

2025 Rule of Law Report - targeted stakeholder consultation

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

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^[1] 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](#).

^[1] 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

* 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

K-Monitor Public Benefit Association

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

k-monitor.hu

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

361342143111-55

* 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

Orsolya

Surname

Vincze

Email Address of the organisation

info@k-monitor.hu

*** 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

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

Hungary's anti-corruption landscape in 2024 reveals a complex picture of superficial reforms masking deeply entrenched systemic issues. While the year saw the adoption of a new National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) and various institutional adjustments, a closer look reveals a consistent pattern of inadequate implementation, weak enforcement, and a clear lack of genuine political will to tackle high-level and systemic corruption. The NACS, despite its comprehensive list of measures, is hampered by a lack of specific legal detail and relies heavily on soft measures rather than robust, legally binding regulations.

The Anti-Corruption Task Force has become largely ineffective, routinely ignoring proposals from non-governmental members. The Integrity Authority, although formally independent and adequately funded, is severely hampered by a lack of legal power, limited access to databases, and the government's persistent dismissal of its recommendations, a pattern that exposes the authorities' role as merely for show.

Additionally, the Integrity Authority and Anti-Corruption Task Force are facing a significant crisis following a police raid and criminal investigation into IA head Ferenc Biró for alleged office abuse and fund mismanagement, charges he denies. Key anti-corruption institutions, including the Prosecutor's Office, the Competition Authority, and the State Audit Office, remain under heavy government influence, eroding their formal independence and limiting their capacity to pursue high-level corruption cases. Instead, these bodies are often used as tools against political opponents of the ruling party or rivals within the government-affiliated business elite.

The most revealing indicators of systemic corruption are the rising fortunes of government cronies, such as Hungary's wealthiest individual and close ally of the Prime Minister, Lőrinc Mészáros, and the Prime Minister's son-in-law, both of whom continue to earn profits well above average, even during economic downturns. At the same time, the asset declaration system remains fundamentally flawed, with significant omissions, a lack of verification mechanisms, and no sanctions in place. This system now demands the publication of even less information than it did before the EU-initiated reforms. The concealment of wealth is facilitated by the growing use of private equity funds, which operate without effective oversight or transparency regarding their beneficial owners.

The lack of transparency in state transactions is evident in questionable developments, such as the government's purchases of office spaces and logistics hubs at inflated prices from government-affiliated oligarchs, including the Prime Minister's son-in-law, and the dubious "mini Dubai" real estate project with investors from the UAE. These examples reveal a deeply rooted pattern of cronyism.

Additionally, the frequent, no-cost transfer of valuable state assets to public interest trusts and churches further illustrates questionable state asset management that benefits politically loyal institutions. The tendency to provide preferential treatment and benefits to a select few is also evident in the use of "strategically important" investments.

Efforts in criminal justice have been largely ineffective, with very few successful prosecutions of high-level corruption. The new "judicial review" mechanism has proven to be little more than a façade, seldom resulting in meaningful progress in such cases. Whistleblowing systems, while in place, are underused and function in an atmosphere of widespread distrust. Attacks against media and civil society, along with ongoing efforts to further undermine judicial independence, pose a serious threat to the remaining pillars of independent oversight.

Overall, the events in 2024 confirm once again that corruption in Hungary is not merely a system error; it is deeply entrenched in its core. The focus on superficial measures, coupled with the lack of political will for genuine reform, points to a system that is designed to enrich a select few at the expense of the public good, all the while attempting to maintain a façade of compliance with EU standards and the Rule of Law.

This submission covers topics that align with K-Monitor's mission and areas of focus. The majority of the content was developed in collaboration with other Hungarian civil society organizations. The sections on the justice system were authored by Amnesty International Hungary and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, and represent K-Monitor's position. The anti-corruption chapter was co-written by K-Monitor and Transparency International Hungary, while the part on Access to Information in the Media chapter was prepared by K-Monitor, with contributions from the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union. The submitted parts of the final chapter were written by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and include findings from K-Monitor's research, fully reflecting our position on those issues.

Questions for contribution

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

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

A. Independence

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

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

Promotion of judges and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)

5000 character(s) maximum

Allocation of cases in courts

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

Independence/autonomy of the prosecution service

5000 character(s) maximum

1) As recalled by the 2024 Rule of Law Report, “[t]he 2023 and previous Rule of Law Reports noted that the strictly hierarchical architecture of the prosecution service and a lack of internal checks and balances enhance the persistent risk of top prosecutors influencing the work of subordinate prosecutors, including in individual cases”. Since the structure of the prosecution service remained the same and the respective concerns have not been addressed in any form, the 2024 Rule of Law Report’s conclusion that “risks of undue interference with individual cases remain” is still valid.

Hungary has still not implemented GRECO’s recommendation to review the possibility to maintain the Prosecutor General in office after the expiry of their mandate by a minority blocking of the election in Parliament of a successor. This possibility was criticized by the Venice Commission as early as 2012, and, as also pointed out by the 2023 Rule of Law Report, it “could expose [the Prosecutor General] to undue political influence”. It continues to be the case that the Prosecutor General can only be removed from office with a two-thirds majority of Members of Parliament as a result of a 2021 amendment. Moreover, the 14th Amendment to the Fundamental Law, adopted in December 2024, opened the path for the position of the Prosecutor General to be filled in by a non-prosecutor, which may signal an increase in political expectations at the expense of professional standards.

GRECO’s recommendation that the immunity of prosecutors be limited to activities relating to their participation in the administration of justice (“functional immunity”) remains not implemented.

It was also recommended by GRECO that disciplinary proceedings in respect of prosecutors be handled outside the immediate hierarchical structure of the prosecution service and in a way that provides for enhanced accountability and transparency. As a result, the respective rules were amended to involve a disciplinary commissioner in disciplinary proceedings. GRECO welcomed this step, but pointed out in its 2023 compliance report that the disciplinary commissioner’s “role is limited, and the superior prosecutor is still leading the overall procedure”, and that “[n]o measures to increase the transparency of the process has been reported” by the Hungarian authorities.

In sum, out of the four recommendations issued by GRECO in 2015 in relation to corruption prevention in respect of prosecutors, one recommendation remains not implemented, while two remain only partly implemented.

(2) As of 9 July 2024, Act CLXI of 2011 on the Organisation and Administration of Courts and Act CLXIII of 2011 on the Prosecution Service were amended, granting the Ministry of Justice unlimited access to decisions delivered by the judiciary, the prosecution service and other autonomous state bodies and government agencies. The new rules allow the Ministry of Justice to acquire protected information to which it would not have access otherwise. Early access to information regarding ongoing cases allows the Government and the government majority to interfere in ongoing court proceedings and influence their outcome through immediate effect law-making (e.g. by issuing emergency decrees, or amending laws in the Parliament’s fast-track legislative process), thereby undermining the organisational independence of courts and the prosecution service. A freedom of information request revealed that until 19 December 2024, the Ministry of Justice requested the NOJ once (in August 2024) to provide it with a random sample of anonymised civil and criminal decisions.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

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

Any other developments related to the justice system - please specify

5000 character(s) maximum

II. Anti-Corruption Framework

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

The 2023 Rule of Law Report and the 2024 Rule of Law Report concluded that Hungary has made no progress on adopting comprehensive reforms on lobbying and revolving doors; on further improving the system of asset declarations, providing for effective oversight and enforcement; and on establishing a robust track record of investigations, prosecutions and final judgments for high-level corruption cases.

The 2024 Rule of Law Report reiterated the same anti-corruption recommendations.

(1) Hungary's new mid-term national anti-corruption strategy (NACS) was adopted in February 2024 and it envisions a series of measures aiming to fulfil the recommendation on "adopting comprehensive reforms on lobbying and revolving doors, and further improving the system of asset declarations, providing for effective oversight and enforcement". The NACS expected the digitalisation of asset declarations in the public sector by 31 May 2024 and the introduction of adequate and deterrent administrative and criminal sanctions for serious breaches of obligations relating to asset declarations by 30 April 2024. Although a certain level of digitalisation was achieved, as previously hand-written declarations are now available in a single pdf document, the measures relating to a sanction system have not been adopted until the day of submission of this contribution. Furthermore, neither the substance of the asset declarations nor the sanctions mechanism associated with them have advanced. In addition, the NACS mandates the Government to examine by 30 November 2025 the expansion of asset declaration obligation to high level officials of non-government public organs, such as chambers of commerce, the Academy of Sciences, etc.

By 31 December 2024, the NACS expected the inclusion of provisions relating to lobbying, conflict of interests and the revolving door phenomenon into the Ethics Code of public officials, the adoption of Ethics Codes in order to address conflict of interests, the acceptance of gifts and hospitality, the revolving door phenomenon, lobby contacts, and the occupation of immediate relatives among top level executives, their advisers, parliamentarians and employees of the Parliament's Office, the adoption of a methodology guide at the municipal level to identify and promote best practices in lobbying, the revolving door phenomenon and the prevention of conflict of interests.

However, no publicly available information indicates the completion of the above goals. Information received in relation to the delivery on the NACS requirements indicate that the Ethics Code of the employees of the Parliament's Office is believed to be completed and uploaded on the Office's internal web, but no public access has been granted.

By 30 November 2025, the NACS expects the completion of Hungary's new lobby act. Except for hinting at the revolving door phenomenon, the strategy fails to outline any detail regarding the content, direction or principles of the envisioned new regulation. So far, no preparatory work or regulatory draft relating to the new lobby act has been made public.

(2) As regards the other recommendation Hungary should "Establish a robust track record of investigations, prosecutions and final judgments for high-level corruption cases." The 2022 criminal procedure reform, with the introduction of the 'motion for revision' and by enabling private prosecution in certain high-level corruption offences and offences of abuse and mismanagement intended to facilitate the prosecution of high-level cases even if they are derailed by the investigating authorities or the prosecution service. In light of experience accumulated during the past two years, this new legal instrument has not improved the fight against corruption.

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

The anti-corruption framework remained fragmented with numerous stakeholders such as the State Audit Office, the Public Procurement Authority, the Competition Authority, the Integrity Authority, the Prosecution Service and the judiciary. Although the National Protective Service (NPS), under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, is tasked with coordinating the Government's anti-corruption policy, since 2022, it has lost significant parts of its jurisdiction. Parallel to this, the anticorruption portfolio of the Constitution Protection Authority (CPA), one of Hungary's six national security agencies includes, since 2022, reliability checks and the detection of corruption offences of government officials, except for the ones working under the Ministry of Interior, i.e., law enforcement, health, and child protection (the latter from 2024 July). This narrows the purview of the NPS and the Police, and it expands secrecy over the Government's anti-corruption activities by excluding accessibility of even the most basic statistics, such as the number of reliability screenings. New elements of the anti-corruption framework introduced in 2022 to meet EU remedial measures, such as the Integrity Authority, the Directorate for Internal Audit and Integrity (DIAI), the Anti-Corruption Task Force and the redesigned Directorate General for Audit of European Funds did not have a significant impact in curbing high level government corruption. The newly created institutions lack proper jurisdiction and primarily have subsidiary or parallel competencies, which means they depend on the powers and cooperation of pre-existing institutions. However, these institutions show a clear reluctance to strengthen the fight against corruption.

The Integrity Authority's budget for 2025 remains at HUF 19 billion (€ 46 million), and it employs over 100 staff members. It is significant (especially in light of the January 2025 criminal proceedings against the Authority's president) that, although the Integrity Authority theoretically has the autonomy to set its budget and had proposed a nearly 10 billion (€ 24 million) increase for 2025, this decision was ultimately overturned by ruling party MPs following a direct recommendation from the Ministry of Finance. (átírnám)

The law permits the Integrity Authority to sign agreements with both public and non-state entities for communication, information exchange, and to support the practical measures necessary for carrying out its duties. However, the cooperation agreements signed by the Authority only enable limited information sharing, due to a mismatch between the Authority's legal right to access data and information related to its audit procedures and the reporting authorizations of the cooperating bodies under sectoral laws. As a result, the Authority's efforts to establish crucial cooperation agreements for information access have been undermined, leaving it with agreements that function only minimally. Consequently, the Authority's ability to address corruption and financial misconduct is significantly hindered by conflicting access-to-data regulations.

The challenges preventing the Anti-Corruption Task Force (ACTF) from effectively fulfilling its mission continue to persist, its contribution to fighting corruption remains very limited. There is little to no consultation between civil society and government members on the anti-corruption framework within the Task Force, and government agencies tasked with combating corruption do not consider the ACTF or its non-governmental members as relevant stakeholders. The fact that the Government regularly fails to consult the Task Force on important legislative changes is an indication for that. One recent example for that was the introduction of new conflict of interest provisions for the board members of public interest asset management foundations, where the draft regulation was not even presented to the ACTF. Furthermore, the lack of financial and infrastructural support for the non-governmental members of the ACTF remains unaddressed by the Government, despite the Task Force's unanimous approval of the need for certain reforms to improve its efficiency.

As a result, both the Integrity Authority and the Anti-Corruption Task Force remain isolated enclaves in Hungary's anti-corruption landscape.

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

State institutions designed to represent democratic checks and balances are headed by political loyalists and tend to selectively enforce the laws or underuse their jurisdiction to favour the incumbent administration. The Integrity Authority exhibits the only exception to the pervasive state capture, but this agency, as highlighted above, functions as an enclave and is reliant on other state agencies.

Tasks to combat corruption are distributed among various state agencies, some of which are subordinated to the Government, such as, for example, the National Protective Service, the National Tax and Customs Administration, or the Government Control Office. These institutions can in no way be considered as independent or autonomous bodies. Other institutions charged with anti-corruption duties are formally independent from the Government's executive, such as the State Audit Office (SAO), the Hungarian Competition Authority (HCA), the Public Procurement Authority (PPA), and the prosecution service. These agencies remain exposed to undue government influence and show low levels of autonomy in performing their functions. This is exemplified by the reluctance of the Prosecution Service and of the Public Procurement Authority to take action in the case of the 35-year long concession of substantial parts of Hungary's waste management industry to the oil giant 'MOL' company. .

A relevant change regarding the independence of the prosecution service was the 14th amendment to the Fundamental Law, adopted in December 2024, that opened the path for the position of the Prosecutor General to be filled by a non-prosecutor, which gives rise to speculations regarding the potential early termination of the incumbent Prosecutor General's mandate and recruitment of his potential successor, as the amendment enable the appointment of a new Prosecutor General, loyal to the current ruling party, for a nine-year term before the 2026 election, in case of a threat of a potential government change.

It is not uncommon and clear evidence of political bias of Hungary's oversight institutions that the leaders of these bodies openly support questionable government measures that have clearly partisan aims. As an example, HCA president Rigo publicly stated in an interview that the EU court's ruling against Hungary in the Spar case was an affront to Hungarian consumers. Mr. Rigo also defended the Government's price controls as necessary to protect citizens and criticised the Hungarian court for referring the case to the EU court.

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

Beyond the requirements in the area of lobbying, the revolving doors phenomenon and the digitalisation of asset declarations described in a previous section, Hungary's mid-term national anti-corruption strategy (NACS) envisions a variety of different anti-corruption related goals to be achieved until the end of 2024. By 31 March 2024, the Ministry of Justice ought to have outlined the directions of amendments to the freedom of information framework in line with the recommendations of the National Data Protection and Freedom of Information Authority. No corresponding draft was made publicly available, even though CSO members of the Anti-Corruption Task Force asked for this on multiple occasions. It has to be noted that Act LXXXV of 2024 amended the law on informational self-determination and freedom of information, but the amendments only partially address the above mentioned recommendations. By April 30, the Ministry of Justice was expected to examine the political finance framework to protect political parties against foreign influence and ensure the compliance of operations of political organisations with international and EU standards. Beyond the lack of any publicly available information relating to the completion of this specific task, it has to be underlined that the NACS fails to define 'political organisations', opening the door to speculations as to whether this exercise targets civil society organisations labelled as 'political pressure groups'.

By 29 February 2024, the new provisions on private prosecution of high-level cases related to corruption and mismanagement ought to have been revisited and necessary amendments ought to have been proposed by the Ministry of Justice, but no publicly available evidence support that either of these goals have been achieved. By the end of 2024, the Ministry of Interior was expected to complete the review of the methodology of reliability screenings, but again, no progress was publicly available to date of this submission. By 30 June 2024, the Ministry of Justice was expected to consult the ombuds and draft training materials relating to the new whistleblower regulation by June 30 2024, but no deliverables following from this task were made public.

The NACS expects the review of ethics codices of judges (by June 30, 2024), and law enforcement (by 31 December 2024). The Ministry of Justice was expected to review by 30 June 2024 the scoring system based on which judicial applicants are selected. The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Interior were jointly tasked with the development of training materials specifically serving to promote the prevention of corruption among the youth (by June 30 2024). The Ministry of Interior, within its own purview, should have examined the possibility of further reducing the risk of corruption in education, healthcare and social services (by 31 December 2024). Except for the amendment to the Police Code of Ethics, no publicly available information indicates if these targets have been met.

The Ministry of Justice was expected to examine the possibility of introducing methods aiming to promote integrity within public bodies and state-owned service providers by 30 June 2024, and to propose a roadmap for the introduction of the necessary amendments to the Government by 31 December 2024. No publicly available information indicates whether these targets have been met.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade was expected to assess Hungarian businesses' exposure to foreign bribery by 31 December 2024. In the area of combating foreign bribery, the Ministry of Justice was tasked to cooperate with the Prosecutor General in order to devise an international exchange program with the aim to effectively carry out tasks related to the investigation and prosecution of foreign bribery cases and to improve the quality of related regulations (31 December 2024). The Ministry of Finance was expected to outline the cooperation framework of the Prosecution Service and the National Tax and Customs in foreign bribery cases (31 December 2024). No publicly available information indicates whether these targets have been met.

Multiple tasks were assigned to the Ministry of Finance in relation, inter alia, to assessment of the domestic and EU funds distribution mechanism, reporting obligations to the State Aid Monitoring Office (by 30 September 2024), prevention of cases of "double jeopardy" (by 31 December 2024), internal control systems of major domestic corporations (by 31 March 2024) and a roadmap for introduction (by 30 June 2024), cooperation framework in foreign bribery cases (by 31 December 2024).(by 30 June 2024), however, no publicly available information indicates if these targets have been met.

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

The National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) Action Plan outlines several actions for developing and adopting ethical codes across various public sector entities in Hungary, each with its own requirements, timelines, and procedures.

Top officials, advisors, Members of Parliament (MPs), and Parliament staff were mandated to adopt comprehensive ethical codes by December 31, 2024. These codes must explicitly address core areas, including conflicts of interest, gift acceptance policies, post-employment restrictions (like cooling-off periods), rules governing interactions with lobbyists, and regulations regarding the employment of relatives. This includes stipulations on referrals, procedural rules for enforcement, and mechanisms of oversight. The Parliament's Office has taken initial steps by drafting an Ethical and Conduct Code for parliamentary civil servants, which was developed following consultations with various state bodies. Furthermore, a compendium of ethical codes and legal rules for MPs has been completed, although minor revisions are anticipated due to pending legislation, and issues concerning the formal publication of these documents remain under discussion. Issues concerning the official adoption and publication of these documents prevail. The National Judicial Council (NJC) is tasked with reviewing the existing judicial code of ethics, specifically focusing on provisions related to gift acceptance. This review has no specific deadline but should encompass the procedural rules for enforcement of these provisions. The NJC has confirmed that the current judicial code of ethics lacks explicit provisions on gift acceptance and has also noted the existence of the National Office of the Judiciary's (NOJ) integrity regulations which do cover gift acceptance. The NJC has contacted the NOJ to obtain documents related to the enactment of these regulations, to avoid conflicting rules. It's worth noting that the judges adopted their Code of Ethics in 2022, which was then unusually challenged by the President of the Kúria before the Constitutional Court, but this issue has not been placed on the agenda of the Constitutional Court in the past two years.

For police officers, the Police Code of Ethics was to be supplemented by December 31, 2024, with detailed and practical guidance on appropriate conduct, developed in collaboration with the Hungarian Police Association. The National Police Headquarters, the National Disaster Management Directorate, the National Prison Service, and the National Immigration Directorate have all submitted proposals to the Ministry of Interior (BM) regarding amendments to sector-specific ethical codes, particularly the Police Code of Ethics and the Law Enforcement Ethical Code. In November 2024 the Civil servants, specifically those belonging to the Hungarian Civil Servants' Association, are required to supplement their code of ethics with detailed rules on avoiding conflicts of interest and regulating interactions with lobbyists. These rules should build upon the work of integrity advisors and should align with the Council of Europe's recommendations on civil servant ethical codes. However, the Hungarian Civil Servants' Association plans to revise these codes in 2025. Despite these efforts initiated throughout 2024, a significant gap remains. There are no known plans, not even conceptual plans, to develop ethical codes (or establish associated enforcement mechanisms) specifically for MPs and senior government officials. This gap has previously been highlighted in GRECO's fifth evaluation round, representing a major deficiency.

An outstanding case of the revolving door phenomenon resulted when Ms Judit Varga, Hungary's previous minister of justice and leading Fidesz candidate for the 2024 European Parliament elections had to resign due to a political scandal. After her resignation it turned out that her new partner was Mr László Windisch, chair of the State Audit Office. It was revealed that since her resignation, Ms Judit Varga receives a monthly remuneration of HUF 2,1 million (EUR 5000) from the public interest asset management foundation that manages the university of Miskolc.

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

Although the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) expects the completion of Hungary's new lobby act by 30 November 2025, to this date, no publicly available information has surfaced as regards the preparatory works or the actual scope of the planned regulation. In lack of encouraging developments, concerns raised in the previous contribution are still relevant. There is no transparency register in Hungary; and it is not possible to track if individual or partial interests drive the adoption or amendments of regulations, which are often tailored and fail to serve public good while giving preference to the interests of certain groups or individuals. This is exemplified by a recent amendment to the anti money laundering regulatory framework aiming to promote transparency of ultimate beneficial owners of private equity funds, a special purpose vehicle preferred by many government cronies, including family members of Mr Orban to appropriate public funds and to whitewash ill-gotten assets deriving from unchecked origin. The amendment aimed to harmonise Hungarian regulations with the CJEU's joint ruling cases C-37/20 and C-601/20, which expects accessibility of UBO registers by interested third parties. The original text of the draft amendment envisioned that new provisions on accessibility of UBO registers were to be applied with immediate effect, while a last-minute amendment submitted by the Parliament's Legislative Committee postponed the original date of entry into force to 1 July 2026. This serious delay hugely benefits those who hide their profits and enrichment in private equity funds and it prevents the eruption of major corruption scandals before the next Parliamentary elections due in the first semester of 2026. The explanatory note cites preparatory requirements, however no evidence supports that such a long period would really be needed.

The material and personal scope of public asset declarations has not been widened since it was modified in 2022. Therefore, asset declarations offer only insufficient information of the declarants' tangible assets, revenues, and investments compared to the forms that were operational prior to 2022.(details: (https://k.blog.hu/2023/02/15/hungarian_mp_s_assets_less_declared_and_still_not_monitored)). Fiduciary relationships, investments into private equity funds, foreign assets, and non-taxable revenues such as royalty insurance are still missing from asset declarations. In the absence of verification, enforcement and sanctions the system of digitised and searchable asset declarations did not contribute to more reliable tracking of enrichment. Deadlines set in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy for the reform of the system of asset declarations elapsed without the adoption of any legal amendment or at least the publication of a legal draft. Corruption risks following from the ill-regulated political finance framework persists. Apart from vaguely defined tasks in the NACS, which serve more to enable further legal and rhetorical sanctioning of critical civil society groups than to promote accountability and transparency, the challenges relating to the political finance system remain unrecognised and unaddressed. Progressive reforms such as the introduction of campaign accounts have not even been discussed in recent years. Although extensive regulations prohibit foreign funding and business donations of political parties, in the absence of unbiased and intransigent enforcement, these requirements are circumvented. Beyond the questionable auditing practices by the State Audit Office, which incommensurately clamps down on the political opposition for unlawful third-party campaigning, while failing to equally sanction similar practices on behalf of progovernment entities, the lack of separation of state and party is particularly worrisome, as this enables the unhindered use of public funds to promote the campaigns of the ruling Fidesz party.

The law on the protection of national sovereignty prohibits foreign funding for candidate organisations and limits domestic support options for them as well as it expands the definition of foreign funding in a way that besides political parties it applies to civil society organisations, too. The broad wording of the law created significant uncertainty for civil society organizations during the 2024 campaigns, particularly concerning their permitted level of involvement. For example, it was unclear whether CSOs using EU funds could provide training or legal aid to candidates without risking criminal liability, especially those funded from foreign sources for democracy promotion or capacity building. Although no legal action has been taken, this ambiguity significantly chilled CSO activity during the election cycle.

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

The new Directorate for Internal Audit and Integrity (DIAI), set up at the end of 2022 and tasked to monitor conflict of interest declarations and raise awareness of potential incidents of conflict of interest at national authorities involved with the implementation of European Union support published its latest available report with substantial delay. According to this report, in 2023, DIAI conducted conflict of interest checks on 382 individuals (about 5% of those in the institutional system) as part of its two-year plan. It also processed 19 reports from www.palyazat.gov.hu (five with useful information) and one from www.anti-lop.hu, prioritizing investigations based on these reports over random checks. The DIAI aims to complete investigations within 30 days, with a possible 60-day extension, and notifies reporters of the findings.

A law adopted in 2024 outlined new conflict of interest regulations for public interest asset management foundations, but due to the envisioned regulation's rather limited scope, the European Commission refused to lift the prohibition to enter into new legal commitments with such foundations and entities maintained by them for EU funding it had previously imposed. Although the law excludes most high-level public officials from the leadership of public interest asset management foundations, it only pertains to those foundations, which maintain a higher education institution on condition that such public interest asset management foundations wish to acquire European Union funding. Moreover, serious concerns relating to public interest asset management foundations remained unaddressed, including those arising from the cooptation of leadership members by incumbent members of the board of trustees, and the boards' empowerment to exercise all proprietary rights. It needs to be noted that these new provisions have not entered into force and the law fails to define the exact time of their entry into force.

The NACS is expecting the revision and expansion of conflicts of interest rules to cover more individuals and institutions. Crucially, these revisions will be largely limited to codes of ethics and will therefore lack the binding power of actual legislation.

--> 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

The 2023 law that transposed the EU whistleblowing directive assigned the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights a central role in overseeing public interest disclosures. This includes monitoring the processing of reports, evaluating the functioning of whistleblower systems, and providing a secure online portal for submissions. The system allows whistleblowers to appeal to the Commissioner if they believe that their case was improperly handled and requires security clearance for investigation staff. Since the law's entry into force, the Commissioner has initiated twelve proceedings due to failures in handling public interest reports, primarily concerning delayed responses. These investigations, reports on which can be found on the Commissioner's website, typically conclude with recommendations to relevant bodies for procedural improvements. However, the Commissioner lacks stronger enforcement powers. Importantly, the public interest disclosures examined have not been related to corruption. While the Action Plan for the National Anti-Corruption Strategy has made moderate progress in training relevant organizations through the Office of the Fundamental Rights Commissioner and the creation of e-learning materials – a full-scale public awareness campaign is yet to be implemented.

Meanwhile, in practice there is no change in the approach to whistleblowers who report on mismanagement or malpractice relating to high level wrongdoing. An outstanding example is the case of Mr Péter Bátonyi, a former desk officer with the Ministry of Construction and Transport, who gave a video interview to the independent media outlet 'Partizan' about serious abuses of cultural heritage protection requirements in construction permit processes. Mr Bátonyi revealed unlawful practices where the level of certain edifices' protection was decreased or the protection was withdrawn in order to enable substantial reconstruction or demolition. Mr Bátonyi named state secretary for construction Mr Regő Lánszki as the person responsible for condoning such practices, moreover he alleged that the sister of the state secretary, was a leading architect at the development firm, that may benefit from the unlawful decrease of cultural heritage protection when submitting a draft plan to reconstruct one of Budapest's landmark caserns. Mr Péter Bátonyi was dismissed with immediate effect when the video interview's three-minute-long teaser was published on-line. Later the Ministry of Construction and Transport submitted an official complaint to the police accusing Mr Bátonyi of breach of professional obligations.

This incident indicates that the law to transpose the EU Whistleblowing Directive in Hungary does not offer real protection to reporting persons and it fails to improve the culture of whistleblowing. The persecution of Mr Bátonyi also showcases that state agencies impacted by whistleblower reports tend to react with retribution. However, due to regulatory loopholes, there is no legal remedy for the kind of repression suffered by Mr Péter Bátonyi, as Act XXV of 2023 expressly states that disclosures to the press are not covered by whistleblower protection, consequently, it intentionally fails to properly transpose Article 15(2) of the EU's Whistleblower Directive, which clearly expands protection to public disclosure of whistleblower reports to the press. K-Monitor and Transparency International Hungary jointly submitted a complaint to the European Commission in 2023 to call attention to the failed transposition, but this complaint was not tabled since submission

The 2023 conclusions by K-Monitor and Transparency International Hungary that the legislation only marginally meets anticipated standards, fails to put adequate safeguards into place for individuals who approach the media, and contravenes European Union legislation are still valid.

The new legislation has failed to remove confusion about whistleblowing: it is still unclear where and how citizens and potential whistleblowers can turn to in cases of wrongdoing, how they can preserve their anonymity and be protected from retaliation. In this respect, the forthcoming anti-corruption draft strategy would launch an awareness-raising campaign – at this moment it would be obviously premature to assess its potential impacts.

Despite the general perception that whistleblowing is not prevalent in Hungary, and authorities do little to encourage whistleblowing, numerous authorities and institutions receive reports about incidents of potential wrongdoing. Anonymous whistleblowing regarding EU fraud, for instance, is possible on the anti-lop.hu website, which, from 2023, also provides a brief summary of the reports. Twenty-five reports were received in 2023; of which three are the subject of investigation, while ten have been deemed unfounded or rejected subsequent to investigation. Regarding the remaining cases, the course of action taken is unclear.

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

While a significant part of the commitments adopted under Hungary's Recovery and Resilience Plan and the conditionality mechanism aim to improve the integrity of public procurement processes, the implementation of corrective measures has fallen short of expectations on several points. Although the share of single bid tenders is decreasing, this alone is not sufficient to restore market conditions.

Concentration of the public procurement market remains high, and some pro-government players established themselves in leading positions, which is a cause for concern. A childhood friend of the Prime Minister, Lőrinc Mészáros has long been the most successful player in the public procurement market, becoming the richest entrepreneur in the country during Viktor Orbán's premiership. Meanwhile, the quarry of Viktor Orbán's father is participating as a supplier in the most important tender won by Lőrinc Mészáros' companies, the HUF 800 billion (EUR 1,94 bn) Budapest-Belgrade railway project.

The excessive use of concession contracts has also led to extreme concentration in certain segments. In both the highway and the waste management concessions, the 35-year duration is too long and too restrictive of competition, and the detailed reasoning is not made public either.

Framework agreements have become increasingly important in the Hungarian public procurement market. While the value of contracts concluded in framework agreements reached only HUF 605 billion (EUR 1,468 bn) in 2019, in 2023, they already represented HUF 4,082 billion (EUR 9.9 million), which exceeded the value of other tenders, HUF 3,368 billion (EUR 8.2 million). Central purchasing bodies based on large framework agreements often do not use methods to measure efficiency leading to monopolization of service markets, such as communication and event organisation or cleaning and maintenance to government cronies.

The proportion of framework agreements with a single bidder has been rising steadily since 2019 in Hungary and was particularly high, over 70 percent in 2023. As regards centralised public procurement bodies, single bidding in framework agreements is particularly significant in the case of the tenders of the National Communications Office (NCO). According to the G7.hu economic portal, between 2015 and 2023, state actors have signed contracts worth a total of HUF 1360 billion (EUR 3.3 million) for communication and event management tasks under the framework agreements of the NCO. In recent years, 73 percent of the value of NCO's contracts were concluded with the companies of one operator, Gyula Balásy's companies between 2015 and 2023.

The Government's action plan to boost competition in public procurement has limited ambitions, which raises doubts about their potential to enhance competition. The action plan hardly takes into consideration the findings and the proposals of the Integrity Authority, the non-governmental members of the ACTF and the working group on the performance measurement framework to assess the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of public procurements. This shortcoming is tangible in the case of certain types of procurement with high risk of corruption: notably for procurement procedures according to Section 115 of the Public Procurement Act (this procedure allows awarding low value works contracts without prior contract notice) and multiannual framework contracts established by central purchasing bodies with a single market operator. Public procurement in Hungary faces challenges in risk-based analysis and audit, particularly in cases not covered by EU funding. High-quality public procurement data is essential for identifying corruption patterns, but the Government's pledge to allow bulk downloads of data from the Electronic Procurement System has resulted in mixed results.

C. Repression

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Conclusions drawn in previous contributions by K-Monitor and Transparency International Hungary remain relevant. Shortcomings relating to the regulation enabling private prosecution of high-level incidents of corruption and mismanagement persist, as procedural deficiencies render this legal option ineffective. No legal or institutional reform took place aiming to change the hierarchical structure of the prosecution service, one of the root-causes underlying malfunctions within the system and the failure to take action in prominent corruption cases. In lack of groundbreaking changes, no improvement can be anticipated. The 13th amendment to the Fundamental Law affects criminal cases that have already been conclusively closed, stating that from now on, the exercise of the presidential pardon will no longer require the countersignature of a government member. This amendment narrows professional control, which was previously exercised by the Minister of Justice, over decisions regarding the further fate of convicted individuals.

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

According to the latest parliamentary report of the Prosecutor General, in 2023, 1,491 investigations were initiated within the category of official corruption crimes, including 84 active and 377 passive official bribery cases, 38 active and 11 passive bribes in judicial or official proceedings, 16 cases of influence peddling, 961 cases of trading in influence, and 4 instances of failure to report a corruption crime. The number of proceedings initiated due to corruption crimes was 384, though this data also includes economic corruption. The number of perpetrators of registered official bribery was 131. The National Protective Service and the Constitution Protection Authority conducted 988 integrity testings, based on which criminal reports were filed against 17 individuals (9 police officers, 2 government officials, 1 prison service employee, and 5 healthcare service employees). Statistical data specifically related to corruption offenses are not available for cases in the judicial phase or for the sanctions imposed.

The Prosecutor General's report links the above-mentioned crimes to EU expectations by suggesting that high-level corruption situation is of particular interest to EU institutions, and their decisions are also based on this focus. However, the Prosecutor General still maintains his position regarding the lack of a definition for high-level corruption, which is why the prosecution service does not collect separate statistical data on this. Nonetheless, he mentions cases that fall within this category.

Among the summaries of the Kúria's jurisprudence analysis groups, there is no analysis concerning judicial practice related to corruption offenses. Also, the National Office for the Judiciary has not published any such report, and its case flow analysis for the first half of 2024 does not include a separate data provision on corruption cases either.

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

Concerns raised in previous contributions regarding impunity in high-level corruption cases persist. The Prosecutor General still maintains his position regarding the lack of a definition for high-level corruption, which is why the prosecution service does not collect separate statistical data on this. Although he mentions cases that fall within this category, in his response to the 2024 Rule of Law Report, the Prosecutor General maintained his reference to the lack of conceptual clarity, adding that “the prosecution office is still awaiting feedback on what the European Commission’s interpretation of high-level corruption cases entails.”

Impunity of a supposed high-level perpetrator of grand corruption is most recently exemplified in the Schadl-Völner case, where the prosecution service indicted the former deputy minister of justice Pál Völner for allegedly having rigged the appointment of bailiffs in exchange of bribes. According to wiretaps recorded by Mr Péter Magyar, ex-spouse of former minister of justice Judit Varga, the defendant had concrete and specific information about the ongoing investigation and Mr Antal Rogan, Minister overseeing the Prime Minister’s Cabinet Office had direct access to the casefile and gave instructions to the authorities as regards the direction of the investigation. On complaint of Mr Péter Magyar, the prosecution service examined these allegations and the recorded wiretaps but came to the conclusion that no criminal offence occurred.

Besides, the adjudication of major corruption cases is further protracted due to malfunctions of the judicial administration. In the “Simonka-case”, the prosecution service indicted former government MP Mr György Simonka for budgetary fraud committed in a criminal organisation in 2019 and four and a half years did not suffice for the court’s first instance to decide in the merits of this case (criminal offences suspected to have taken place in 2008-2013). Again, this case was also reassigned twice following indictment, and had to be restarted due to the change of the judge. On 29 November 2024, judge Adrienn Laczó, to whom this case was assigned, resigned, therefore this process will need to be restarted from the first hearing for the fourth time. The protraction of criminal proceedings violates the fair trial principles, and, according to long standing judicial practice, if it is imputable to the authorities, it entails the mitigation of the sanction. Protraction therefore not only places the enforcement of fair trial principles into doubt, but, due to compulsory mitigation, it results in disproportionately soft punishments.

The use of plea bargains in corruption cases creates perverse incentives that compromise investigations. The legal framework allows criminals to stockpile information on unrelated crimes for leverage, rather than providing full cooperation. This has been seen in the cases of several Socialist politicians in Budapest (who face charges related to a parking scheme and a local transport company’s IT contract), where a key witness secured immunity from prosecution.

According to information received from the respective court, 38 judicial review requests were submitted in 2023 and 74 were submitted in 2024 until 20 November 2024. The court appointed to hear such motions has examined all 38 motions submitted in 2023 and has examined 71 motions out of the 74 motions submitted in 2024 until 20 November 2024. The court granted the motion in only 5 cases in 2023 and in a mere 3 cases in 2024, while the number of rejections was 27 in 2023 and 64 in 2024. A repeated motion for judicial review was submitted only in 1 case in 2023 and in another case in 2024. According to the information provided by the respective court, there was no private prosecution in any of the cases concerned. Judicial review motions were submitted in relation to the following types of criminal offences: abuse of public authority, misappropriation of funds, cartel offence, bribery, budgetary (practically: tax or subsidy) fraud, forgery, etc. According to the NACS, the Ministry of Justice ought to have revisited the provisions on private prosecution of high-level cases related to corruption and mismanagement by 29 February 2024, and should have proposed amendments as necessary, but none of these requirements have been met.

In December 2024, another six motions were submitted, out of which the court rejected two motions, while the decision in the remaining four motions was pending at the date of submission of this contribution. In addition, on 10 December 2024 the court approved a motion submitted by the Integrity Authority on 11 November 2024.

5000 character(s) maximum

The prosecution brought charges against a total of 54 individuals in the corruption case related to EU tenders, including the former deputy state secretary of the Ministry of Finance and other high-ranking officials in February 2024. The indictment reveals the possibility of the unchecked operation of a corruption network spanning across ministries. Some of the indicted persons were also responsible for implementing the anti-corruption strategy.

The long-standing situation has not changed, where instead of holding the crony companies that were caught for misusing EU funds accountable, the Hungarian state prefers to pay the fines from taxpayers' money rather than recover them from the guilty companies, whether through criminal proceedings, civil lawsuits, or other legal means. As a result, even when public funds misuse comes to light, there is very low financial or criminal risk at the level of government-linked relationships. The loss of funds due to the withholding of EU resources also impacts the Hungarian budget, from which government-linked companies, such as those owned by Viktor Orbán's son-in-law, continue to receive substantial support. The Hungarian legal system thus lacks any deterrent force against the misuse of public funds or the behaviour of companies benefiting from it.

Companies harming the interests of the Prime Minister's inner circle, or which have fallen out of favor, are typically subjected to extensive investigations and sanctions. The most recent examples of this are the fines imposed by the Competition Authority for cartel activity, such as the HUF 11 billion (EUR 26.7 million) fine imposed on the company of the large entrepreneur László Bige, who has not joined the government interest group, and the HUF 1.2 billion (EUR 2.9 million) fine imposed on the companies of Zsolt Homlok, the disgraced son-in-law of Lőrinc Mészáros, who divorced his daughter. In the former case, the court found the fine to be unlawful.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Firstly, both the Integrity Authority, and the Anti-Corruption Task Force (ACTF) are facing a severe crisis following a police raid and criminal investigation targeting the IA's head, Ferenc Biró in January 2025. The prosecution service alleges that IA president Ferenc Biró abused his office and mismanaged funds, claiming that he had improperly used public funds to lease multiple vehicles, including one for his wife's private use and to refurbish his home – charges Ferenc Biró vehemently denies. Additionally, the prosecution service reportedly seized a large volume of documents from the IA, raising significant concerns about the protection of ongoing IA investigations, and the potential risks for whistleblowers who have come forward with sensitive information. While the alleged financial irregularities appear to be relatively minor (improper car leasing and later, alleged home renovations), the scale and intensity of the raid, and the ensuing investigation are perceived as disproportionate, especially when compared to the typically muted responses in similar, yet much larger and more complex, corruption investigations in Hungary. This apparent overreach raises serious questions about the motives behind the investigation and threatens the perceived independence and credibility of both the IA and ACTF. The conflict stems from direct contradictions between the prosecution's claims and Biró's public statements. The prosecution asserts that two vehicles were leased using public funds, with one exclusively for his wife's use, which is refuted by Biró who maintains that only one vehicle was leased and any use by his wife was occasional and permitted under IA regulations. A further significant disagreement revolves around the nature of the seized documents. The prosecution denies seizing documents related to ongoing IA cases, while Biró insists that these files were indeed taken, which Biró suggests highlights an attempt to undermine the IA's oversight function beyond targeting him personally. This crisis creates major problems for both the IA and ACTF. The disproportionate response from the prosecution risks a chilling effect, potentially discouraging whistleblowers from coming forward, and ultimately undermining the ability of both bodies to function independently and effectively as credible checks on corruption. The future leadership and effectiveness of both the IA and ACTF are now uncertain, with the possibility that the State Audit Office (SAO) initiates legal proceedings for the termination of Biró's employment in court, potentially leaving the organization vulnerable to political influence and attempts to capture.

Secondly, according to information disclosed in December 2024, the Information Office, responsible for foreign intelligence, illegally wiretapped and followed OLAF staff investigating in Hungary for years, and special focus went to those investigators, who examined the so-called Elios-case, which was related to the son-in-law of prime minister Viktor Orban and where OLAF concluded that a mafia-like behaviour took place in order to extract EU-funds.

Thirdly, in 2024, GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) adopted compliance reports concerning Hungary during its plenary meetings. However, the Hungarian Government has not yet made these reports public. Based on past behaviour, this publication could be delayed for a significant period, potentially up to one and a half or two years.

In its October 2024 plenary, the OECD Working Group on Bribery decided that the Hungarian Government had not adequately responded to the concerns and deficiencies identified in previous evaluations and proposed a high-level mission. The mission was subsequently cancelled because of the Hungarian Government's inability to secure sufficient representation. This unprecedented event signals not just a lack of cooperation but a deliberate attempt to avoid meaningful engagement. The failure to implement long-standing recommendations, dating as far back as 2012, coupled with this cancellation, points to a significant problem with Hungary's approach to anti-corruption measures.

Meanwhile the OECD Economic Survey for Hungary⁽¹⁾ highlighted the necessity of the complete implementation of the strategy. Other OECD reports concerned the procurement system. While the OECD report 'Improving Competitive Practices in Hungary's Public Procurement' recommended improving Hungary's public procurement through better data governance, competition analysis, stronger oversight, coordination, and stakeholder engagement, another focused on creating a transparent, and effective performance measurement framework, with an emphasis on data quality and effective processes. The other report focused on the effectiveness and transparency of the public procurement performance measurement framework: the recommendations concerned improving the framework itself but also focused on the data quality and processes to use this framework more effectively.

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

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

Problems regarding the FOI framework that were flagged by CSOs last year have remained unresolved. One of these is the status of private companies' under the Freedom of Information Act. Despite the Government amending the Freedom of Information Act many times, it avoided to ensure compliance with the Constitutional Court's decision No. 7/2020 (V. 13.). Therefore it is still not possible to keep private companies receiving public funds accountable before court. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court's understanding of public funds in decision No. 3258/2022. (VI. 3.) narrowed the scope of transparency, making impossible to obtain data from subcontractors. The problem is further compounded by the fact that the government is outsourcing an increasing range of public activities (e.g. drafting policy documents, running government communications) to private companies in framework contracts or through intermediary companies.

The government has continued in 2024 to empty out the Freedom of Information framework in several ways (https://k.blog.hu/2024/11/19/what_has_the_hungarian_government_done_in_freedom_of_information_since) Legislation and legal amendments have been enacted in response to pro-transparency court rulings, making it more difficult or even impossible to access data that was previously available (<https://k.blog.hu/2024/01/23>

/hungarian_government_further_weakens_access_to_information). Such restrictions were often introduced in separate laws, leading to a further fragmentation of transparency legislation. After TI Hungary won an FOI lawsuit (Kúria's decision No. Pfv.20278/2023/6.), an omnibus bill has been passed according to which data that could otherwise be directly obtained through a single data request from one government entity and its subordinate bodies, information belonging to the latter no longer has to be shared with the requester (Act CI of 2023). As a consequence, citizens are compelled to individually approach and, if necessary, engage in legal proceedings with various entities, even if the sought-after data could reasonably be provided by a single body with control or oversight over multiple others. Following K-Monitor's and a HVG journalist's cases (Kúria's decision No. Pfv.20112/2023/5), the law on government decision-making has been amended as well (Act CXXV of 2018 amended by Act CIX of 2023). Under the new law, the government might deny access to government decisions and minutes of government meetings for twenty years. Lack of access to government decisions is particularly concerning because budgetary decisions are often made in this form, bypassing general transparency requirements. Legislation governing publicly owned companies has been changed, too (Act CXXII of 2009 amended by Act CI of 2023). Freedom of information requests sent to state or municipal owned enterprises must be denied for ten years if the release of data bearing financial, technical, or business significance could potentially harm foreign policy interests. Although the public interest test applies in both types of restriction, the Constitutional Court is currently examining whether courts have the competence to overrule the balancing made by the minister (Cases Nos. IV/02579/2022, III/03701/2024). In case the Constitutional Court concludes that courts lack the competence to overrule ministerial decisions, such restrictions could become automatic without any effective judicial remedy.

Although there have been advances in the field of proactive disclosure, the National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information still lacks the power to step up against state- and municipally-owned companies or other entities with public duties such as public asset management foundations. Consequently, the so-called transparency procedures established as a consequence of the remedial measures within the conditionality mechanism can not be initiated in all entities performing public duties. As a result, there is still no effective legal remedy available in cases where these entities fail to comply with proactive transparency rules. A positive effect of a recent FOI Act amendment is that from 2025 on municipalities become subjects to the transparency procedure and have to report metadata of their contacts to the Central Public Data Information Registry (Act LXXXV of 2024). Unfortunately the Registry established in 2023 has a search engine that provides only limited search options, it is still not possible to look up specific companies that are beneficiaries of public funds.

The ECtHR case Kenedi v. Hungary has been transferred to the enhanced supervision procedure and the Hungarian authorities were called on to adopt additional targeted general measures to address the reoccurring reluctance of state authorities to comply with the domestic courts' orders granting access to documents, and to ensure that effective and genuinely coercive enforcement tools are available for the implementation of such orders.

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

IV. Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

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

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 transparency and quality of the whole legislative process and the efficiency of public consultations remain a source of concern, the latter despite the amendment of Act CXXXI of 2010 on Public Participation in Preparing Laws adopted in 2022. Firstly, as detailed in our previous contributions, regulatory flaws undermine the capacity of the amendments to ensure effective public consultation: e.g. laws adopted in breach of public consultation rules can still become/remain part of the legal system, and the range of exceptions when draft laws do not have to or must not be subject to public consultation remains wide. Secondly, the impact of the amended rules is limited, and the practice of public consultation remains deeply flawed.

It still occurs that significant laws are not published for public consultation, which happened in 2024 e.g. in the case of the 13th Amendment to the Fundamental Law. In other instances, in an attempt to circumvent the obligation of public consultation, the Government introduces laws to the Parliament that are clearly part of government policy via governing majority MPs (e.g. the Sovereignty Protection Act) or via parliamentary committees (e.g. the 14th Amendment to the Fundamental Law). Another avenue used is the Legislative Committee of the Parliament, a super committee the composition of which reflects that of the Parliament and which can introduce amendments to any bill directly prior to the plenary vote – this avenue was utilised to introduce significant changes to the laws on the judiciary in December 2024 (see Chapter I.), in which instance the mandatory consultation with the NJC was also circumvented.

Ministries almost never provide a longer consultation period than the statutory minimum, irrespective of the length and complexity of the draft law: according to K-Monitor's data, between 1 October 2022 and 4 October 2024, out of the 1,730 draft laws published, the consultation period was longer than eight days in only six instances. The way in which draft laws are published only formally meets the legal requirements, e.g. the titles and summaries of the published legislative packages rarely indicate clearly the subject matter of the proposals. It is a recurring practice that draft laws are published for consultation with a one-sentence reasoning: this occurred in 2024 e.g. in the case of the laws authorising the Government to extend the state of danger and an omnibus law that extended the asylum system that the CJEU had found to be in violation of EU law, while a draft law amending rules on public interest asset management foundations was published with a two-sentence reasoning. The majority of opinions submitted are rejected by the Government: according to K-Monitor's data, between 1 October 2022 and 4 October 2024, at least 88% of the opinions were rejected, and without any real reasoning, e.g. that "the draft law implements the decision of the Government" or that the opinion "is contrary to the opinion of the legislator". A detailed analysis by K-Monitor is available here: https://k.blog.hu/2024/11/29/public_consultation_--_there_would_be_a_need_for_it According to the respective reports published by the Government Control Office (GCO) pertaining to the last

three months of 2022 and to 2023, legislative targets were formally achieved, i.e. at least 90% of all government decrees, ministerial decrees and bills submitted by the Government to the Parliament were subject to public consultation. However, the reports do not contain detailed information on why certain draft laws were not put to public consultation (i.e. which exemptions they supposedly fell under). Moreover, the GCO refused to disclose upon a freedom of information request its methodology and the information ministries submitted to the GCO. Thus, the efficiency of the review carried out by the GCO cannot be meaningfully assessed.

The quality of the impact assessments of the draft laws and the summaries published about them in the course of the public consultation is often inadequate. The new methodology for impact assessments, which should have been adopted by the end of 2023 under an RRP milestone, has not been adopted as of 31 October 2024. Another RRP milestone (due by the end of 2022) foreseeing the capacity development of the Office of the Parliament to help MPs and parliamentary committees to prepare impact assessments and conduct stakeholder consultations for the bills proposed by them and their possibility to request such assistance have not been achieved either.

Using the legal opportunity created by the Government in 2023, public hearings without the public, i.e. held through electronic means (whereby opinions may be submitted via e-mail or left on an answering machine) are becoming widespread especially in cases of planned investments likely to generate local protest due to their potential environmental impacts.

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

(1) Rules of fast-track procedures

Parliamentary Resolution 10/2014. (II. 24.) OGY on Certain Provisions of the Rules of Procedure establishes three main fast-track parliamentary procedures: the “discussion with urgency” (“sürgős tárgyalás”), the “exceptional procedure” (“kivételes eljárás”), and the “derogation from the provisions of the Rules of Procedure” (“a határozati házszabályi rendelkezésektől való eltérés”).

A discussion with urgency may be initiated by the stakeholder submitting the bill, but if the bill was submitted by an MP, the initiative for a discussion with urgency shall be supported by at least 25 MPs. The Parliament shall decide on ordering a discussion with urgency with a two-thirds majority of the MPs present. A discussion with urgency may be ordered by the Parliament not more than six times in any six-month period. The initiator may propose, among others, that the general debate on the bill would begin on the day of the sitting specified by the proposal, but not earlier than two days after the day on which the bill is submitted (instead of the ordinary six days); and that the time limit for the submission of proposed amendments to the bill be shorter than the time limit provided for in the ordinary rules. A discussion with urgency shall be ordered in a way that at least six days must elapse between ordering it and the final vote on the bill.

An exceptional procedure may be initiated by the stakeholder submitting the bill, but if the bill was submitted by an MP, the initiative for an exceptional procedure shall be supported by at least one-fifth of the MPs. The Parliament shall decide on ordering an exceptional procedure with a majority of the votes of all the MPs. An exceptional procedure may be ordered up to four times every six months, and there are certain topics regarding which no exceptional procedure may be conducted: the adoption or amendment of the Fundamental Law, international treaties, cardinal provisions, the Parliament’s Rules of Procedure, and the laws on the central budget and its execution. When ordering an exceptional procedure, the Parliament decides on the various procedural deadlines. Bills debated in an exceptional procedure can be adopted even the day after their submission.

A derogation from the provisions of the Rules of Procedure may be ordered by the vote of at least four-fifths of the MPs present, upon the proposal of the House Committee. No derogation may be ordered with respect to the adoption or amendment of the Fundamental Law, international treaties, and the Parliament’s Rules of

Procedure. Since no minimum time limits are set out, the derogation from the provisions of the Rules of Procedure can mean that the bill is adopted the same day as it is submitted.

(2) The use of fast-track procedures in 2024

Both amendments to the Fundamental Law adopted in 2024 (the 13th and 14th amendments to the Fundamental Law, which is in force since 2012) were adopted in an ordinary legislative procedure. From among the 92 Acts of Parliament promulgated in 2024, only one was adopted in a discussion with urgency procedure, Act LXXX of 2024 on Amending Act IX of 2021 on Public Interest Asset Management Foundations. (This was supposed to ensure compliance with conditions of accessing EU funds under the conditionality mechanism, but the European Commission found that it had not been sufficient to address risks of conflicts of interests in the boards of the foundations.) Three Acts of Parliament were adopted in an exceptional procedure. One Act of Parliament was adopted via derogation from the provisions of the Rules of Procedure: Act LXVIII of 2024 on Amending Act C of 2012 on the Criminal Code, which tightened statute of limitations rules as an instant reaction to developments in a high-profile individual case.

From among the 29 parliamentary resolutions promulgated in 2024, none were adopted in a discussion with urgency procedure or via derogation from the provisions of the Rules of Procedure, and only one resolution was adopted in an exceptional procedure.

Finally, it has to be highlighted that under the continued state of danger, the Government has a virtually unlimited possibility to override Acts of Parliament practically overnight.

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

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

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

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

Contact

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