

Input of Latvia for the 2025 Rule of Law Report

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):

In the previous report, a recommendation was made for Latvia to take measures to ensure adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the existing appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges, in line with European standards on judicial appointments.

Since the 2023 report, the judge concerned has been re-nominated for appointment as a Supreme Court judge and was confirmed by a majority vote in Parliament in October 2023. Additionally, all subsequent judges nominated by the justice sector have been confirmed by Parliament as Supreme Court judges. This leads to the conclusion that the situation was an exceptional case and does not represent systemic problems in the procedure for appointing or confirming judges.

As this case was exceptional and our procedure fully aligns with Council of Europe recommendations on best practices, no additional measures, such as legislative amendments, have been initiated. However, we continue to closely monitor the situation and facilitate dialogue between the judiciary and other institutions.¹

A. Independence

- *Appointment and selection of judges, prosecutors and court presidents (incl. judicial review)*
- *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)*
- *Promotion of judges and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)*
- *Allocation of cases in courts*
- *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)*
- *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)*
- *Independence/autonomy of the prosecution service*
- *Independence of the Bar (chamber/association of lawyers) and of lawyers*

For information regarding the independence of the Bar, please see the attached letter of the Latvian Council of Sworn Advocates.

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

On 15.12.2022, the Constitutional Court passed a judgment in case no. 2021-41-01, recognizing that Article 55, Clause 3 of the law "On Judicial Power," which stipulates that a candidate for the position of judge cannot be a person against whom criminal proceedings have been terminated on a non-rehabilitative basis, is inconsistent with the first part of Article 101 (which states that every citizen of Latvia has the right, as provided for by law, to participate in the work

¹ On September 4, 2024, the European Affairs Committee of the national parliament (the Saeima) organised a discussion on the Rule of Law Report 2024, focusing *inter alia*, on recommendations included in the Report. The discussion was attended by other Committees of the Saeima, representatives from institutions involved in preparation of Latvia's input for the Report (Ministry of Justice, KNAB, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Representation of the European Commission in Latvia, and the civil society. It was discussed how rule of law principles could be promoted in the work of the Saeima.

of the State and local government and to hold a position in the civil service) and the first sentence of Article 106 (which guarantees that everyone has the right to freely choose their employment and workplace according to their abilities and qualifications) of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.

In compliance with the above, amendments were made to Article 55 of the law "On Judicial Power," establishing the possibility to evaluate and determine, in cases where criminal proceedings have been terminated on a non-rehabilitative basis, whether the circumstances are such that, without endangering public trust in the judiciary and the reputation of the judiciary, a person may still become a candidate for the position of judge.

At the same time, taking into account the importance of the positions of judges and prosecutors in the protection of a democratic state system, as well as the similarity of the regulation of Article 37 of the Office of the Prosecutor Law with the regulation of Article 55 of the law "On Judicial Power," analogous amendments were also developed in Article 37 of the Office of the Prosecutor Law, which sets restrictions on prosecutors and candidates for the position of prosecutor. These amendments to the aforementioned laws entered into force on 05.01.2024.

The Judicial Council has approved the procedure for allowing a person who has committed a criminal offense through negligence to participate in the selection of candidates for the position of judge or prosecutor. A commission has also been established to evaluate these candidates.

Guidelines for court communication are being developed to ensure effective communication between courts and the public, thereby promoting public trust in the judicial system. These guidelines aim to strengthen the positive image of the courts and improve understanding of their work and the decisions they make.

Computerized case distribution is provided by the Court information system, which takes direct specialization, workload, and absences into account during allocation. The computerized distribution of cases ensures the principle of randomness in the allocation and avoids conflicts of interest. Moreover, in 2024, work continued towards implementing the case-weighting model. To ensure the model's use in determining the degree of complexity of cases for workload analysis and monitoring in courts of first and second instance, the Court Administration made technical adjustments to statistical accounting tools. From January 2024, these adjustments ensure the collection of the results of case weighing for courts of first instance, and from July 1 of this year, also in regional (appeal instance) courts. Court presidents now have access to current data on court performance indicators, according to the scope of the weighing project. Data is grouped (aggregated) by instance, so each instance has its own reports. To verify the compliance of workload points with the actual situation and to explore solutions for synchronizing the workload between judges specializing in criminal and civil cases, two working groups have been established—one for first instance courts and another for appeal instance courts.

Amendments have been made to the Law "On Official Secret," stipulating that only judges, investigators, and prosecutors who have been granted access to state secrets may work on cases involving state secrets. Only in exceptional cases, if necessary to comply with the principle of procedural economy and ensure the completion of the process within a reasonable time, may a judge, prosecutor, or investigator who does not have access to state secrets work on such cases, by signing a warning confirming their assumption of responsibility for the unlawful disclosure of official secrets. These amendments enter into force on 01.01.2025.

In 2024, a new President and Vice President were elected at the Constitutional Court, and three new judges took office. Under the Constitutional Court Law, a specified number of judges are nominated by each of the three branches of government (the plenary session of the Supreme Court, 10 members of Parliament and the Cabinet of Ministers).

To strengthen the independence of the Constitutional Court judges, amendments to the Constitutional Court Law are being promoted. These would ensure that if someone appointed

as a prosecutor, in accordance with the Office of the Prosecutor Law, is confirmed as a Constitutional Court judge, the public prosecutor's office guarantees the person's right to return to their prosecutor position after their term ends -provided they have not reached the maximum age limit for the position. Additionally, such individuals would be entitled to a retirement pension if their service as a prosecutor is no shorter than 20 years under the Law on Retirement Pensions of Public Prosecutors. This draft law has not yet been submitted to the Parliament.

On 24 October 2024², the Latvian Parliament adopted amendments to the "On Judicial Power" law concerning case distribution among judges. These amendments allow for consideration of the additional workload of a judge participates in judicial self-government bodies, organizes training events for judges and prosecutors, or mentors new judges. The amendments also allow for the inclusion of time required to complete a training course for new judges when distributing cases.

The Constitutional Court of Latvia adopted a judgment³ on the issue of banning a person from being a forensic expert if criminal proceedings against them were terminated for non-exonerating reasons. The Court emphasized that, given the functions and competences of forensic experts, circumstances such as the severity of the offence, affected interests, time elapsed since the offence, the individual's attitude, as well as the behaviour and conduct after the offence, which, taken together, may indicate that the previous criminal conduct of the person will not impair the performance of the functions of a forensic expert. Consequently, Article 6(3)(5) of the Law on Forensic Experts was declared unconstitutional, as individual assessment of a person's suitability for the role would be a less restrictive measure than a blanket ban foreseen by the above-mentioned legal provision.

The Judicial Council has further modified the procedure for the selection of district and regional court judges.⁴ Under these amendments the selection committee may assess the candidate's compliance with the criterion of good reputation throughout the selection process. The modified selection procedure also gives more weight to the candidate's behavioural skills (such as teamwork) in the selection of candidates.

A public debate, including comments from public officials and the highest members of the judiciary, arose after the head of the State Security Service expressed criticism on a news programs against several court decisions in cases related to national security where the accused persons had been released on bail and consequently had (unlawfully) left the territory of Latvia, thus avoiding from further prosecution.⁵ Both the President of the Republic of Latvia⁶ and the Prosecutor General criticized the court decisions. In the course of these events, amendments to the Law on Official Secret were drafted and adopted by the Parliament in the final reading, which extends the scope of cases in which a judge needs to obtain a clearance for work with official secrets in order to perform their duties.⁷ During the drafting of the amendments, the Judicial Council pointed out in a letter to the Defence, Interior affairs and Anti-Corruption Commission of the Parliament that the loyalty of judges was being unjustifiably called into question.⁸

² <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2024/213A.2>.

³ Judgment of 17 December 2024 in case no 2023-47-01, Official Journal 18.12.2024., No. 247, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2024/247.32?search=on>.

⁴ Decision of the Judicial Council No 53 of 18 October 2024, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/353837-par-grozijumiem-rajona-pilsetas-tiesas-un-apgabaltiesas-tiesnesa-amata-kandidatu-atlases-kartiba>

⁵ <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/14.03.2024-vdd-vaditaju-atseviskos-gadijumos-mulsina-tiesu-lemumi-dienesta-izmekletajas-lietas.a546658/>

⁶ <https://x.com/edgarsrinkevics/status/1782119717605363959>

⁷ [https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/webAll?SearchView&Query=\(NumberTxt=758\)&SearchMax=0&SearchOrder=4](https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/webAll?SearchView&Query=(NumberTxt=758)&SearchMax=0&SearchOrder=4)

⁸ <https://www.tieslietupadome.lv/lv/jaunums/tieslietu-padome-prasiba-tiesnesiem-sanemt-specialo-atlauju-pieejai-valsts-noslepumam-nav-izmantojama-ka-tiesnesu-lojalitates-apliecinajums>

In 2024 the Prosecution Office organized 2 application procedure rounds for positions of prosecutor. In the first round 6 applications were received (2 applicants exempted from the tests, 2 applicants passed, and 2 applicants failed the test). In the second round 21 applications were received (13 applicants exempted from the tests, 1 person removed his application, 7 applicants failed the test). Outside of rounds of applications 14 applications were received. 25 applicants started internship training and 14 were promoted as prosecutors. A total of 10 senior prosecutor assistants and qualified prosecutor assistants who passed the internship at the prosecution office were appointed as prosecutors.

In 2024 altogether, 19 prosecutors were promoted in their positions. In 2024, four prosecutors were subject to a disciplinary sanction. The Prosecutors' Attestation Commission issued the following disciplinary sanctions: 2 decreases in monthly salary, 2 reprimands.

B. Quality of justice

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

Since June 2024, the Court Administration has been implementing a project co-financed by the European Social Fund Plus, titled "Access to Justice." As part of this project, efforts will be made to integrate mediation into the legal aid system to enable effective and cost-efficient dispute resolution outside of court proceedings. Additionally, the project will include awareness-raising activities about state-provided legal aid, including mediation, across various case categories. The project also aims to promote broader public awareness, extending beyond the primary target groups, to ensure that information about legal aid and mediation reaches a wide audience.

Amendments have been developed to the Law "On State Compensation to Victims," providing that the circle of victims eligible for state compensation will be expanded, as the significance of the harm and the impact of criminal offenses committed due to negligence on victims will also be assessed. The amendments enter into force on 01.01.2025.

In 2024, significant developments took place to promote access to legal aid. As mentioned in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, in February 2024, the cooperation project between the Council of Europe, the European Commission and Latvia aiming to strengthen access to justice ended. The final report was published on 2 October 2024 and the primary focus of the recommendations was on the training and quality control of legal aid advisers, and accessibility of legal aid. In an interview with the media, the President of the Constitutional Court drew attention to the need to broaden access to state-provided legal aid in cases referred to the Constitutional Court. In order to raise public awareness of the possibilities to obtain legal aid, in March 2024 the Courts Administration created forms and pre-filled samples of forms for applications for legal aid, as well as a YouTube video explaining the process of obtaining legal aid. The Courts Administration has also published several videos on its YouTube account, informing the public about the application procedure and the possibilities offered by the e-Case. To make the provision of state-funded legal aid more attractive to legal professionals, the Cabinet of Ministers increased the remuneration for the provision of legal aid on 20 August 2024. On 27 February 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the regulations prepared by the Ministry of Justice to implement a project to establish a system of state-provided legal aid. The project will expand access to legal aid services for vulnerable persons and improve support mechanisms for victims of crime.

Regarding legal fees in civil proceedings, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Civil Procedure Law, which allow a legal entity to apply for exemption from the payment of legal

expenses and security deposits.⁹ These modifications were adopted to comply with the judgments of the Constitutional Court in case no. 2021-22-01¹⁰ and in case no. 2022-05-01.¹¹

• *Resources of the judiciary (human/financial/material), remuneration/bonuses/rewards for judges and prosecutors, including observed changes*

The number of available positions for judges in the first and second (appellate) instance courts – 546 – remains unchanged in 2024.

State budget funding for courts in 2024 is EUR 94,945,052, including EUR 72,001,499 for the remuneration of judges and court employees, which accounts for 75.8% of the total court budget. In comparison to 2023, the total court budget in 2024 increased by 7.7%, and compensation expenses by 8.7%. In 2024, the share of compensation expenses in the total court budget increased by 0.6% compared to the previous year.

The monthly salaries of judges increased by 6% in 2024, with these changes reflected in the table below. Accordingly, the amount of seniority allowances, allowances for participation in self-governing institutions, and vacation allowances have also increased.

Position of judge	Current year's monthly salary for 2024 (gross), <i>euro</i>	Current year's monthly salary for 2023 (gross), <i>euro</i>	Changes in 2024 compared to 2023, <i>euro</i>
District (city) court judge	3858	3640	218
Regional court (appeal instance) judge	4630	4368	262
Supreme court judge	6029	5687	342
Constitutional court judge	6945	6552	393

An additional 925,406 euros have been allocated in next year's court budget to strengthen the competitiveness of judicial assistants in the labour market and ensure competitive remuneration for court employees. This aims to reduce employee turnover and promote work efficiency.

In 2024, the State Audit Office of Latvia conducted performance audit on the “Availability and development of human resources in the courts of Latvia”¹². The study highlights that prerequisites have been created in Latvia for providing district (city) courts and regional courts with professional and competent human resources. However, measures for the development of human resources are proceeding too slowly and a crisis may occur in the coming years. The audit especially points out that the number of judges who leave their position exceeds the number of appointed judges. The number of candidates who have passed the selection procedure is not sufficient to fill the existing vacancies. This means that the trend of increasing number of judicial vacancies may continue and the judicial system may lack judges to ensure an effective functioning of the courts.

The aforementioned study of the State Audit Office also draws attention to the fact that the position of assistant to a judge still does not have appropriate educational requirements, and the competences and responsibilities of judicial assistants have not been expanded. This reduces the possibility of improving the competitive level of remuneration of assistants on the labour market, limiting the ability to motivate existing employees, attract new qualified staff, and fully employ them to reduce the workload of judges. Overall, the audit concludes that the judicial

⁹ <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2024/128A.3>

¹⁰ Judgment of 23 February 2022 in case no. 2021-22-01, English translation is available: https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2021-22-01_Judgement.pdf.

¹¹ Judgment of 17 February 2023 in case no. 2022-05-01, English translation is available: https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2022-05-01_Judgement.pdf.

¹² Audit summary in English is available here: https://www.lrvk.gov.lv/en/getrevisionfile/29740-J2RD-kxrwmAYd1ZQNdSJZjDb6mRsn_.pdf

system has failed to develop the institution of judicial assistants effectively and sustainably. As a result, the turnover of assistants to judges is unacceptably high, particularly in courts in Riga, where it reaches up to 41% per year.

The issue of increasing the remuneration of court staff continued to be addressed. The Judicial Council approved the proposed budget for the district (city) and regional courts in 2025,¹³ although A. Strupišs, the President of the Supreme Court and the President of the Judicial Council pointed out that a salary increase of at least 12% is needed for the staff of courts of first and second instance in 2025. Initially, the Judicial Council endorsed the priority measures proposed by the Ministry of Justice for the budget of district (city) courts and regional courts for the period 2025–2028, which envisaged a 6% increase in the remuneration of court staff. However, given the limited possibilities of next year's budget and the country's external security as the main budgetary priority, only a 2.6% salary increase for court staff was possible. Therefore, a shortage of judges and qualified court staff is expected, he concluded.

Compared to 2023, in 2024 there was an increase in the monthly salary of prosecutors: for the prosecutors of the Office of the Prosecutor General – 12,8 %; for the prosecutors of the judicial region prosecution offices – 13 %.

• *Training of justice professionals*

As part of the task set by the working group for strengthening judicial efficiency, established by the Judicial Council, guidelines for writing court judgments in both administrative offense cases and criminal cases for courts of first and second instance were developed.

In 2024, work on the reform of the judicial training system and the establishment of a unified training centre for judges and prosecutors – the Academy of Justice – continued. On 24 October 2024, Parliament adopted the Law on the Academy of Justice¹⁴. Its aim is to ensure a sustainable and effective training system for the qualitative performance of judicial and prosecutorial functions by establishing the Academy of Justice. The Academy of Justice is intended as a one stop training centre for judges, court staff, prosecutors, assistant prosecutors, and investigators. It became operational on 1 January 2025. The Judicial Council also approved the conditions and procedures for applying for the position of Director of the Academy of Justice¹⁵, as well as the procedure for selecting and evaluating applicants. The competition for this post is still ongoing.

In 2024 prosecutors attended various training events: courses, seminars, and conferences organized in Latvia and abroad, as well as training organized by the Prosecution Office, other state institutions, international organizations, and NGOs.

In order to ensure the improvement of prosecutors' professional qualifications the Prosecution Office organized trainings on following topics: investigation of financial and economic crimes, cryptocurrencies and digital evidence, virtual assets, illegal waste management, construction regulations, drafting of prosecutor's indictment, latest rulings of European Court of Justice, hate crimes, asset recovery, protection of the children's rights, fight against child sexual exploitation, human trafficking, psychological aspects behind crimes etc. The total number of events that prosecutors attended reached 369. In 2024 many training courses that were organized for prosecutors were also attended by senior prosecutor assistants, allowing them to raise the quality of work to assist the prosecutors.

To further ensure that technical assistance tools are used in daily work, training courses for i2 Analyst's Notebook software were organized. These trainings were organized in two levels of

¹³ Statement of the Judicial Council regarding the Decision of the Judicial Council of 18 October 2024 "On budget request for district (city) and regional courts for 2025": <https://www.tieslietupadome.lv/lv/jaunums/par-tieslietupadomes-18-oktobra-sedes-lemumiem>

¹⁴ Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/356029-tieslietu-akademijas-likums>

¹⁵ <https://www.tieslietupadome.lv/lv/media/8955/download?attachment>

knowledge – beginner and intermediate. In each group there were 8 participants from prosecutors and senior prosecutor assistants. This software is used by investigative authorities. Providing training courses about it enhances the cooperation between the Prosecution Office and investigative authorities and facilitates the sharing of data.

The topics of trainings for prosecutors organized by the Prosecution Office were based on surveys of prosecutors, as well as on the specific recommendations given by Prosecutors' Attestation Commission to those prosecutors that were being evaluated. The evaluation system introduced by the Prosecution Office in 2021 pays special attention to the identification of the specific training needs for each prosecutor.

In year 2024 chief prosecutors and prosecutors appointed by the chief prosecutors of all the structural units received training to improve their communication skills. The communication training consisted of theoretical and practical modules that included mock interviews, analysis of speech and hand gestures. In 2025 it is planned that the training will continue to facilitate the communication with media representatives about the decisions prosecutors have made in cases. The theoretical communication trainings were recorded and are available to every prosecutor via internal webpage. In addition, the foreign language trainings were organized to strengthen the capacity of prosecutors to cooperate in cross border investigations. The trainings were organized to improve knowledge of English and French languages. All together 124 prosecutors have participated in language trainings.

In partnership with the United States Embassy in Latvia specialized trainings for prosecutors and investigators were organized. Some of the trainings were organized for prosecutors and investigators from all the Baltic States. The topics covered by the trainings were: money laundering and asset recovery, cybercrime related cases, cyber operations for law enforcement, combating of white-collar crime, crypto currencies and digital evidence. In 2024 prosecutors participated in various EJTN, CEPOL and ERA trainings organized online as well as in face-to-face setting. 91 prosecutors participated in trainings and exchange visits on topics such as judicial cooperation in criminal matters, specialized language courses, victim's rights, artificial intelligence in criminal proceeding etc.

• *Digitalisation*

The E-case program is being implemented in two stages. Stage 1 ran from 2018 to 2021, and Stage 2 began in 2022. The main goal is to continue the digitalization of other litigation processes, including those in investigation authorities, and to complete the integration of cooperation partners and the development of additional functionalities.

During 2024, advancements were made to enhance the functionality, accessibility, and efficiency of the E-case portal. Key achievements include: 1) The implementation of two-factor authentication using user credentials, thereby strengthening security protocols; 2) Case materials are now being transmitted multiple times per day; 3) A technical solution was ensured for pre-trial stage case material publication for prosecutors; 4) The capacity for file submissions via the portal was significantly increased, with the permissible file size raised from 10 MB to 15 MB per individual file; 5) Accessibility to information was notably enhanced, facilitating user access to materials concerning proceedings on criminally acquired property, materials examined outside court hearings, and materials considered under civil procedure rules. Additionally, following the initiation of civil proceedings, respondents now have access to application information; 6) The "Packager Tool" was introduced for use at the advocate's workplace, allowing all case materials to be compiled into a single file; 7) The "Case Participant Calendar" was launched, providing a unified overview of all court hearing information for participants (to be released in January 2025); 8) Enhancements to the "Advocate's Calendar" included functionalities for viewing reserved hearing dates in administrative offense cases, the registration date of hearings, visibility of deleted absences, a monthly view option, and access for the court to view an advocate's absences; 9) The e-form system underwent upgrades,

including the addition of a text editor and various improvements; 10) A new e-form, titled "E-Application to the Court," was introduced, enabling the submission of applications to any court online, thereby promoting greater efficiency and accessibility in judicial processes.

Regarding technical equipment in 2024, technical work was carried out to ensure the continuous operation and modernization of court infrastructure. The Court Administration manages over 8,500 technical units, with an annual replacement rate of up to 10% to maintain operational continuity.

Key technical improvements implemented in 2024 include: 1) Replacement of monitors in all court hearing rooms; 2) Replacement of computers in half of the hearing rooms; 3) Reorganization of courtrooms to reduce the visibility of cables; 4) Replacement or additional installation of 23 video conferencing systems; 5) Initiation of a pilot project for new audio equipment; 6) Replacement or installation of over 300 laptops and approximately 400 monitors; 7) Delivery of 118 scanners to support the digitalization of paper case files; 8) Replacement and additional installation of 70 Wi-Fi access points to enhance network coverage and connectivity.

Work continues on the digitization of the judicial system and the development of the e-Case IT platform. The e-Case Supervisory Board has approved the e-Case Program Action Plan and extended the transition period for the full migration for all proceedings before 31 May 2026.¹⁶ Currently, all district courts handle complaints in administrative offence cases in a fully digital environment. The Judicial Council plans to expand the categories of digitized litigation cases in 2025 to ensure the gradual introduction of e-cases.¹⁷

The Prosecution Office continued to participate in the implementation of the national e-case platform in which the information systems of the Courts, the Prosecution Office, the State probation service, and the Prison Administration are connected. The existing solutions have been updated as well as some new ones have been implemented. The Prosecution Office has improved the communication with the parties involved in the case via e-case platform. New data is available in real time search requests to see the information in various state data bases, thus ensuring faster case management within the Prosecution Office. In 2024 following the analysis of necessary functionalities the Prosecution Office prepared a proposal to develop an electronic tool for remote procedural actions – a secure solution with data verification that will allow communication with the prosecutor remotely. It is planned to fully implement the tool in 2025. To ensure further development of the translation service and efficient use of translation time resources, the Prosecution Office is planning to acquire a speech recognition platform and a machine translation platform licensing service. The first steps to implement these improvements related to the translation service were started in 2024, however the full implementation will be conducted in 2025.

- *Use of assessment tools and standards*

To ensure day-to-day operations for judicial officers, courts have their own information system—the Court Information System. Work toward transferring processes (incoming/outgoing document flow, administrative cases) to a new and modernized Court Information System platform is ongoing. For example, in 2024, the major improvements made to the Court Information System's new platform include the implementation of the enhanced record-keeping module. The implementation process was carried out in close cooperation with the courts to define and refine system requirements, ensuring that feedback and experience were incorporated into future development processes. The following tools are currently in the final

¹⁶ <https://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/e-lietas-uzraudzibas-padome-apstiprina-e-lietas-programmas-ricibas-planu>

¹⁷ <https://www.tieslietupadome.lv/lv/jaunums/tieslietu-padome-apsprieda-elektroniskas-tiesvedibas-ieviesanas-gaitu>

stages of development testing before production: e-invoices, audio-video protocols, improved summons, and streamer.

The Prosecution Office Information System (ProIS) includes several tools that assist prosecutors such as sample forms, reminders about deadlines, notifications about expiration of terms, etc. In addition, ProIS allows to monitor quality of the implementation of criminal proceedings and uniform application of the Criminal Law. To ensure uniform criminal sentencing policy, ProIS allows to carry out daily monitoring of the adopted prosecutor's penal orders and concluded plea agreements. ProIS is also used to collect and analyse data about prosecutors' performance, both by assessing the workload of each structural unit as a whole and the individual workload of each prosecutor. This allows to introduce necessary adjustments to balance the workload.

• *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*

In 2024, no changes were made to the judicial map. According to the Report on the Evaluation of the Territorial Reform of Courts, prepared by the Working Group for Strengthening the Efficiency of Courts and approved by the Judicial Council, the following conclusions were made:

1. The greatest societal benefit from the judicial reform is for court clients: the court territories have been significantly expanded, simplifying and facilitating access to the court.
2. The differences in the duties of court employees that existed between different court locations have been reduced, and work has been optimized.
3. By consolidating smaller courts into larger regional centres, the efficiency of the judicial system has been increased, improving the speed of case processing and reducing litigation time.
4. The reform has helped equalize the workload of judges, preventing situations where some judges were overworked while others had relatively little work. Equalization of the workload has been achieved within the relevant judicial districts.
5. More centralized court management has improved administrative efficiency, enabling better allocation of resources and reducing administrative costs. Court management has become more efficient thanks to a more centralized approach, allowing for better use of resources and administrative technology.
6. The reform has promoted the introduction of new technologies and e-services in the functioning of the courts, making the judicial process more accessible and convenient for users. The introduction of digital solutions and e-services has facilitated access to the court.

C. Efficiency of the justice system:

☐ No developments

☒ If there have been developments related to efforts to improve the efficiency of the justice system (*e.g. as regards length of proceedings*), please specify: ...

The average length of court proceedings in 2024, according to the Judicial Work Data Portal, was as follows:

1. 2.6 months (including statistics with warning procedures) or 6.7 months (excluding warning procedures) in the first instance, and 4.7 months in the appeal instance for civil cases.
2. 7.3 months in the first instance and 6 months in the appeal instance for criminal cases.
3. 7.2 months in the first instance and 8.2 months in the appeal instance for administrative cases.

4. 4.2 months in the first instance and 3.4 months in the appeal instance for administrative offense cases.

The Judicial Specialization Working Group, established by the Judicial Council, concluded in its report on judicial specializations that in order to ensure high-quality and uniform court operations, attention should be paid to the selection of the most appropriate and professional candidates for their fields of specialization during the process of selecting judges. Specialization should also be determined for assistant judges, and the role of court presidents in determining specializations is emphasized.

The working group has developed the following principles for the specialization of judges: 1) Efficiency and quality; 2) Flexibility and versatility; 3) Unity of the judicial system; 4) Quality management of court resources.

Additionally, the following criteria were developed: 1) The complexity, scope, and relevance of the cases; 2) The number of judges, administrative resources, and support staff; 3) A balance between specialization and access to justice; 4) Judicial training and rotation.

In the report on the specialization of land registry cases in courts, the working group concluded that, in light of the expected reduction in the number of judges specializing in land registers, a redistribution of decision-making competencies should be implemented by creating the position of a court lawyer (state official) in courts with competitive remuneration. The implementation of this institution should involve transferring certain functions from the jurisdiction of judges specializing in land registers to court lawyers in order to handle less complex decision-making, thereby relieving the workload of judges specializing in land registers.

Assessment of judicial reforms and the need for change in the view of the Judicial Council

As noted in the 2024 Rule of Law report, the Judicial Council set up a new working group on the specialization of judges. The working group delivered two reports in November 2024 – on the basic principles of specialization of judges and on the specialization of land registry cases in courts.¹⁸ In its report on the specialization of judges, the working group concluded that specialization by branches of law is objectively necessary as it contributes to more efficient performance of judges. The specialization of judges at first instance should be maintained in courts of general jurisdiction, but judges should be allowed to change their specialization during their career. At the same time, the working group is critical of the initiative to create more specialized courts in Latvia in the future. The report on land registry cases concludes that this function should be maintained as a judicial function in the civil law sector. The working group proposes the introduction of a position of a court lawyer, which could take over some of the functions of land registry judges and alleviate their workload. Discussions on these issues will continue in the Judicial Council at its forthcoming meetings to find the most appropriate solution.

In 2024, the Judicial Council also established a working group on strengthening judicial efficiency, which reported on the outcomes of the territorial reform of courts.¹⁹ The reform, initiated in 2014, was completed in 2024 and was deemed a success by the working group. It has increased the speed of case processing, evened out the workload of judges, reduced management costs and facilitated the introduction of new technologies and e-services in court proceedings.

In September 2024, the Judicial Council, with funding from the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, initiated the implementation of the project “Improving Judicial Efficiency and Budgeting in Latvia”.²⁰ Over a period of 18 months, various activities are

¹⁸ Reports of the working groups of the Judicial Council. Available here: <https://www.tieslietupadome.lv/en/documents>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ <https://www.tieslietupadome.lv/en/article/support-european-commission-judicial-council-has-launched->

planned within the project – the development of a report on the current situation in the Latvian judicial system; the development of recommendations and a roadmap for the institutional reform of the judicial system; the development of a statistical model to assess the workload and budgetary aspects of the judicial system, as well as pilot of the methodologies, training, and a manual on judicial data collection, methodology and resource assessment. The implementation of the project will continue until March 2026.

Other – please specify

Training for more effective handling of domestic violence cases was organized. As noted in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, a Judicial Council working group had identified certain “systemic weaknesses” in the handling of domestic violence cases in 2023. Training “A Victim-Centered Approach to the Justice System”, organized by the Academy of Justice, has started for the second round.²¹ Judges, prosecutors and investigators participated in the training. Various social partners, including experts from crisis centers and professionals from the justice and internal affairs sector, conducted the training. According to the participants, one of the biggest benefits of the training was the opportunity to learn how each of the parties involved (judges, prosecutors, investigators) views these cases from their respective perspectives. The training is planned to continue in 2025. The Ombudsman’s Office has carried out a study and presented it to the wider public in a discussion on the effectiveness of the temporary protection mechanism against domestic violence.²² The study also provides recommendations for improving the legal framework in this area.

New Guidelines for writing judgments in criminal cases were adopted. On 24 May 2024, the Judicial Council adopted the Guidelines for the Writing of Judgments in Criminal Cases for the courts of first instance and courts of appeal, developed by the Judicial and Scientific Analysis Division of the Supreme Court.²³ The purpose of the guidelines is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of judgments and to ensure a uniform approach to the writing of judgments in all courts.

Improvements to the efficiency in the criminal proceedings. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law were adopted and entered into force on 22 October 2024, extend the possibilities for courts of appeal to hear criminal cases in written proceedings, thereby ensuring faster and more efficient criminal proceedings.²⁴

Arbitration legislation was improved in compliance with the Constitutional Court’s judgement. Following the judgment of the Constitutional Court in case 2022-03-01²⁵, amendments were made to the Arbitration Law²⁶ and the Civil Procedure Law.²⁷ Latvia had not adopted the annulment procedure for arbitral awards as is included in UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration. In the aforementioned case, the Constitutional Court ruled that provisions of the Civil Procedure Law were incompatible with the right to a fair trial under the Constitution of Latvia. The amendments introduce the annulment procedure for arbitral awards, increase the involvement of state courts in gathering evidence in arbitration proceedings, and modernize the formalities for concluding an arbitration agreement.

[project-improving-judicial-efficiency-and-budgeting-latvia](#)

²¹ <https://www.tiesas.lv/aktualitates/nosledzies-pirmais-tieslietu-akademijas-macibu-uz-vardarbiba-cietusa-vajadzibam-versta-pieejja-tiesu-13106>

²² <https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/news/petijuma-prezentacija-un-diskusija-par-pagaidu-aizsardzibas-pret-vardarbibu-mehanisma-efektivitati/>

²³ <https://www.tieslietupadome.lv/lv/media/7704/download?attachment>

²⁴ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/355473-grozijumi-kriminalprocesa-likuma>

²⁵ Judgment of 23 February 2023 in case no. 2022-03-01, available in English translation: https://www.satv.tiesas.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2022-03-01_Judgement.pdf.

²⁶ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/352938-grozijumi-skirejtiesu-likuma>

²⁷ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/352940-grozijumi-civilprocesa-likuma>

II. Anti-corruption framework²⁸

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

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

☐ No developments

☒ If there have been developments related to the institutional framework capacity to fight corruption, please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

• *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.*

As of 1 January 2025, the **Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB)** has taken over the investigative and criminal intelligence functions of the Internal Security Department (ISD) of the State Revenue Service (SRS). The takeover of functions means that from now on, KNAB will be the law enforcement institution investigating corruption criminal offenses committed by SRS employees.

Previously, the pre-trial investigation of alleged corruption-related criminal offences committed by persons SRS employees were conducted by the ISD. In order to separate the functions of detecting and investigating criminal offences from the functions of a service provider, a reform of the SRS is being implemented. This reform, among other things, provides for KNAB to investigate alleged corruption-related criminal offences committed by SRS employees in the future.

The changes provide for KNAB to take over 16 positions with funding for remuneration and maintenance, as well as the necessary material assets. KNAB will also take over ISD's departmental inspection cases, criminal proceedings, submissions of persons, operational cases, nomenclature cases and physical evidence.

Internal Security Bureau (ISB) mandate has been expanded. It will now also cover the detection, investigation and prevention of all type of crimes (including related to corruption) committed by the officials and employees of the Prison administration (institution subordinated to Ministry of Justice). Up until 31 December 2024, ISB's mandate covered the detection, investigation and prevention of all type of crimes (including related to corruption) committed by the officials and employees of the institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Interior.

In 2024, the **Economic Crime Enforcement Department (ENAP)** of the State Police raised its capacity in corruption combating and investigation in the private sector in relation to reforms under the Recovery and Resilience plan by taking part in multiple education and training events. Additionally, in the context of the defrauding or misappropriation in EU Structural Funds, and cooperation with EPPO and OLAF, the State Police in 2024:

- 1) Received 10 criminal proceedings from EPPO, sent 1 criminal proceedings to EPPO, initiated 5 criminal proceedings, reopened 1 criminal proceedings, terminated 5 and sent for prosecution 6 criminal proceedings;

²⁸ 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.

- 2) 13 December 2024, ENAP representative (along with representatives from SRS, State Audit Service, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Prosecutor General's Office, State Police, Ministry of Justice, KNAB, EPPO, Procurement Monitoring Bureau, Competition Council, Climate and Energy Ministry, State Treasury, Central Finance and Contracting Agency, Rural Support Service, Ministry of Welfare, ISB, Transparency International Latvia / "Sabiedrība par atklātību – Delna"), participated in a meeting with representatives of the Anti-Fraud Coordination Service (AFCOS) to discuss issues of mutual cooperation.

There have been no changes to the powers of resources of the Prosecutor Generals' Office or State Border Guard.

In 2024, KNAB officials carried out one pre-trial investigation as members of an investigation group in one criminal proceeding initiated by EPPO in 2024. No additional information on the proceeding can be provided at this point in time. In 2024, 4 criminal proceedings initiated by EPPO were investigated by KNAB and analytical support was provided therein.

In 2023, the ISB received for further investigation a criminal case started by EPPO related to fraud.

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

No developments.

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

The Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan 2023-2025 (adopted by Cabinet of Ministers 11 April 2023 Order No.199) is the main policy planning document for corruption prevention and combating in Latvia.

The supervision of the implementation of the Action Plan is established by Paragraph 5 of the Cabinet of Ministers 11 April 2023 Order No. 199, establishing the obligation for the institutions responsible for the implementation of the measures included in the Action Plan to submit to KNAB information on the progress of the implementation of the measures by 1 February, as well as information on the results of the implementation of the plan measures for the entire period of implementation of the plan by 31 December 2025.

Therefore, updated data on the progress of the implementation of the Plan measures in 2024 will likely become available in March 2025.

Additionally, work has begun on the Corruption Prevention and Combating Action plan 2026-2027. The period of this policy document has been set to match the conclusion of the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027. After 2027, KNAB plans to draft a new long-term anti-corruption policy planning document for 2028-2036.

An interinstitutional working group, headed by KNAB, has been set up for drafting the 2026-2027 Action Plan on 7 November 2024. It contains representatives from 36 public authorities (ministries and their subordinate institutions, independent institutions, law enforcement authorities) and non-governmental organizations. The first meeting of the working group was held on 4 November 2024.

B. Prevention

☐ No developments

☒ If there have been developments related to the prevention of corruption, please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

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

Draft report on **Cooling-off period for work in the public sector** was drawn up by the State Chancellery, KNAB and the Ministry of Labour in 2024. It aims to review the existing legal framework and practice in Latvia, as well as includes experience in other countries. The work on the draft report will continue in 2025.

In 2024, to conduct an assessment of values and ethics in public administration a contract was awarded by the State Chancellery to the NGO Sabiedrība par atklātību – Delna” / Transparency International LATVIA (TI LATVIA). The project aims to conduct ex-post assessment of the effectiveness of implementation of the following Cabinet Recommendation No. 1 “Values of State Administration and Fundamental Principles of Ethics”²⁹.

On 18 October 2024, **webinar "Creating a Culture of Ethics at the workplace - experience, practice and ideas"** was organised by the Latvian School of Public Administration. Presentation on the public sector values and common ethical principles: on the way towards increasing trust in public institutions was delivered by the State Chancellery. The ethics rules in the public sector, codes of ethics in public administration and nomination of support persons on ethical issues, as foreseen by regulation, was discussed among other topics.

In 2024, **KNAB** conducted a total of 91 educational events, of which at least 52 included topics on the role of professional ethics in preventing conflict of interest situations and corruption, reaching an audience of 9074 people.

- *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).*

Work continues on the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, including the setting up of a special lobby register and developing regulation for the register and declaration system. According to the Law on the Transparency of Interest Representation, the Register of Interest Representation and System for Declaring Interest Representation shall become operational on 1st September 2025. It should be noted that while there is no transparency register yet, general rules of interest representation are in force.

Furthermore, regarding the monitoring of the achievement of the purpose of the Law on the Transparency of Interest Representation³⁰ the Cabinet of Ministers has submitted a report in 2024. The report provided information about what has been done to achieve the objectives of the Law on the Transparency of Interest Representation.³¹ Administrative liability will be assessed in Latvia after the implementation of the register and declaration system. In accordance with paragraph 4 of the transitional provisions of the Law on Transparency of Interest Representation - the Cabinet of Ministers shall also include in its report for 2025 an assessment of the need to provide for administrative liability for failure to fulfil the obligations referred to in this law.

26 September 2024 amendments³² to the **Law on Financing of Political Organisations (Parties)**: In Latvia, the calculation of State budget funding for political parties is tied to the official minimum monthly wage (in 2024 – EUR 700). Therefore, as the minimum monthly wage increases, the State budget funding for political parties also increases. For 2025, the minimum monthly wage in the country has been set at EUR 740. In light of the aforementioned and the decision to primarily direct budget funds to measures related to national security, a decision was made that State budget funding in 2025 for a political organization (party) will be calculated and allocated from the minimum monthly wage for 2024.

²⁹ <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/303328-values-of-state-administration-and-fundamental-principles-of-ethics>

³⁰ Law on Transparency of Interest Representation can be found in also in English:

<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/336676-law-on-transparency-of-interest-representation>

³¹ https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/a5a1727a-e043-4240-a2b9-33a0fd049b61

³² <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/355383-grozijums-politisko-organizaciju-partiju-finansesanas-likuma>

In 2024, the use of artificial intelligence systems in pre-election campaigning became regulated. On 24 October 2024, **Pre-Election Campaign Law** was supplemented³³ with an obligation for political organizations, parliamentary candidates and any other campaigners to inform the public if artificial intelligence had been used in the pre-election campaign. This means that video advertising clips published on the Internet and all other pre-election campaigning materials created with the help of artificial intelligence will have to contain a clear and unambiguous indication that the relevant material was created with artificial intelligence tools. This condition will apply to all paid campaigning materials, regardless of the campaign environment. It will not apply to text editing and creation. The changes also provide that in the future, it will be prohibited to use fake or anonymous social network accounts created by automated systems for any pre-election campaigning activities on social networks or elsewhere else on the Internet.

The amendments also provide that in cases where the aforementioned procedure is not followed, KNAB will prohibit further placement of the relevant pre-election campaign material created by the artificial intelligence system. To make such a decision, KNAB shall receive the opinion of an expert or other specialist, assess the usefulness of the relevant decision, the possibility of execution, as well as its proportionality. Information on the adoption, cancellation or amendment of the KNAB decision on the prohibition of campaign materials will be published on the KNAB website³⁴.

On 1 January 2025, amendments³⁵ to the **Law on Administrative Liability** entered into force. With amendments to Section 118 (Limitation period of the initiation of the administrative offence proceedings) this period has been extended to three years. Previously, administrative violation proceedings could be initiated within two years from the date of the violation for violations committed in the financing of political organizations (parties) or associations thereof. It is expected that when KNAB receives information in the future about the aforementioned violations committed three years ago, it will be possible to hold the guilty parties accountable, thus streamlining control of political parties and ensuring the inevitability of punishment.

The Law on **Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials** has had 2 relevant amendments:

- 1) 15 February 2024 amendments³⁶ provide for the so-called cooling-off period with regard to making decisions affecting the former spouse or partner of a public official. Thus, public officials are prohibited from making decisions or taking any other actions against a spouse or partner not only during cohabitation, but also for two years after the termination of the legal relationship. Additional restrictions were also imposed on public officials regarding commercial companies in which public officials are the beneficial owners. Public officials may not perform any actions in relation to a commercial company in which they are the beneficial owners. In addition, the President of the Republic, members of the parliament and other highest public officials may not be the beneficial owners of companies or individual merchants that receive public procurement, state funds or state-guaranteed loans.
- 2) On 12 December 2024 the Saeima adopted amendments³⁷ (entered into force on 11 January 2025) that as of 2025, the position of a state and municipal executive board member is no longer compatible with the position of head of institution, deputy thereof or civil servant. The prohibition was introduced as the position of an executive board member is considered a fulltime job, requiring constant attention and involvement, and was thus deemed

³³ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/356149-grozijumi-prieksvelesanu-agitacijas-likuma>

³⁴ <https://www.knab.gov.lv/en/article/saeima-sets-requirements-use-artificial-intelligence-pre-election-campaigning>

³⁵ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/356850-grozijumi-administrativas-atbildibas-likuma>

³⁶ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/350151-grozijumi-likuma-par-interesu-konflikta-noversanu-valsts-amatpersonu-darbiba->

³⁷ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/357695-grozijumi-likuma-par-interesu-konflikta-noversanu-valsts-amatpersonu-darbiba->

incompatible with other responsibilities. The position of a supervisory board member related to making strategic decisions and board supervision can henceforth only be combined in exceptional cases, where it is necessary to ensure the capacity of the capital company. In such scenarios, the person can be appointed for up to one year, and repeated appointment will only be possible after a one-year break. Furthermore, the amendments reduce the amount of positions the highest public officials may hold. Previously heads of public authorities and deputies thereof were allowed to combine their main office with two additional paid or otherwise remunerated positions in institutions of public person. They will henceforth be allowed to hold only one other paid or otherwise remunerated position. These restrictions on combinations of offices apply to: head of the Chancery of the President and a deputy thereof; the Secretary General of the Administration of the Saeima; heads of institutions of direct administration and deputies thereof; the chairperson of a local government council and a deputy thereof who holds a paid office in a local government council; the executive director of a local government and a deputy thereof; executive board members of state and local government capital companies;

These reforms were initiated based on the facts established in the State Audit Service audit³⁸, which indicated challenges and risks caused by the combination of several offices, including the reduction in the quality of work.

Additionally, the head of a public institution, after assessing the risks of a conflict of interest in the relevant public official position and the time required to perform the position, will be able to determine which public official positions do not require a written permit for the combination of offices. For example, such a decision may be taken in relation to municipal police officers, professional service soldiers of the National Armed Forces, and officials of the Prison Administration who hold special service ranks. It is expected that this could help reduce administrative burden.

- *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).*

→ *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.).*

In carrying out control over the implementation of the restrictions, prohibitions and obligations set out in the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials, KNAB has verified declarations of 1115 public officials based on received reports and complaints on potential interests of conflict. Thus, 398 departmental investigations were initiated, completing 55 departmental investigations (that had been initiated in 2023) and 343 of the departmental investigations initiated in 2024. A total of 188 administrative proceedings were initiated, and in 77 cases decision was made to not initiate administrative violation proceedings.

In 2024, a total of 199 decisions were made in administrative violations proceedings, and in 134 cases the public officials were fined for a total amount of EUR 25 365; 49 public officials were reprimanded, and in 16 cases the administrative proceedings were terminated as circumstances precluding administrative liability had been established. 27 persons were ordered to repay the damages to the State in the amount of EUR 34 618,62, whereas 6 persons were exempted from the obligation to repay damages to the State.

In 2 cases, materials were transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department of KNAB for initiating criminal procedures.

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

³⁸ [Is the Public Administration Reform Plan 2020 proceeding as planned and is the intended effect achieved?](#)

2023 annual report: In 2023, 45 public administration institutions received submissions in the form of whistleblower reports, receiving a total of 386 such submissions. Most of them were received by KNAB, the State Police, Riga City Municipality and the Prosecution service. Furthermore, 31 submissions were received by the Contact point for whistleblowers. From the 386 submissions, 111 were recognised as whistleblower reports and follow-up was given according to the Whistleblowing law. In 2023, 5 demands to provide State Ensured Legal Aid were received from whistleblowers and it was provided in 3 cases.

In 2025, the statistics for 2024 will be compiled and the **2024 annual report** will be prepared. In 2024, the **Ex-post evaluation of the Whistleblowing law** was carried out. The draft report was prepared by the State Chancellery and other institutions provided comments on the draft report. Moreover, on 2 May 2024, the State Chancellery held an in-person discussion on this evaluation with responsible persons from competent institutions, which expressed their opinions and the report was amended accordingly. There are conclusions about activity of whistleblowers, protection, work of the Contact point for whistleblowers etc. One of the conclusions is to transfer the function of Contact point for whistleblowers to KNAB from 1 January 2026.

The report is soon to be adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers and then amendments to the Whistleblowing law are to be prepared and approved in 2025.

The draft evaluation report is available on the TAP portal³⁹.

Regarding KNAB: In 2024, KNAB received a total of 60 submissions in the form of whistleblower reports, of which 22 were recognized as whistleblower reports, whereas 38 were not recognized as such. Additionally, 17 submissions were transferred to other institutions based on their competence.

Breakdown of topics in received submissions in the form of whistleblower reports	Amount
Using official position in bad faith	5
Violations of the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials	14
Squandering	6
Bribery	3
Violations of pre-election campaigning	1
Violations in public procurements	2
Violations in political party financing	1
Forging documents	2
Fraud	8
Other	18

Breakdown of topics in reports recognized as whistleblower reports	Amount
Using official position in bad faith	1
Violations of the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials	10
Squandering	6
Bribery	3
Violations of pre-election campaigning	1
Violations in political party financing	1

³⁹ https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/131821e9-6cb3-4835-9b15-ed2c3cd6929d

• *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.*

To identify potential conflicts of interest in the Procurement Commission on 22 January 2024 a sample survey questionnaire⁴⁰ was published on the **Procurement Monitoring Bureau** website.

Amendments to the Public Procurement Law⁴¹ (PIL) are being proposed, which provide for supplementing Section 24 of the PIL with the Paragraphs 5 and 6, which contain regulations on the use of the information system established by the Cabinet of Ministers to obtain information about the relationship of a person preparing the procurement procedure documents (an official or employee of the contracting authority), members of the procurement commission, a secretary of the procurement commission, and experts with a candidate or tenderer within the meaning of Section 25(1) of the PIL. Based on this regulation, the Electronic Procurement System will provide a solution to obtain information in the form of a e-certificate about the relationship of a person preparing the procurement procedure documents (an official or employee of the contracting authority), members of the procurement commission, a secretary of the procurement commission, and experts with a candidate or tenderer. These changes will allow the identification and prevention of potential conflict of interest situations in the operations of the procurement commission. It is expected that the regulation will enter into force on 1 March 2025.

The **Central Finance and Contracting Agency** (hereinafter – CFCA) focuses its work on the identification and prevention of fraud risks to ensure effective, transparent and compliant with the principles of financial management implementation of EU funds in Latvia. In order to demonstrate the tone from the top and to explain the nature and practical importance of zero tolerance to fraud and corruption, the CFCA has developed a Fraud, Corruption and Conflict of Interest Risk Prevention Policy in 2024. The CFCA has also established procedures for the separation of functions, the delegation of tasks, the supervision of tasks to prevent possible cases of fraud or corruption, and the use of IT systems for the task management.

The CFCA has established a separate unit, the Fraud Risk Management Unit of the Legal Department, whose competences are directly related to the identification of fraud risks through the development of internal regulations, clarification, in-depth analysis, training, maintenance of the internal control system and management of the non-compliance decision-making process in the field of prevention of conflict of interest, fraud and corruption, as well as competition related infringements.

The CFCA's Operational Strategy 2023-2026⁴² sets out zero tolerance to fraud and corruption, conflict of interest as one of its guiding principles. The risk management culture of the CFCA is that in the case of fraud and corruption risks, the risk appetite is always unacceptable. The identification, assessment and prevention of fraud and corruption and conflict of interest risks are integrated into the existing CFCA risk management process and role assignments to form an integrated risk management framework. Taking into account the number of CFCA employees and the different functions, several risk registers are maintained (e.g. Fraud, Corruption and Conflict of Interest Risk Register, EU Funds Risk Register, Cyber Security Risk Register, Additional Risks List) and the implementation of risk mitigation measures is regularly monitored.

The CFCA has developed a Risk Management Manual, which sets out that, within its strategic, support and horizontal functions, the CFCA identifies and assesses the risk of fraud, corruption

⁴⁰ <https://www.iub.gov.lv/lv/media/7257/download?attachment>

⁴¹ <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/287760-public-procurement-law>

⁴² <https://www.cfla.gov.lv/lv/media/10713/download?attachment>

and conflict of interest at CFCA level. The assessment and management of these risks is a separate process, with the risk owner being the Director of the Legal Department. The process of identifying these risks is intended to assess the risks of fraud, corruption and conflict of interest fully across all CFCA functions and lines of action. The CFCA's risk classification identifies fraud, corruption and conflict of interest risks as a separate category and considers risks related to various types of fraud, misconduct and malpractice, intentional deception of the CFCA, intentional misrepresentation of facts (e.g., conflicts of interest, corruption, false information, double funding), including by CFCA employees.

The Fraud Risk Management Unit also ensures coordination, consultation and cooperation with the competent investigative authorities of Latvia, as well as with the EPPO and OLAF, including the reporting of irregularities and suspected fraud in the OLAF IMS system. The Legal Department and the Fraud Risk Management Unit ensure the CFCA's representation in AFCOS. The Unit uses the VI "Methodological Guidance for assessing specific fraud and corruption risks in the implementation of European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund projects in the 2014-2020 programming period" when assessing fraud risks in EU Fund programmes. Following the assessment of these risks, the CFCA develops an organisational action plan to mitigate fraud and corruption risks, which is approved by the Director of the CFCA.

The CFCA provides training to its employees to prevent, detect and correct possible irregularities in EU funds: in 2023 and 2024, CFCA employees received training on managing corruption and conflict of interest risks, as well as on restrictions on accepting gifts and combining offices, and on ethical issues. CFCA employees are subject to integrity checks to prevent risks of corruption, conflict of interest or fraud, including a Code of Ethics which sets out the obligation of employees to act with integrity, diligence and a responsible attitude in their work and to perform their duties independently, resisting and rejecting all demands and influences to act unlawfully or unethically or in breach of the principles of public administration.

Positions at high risk of corruption have been identified and internal regulations have been drawn up on "Rules on the Procedure for Combining Offices, Preventing Conflicts of Interest, Accepting Gifts and Identifying Sensitive Offices", which specify the procedures to be followed for sensitive positions. Employees are repeatedly reminded of the information on possible irregularities related to fraud and corruption, pointing out the specific applicable legal liability. The CFCA uses an integrated data retrieval and information technology tool, Arachne, and national level databases to carry out administrative and management checks in Structural Funds. CFCA has developed Internal Rules on the use of Arachne, methodological support material for double funding checks in Arachne has been inserted in the KPVIS (Management information system of cohesion policy funds). The CFCA has implemented a whistleblowing procedure: on its website detailed information on the meaning of whistleblowing and its legal basis is published. The CFCA website also has an "Anti-Fraud" section which provides information on what to do in case of suspected fraud or corruption.

The principles set out in the previous planning period's procedures apply to the identification of non-compliances in the 2021-2027 planning period. The internal regulations of the CFCA specify the procedure for an employee to report specific facts or reasonable suspicions of a possible irregularity or a possible case of fraud in the activities of institutions, officials or employees involved in the administration of financial instruments under the CFCA's competence. According to the information provided by the CFCA both in the AFCOS network meetings and on other platforms, for the planning period 2021-2027 it is planned to change the approach and to withhold payments only in case of reasonable suspicion and not immediately after initiating criminal proceedings. This change of approach has not been incorporated in the

procedures for the 2021-2027 planning period but is planned to be implemented in the near future.

In 2024, there were no changes to regulations in the field of migration related to anti-corruption measures. The **Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs** (hereinafter – PMLP) cooperates with KNAB to enable verification in relation to the provisions of Section 25(1) of the Public Procurement Law. For this purpose, PMLP provides access to the data service of parents, children, siblings, as well as spouses. In addition, in connection with the amendments to Section 25(1) of the Public Procurement Law, KNAB is provided with access to the partnership data service in the test environment. Each application is additionally verified by the competent state security institutions, in the opinion of PMLP this verification mechanism is sufficient.

Healthcare: In late 2024, Transparency International Latvia (Delna) and the Latvian Corporate Social Responsibility Platform launched the initiative “*Zero Tolerance Towards Corruption.*” This initiative aims to foster a society that firmly rejects corruption in all its forms. It seeks to encourage citizens to take a stand against corruption, strengthen government accountability, and promote transparency across various sectors, including healthcare.

In autumn 2024, Delna began inviting both private companies and government institutions to join the initiative and actively contribute to creating a corruption-free environment. By joining the initiative, organizations commit to implementing and promoting transparency principles, establishing, and publicly sharing anti-corruption policies and procedures within their operations and the broader professional environment⁴³.

Several healthcare institutions in Latvia, including the largest children’s hospital – the Children’s Clinical University Hospital, and one of the largest multidisciplinary hospitals in Latvia – the Pauls Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital, have already joined this initiative. It is hoped that even more healthcare service providers, both public and private, will follow the example in 2025.

Additionally, healthcare institutions are using “whistleblowing mechanisms” as a key tool for enforcing zero-tolerance policies. These mechanisms provide an opportunity for both employees and patients to anonymously report conflicts of interest or potential encounters with corruption in healthcare provision.

Healthcare institutions are also providing patients with the opportunity to share their experiences within the hospital by completing patient experience surveys. For example, the survey on childbirth experiences within the institution includes questions about whether patients have made any unofficial payments (such as money, bribes, or gifts) to receive better quality healthcare services during their hospital stay.

In addition, hospitals organize internal training for employees on adhering to ethical standards, preventing conflicts of interest, and combating corruption, targeting not only those involved in healthcare provision but also those engaged in procurement activities. In 2024, several hospitals also participated in external events, such as the discussion “*How Companies Reduce Corruption in Latvia*”, organized by Delna, and the seminar “*Fair Business Practices in Procurement*”, organized by KNAB.

- *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.*

C. Repression

☐ No developments regarding the repression of corruption

⁴³ <https://nulleskorupcija.lv/>

☒ If there have been developments related to the repression of corruption, please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

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

The Parliament of Latvia (hereinafter – *Saeima*) has adopted amendments to the Criminal Law.⁴⁴ The Amendments to the Criminal Law envisage reducing the threshold of illegal financing, from which criminal liability for illegal financing of political parties arises, which is defined in Section 288.² of the Criminal Law. These amendments are designed to prevent illegal financing of political parties and strengthen public trust in the political system.

The justification for the amendments is related to the fact that the current threshold set in Sections 288.² and 288.⁴ of the Criminal Law as "a large amount" (50 official minimum monthly wages⁴⁵) is too high for individuals to be prosecuted for illegal financing of political parties. The amendments envisage setting a "significant amount" (10 official minimum monthly wages⁴⁶) as a threshold in the first part of Section 288.² and the first part of Section 288.⁴ of the Criminal Law, while transferring the responsibility for "large amounts" to the second parts of the respective articles.

In addition, Section 288.³ of the Criminal Law is excluded, as it was concluded that an intermediary who directly transfers illegal funding to a political party also meets the characteristics of a financier. In order to avoid legal duplication and to simplify the legal framework, this Section is deleted.

Saeima also on 9 May 2024 adopted a new article⁴⁷ in the Criminal law e.g. Section 90.¹ which determine responsibility for deliberately producing or distributing false discrediting information about a political organization (party) or an association of political organizations (parties) or a candidate for a member of the *Saeima* of the Republic of Latvia, a local council or a member of the European Parliament, using deepfake technology, if it was done during the pre-election campaign period or on election day, punishable by deprivation of liberty for a period of up to five years or by temporary deprivation of liberty, or by probation supervision, or by community service.

On 26 September 2024⁴⁸, *Saeima* adopted Section 90.² which determine responsibility for deliberately producing or distributing false discrediting information using deepfake technology, regarding a candidate for the position of a public official, who is elected, appointed or approved by *Saeima*, if this is done during the process of election, appointment or confirmation of a public official as prescribed by law, punishable by deprivation of liberty for a period of up to five years or by temporary deprivation of liberty, or by probation supervision, or by community service. Additionally, it was concluded that, in addition to the intent of acquiring property, which is already contained in Criminal Law, when an official acts unlawfully or abuses their official position, there may also be other intentions related to obtaining unjustified advantages for themselves or any other person, and which are not related to obtaining material benefit. This may be especially evident in various public procurement procedures, e.g., when a member of a public procurement commission commits intentional actions, abusing their official position, in order to achieve recognition of a specific bidder (relative, acquaintance), who has submitted or may submit a bid, as the winner in the procurement procedure. Similarly, an official may intend to increase their power or influence, using official position to obtain a better position or control

⁴⁴ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/355469-grozijumi-kriminallikuma>

The amendments have entered into force and have been incorporated into the current version Criminal Law, can be found: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/88966-kriminallikums>

⁴⁵ In 2024: 700 x 50 = 35 000 EUR

⁴⁶ In 2024: 700 x 10 = 10 000 EUR

⁴⁷ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/352098-grozijumi-kriminallikuma>

⁴⁸ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/355469-grozijumi-kriminallikuma>

situations that may be unrelated to material benefit. Abuse of official position may provide access to confidential information or opportunities that are not available to others, creating advantages for themselves or another person. An official may also intend to use their position to foster personal relationships with specific individuals or groups that may lead to advantages at a public, social or personal level.

Therefore, Criminal Law 6 June 2024 amendments⁴⁹ to Section 317(2) “Exceeding official authority”, Section 318(2) “Using official position in bad faith”, Section 319(2) “Failure to act by public official” were supplemented with a new type of intent - the intent to obtain unjustified advantages for oneself or any other person. It is thus expected that holding public officials criminally liable will become possible also in cases where there was no intent to acquire property (greedy intent) and no material benefit was obtained, yet some unjustified advantages were obtained, e.g., a specific bidder was successful in a public procurement.

• *Official data on the number of investigations, prosecutions, final judgments, and the application of sanctions for corruption offences (differentiated by offence if possible)*⁵⁰. Please indicate whether the cases: involve legal persons; are related to the implementation of EU or national funds⁵¹; involve high level corruption. Please indicate which data is publicly available and how policy-making is informed by the data.

KNAB: a total of 25 criminal proceedings were initiated in 2024. Of these, 5 were initiated for giving of bribes, 5 – use of official position in bad faith, 4 – accepting bribes, 2 – for failure to act by public official, 2 – for compelling the giving of false testimony, explanations, opinions and translations, 1 – for violation of restrictions imposed on a public official, 1 – for fraud, 1 – for disclosure of non-disclosable information which is not confidential, secret, or top secret information, unauthorised acquisition and disclosure of information containing commercial secret, and illegal disclosure of inside information of the financial markets, 1 – for forgery of a document, seal and stamp and use and disposal of a forged document, seal and stamp.

In 2024, a total of 19 criminal proceedings against 41 natural person and 5 legal persons were sent for prosecution. The natural persons were primarily accused of giving bribes (8 persons), accepting bribes (6 persons), fraud (6 persons), forgery of a document, seal and stamp and use and disposal of a forged document, seal and stamp (6 persons), disclosure of non-disclosable information (4 persons), avoiding submission of declaration (2 persons), use of official position in bad faith (1 person), failure to act by public official (1 person), exceeding official authority (1 person), unlawful requesting and receiving of benefits (1 person), manufacture (production), storage and movement of illegal alcoholic beverages (1 person), misappropriation of bribe (1 person), and 3 persons were transferred to the Prosecution service to evaluate the change of their procedural status.

19 criminal proceedings received convicting judgements against 30 natural persons and 2 legal persons. In one criminal proceeding, an acquittal was received. The natural persons mostly received suspended sentences (24 persons), 3 persons were imprisoned, 9 were imposed fines, and 4 were sentenced to community service. Both legal persons were imposed coercive measures – recovery of money (EUR 120 000 for one, and EUR 31 500 for the other).

The most common offence by the sentenced natural persons was giving of bribes (16 persons), the rest were sentenced for disclosure of non-disclosable information (5 persons), accepting

⁴⁹ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/352942-grozijumi-kriminallikuma>

⁵⁰ Please include, if available the number of (data since 2022 or latest available data): indictments; first instance convictions, first instance acquittals; final convictions; final acquittals; other outcomes (final) (i.e. excluding convictions and acquittals); cases adjudicated (final); imprisonment / custodial sentences through final convictions; suspended custodial sentences through final convictions; pending cases at the end of the reference year.

⁵¹ For MS participating in the EPPO, data on cases related to EU funds does not encompass investigations and prosecutions carried out by the EPPO.

bribes (4 persons), fraud (4 persons), use of official position in bad faith (3 persons), exceeding official authority (2 persons), misappropriation of bribe (2 persons), avoiding submission of declaration (1 person), misappropriation (1 person), forgery of a document, seal and stamp and use and disposal of a forged document, seal and stamp (1 person), and manufacture (production), storage and movement of illegal alcoholic beverages (1 person).

Most noteworthy KNAB cases sent for prosecution in 2024:

On 26 February 2024, KNAB sent for prosecution criminal proceedings against four public officials, two representatives of a legal person and one natural person, where pre-trial investigation had established alleged systematic bribery of multiple public officials by representatives of a company to obtain limited access information on planned public procurements. After obtaining the information, the representatives would involve a natural person to bribe members of the procurement commission, thus obtaining a procurement for road maintenance in the municipality exceeding EUR 680 000.

On 26 June 2024, KNAB sent for prosecution criminal proceedings where pre-trial investigation had established that a former public official of a Riga City Council department had allegedly offered a large bribe to the advisor of the Minister of Transport at the behest of an entrepreneur in exchange for a beneficial decision. The EUR 50 000 bribe had allegedly been to ensure the Ministry of Transport would withdraw from the rights of pre-emption for 22 land plots previously owned by the VAS International Airport Riga.

On 19 August 2024, KNAB transferred criminal proceedings to EPPO, where pre-trial investigation had established that a representative of a company (board member) specializing in the production of beverages, together with two officials of a municipality (including head of administration), may have defrauded the European Union (EU) Structural Funds and the Latvian State budget on a large scale, thus causing EUR 581 709 damages to Latvia and the EU. Two public officials of the municipality, together with a representative of the company, allegedly misled officials of the CFCA about the project.

In 2024, the **Internal Security Bureau** initiated a total of 52 criminal investigations, of which 24 were related to crimes committed on duty by the officials from the institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Interior (including 7 criminal investigations related to corruption).

In 2024, 20 criminal cases related to crimes committed on duty by the officials from the institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Interior, including 5 criminal cases related to corruption, were sent to the Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution. 1 of these 5 cases was related to high level corruption.

In 2024, 19 officials from institutions subordinated to the Ministry of interior and 2 private individuals were convicted for crimes committed related to corruption. 6 officials were sentenced to imprisonment, and the remaining officials and 2 natural persons received suspended sentences and other types of punishment.

Noteworthy ISB cases in 2024:

1) On 19 September 2024, the ISB completed its investigation and forwarded the criminal case for prosecution regarding the extortion of a EUR 2,500 bribe to prevent the administrative violations for exceeding the maximum allowed speed limit, which were committed by a public official employed in the State Police traffic monitoring on 11 July 2024;

2) In 2024, ISB finished investigation (initiated in 2022) where two high level officers of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs and two representatives of legal entity were involved. It was identified that the two high level officials (deputy head of the institution and head of the department) of Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs illegally pre-negotiated terms and specification before launching a public procurement (related to IT solutions in government election systems) in favour of one specific company. Due to these illegal activities the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs received low quality, non-compliant services and as a result large amount of public funds were misused. It is also worth mentioning that in

close and effective cooperation with the Financial Intelligence Unit and private sector, illegal funds in the amount of EUR 521 000 were arrested. On 6 February 2024, the criminal case was sent to Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution against natural persons for fraud on a large scale and using official position in bad faith.

3) In 2022, the ISB stopped the activities of an international organized criminal group (Latvia, Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan). The criminal group had organized illegal transfer of persons across the State border. Two persons from Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan paid bribes to officials of the State Border Guard in order to illegally transfer persons across the State border. During the investigation 3 persons were arrested (including one State Border Guard official). In 2022, the case was sent to Prosecutor General's Office for prosecution. The proceedings were later separated, and the judgement against the citizen of Kirgizstan for 2 years imprisonment (3 year probation) has entered into force for organizing the giving of a bribe. The proceedings against the State Border Guard official and citizen of Kazakhstan remain pending in appeal instance (first instance judgement was pronounced on 20 November 2024).

During the reporting period, 10 criminal proceedings were initiated by the **SRS Internal Security Department**, and 1 was received for investigation in accordance with institutional jurisdiction regarding criminal offences in the service of state institutions, or other criminal offences provided for in the Criminal Law in which officials of the State Revenue Service are involved (including for corrupt criminal offences), while 14 criminal proceedings were sent for prosecution. The ISD does not keep records of the results of legal proceedings and the sanctions for corruption offences.

In 2024, the **State Border Guard** initiated 12 criminal proceedings against 12 natural persons in connection with bribery of State Border Guard officials. Regarding bribery, it should be noted that, as in previous years, cases of bribery were detected at border crossing points at the external land border during the reporting period. The methods of giving of bribes have remained unchanged - usually a bribe was given by placing a relevant banknote (banknotes) in documents presented (given) to a State Border Guard official during a border check. No new types of crimes or new criminal trends in bribery crimes were detected in 2024.

In turn, in 2024, 8 criminal proceedings against 8 natural persons were sent for prosecution for the giving of bribes to a State Border Guard official, i.e., for the elements of the crime provided for in Section 323(1) of the Criminal Law.

The **Economic Crime Enforcement Department** (ENAP) of the State Police has not initiated any criminal proceedings for corruption in the private sector in 2024.

The **Central Finance and Contracting Agency**: According to the information available to the CFCA, 37 projects under its supervision (30 criminal proceedings) are currently under pre-trial investigation, prosecution or trial. However, from 2022 to present date, non-compliance "fraud" has been found in 5 projects (5 criminal proceedings).

Prosecutor General's Office: In 2024, prosecutors of the Prosecution Office for Investigation of Public Office Holders Misconduct Offences (hereinafter – NNVIDIP) drafted 20 penal orders for a total of 32 criminal offences:

- 12 offences qualified under Section 323(1) of the Criminal Law (giving of bribes)
- 9 offences under Section 329 (disclosure of non-disclosable information)
- 4 offences under Section 327(1) (forging official documents)
- 3 offences under Section 262.¹(1) (Refusal to Take a Test for the Influence of Alcohol, Narcotic, Psychotropic, Toxic and Other Intoxicating Substances and Leaving of the Place of Road Traffic Accident, together with Section 323(1))
- 4 offences, individually under Section 317(2) (exceeding official authority related to violence or threatened violence or if they have been committed for the purpose of acquiring property), Section 321(1) (misappropriation of a bribe), Section 221.²(3)

(manufacture (production), storage and movement of illegal alcoholic beverages committed on a large scale or in a group), Section 275(2) (forgery of a document, seal and stamp and use and disposal of a forged document, seal and stamp committed by a group of persons according to a prior agreement)

Fines were imposed for 12 offences, and community service for 20 offences, i.e.:

- For offences under Section 323(1):
 - In 6 cases – fines from EUR 2100 to EUR 14000
 - In 6 cases – community service from 130 to 210 hours
- For offences under Section 329:
 - In 1 case – fine of EUR 4200
 - In 8 cases – community service from 45 to 75 hours;
- For offences under Section 327(1) in all 4 cases – community service from 150h to 210 hours.
- For offences under Section 262.1(1): In 2 cases – fines of EUR 2100 and EUR 4200, in 1 case – community service for 180 hours. Additional penalty – withdrawal of driving licence for 5 years – was applied in all cases.
- For offences under Section 317(2): A fine of EUR 11900, withdrawing the right to hold position of insolvency administrator for 2 years
- For offence under Section 321(1): Community service for 200 hours
- For offence under Section 221.2(3): A fine of EUR 7700
- For offence under Section 275(2): A fine of EUR 11900

The sum total of fines in 2024 was EUR 79100 (EUR 72540 in 2023), and community service for 2080 hours (1960 hours in 2023).

In 2024, prosecutors of the NNVIDIP directed 6 criminal proceedings for 24 offences in an agreement process. At the moment of reporting, the concluded proceedings have had the following sanctions:

- for the offence under Section 177(2), in 4 cases a sentence of imprisonment from 8 months to 1 year 6 months was imposed, in all cases the sentence of imprisonment was imposed conditionally with a probationary period of 8 months to 2 years;
- for the offence under Section 20(2) and Section 275(2), in 1 case 100 hours of community service was imposed;
- for the offence under Section 275(2), in 2 cases community service was imposed in the amount of 100 and 150 hours, in one case – imprisonment for 5 months, the sentence of imprisonment was imposed conditionally with a probationary period of 1 year 2 months;
- for the offence under Section 320(2), in 1 case a sentence of imprisonment of 8 months was imposed, the sentence of imprisonment was imposed conditionally with a probationary period of 2 years;
- for the offence under Section 320(2), in 2 cases a sentence of imprisonment of 1 year 6 months and 2 years was imposed, in both cases the sentence of imprisonment was imposed conditionally with a probationary period of 2 years;
- for the offence under Section 320(3), in 2 cases a sentence of imprisonment of 2 years was imposed, in both cases the sentence of imprisonment was imposed conditionally with a probationary period of 2 years, in one case – a sentence of imprisonment of 3 years, the sentence of imprisonment of 3 years was imposed conditionally with a probationary period of 3 years;
- for the offence under Section 320(4), in 5 cases a sentence of imprisonment of 3 years was imposed, in all cases the sentence of imprisonment was imposed conditionally with a probationary period of 3 years;

- for the offence under Section 323(1), in 2 cases a 1-year prison sentence was imposed, with a probationary period of 3 years and 6 months, in one case a 1-year prison sentence was imposed, with a probationary period of 2 years;
- for the offence under Section 323(2), in all 3 cases a 2-year prison sentence was imposed, but in two cases a 2-year prison sentence was imposed, with a probationary period of 3 years and 6 months, in one case a 3-year prison sentence was imposed;
- for the offence under Section 327(2), in 1 case 150 hours of community service was imposed;
- for the offence under Section 20(3) and Section 329, in 1 case a fine of 2100 euros was imposed;
- for the offence provided for in Section 329, in 1 case, community service was imposed for 3 criminal offences, 70 hours for each, setting a final sentence of 160 hours, and in 1 other case, for 2 criminal offences, 90 hours for each, setting a final sentence of 140 hours.

If in 2023, NNVIDIP prosecutors most commonly requested, and the court imposed, imprisonment from 3 to 4 year, in 2024, the range was 1 to 3 years.

Most noteworthy cases transferred to court in 2024:

1. Officials of the Customs Control Point of the Freeport of Riga in an organized group - continuously, regularly, systematically, accepted bribe offers before performing and failing to perform lawful actions, as well as accepted bribes for already performed lawful actions or permitted inaction, using their official position. The sentence imposed by the Economic Court (the case was heard in agreement procedure) - deprivation of liberty for 3 years, conditionally, with a probationary period of 3 years, without confiscation of property, deprivation of the right to hold public official positions in public administration for 5 years and with probation supervision for 3 years;
2. Riga City Council official offering a bribe of EUR 50 000 to an official of the Ministry of Transport in connection with the expropriation of a plot of land near Riga Airport. The case is being heard in first instance court.
3. The former chairperson of Rēzekne City Council has been charged with disclosing restricted information and for deliberately failing to disclose information about property (including property located abroad) and other income in large amounts in the declarations of a public official for sixteen years. The case is being heard in first instance court.

• *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).*

The Prosecutor General's Office has noted a negative trend – an increase in the number of cases pending (stuck) in court.

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

The **Public Officials' Data Administration Unit** of the **State Revenue Service** provides the following information:

The sanctions (administrative penalties) provided for in the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in the Activities of Public Officials for non-compliance with the deadline and the procedure for filing the declaration and for providing false information in the declaration, as well as for not filing the lists of public officials and amendments thereto in the prescribed manner, are effective and the administrative penalties are sufficiently high. Moreover, according to Section 26 of the Law on Administrative Liability, if an administrative offence has been punished with an administrative penalty, but the administrative offence continues and is not discontinued, the administrative penalty for the continuation of the administrative offence shall be imposed after a reasonable time has elapsed for the discontinuation of the

administrative offence. Thus, an administrative penalty may be applied repeatedly in cases where a person fails to comply with an obligation imposed on him by law.

The administrative penalties imposed have a deterring effect, so that the sanctions imposed for the administrative offences committed are sufficient to deter future infringements.

In cases where it is established that the administrative offence committed is of minor importance, in accordance with Section 11 of the Law on Administrative Liability, a decision shall be taken as to whether or not an administrative penalty is appropriate in the particular case and, accordingly, a decision may be taken to exempt the person from administrative liability, limited to a reprimand.

Information on the measures taken by the Public Officials’ Data Administration Unit in 2023 and 2024 in cases of administrative offences (non-criminal):

2023

for refusal to initiate administrative offence proceedings (oral reprimand)	158
imposing an administrative penalty	174
on the termination of administrative offence proceedings	8

2024

or refusal to initiate administrative offence proceedings (oral reprimand)	266
imposing an administrative penalty	157
on the termination of administrative offence proceedings	22

The application of penalties follows the guidelines of the State Revenue Service on administrative fines.

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):

A. Media authorities and bodies⁵²

- ☐ No developments
- ☒ If there have been developments related to media authorities and bodies, please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

With the decision of the Register of Enterprises on 2 January 2025, to register the reorganisation and the new company – the State Limited Liability Company (VSIA) "Latvijas Sabiedriskais medijs" (Latvian Public Media) – in the Commercial Register, the legal process of reorganising the unified public media has been concluded. Immediately after the company’s registration, the Public Electronic Mass Media Council, fulfilling the functions of the shareholder and shareholders’ meeting, signed authorisation agreements with the five board members elected to their positions on 13 November 2024. The board has now assumed responsibility for the company’s administrative management.

Amendments to the Copyright Law were adopted on 12 December 2024 enabling the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) to restrict access to websites that infringe upon copyright or neighbouring rights.

⁵² Cf. Article 30 of Directive 2018/1808.

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

☐ No developments

☒ If there have been developments related government or political interference or transparency and concentration of media ownership, please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

On 9 July 2024, the Ministry of Culture established a working group comprised of representatives from various state institutions to assess the compliance of the Latvian legal framework with the provisions of the European Media Freedom Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1083) and to propose any necessary amendments. Needless to say, all the topics listed below are covered by the EMFA and will be addressed in the assessment.

Actions required for Latvia's legal framework to comply with the EMFA Regulation are detailed in the EMFA Report created by the working group. These actions will be carried out throughout 2025.

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

☐ No developments

☒ If there have been developments related to the framework for journalists' protection or transparency/access to documents, please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

• *Rules and practices guaranteeing journalist's 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.*

Latvia is actively participating in the Council of Europe's "Journalists Matter" Campaign. On 10 April 2024, the Ministry of Culture established a multi-stakeholder working group to develop an action plan that will address safety issues faced by journalists and other media professionals in Latvia. Specifically, the plan will focus on implementing the "Secure Media Space" action line of the Media Policy Guidelines 2024-2027. This includes promoting media freedom, protecting journalists from violence and threats, ensuring digital safety, assisting in establishing an appropriate legal and institutional framework, and improving the practical security situation. The plan will take into account the relevant research on the safety of journalists in Latvia and Europe, as well as the recommendations of the Council of Europe and European Commission, the European Media Freedom Act, and other relevant legislation.

In mid-2024, the Ministry of Culture commissioned a study on the "*Safety situation of journalists and other media professionals in Latvia*". Through interviews and case studies, the study empirically identified the main risks and security challenges faced by journalists. The study summarises the main challenges faced by law enforcement officers and provides proposals on how to implement better the recommendations of the Council of Europe and European Commission in the legal framework of Latvia. The researchers also summarised proposals for quantitative and qualitative monitoring of data concerning journalists' safety in Latvia.

In mid-2024, the tender for the National Focal Point of the "Journalists Matter" Campaign was won by the Latvian Journalists' Association (Latvijas Žurnālistu Asociācija – LŽA).

The Ministry of Culture cooperates closely with the Focal Point. For example, on 8 November 2024 with the support of the Ministry of Culture, the Focal Point held a seminar "*Journalists*

and civil society in the disinformation era” which took place in Rēzekne in eastern Latvia. The seminar was organised to promote citizen's understanding of the functions and role of journalists in a democratic society, also focusing on various aspects of journalists' safety.

The LŽA now has an "Alarm Button", which was publicly announced on 4 December 2024. This feature is designed for journalists who have experienced any form of violence, it provides a quick and easy way for them to report threats. The Focal Point will collect information on these cases to monitor the situation and contact the competent authorities if necessary. To promote the use of this tool social media accounts have been created in “X” (*previously – Twitter*), “BlueSky”, “Facebook”, “Threads” and “Instagram” under the name “*TrauksmesPoga*” (Latvian for “Alarm Button”).

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

One of the action lines in the *Safety of Journalists and Media Professionals Action Plan* focuses on raising awareness and educational activities, targeting law enforcement officers as a primary audience.

In 2020, a memorandum of cooperation was signed by the State Police and the two journalists' associations to improve the safety of journalists. As part of this agreement, the State Police designated a contact person to facilitate collaboration with journalists. However, both parties have acknowledged that the memorandum has not yielded the expected results and that improvements are necessary.

To address the needs of journalists who face threats, attacks, and harassment, a meeting was held between the Ministry of Culture, the Latvian Journalists' Association, and the State Police. All parties agreed that the existing cooperation memorandum should be revised and updated to enhance collaboration. The action plan now includes updating the cooperation memorandum between the State Police and journalist organisations. Further meetings on this issue are anticipated in 2025.

- *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).*

- *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.*

Ensuring the protection of journalists and other media professionals from malicious litigation is a key action point in the *Safety of Journalists and Media Professionals Action Plan*. This action line envisages the transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive – the lead ministry is the Ministry of Justice. Training and informative educational events for law enforcement officers, including prosecutors, police officers, and judges, are also planned in the action plan.

The study "*Safety Situation of Journalists and Other Media Professionals in Latvia*" highlighted a lack of understanding in the professional environment regarding the nature of SLAPPs. Experts believe that while the existing legal regulations are generally adequate, only minor adjustments and additions are needed rather than major overhauls. Considering the scope and professional experience related to the Anti-SLAPP Directive, it is advisable to implement some significant regulatory changes, or at least to engage in negotiations to adapt the directive's criteria to align with national regulations. Additionally, establishing a system for regularly monitoring SLAPP cases in Latvia is essential. This would help keep all involved parties informed and facilitate professional discussions on the topic of SLAPP.

Other – please specify

On 1 October 2024, the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers approved the Media Policy Guidelines for

2024–2027, developed by the Ministry of Culture in close collaboration with media industry professionals. The guidelines focus on fostering a robust Latvian media environment and information space by ensuring the development of public media, aligning its funding levels with European averages, and establishing a more predictable and transparent financing model. Guidelines also emphasise improving commercial media conditions through enhanced support mechanisms and regulations. The strategic directions include strengthening journalist and media professional safety, preparing media for crisis scenarios, and enhancing media literacy through coordinated, strategic approaches. Additionally, the guidelines aim to bolster media independence by strengthening the independence of institutions overseeing the media sector, improving the regulatory framework, enhancing the independence of journalists, and promoting media self-regulation.

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): ...

A. The process for preparing and enacting laws

☐ No developments

☒ If there have been developments related to the process for preparing and enacting laws, please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

Regarding Section IV, point A of the report (about rules and the application of states of emergency or analogous regimes), and taking into account the information provided in previous reports, we inform you that, in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic, several amendments have been made to regulatory acts, and several regulatory acts are no longer in force, based on the current epidemiological situation and social developments both in the world and in the country.⁵³

The Commission Recommendation of 12 December 2023 on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes was used in Latvia developing the Cabinet of Ministers regulation “Procedures for the Public Participation in the Development Planning Process”⁵⁴ adopted on 15 October 2024. Our new regulation forms a framework of rules to enhance a more meaningful public participation in elaboration of legal acts, policy planning documents, elaboration and implementation of reforms and in defining priorities of public funding. New rules provide for a number of significant improvements for civil society representatives, business and other members of the society to participate in state and local government decision-making processes. The State Chancellery has developed this new regulation to provide citizens with user-friendly and modern means for expressing their views, initiatives and getting involved in the decision-making processes. The new regulation motivates public authorities to use a variety of tools and methods to engage with the public, in particular by reaching out to the groups affected by the particular matter and also by adopting the communication to their needs, for example, using plain language, if necessary. Another important change is the mandatory provision of feedback, i.e. informing stakeholders, which ideas expressed by them will be taken into account. The new

⁵³ We point out that all regulations related to Covid-19, also acts that are no longer into the force, can be found at <https://likumi.lv/> in the "Covid-19" section (aforementioned regulatory acts are translated into English as well, so they are available for in-depth research).

⁵⁴ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/355632-sabiedribas-lidzdalibas-kartiba-attistibas-planosanas-procesa>

regulation highlights the importance of targeted and proactive communication with specific social groups in order to inform them early enough about the opportunities to participate in decision-making that directly affects them. The new regulation promotes both classical forms of public participation, such as written public consultation, working groups and consultative councils, moreover, in line with the Commission Recommendation, Latvia encourages the use of innovative forms of participation - co-creation, deliberative methods, dialogues and other innovative methods of participation can be used. The possibility to organize remote consultations with the public is included in the regulation, making participation more accessible and flexible, for example, for people living in the regions of Latvia.

Since 1 January 2023, when the Local Government Law came into force, there have been significant changes related to instruments that promote public participation in local government activities.

To promote more active public participation in decision-making and to provide more effective tools for obtaining and assessing public views on issues relevant to the functioning of local government, as well as to foster a sense of belonging, the Local Government Law provides a number of instruments that are being put into practice, with varying levels of activity. The most important innovations in terms of citizen involvement are:

1. **Inhabitants' councils** (In order to ensure the representation of the interests of the inhabitants of local communities and the development of the territory of the local government by promoting cooperation and coordinated action of the inhabitants for the common good, advisory local government authorities may be established in the local government — inhabitant councils. The inhabitant council shall examine matters arising from the functions of the local government specified in Local Government Law Section 4, Paragraph one, Clauses 2 (taking care of improvements and sanitary cleanliness of the administrative territory and laying down the requirements for the maintenance of territories and structures, insofar as they are related to public safety; maintenance of sanitary cleanliness, and preservation of the urban landscape), 5 (providing a culturally diverse offer to inhabitants and the opportunity to take part in cultural life, to contribute to the preservation of the cultural heritage in the territory of the local government, and to support cultural activities), and 12 (facilitating and supporting economic activity in the administrative territory) of this Law, which affect the interests of the inhabitants of the territory of operation of the inhabitant council, and shall submit draft decisions for examination by the council. The council has the obligation to ascertain the opinion of the inhabitant council before taking a decision on changes in the procedures for the performance of the above mentioned functions which can affect interests of the inhabitants of the territory of operation of the inhabitant council);

2. **Participatory budgets** (A council shall allocate financing for the participatory budget in the local government's annual budget for the year 2025, with at least 0.1 percent of the average actual revenue from personal income tax and immovable property tax of the local government over the last three years. The participatory budgets shall be used to promote the participation of the inhabitants of the administrative territory of the local government in decisions regarding the development of the territory. The inhabitants of the administrative territory of the local government shall decide on the use of the participatory budget.);

3. **Collective submissions** (Citizens of the Republic of Latvia who, on the date of submitting the submission, have attained 16 years of age and whose place of residence has been declared in the administrative territory of the local government or who, in this territory, own immovable property registered in accordance with the procedures laid down in law are entitled to submit a collective submission to the local government on matters falling within its competence. Upon receipt of a collective submission, a local government shall, within seven working days, assess its conformity with the requirements of this Law. If the submission meets

the afore-mentioned requirements, the chairperson of the council shall ensure its inclusion on the agenda of the next council meeting and its examination. The natural person authorized to represent the submitters of the collective submission and representatives of the authorities affected by the request included in the collective submission shall be invited to the relevant council meeting. In the municipal government, based on the number of inhabitants registered in the administrative territory of the local government according to the current data from the Register of Natural Persons on 1 January of the respective year: a) up to 15,000 inhabitants - 100 submitters; b) from 15,000 up to 30,000 inhabitants - 200 submitters; c) more than 30,000 inhabitants - 300 submitters; d) in the city government, except for the Riga city government - 300 submitters; e) in the Riga city government - 2,000 submitters.);

4. **Public discussions** (In order to promote the involvement of inhabitants in decision-making on matters of local importance and to respect the interests of the inhabitants, a local government shall organize a public discussion on matters falling within its autonomous competence. A public discussion shall be held on the initiative of the inhabitants of the administrative territory of the local government, the inhabitant council, the council, or the chairperson of the council and on the basis of a decision by the council. If the public discussion is initiated by the inhabitants, the local government may determine the minimum number of inhabitants required for such a discussion. The duration of the public discussion shall be at least 30 days. A local government shall prepare the notice for a public discussion by specifying the matter to be discussed, the justification, and the discussion period, and shall send the notice for publication in the official gazette *Latvijas Vēstnesis* no later than three working days before the start of the public discussion. A local government has the obligation to summarize the opinions expressed and to prepare a summary of the results of a public discussion, including the reasons for the rejection of the opinions not taken into account.);

5. **Wider rights for young people aged 16 and over** (To participate in the submission of a collective submission; to be a member of the inhabitant council; to elect members of the inhabitant council; to submit territorial development projects financed by the participatory budget; to participate in voting for territorial development projects.);

6. **Local referendums** (A local government is entitled to organize a local government referendum in accordance with the procedures laid down in law. The issues on which a local government referendum may be initiated and organized, the source of financing for the local government referendum, and the procedures for initiating and organizing the local government referendum and for announcing its results are prescribed by the Local Government Referendum Law. Inhabitants may propose a local government referendum on the following issues: a) the sustainable development strategy of the local government or amendments thereto and a council decision by which the local government has initiated the construction of a new building — either a public building or an object subject to the environmental impact assessment procedure (construction) — as outlined in Section 4, Paragraph one, Clause 1 of the *On Environmental Impact Assessment* Law (not less than 10 percent in the capital city Riga, not less than 15 percent of the number of inhabitants in other local governments who were included in the electoral rolls of the relevant electoral district on the election day of the last council elections); b) dismissal of the council (not less than 30 percent of the number of inhabitants who were included in the electoral rolls of the relevant electoral district on the election day of the last council elections).);

7. **Ascertaining public opinion on local government's binding regulation** (The draft binding regulations and the explanatory memorandum attached thereto shall be published on the official website of the local government in accordance with the procedures laid down in the local government by-law for the purpose of ascertaining public opinion by providing a time limit of not less than two weeks. The local government shall summarize the opinions received

on the draft binding regulations and reflect them in the explanatory memorandum to the draft regulations.).

B. Independent authorities

☐ No developments regarding independent authorities

☒ If there have been developments related to independent authorities, please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

Relevant topics to be covered in your contribution include:

- *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 institutions⁵⁵*
- *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.*

Since January 1, 2024, the Ombudsman has created a separate Division – Discrimination Prevention Division (staff of this Division – four people: the manager and three employees) with main goal to promote and prevent any kind of discrimination.

The mentioned Division was created based on the development trends in the European Union – Directive (EU) 2024/1500 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation, and amending Directives 2006/54/EC and 2010/41/EU and Council Directive (EU) 2024/1499 of 7 May 2024 on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment between persons irrespective of their racial or ethnic origin, equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation between persons irrespective of their religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, equal treatment between women and men in matters of social security and in the access to and supply of goods and services, and amending Directives 2000/43/EC and 2004/113/EC.

The Parliament of Latvia (Saeima) granted additional funding for the operation of the mentioned Division in the amount requested by the Ombudsman. In accordance with the functions of the Ombudsman, Discrimination Prevention Division reviews submissions, investigates cases on possible violations of the prohibition of discrimination, informs the society, and conducts researches.

Within the framework of 2024, Discrimination Prevention Division has conducted 16 various studies, for example:

- a) Aspects of artificial intelligence systems and discrimination;
- b) The concept of discrimination in Latvian media;
- c) Accessibility of websites for persons with disabilities (Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies (Text with EEA relevance);
- d) Public survey on the rights of persons with disabilities;
- e) The opinion of persons with disabilities on ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities;
- f) Public opinion of the understanding of caregiver's leave;
- g) Compliance with the rights of parents of young children in regulated professions;
- h) Survey on the problem of sexual harassment in Latvian higher education institutions.

⁵⁵ Cf. the website of the European Court of Auditors:
<https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/SupremeAuditInstitutions.aspx#>

C. Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

☐ No developments

☒ If there have been developments related to the accessibility and judicial review of judicial decisions please specify which, in particular regarding topics listed below: ...

Regarding Section IV, point C of the report, we inform you that the Law on Compensation for Losses Caused by State Administration Institutions stipulates that a loss also includes the costs related to legal aid. In general, costs related to legal aid are reimbursed in accordance with the types and amounts determined in the regulatory acts governing the payment of state-provided legal aid in administrative cases. At the end of 2024, amendments to the Law on Compensation for Losses Caused by State Administration Institutions were adopted, providing that, in exceptional cases, an institution or a court can determine the amount of reimbursable expenses for legal aid that exceeds the amount specified in the regulatory acts, if these expenses are objectively necessary. This gives the institution and the court the opportunity to determine the reimbursement of legal aid costs based on an individual evaluation.

The Court of the European Union, in its judgment of December 10, 2020, in case no. C-735/19, considered after the request of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Latvia to provide a preliminary ruling in the legal proceedings of *Euromin Holdings (Cyprus) Limited* against the Financial and Capital Market Commission, and in response to the preliminary questions posed by the Department of Administrative Cases of the Supreme Court, stated that "EU law must be interpreted as precluding national legislation which provides that, in a case where a Member State incurs liability for damage caused as a result of a breach of a rule of EU law by a decision of an administrative authority of that State, compensation for the resulting material damage may be limited to 50% of the amount of that damage." According to the Court's judgment in case no. C-735/19, compensation for damages caused to private individuals due to violations of European Union law must be adequate to compensate for the damage caused, thus ensuring the effective protection of their rights. At the same time, it should be recognized that such restrictions should not apply in cases where a violation of Latvian legal norms is found.

Thus, with the amendments adopted at the end of 2024 to the Law on Compensation for Losses Caused by State Administration Institutions, provisions that imposed limitations on the compensation of property damage if the calculated amount exceeded 145,000 euros were removed.

In its judgment of December 10, 2020, in case no. C-735/19, the Court of the European Union, which was issued following a request from the Supreme Court of the Republic of Latvia for a preliminary ruling in the legal proceedings *Euromin Holdings (Cyprus) Limited* against the Financial and Capital Market Commission, stated that "EU law must be interpreted as precluding national legislation which provides that, in a case where a Member State incurs liability for damage caused as a result of a breach of a rule of EU law by a decision of an administrative authority of that State, compensation for the resulting material damage may be limited to 50% of the amount of that damage."

According to the Court's judgment in case no. C-735/19, compensation for damages caused to private individuals due to violations of European Union law must be adequate to fully compensate for the damage caused, thereby ensuring the effective protection of their rights. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that such restrictions should not exist in cases where a violation of Latvian legal norms is found.

Thus, with the amendments adopted at the end of 2024 to the Law on Compensation for Losses Caused by State Administration Institutions, provisions that had limited compensation for property damage where the calculated amount exceeded 145,000 euros were removed.

D. The enabling framework for civil society

☐ No developments

☒ If there have been developments related to the enabling framework for civil society, please specify which, regarding topics listed below: ...

• *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)*

Regarding Section IV, point D of the report (on non-governmental organizations), we inform you that on March 20, 2024, amendments to the Law on Associations and Foundations entered into force. The aforementioned amendments establish the following:

1. A mandatory obligation for all associations and foundations to specify their scope of activity in accordance with the classification of associations and foundations;
2. The possibility for holding and participating in meetings of members remotely, using electronic means of communication;
3. The right to terminate the activities of an association or foundation, which can be done through a decision by the State Revenue Service or the Enterprise Register of the Republic of Latvia.

The activities of an association or foundation may be terminated by a decision of the Enterprise Register of the Republic of Latvia if the board of the association or foundation has not had representation rights for more than two years, and the association or foundation has not remedied this deficiency within six months after receiving a written warning; the association or foundation cannot be reached at its legal address and has not remedied this deficiency within six months after receiving a written warning.

The activities of an association or foundation may also be terminated by a decision of the State Revenue Service if the association or foundation has not submitted an annual report within three months after the imposition of an administrative penalty, and at least two years have passed since the violation was committed.

According to the State Administration Structure Law, state administration shall comply with the principles of good administration in its activities. These principles shall include openness with respect to private individuals and the public, the protection of data, the fair implementation of procedures within a reasonable time period, and other regulations aimed at ensuring that state administration complies with the rights and lawful interests of private individuals.

In accordance with the Administrative Procedure Law, an administrative act (decision) issued in writing shall include the basis for the act (decision), including, in particular, considerations of usefulness. The purpose of this basis is to provide information to the addressee regarding the reasons for adopting the administrative act of the specific content. At the same time, it ensures that the administrative act (decision) issued by the institution is not arbitrary.

In Latvia, there are several data registers maintained by state institutions, which collect information about the activities of organisations, but the information collected in the registers is fragmented and the data collected in the register for one organisation may differ. This not only does not give a clear picture of the sector but also has negative consequences. Since mid-2024, amendments were made to the regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers "Regulations for determining associations and foundations" which determines the scope of activities of associations and foundations, as well as the procedure for applying and changing these areas. Until now, regulatory acts did not provide for a mandatory obligation to indicate the scope of activities of NGOs. It was a voluntary choice made by only 13% of organisations registered in Latvia, which prevented them from targeting certain areas of the organisation when needed.

• *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.

N/A

• *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)*

Civil society organisations can apply for funding in the “NGO Fund” programme financed by the state budget. The aim of the “NGO Fund” is to support NGOs, thus strengthening the sustainable development of civil society and democracy in Latvia. Financing is available for a wide range of NGOs in an open calls’ procedure. In 2024, to an additional 47 macro projects, whose implementation was started in 2023 and continued in 2024, funding in the amount of 860 545,94 euros was available to support 55 more NGOs. The total amount available in the “NGO Fund” programme in 2024 was 2,5 million euros.

Civil society organisations can also apply for co-financing projects that are financed by foreign funds or projects where Latvian organisations are involved as partners. The aim is to promote the participation of Latvian NGOs in the implementation of projects financed by foreign financial instruments, which are aimed at the development of a cohesive and civically active society. In 2024, funding in the amount of 98 700 euros was available, and 9 projects were funded.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia continues to implement the “Regional NGO support programme” and the “Minority NGO participation promotion programme”. From 2022-2025 there are five NGOs (one in each region of Latvia) implementing the measures of both programmes. In total funding in the amount of 250 000 euros is available for the implementation of both programmes each year.

E. Initiatives to foster a rule of law culture

☐ No developments

☒ 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.): ...

On September 4, 2024, the European Affairs Committee of the national parliament (the Saeima) organised a discussion on the Rule of Law Report 2024, focusing *inter alia*, on recommendations included in the Report. The discussion was attended by other Committees of the Saeima, representatives from institutions involved in preparation of Latvia’s input for the Report (Ministry of Justice, KNAB, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Representation of the European Commission in Latvia, and the civil society. The purpose of the discussion was to introduce the members of parliament with the scope of the rule of law report, recommendations to Latvia, the importance of the EU values. It was also discussed how rule of law principles could be promoted in the work of the Saeima.

Other – please specify