

2026 Rule of Law Report - targeted stakeholder consultation

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

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

As every year, the Commission would like to invite the stakeholders to provide contributions to the 2026 Rule of Law Report. On the basis of these contributions and on-going developments, further targeted questions may be shared at a later stage of preparation of the 2026 Rule of Law Report, in particular in the context of country visits, or bilateral contacts.

The Commission invites stakeholders to provide contributions which include:

**(1) developments and measures taken in relation to the recommendations in the 2025 report,
(2) developments related to topics covered in the 2025 country chapters, as well as any other new developments related to the rule of law.**

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

This questionnaire also integrates the separate questionnaire on the single market from last year. In addition to these specific questions, respondents to the questionnaire are invited to consider the Single Market dimension, including any relevant cross-border issues, in all their answers.

Where questions of particular relevance under the single market dimension, this is indicated before the relevant question.

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

Type of information to be included:

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

A) Legislative developments

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

B) Policy developments

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

C) Developments related to the judiciary / independent authorities

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

D) Any other relevant developments

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

Where relevant, please also indicate whether the developments reported are linked to the implementation of reforms and investments under the national Recovery Resilience Plan. To simplify your answers to the questionnaire, if there are no developments, it is sufficient to indicate this and the information covered in the contributions for the previous Rule of Law Reports does not need not be repeated.

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

* I am giving my contribution as

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

* Organisation name

250 character(s) maximum

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)

Main Areas of Work

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

If "Other", please specify

Rights advocacy, combating discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech

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

500 character(s) maximum

www.abtff.org

Transparency register number

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

63767476294-52

* Country of origin

Please indicate the country of origin of your organisation

- ☐ Austria
- ☐ Belgium
- ☐ Bulgaria
- ☐ Croatia
- ☐ Cyprus
- ☐ Czechia
- ☐ Denmark
- ☐ Estonia
- ☐ Finland
- ☐ France
- ☒ Germany
- ☐ Greece
- ☐ Hungary
- ☐ Ireland
- ☐ Italy
- ☐ Latvia
- ☐ Lithuania
- ☐ Luxembourg
- ☐ Malta
- ☐ Netherlands
- ☐ Poland
- ☐ Portugal
- ☐ Romania
- ☐ Slovak Republic
- ☐ Slovenia
- ☐ Spain
- ☐ Sweden
- ☐ Other - please specify

First name

Halit

Surname

Habip Oglou

Email Address of the organisation

info@abtff.org

* Publication of your contribution and privacy settings

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

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

☒ I agree with the personal data protection provisions.

[Specific privacy statement targeted stakeholder consultation 2026 rule of law report.pdf](#)

Questions on horizontal developments

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

Overview topics for contribution

[List of topics for contribution.docx](#)

Please provide any relevant information on horizontal developments here

5000 character(s) maximum

The Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece has been granted national minority status under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. With a population of approximately 150,000, the Western Thrace Turks are recognised by the state as a religious minority, not as an ethnic one, because the Treaty of Lausanne used the term “Muslim minority”. However, although their ethnic identity was explicitly stipulated to be “Turkish” in the official documents issued to them at that time, when they gained national minority status in 1923. They were defined by the state as the “Turkish Minority”; the autonomy granted in the fields of education and religion was applied under the definition of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace. Depending on the course of relations between Türkiye and Greece, in the 1980s, the state adopted the definition of a “Muslim minority” as state policy, stating that there were no “Turks” in the region. This issue persists today, with the ethnic Turkish identity of the Minority not being recognised and associations with the word “Turkish” in their names not being permitted. Under these conditions, dialogue and cooperation mechanisms between Turkish NGOs and state and government authorities are rejected by the state.

One of the three associations dissolved in 1983 on grounds of the word “Turkish” in their names, the Xanthi Turkish Union, along with the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi, and the Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, had their registration applications rejected, leading them to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights. Although the ECtHR ruled in 2008 that Greece had violated the freedom of association in these three cases, known today as the “Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases”, the ECtHR judgments have still not been executed ([https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:\[%2209125948802992af%22\],%22sort%22:\[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22\]}](https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:[%2209125948802992af%22],%22sort%22:[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22]})).

In 2025, the ECtHR unanimously ruled that Greece violated Article 11 by refusing to register the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi due to the use of the word “Turkish.” The Court rejected the state’s public order concerns, affirming that protecting minority rights is essential to democracy and that the distinction between “Turkish” and “Muslim” minorities does not justify restricting freedom of association([https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-243777%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-243777%22]})).

Educational autonomy granted by the Treaty of Lausanne has been effectively nullified by the state, particularly regarding early childhood education. Despite kindergartens becoming compulsory in 2006, Greek authorities consistently refuse all applications to establish autonomous or private Turkish bilingual kindergartens.

The decision to close primary schools with fewer than nine pupils, taken within the framework of economic measures, has also been applied to the autonomous Turkish school system. In this context, three more Turkish primary schools were closed in the 2025-2026 school year (www.turkiyetoday.com/region/greece-school-closures-a-blow-to-turkish-identity-and-culture-in-western-thrace -3205762?s=1), and the number of Turkish primary schools has fallen from 188 in 2011 to 83 today.

The region’s two Turkish secondary schools face severe capacity issues and deteriorating facilities, yet requests for a new building in Xanthi have been repeatedly rejected despite large-scale protests. Furthermore, the state has stripped school boards of their administrative powers, even barring members from entering school premises without ministry permission. This restriction was highlighted on 11 September, when board members were forced to meet the Greek Minister of Education outside their own school to convey their demands (<https://www.trtworld.com/article/b85d5f7f782c>).

The religious autonomy of Western Thrace Turks was undermined in 1991 when the state revoked their right to elect muftis, transforming these offices into government-appointed directorates. Consequently, the Turkish community refuses to recognize these state-appointed leaders, insisting on their treaty-granted right to manage their own religious affairs.

Tensions peaked in October 2024 when state-appointed religious officials caused a confrontation during Friday prayers at the Çınar Mosque, leading to their forced departure by the congregation. As a result, four Turkish community leaders face a trial on March 27, 2026, for their reaction to the appointed officials (<https://www.milletnews.com/western-thrace/another-blow-to-religious-freedom-in-greece-four-turkish-minority-representatives-to-stand-trial>).

Questions for contribution

Under each pillar, you are invited to provide information on measures taken to implement the recommendations addressed to the Member State in the 2025 Rule of Law report, as well as developments with regard to the points raised in the respective country chapter of the 2025 Rule of Law Report and any other significant developments since January 2025 and up to the date of submission^[3]. Please always include a link to and reference relevant legislation/documents (in the national language and/or where available, in English). **Significant developments** can include challenges, positive developments and best practices, covering both legislative developments or implementation and practices.

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

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

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

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

- ☐ Albania
- ☐ Austria
- ☐ Belgium
- ☐ Bulgaria
- ☐ Croatia
- ☐ Cyprus

- ☐ Czechia
- ☐ Denmark
- ☐ Estonia
- ☐ Finland
- ☐ France
- ☐ Germany
- ☒ Greece
- ☐ Hungary
- ☐ Ireland
- ☐ Italy
- ☐ Latvia
- ☐ Lithuania
- ☐ Luxembourg
- ☐ Malta
- ☐ Montenegro
- ☐ Netherlands
- ☐ North Macedonia
- ☐ Poland
- ☐ Portugal
- ☐ Romania
- ☐ Serbia
- ☐ Slovakia
- ☐ Slovenia
- ☐ Spain
- ☐ Sweden

I. Justice System

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

5000 character(s) maximum

In the 2025 Greece report, it was recommended that efforts to assess and amend the current legal framework for the registration system for civil society organisations be strengthened and that structured dialogue with civil society organisations be advanced. No progress has been made in this regard.

The ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases, which concerns associations belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, have not been executed since 2008. The Committee of Experts established by Greece to prepare general recommendations on the execution of the ECtHR judgments submitted its report to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in May 2025. However, as this report contained no concrete information or recommendations on how the ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases should be executed, this process was perceived as an attempt by Greece to stall the Committee of Ministers. Indeed, the report prepared by the Committee confirmed this assessment.

The Greek authorities decided to undertake a second legislative reform, following the amendments made to the Code of Civil Procedure in 2017, based on the report prepared by the Committee of Experts and the recommendations it made. However, there is still no clear explanation of how this legislative change will ensure the execution of the ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases, and as the process remains ambiguous, it is seen by us as a further step aimed at stalling the Committee of Ministers.

The Committee of Ministers examined the aforementioned group of cases at its meeting on 2-4 December 2025. In its decision, the Committee of Ministers requested that the Greek authorities ensure that any proposed measures are compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and decided to monitor the legislative process, resolving to examine this group of cases at its meeting in June 2026 ([https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:\[%2209125948802992af%22\],%22sort%22:\[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22\]}}](https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:[%2209125948802992af%22],%22sort%22:[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22]})).

Furthermore, in its decision, the Committee of Ministers referred to the Sagir and Others judgment, which was finalised on 25 September 2025, and it highlighted that the case concerning the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi should be reopened and requested information on this issue from the competent authorities.

A. Independence

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Promotion of judges and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)

5000 character(s) maximum

Allocation of cases in courts

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Independence/autonomy of the prosecution service

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

B. Quality of justice

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

[single market relevance] Accessibility of courts (e.g. court/legal fees, legal aid, language)

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

[single market relevance] Training of justice professionals (including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court staff, clerks/trainees)

5000 character(s) maximum

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in its review of the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases, considers both individual and general measures in its decisions. In this context, the Committee of Ministers requested the Greek authorities to reinforce the Greek Ombudsman with sufficient staff and to implement the Ombudsman's recommendations.

In addition, the Committee of Ministers recommends that the Greek authorities take further measures to ensure the widespread application of ECtHR case-law in the country and that local judges at all levels be systematically trained to ensure that national courts take decisions on the registration or dissolution of associations that are fully and effectively in line with ECtHR case-law. However, to the best of our knowledge, no concrete progress has been made in this regard.

Moreover, at this point, we would like to emphasise that the principle of the rule of law has been under threat in Greece in recent years. In addition to international institutions and organisations, a resolution adopted by the European Parliament in February 2024 highlighted serious concerns regarding the rule of law in the country and pointed to significant threats to democracy, fundamental rights and media freedom (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/6334/oj/eng>).

According to the 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, Greece ranks last among EU countries in terms of the time required to establish justice. The vast majority of the public does not trust the independence of the courts and believes that there is excessive political interference in the judiciary. In particular, the dissolution of associations belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the failure to execute the European Court of Human Rights judgments for decades demonstrate a systematic violation of the rule of law (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1693).

According to a May 2025 survey conducted by Eurobarometer, affiliated with EU institutions, 69% of the Greek public believes the country is on the wrong path and is concerned about democratic regression. An overwhelming majority of 95% of the public has sent a clear message to the government, advocating that EU funds should only be allocated to countries that respect the rule of law. This situation confirms that citizens' trust in state institutions has collapsed due to corruption scandals and interference in the judiciary (<https://www.milletnews.com/greece/eurobarometer-seven-in-ten-greeks-feel-pessimistic-about-countrys-direction>).

The government's transparency issues and lack of accountability policies have weakened democratic oversight mechanisms. Director of Vouliwatch Stefanos Loukopoulos emphasised that violations of the rule of law in Greece have become so commonplace that they are no longer even newsworthy (<https://govwatch.gr/en/reports/4i-etisia-ekthesi-gia-to-kratos-dikaioy-stin-ellada-2024/>).

In November 2025, Greek Ombudsman Andreas Pottakis indicated that the government had deliberately weakened independent institutions through economic pressure and direct interventions. The Ombudsman pointed out that even the Parliament's refusal to listen to Ombudsman reports demonstrates the erosion of oversight mechanisms and the threat to the functioning of the democratic system. This situation leads to a decline in trust in justice and the disregard of international law (<https://www.abtff.org/arama-detail.php?id=7382&lang=en>).

In the World Justice Project (WJP) index, Greece ranks near the bottom in Europe in terms of the rule of law, ahead only of Bulgaria and Hungary. The report highlights the weakening of judicial independence and restrictions on freedom of expression and association as the main problems (<https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/global/2025/Greece/%C2%A0>).

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

C. Efficiency of the justice system

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

[single market relevance] Developments related to efforts to improve the efficiency of the justice system (e.g. as regards length of proceedings, to address backlogs)

5000 character(s) maximum

The Xanthi Turkish Union is the first Turkish association established in Western Thrace in 1927. On 7 December 1983, the bilingual Turkish and Greek signboards at the entrance of the association building were removed, and the Governor of Xanthi at the time stated that “there are no Turks in Western Thrace”. The association faced a dissolution case on grounds that it “posed a threat to public order and national security”; after 22 years of domestic legal struggle, the Greek Court of Cassation upheld the dissolution decision in February 2005. In 2008, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that Greece’s decision was unlawful and violated freedom of association under the European Convention on Human Rights (<https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/?i=004-15567>).

The Xanthi Turkish Union pursues its legal struggle to end these anti-democratic practices and identity-based discrimination, which have persisted for the last 40 years. The restoration of the association’s legal status and the full execution of the European Court of Human Rights judgments are not merely a matter concerning one association but constitute a fundamental test for the rule of law and democratic standards in Greece.

For the past 18 years, Greece has persistently refused to execute three European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments concerning the Xanthi Turkish Association, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi and the Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, whose registration applications were rejected. The most concrete example of the Greek justice system systematically ignoring ECtHR case-law is the case of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi. Although this association was established in 2011 following the 2008 ECtHR judgments, it has not been registered by the national courts and exhausted its domestic legal remedies in 2017. This situation proves that the Greek judiciary does not accept ECtHR judgments as “case-law” and that the justice system is not functioning effectively with regard to minority rights (<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-243777%22%5D%7D>).

This repressive attitude persists as of today, as exemplified by the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association. Established in 2022 as a fans’ association, the “Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association” is facing dissolution following a court ruling on 28 May 2024 by the Civil Court of First Instance of Rodopi, which claimed that the phrase “Western Thrace” in its name contravenes the law and public order. The appeal process is ongoing (<https://www.turkiyetoday.com/turkiye/western-thrace-fenerbahce-association-ordered-to-close-15478>).

Any other developments related to the justice system - please specify

5000 character(s) maximum

II. Anti-Corruption Framework

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

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding the anti-corruption framework (if applicable):

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

B. Prevention

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

--> For the three previous points, **please also provide information and figures on their application/enforcement if available to you**, such as number of detected breaches/irregularities of the various rules in place and the follow-up given (investigations, sanctions, etc.)

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

5000 character(s) maximum

In 2025, systematic EU fund fraud carried out through OPEKEPE (Payment and Control Agency for Guidance and Guarantee Community Aid) in Greece was a notable development. Investigations conducted by the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) have uncovered approximately €290 million in corruption. The scandal erupted in June 2025, forcing one minister and three deputy ministers to resign.

In particular, Turkish farmers in Western Thrace have been the hardest hit by the freezing of payments due to corruption. This is because the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, where Western Thrace is located, is the most underdeveloped region in Greece. While Thrace has great potential due to its borders with Türkiye and Bulgaria, it is particularly underdeveloped because of systematic discriminatory policies towards the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

In the OPEKEPE scandal, the rights of honest producers have been violated due to fictitious declarations and technical errors involving high-level officials. As of December, farmers in the region have launched a major resistance against "collective punishment" by blocking the Ipsala- Kipoi border crossings with their tractors (<https://www.milletnews.com/greece/opekepe-scandal-farmland-added-and-removed-from-e9-declarations-3000-alleged-landowners-under-investigation>). On 4 January 2026, a meeting attended by farmer representatives from across the country resulted in a decision to "continue the protests" (<https://www.milletnews.com/greece/producers-to-gather-in-malgara-as-movements-next-steps-to-be-decided>).

[single market relevance] Specific measures to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability in sectors with high risks of corruption, with a view to monitor and

prevent corruption and conflict of interests, and where applicable measures to prevent and address corruption committed by organised crime groups.

- *Such high-risk sectors could include: public procurement, including construction, transport/infrastructure, defence, cohesion, agriculture, environment, healthcare, investor residence schemes, large-scale investments of national interest and the spending of EU funds, urban planning.*
- *In particular, measures to mitigate high risks of corruption in the area of public procurement, such as enhancing transparency and oversight (for example through digital technologies) and promoting fair competition and accountability in public procurement (e.g. targeted actions to address the high share of single bids) and measures to guarantee the effective and independent functioning of the public procurement review bodies.*

5000 character(s) maximum

[single market relevance] Measures for the prevention of corruption in relation to the issuing of official permits (e.g. related to environment, energy, service provision and various types of construction)

5000 character(s) maximum

C. Repression

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

III. Media pluralism and media freedom

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding media pluralism and media freedom (if applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

While concerns about media independence persist in Greece, the Turkish community in Western Thrace faces systematic marginalisation and hate speech in mainstream media. Members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and civil society organisations representing the Turkish community are perceived as “the other”, “foreign” or “outsiders” in the country where they have lived for centuries.

Following the Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party’s victory in the 2024 European Parliament (EP) elections in Rodopi and Xanthi, a smear campaign has been launched in the Greek media against the Turkish community and its elected representatives, containing accusations of “national threat” and “espionage” (<https://www.trtworld.com/article/18173300>).

Hate speech in politics is part of structural and systematic discrimination against the Turkish community. Turkish MPs are being rendered as scapegoats and subjected to baseless accusations simply because they participate in events organised by institutions and organisations of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the region or because they carry out parliamentary work as part of their responsibility to protect the rights of the

Turkish community.

As a reflection of this official state policy, members of the national parliament belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, who are Greek citizens, and prominent figures of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, are subjected to hate speech, and false and defamatory reports are published about these individuals. Such reports carry the risk of increasing prejudice, misperceptions, and ultimately hostility towards the Turkish community in Western Thrace within the broader society.

In July 2022, the Western Thrace Turkish Minority Advisory Board issued a joint statement regarding the publication of articles on the [Komotinipress.gr](https://www.komotinipress.gr) website, which featured photographs of prominent figures and civil society representatives advocating for the rights of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, thereby making them open targets. The statement read as follows: “Recently, we have witnessed an internet site and one of its writers publishing aggressive and even insulting articles against politicians, local government officials, and individuals in our region. These “articles” contain personal information that could not be obtained through normal journalistic activities, address events with no basis in reality, and constitute character assassination. This method is reminiscent of the practices of the Colonels’ Junta era...” (<https://www.milletnews.com/western-thrace/condemnation-by-minority-politicians-and-association-executives>).

Following the statement published with the signatures of 17 Turkish representatives, the manager of the aforementioned website, Nikos Arvanitis, residing in Komotini, filed a criminal complaint. As part of the investigation launched in response to this complaint, the 17 Turkish representatives appeared in court in December 2024 and January 2025 to give their statements. These representatives, who were referred to court in July 2025, attended a court hearing on 7 October 2025, while the case of the other representatives will be heard at the Komotini court on 10 February 2026 (<https://www.milletnews.com/western-thrace/western-thrace-turkish-minority-representatives-continue-to-testify>).

The Xanthi Turkish Union (ITB), established in 1927, has faced a decades-long legal battle after being dissolved by Greek authorities for using the word “Turkish” in its name. Despite winning a 2008 judgment from the European Court of Human Rights, the union remains unrecognised, leading to a protest march in July 2021. Following this event, then ITB president Ozan Ahmetoğlu was prosecuted for alleged pandemic health violations and incitement, though the charges were not filed until seven months later. Ahmetoğlu views the lawsuit as a baseless attempt at intimidation, while the court hearing has been repeatedly postponed, most recently to February 2026 (<https://www.milletnews.com/western-thrace/third-postponement-in-iskece-turkish-union-march-case>).

On 27 October 2021, the Greek news site [newsbreak.gr](https://www.newsbreak.gr) published an article titled “ABTTF provokes with Western Thrace flag in Germany,” which the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) indicated contained false, defamatory, and unfounded allegations. Despite two formal warnings sent by ABTTF in 2021 and 2022, the site refused to remove the content, leading the ABTTF to file a claim for damages in an Athens court. Following an initial hearing in 2023, the case was referred to a higher court, which ultimately held a hearing on 8 May 2025 (<https://www.abttf.org/arama-detail.php?id=7271&lang=en>). The court ruled that the article fell within the framework of press freedom, a decision that ABTTF has announced it will appeal.

A. Media authorities and bodies

(Cf. Article 30 of Directive 2018/1808)

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

[single market relevance] Measures taken to ensure the fair and transparent allocation of state advertising

5000 character(s) maximum

Safeguards against state / political interference, in particular:

- safeguards to ensure editorial independence of media (private and public)
- specific safeguards for the independence of heads of management and members of the governing boards of public service media (e.g. related to appointment, dismissal), safeguards for their financial and operational independence (e.g. related to reporting obligations and the allocation of resources) and safeguards for plurality of information and opinions
- **[single market relevance]** information on specific legal provisions and procedures applying to media service providers, including as regards granting /renewal/termination of licenses, company operation, capital entry requirements, concentration and corporate governance

5000 character(s) maximum

[single market relevance] Transparency of media ownership and public availability of media ownership information, including on direct, indirect and beneficial owners

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

IV. Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

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

5000 character(s) maximum

A. The process for preparing, enacting and implementing laws

[single market relevance] Framework, policy and use of impact assessments and evidence based policy-making, stakeholders'*/public consultations (including rules and practices on the transparent participation of civil society to policy development and decision-making processes), and transparency and quality of the legislative process in the preparatory, the parliamentary and implementation phase (including guidance on how to implement legislation)

* This includes also the consultation of social partners

5000 character(s) maximum

The right to determine the religious leaders of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, who adhere to the Muslim faith, was secured by the 1913 Treaty of Athens and guaranteed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which determined the legal status of the Turkish minority in Greece and the Greek minority in Türkiye. The Turks in Western Thrace, who have acquired national minority status in Greece, have been granted autonomy in religious matters.

In accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Athens, the muftis in Rodopi and Xanthi were appointed by a special decree signed by the King under Law No. 2345/1920, while the mufti in Alexandroupolis was never appointed. Following the death of the Mufti of Rodopi in 1985, Greece revoked its right to appoint its own religious leaders and transferred this right to the state by means of a Presidential Decree dated 24 December 1990, whereby muftis were to be appointed from among candidates nominated by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Members of the Muslim Turkish community declared this decision contrary to religious autonomy and elected their own religious leaders in Rodopi and Xanthi. The Greek state did not recognise the Muftis elected by the community; the elected Muftis were brought before the courts and sentenced to prison on grounds of illegal use of religious symbols. In lawsuits filed against Greece by the elected Muftis, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Article 9 of the Convention had been violated. Today, there is a duality in the region between Muftis appointed by the State and Muftis elected by the Turkish community. Greece still does

not recognise the right of the Turkish community in Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders.

While the Greek Orthodox Church, as the dominant religion in the country, and other recognised religions have the right to appoint their own religious leaders and regulate matters concerning their religious communities, although Islam is recognised as a religion, only the Turks in Western Thrace are unable to exercise this right.

Despite all objections from the Turkish community in Western Thrace, the “Law on the Modernisation of Mufti Offices” passed by the Greek Parliament in August 2022 defined mufti offices as directorates general under the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, transforming them into ordinary public institutions. This situation has officially and effectively eliminated the religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

The Turkish community in Western Thrace has been deprived of control over its own foundation properties and the resulting income since 1967, as the state began appointing the boards of directors. A 2008 law further exacerbated this by allowing the sale of foundation real estate and its transfer to local authorities, bypassing the community’s consent. This non-transparent management has severely eroded the revenues necessary to maintain the minority’s vital education and social assistance networks. Consequently, the community faces an economic and cultural impasse, leaving it unable to meet basic social solidarity needs (<https://www.abttf.org/haberler-detay.php?id=6413&kid=104&lang=en>).

Law No. 4115/2013 further undermines religious autonomy by allowing the state to appoint religious officials to mosques and schools, bypassing the Turkish community’s preferences. While local resistance largely blocked these appointments in mosques, unqualified individuals have been placed in public schools to teach Islam as an optional subject. These instructors often lack theological degrees or teaching credentials, yet they are tasked with teaching the faith in Greek using Greek textbooks. This practice is criticised for lacking scientific basis and pedagogical quality, as there are no established studies on teaching Islam in the Greek language.

The “240 Imam Law” is criticised for violating the Turkish community’s religious freedom by imposing state-appointed officials and “mufti regents” into mosques and schools against the community’s will. This practice, often enforced through police presence or coercion, is viewed by local representatives as a “physical occupation” and a direct attack on sacred spaces and social peace. Consequently, the state has initiated investigations and lawsuits against prominent community figures who have resisted these interventions (<https://www.milletnews.com/western-thrace/xanthi-muftiate-condemns-provocation-by-state-appointed-muftis>).

The 2022 “Law on the Modernisation of Mufti Offices” transformed the mufti offices into state civil service, stripping the autonomy promised by the Treaty of Lausanne. Elected muftis face ongoing judicial persecution, effectively paralysing their authority (<https://www.milletnews.com/western-thrace/abttf-greece-continues-its-practices-of-violation-religious-rights>).

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

5000 character(s) maximum

[single market relevance] Safeguards to ensure legal certainty, the stability of the legal framework and non-discrimination.

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Regime for constitutional review of laws

5000 character(s) maximum

B. Independent authorities

Independence, resources, capacity and powers (including effective access to relevant data) of national human rights institutions ('NHRIs'), of ombudsman institutions if different from NHRIs, of equality bodies if different from NHRIs and of supreme audit institutions

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

C. Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

[single market relevance] Transparency of administrative decisions and sanctions (incl. their publication and rules on collection of related data) and respect of the good administration principle (including the obligation of the administration to give reasons for decisions)

5000 character(s) maximum

[single market relevance] Judicial review of administrative decisions: short description of the general regime (in particular competent court, scope, suspensive effect, interim measures, and any applicable specific rules or derogations from the general regime of judicial review)

5000 character(s) maximum

[single market relevance] Safeguards (other than judicial review) regarding decisions or inaction of administrative authorities, including remedies (e.g. administrative review)

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments issued in 2008 regarding the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases have not been executed by Greece for the past 18 years. In 2025, the ECtHR judgment with respect to the Sagir and Others case, which ruled in favour of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi, has become the fourth ruling concerning the violation of the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe continues to examine the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases, but as there are no sanctions regarding the execution of the ECtHR judgments, state and government bodies are pursuing a strategy of prolonging the execution process as much as possible, and there is no follow-up mechanism in place for public administration and state institutions.

Oversight, including by courts, of the use of intrusive surveillance software by national authorities

5000 character(s) maximum

D. The enabling framework for civil society

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

E. Initiatives to foster a rule of law culture

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Cross-pillar elements: cross-border rule of law issues related to the Single Market

If there are any significant challenges concerning the Single Market you have been facing in a cross-border context relating to any of the four pillars of the report, including for example issues with market access and the conditions for economic activities, that you would like to highlight, please do so here.

Given the cross-cutting nature of this question, it is included as a separate section in the questionnaire. Information collected under this question will however be integrated under the relevant existing pillar(s) of the Report.

5000 character(s) maximum

Supporting document upload

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

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/1545th_meeting_of_the_Committee_of_Ministers_of_the_Council_of_Europe__2-

**4_December_2025__DH__ - H46-18_Bekir-Ousta_and_Others_group_v._Greece__Application_No.
35151-05.pdf**

**851bde7b-4031-4113-846a-83f55e17c772/Case_of_Sagir_and_Others_v._Greece__Application_No.
34724-18.pdf**

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/Current_Problems_of_the_Turkish_Community_in_Western_Thrace_in_Greece.pdf

Contact

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