

If there have been developments related to initiatives to foster a rule of law culture, please specify, which (e.g. debates in national parliaments on the rule of law, public information campaigns on rule of law issues, contributions from civil society, education initiatives, etc.)

*5000 character(s) maximum*

**Any other developments related to the system of checks and balances - please specify**

*5000 character(s) maximum*

## Supporting document upload

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If you would like to submit any supporting document(s) to your contribution, please upload your file(s) here

