

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

If "Other", please specify

Dainius Žalimas

* Organisation name

250 character(s) maximum

Dainius Žalimas, Member of the European Parliament (from Lithuania)

Main Areas of Work

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

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

500 character(s) maximum

Transparency register number

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

* Country of origin

Please indicate the country of origin of your organisation

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

First name

Dainius

Surname

Žalimas

Email Address of the organisation

dainius.zalimas@europarl.europa.eu

* 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

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

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

Recent developments have raised concerns regarding the independence of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter CCRL), in particular with respect to the appointment of its judges. In March 2026, the CCRL is scheduled to be renewed by one third of its composition. On 21 October 2025, the Seimas appointed a long-standing and politically active member of parliament, Julius Sabatauskas (who has held a parliamentary mandate continuously since 2000) as a judge of the Constitutional Court (Seimas Resolution No. XV-502 of 21 October 2025). The appointment is due to take effect on 19 March 2026.

Members of the opposition in the Seimas lodged an application with the CCRL contesting the constitutionality of this resolution (application No. 1B-15/2025, case No. 15/2025). The application questions whether the appointee satisfies the constitutional professional requirements applicable to candidates for the office of CCRL's judge, namely whether he possesses the requisite length and nature of legal work experience. Under the Constitution, judges of the CCRL must be citizens of impeccable reputation, hold a higher legal education, and have not less than ten years of professional legal or academic teaching experience in the legal field (Article 103 (3)).

In its ruling of 15 January 2026, the CCRL held that Seimas Resolution No. XV-502 is incompatible with Article 103(3) of the Constitution. The CCRL found that parliamentary activity, including service in Seimas committees composed exclusively of members of parliament, cannot be regarded as "legal work" within the meaning of the Constitution. It further established that Mr Sabatauskas, although holding a Master's degree in law obtained in 2003, had not performed professional legal work or academic teaching in law for the required period of at least ten years. Consequently, the CCRL concluded that the Seimas, by appointing Mr Sabatauskas as a judge of the CCRL, failed to comply with the constitutional professional requirements governing judicial appointments, thereby rendering the contested resolution unconstitutional.

It should be noted that, in its ruling, the CCRL did not address the broader question of whether the appointment of an active, long-standing and high-profile political figure to the CCRL is in itself compatible with the Constitution. This issue raises wider concerns relating to independence, impartiality and public confidence in the constitutional adjudication process. The cumulative effect of decades-long political affiliation and continued participation in party and parliamentary structures risks blurring the boundary between political decision-making and constitutional adjudication. These concerns are particularly acute given the role of the CCRL in reviewing the constitutionality of legislation adopted by the same parliamentary majority to which the appointee belongs. In such circumstances, even in the absence of proven bias, the appearance of impartiality may be seriously compromised.

These risks must be assessed in light of the standards developed by the Venice Commission, notably those set out in the Updated Rule of Law Checklist (CDL-AD(2025)002). The Checklist emphasises that the composition and appointment procedures of constitutional courts must contain adequate safeguards of independence, and that incompatibilities must prevent situations in which political affiliation could undermine impartiality. The Venice Commission stresses that appointments should be based on objective, merit-based criteria, prioritising legal expertise, independence and integrity. Comparative practice shows that constitutional courts are typically composed of experienced legal professionals - judges, practising lawyers and academics - whose careers are primarily rooted in the legal rather than the political sphere.

Against this background, the absence of explicit legal prohibitions on appointing active or long-standing political figures to the CCRL, coupled with the appointment of such an individual in practice, may contribute to a perception of politicisation of the CCRL's composition and expose the institution to risks of political influence.

It should be added that this is not the first instance in which a judge of the CCRL has been appointed directly from the Seimas. A relevant precedent is the appointment of Mr Šedbaras, a long-standing member of parliament and prominent political figure, as a judge of the CCRL by Seimas Resolution No. XIV-1804 of 16 March 2023. In this sense, the contested appointment of Mr Sabatauskas cannot be regarded as an isolated incident, but rather as part of an emerging pattern in the composition of the CCRL. The cumulative effect of repeated appointments of long-standing political actors to the CCLR may, over time, intensify concerns regarding the perceived politicisation of constitutional adjudication.

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

Recent jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of Lithuania reveals developments that may adversely affect public perceptions of judicial independence, particularly due to inconsistent standards applied in corruption-related cases.

On 5 March 2025, the Supreme Court of Lithuania overturned the judgments of lower courts in a corruption case and terminated criminal proceedings against a politician accused of abuse of office, document forgery, and misappropriation of municipal funds (criminal case No. 2K-47-648/2025). The Supreme Court concluded that the damage caused by the defendant's actions was not sufficiently significant to give rise to criminal liability, emphasizing that the established material damage did not exceed €12,500. The Court further held that references by the lower courts to non-material damage, such as harm to the reputation of public institutions or the erosion of public trust in public office, were too abstract to be taken into account when assessing the significance of the damage.

This judgment has raised public concern, particularly given that the acquitted politician is one of the most influential leaders of the ruling Social Democratic Party, which won the parliamentary elections in October 2024. The timing and outcome of the decision have therefore contributed to perceptions of unequal treatment and potential political sensitivity in high-profile corruption cases.

Concerns about inconsistent judicial practice are further reinforced by a contrasting decision adopted by the Supreme Court only two months earlier. On 23 January 2025, the Supreme Court convicted the head of a municipal library for abuse of office in circumstances where the material damage was approximately ten times lower than in the above-mentioned case. In that judgment, significant non-material damage done by the head of the municipal library has been found by the Supreme Court (criminal case No. 2K-50-489/2025).

In light of this divergent judicial practice, the convicted person (the head of the municipal library) sought the reopening of criminal proceedings in case No. 2K-50-489/2025. However, the Supreme Court refused to examine her application for reopening, on the grounds that she had already paid the fine imposed on her, and thus had fully served the sentence. Following this refusal, the convicted person lodged an individual constitutional complaint with the Constitutional Court, challenging the constitutionality of the relevant provision of the Code of Criminal Procedure. She questioned whether the rule limiting the submission of an application or referral for the reopening of criminal proceedings only to the period during which the convicted person is still serving the sentence or the suspension period of the sentence has not yet expired is compatible with the Constitution. The Constitutional Court accepted the constitutional complaint for examination (application No. 1A-15/2025, case No. 8-A/2025).

Taken together, these two judgments suggest the application of divergent standards in assessing the significance of damage in corruption cases, depending on the status of the defendant. Such inconsistency risks undermining legal certainty and equality before the law, and may negatively affect public confidence in the impartiality and independence of the judiciary.

For further analysis, reference is made to Part II, Anti-Corruption Framework, Section C.

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

Effective access to courts is not limited to the formal availability of judicial remedies, but also requires that judicial procedures operate in a manner that enables individuals to meaningfully exercise their rights. This includes, inter alia, transparent procedural rules and reasoned judicial decision-making.

In Lithuania, concerns arise with regard to accessibility at the cassation level, particularly in the practice of the Supreme Court of Lithuania (hereinafter LAT). The LAT has developed a consistent practice of refusing to admit cassation appeals without providing sufficiently reasoned decisions. This practice also extends to situations in which the LAT dismisses applicants' requests to refer questions of constitutionality to the Constitutional Court.

Such refusals are often formulated in a highly abstract or formulaic manner, without engaging with the substance of the applicant's legal arguments. As a result, applicants are left without a clear understanding of the legal reasoning underlying the refusal and are unable to assess whether the decision was based on lawful, objective and non-arbitrary grounds.

This practice is problematic from the perspective of constitutional and European standards. Under Lithuanian constitutional doctrine, courts have a duty to provide adequate and reasoned justification for their decisions, which is an essential component of the right to a fair trial and the principle of the rule of law.

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

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

Any other developments related to the justice system - please specify

5000 character(s) maximum

A matter of concern relates to the practice of ordinary courts in applying the Constitution and constitutional jurisprudence in cases raising significant constitutional questions. Under the Lithuanian constitutional framework, ordinary courts are required to apply the Constitution directly and to take into account the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court (CCRL), as well as relevant European human rights standards. Where doubts arise as to the constitutionality of applicable legislation, ordinary courts have both the right and the obligation to initiate constitutional review proceedings.

Judicial practice, however, indicates that these obligations are not consistently fulfilled. In particular, in cases concerning the legal recognition of partnerships, ordinary courts for a prolonged period failed to apply existing constitutional principles and the jurisprudence of the CCRL, even where such jurisprudence was already available and directly relevant (see, e. g. CCRL's rulings of 28 September 2011 and 11 January 2019). Despite the presence of constitutional arguments based on human dignity, private and family life, equality and non-discrimination, ordinary courts continued to rely primarily on a restrictive interpretation of statutory law.

Moreover, the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), including case law relevant to the protection of family life and same-sex couples, was not applied or meaningfully addressed, even when explicitly invoked by applicants.

It is particularly noteworthy that the constitutional issues relating to partnership recognition were ultimately addressed by the CCRL not following referrals from ordinary courts, but on the basis of an application submitted by the Government. Despite repeated opportunities to initiate constitutional dialogue, ordinary courts did not activate the constitutional review mechanism and instead continued to adjudicate cases without engaging with constitutional norms.

As a result, individuals seeking legal recognition of their partnerships were forced to pursue lengthy litigation, often without effective constitutional protection at the ordinary court level. Constitutional guarantees thus remained largely theoretical until the matter was resolved through a government-initiated constitutional review.

Such a pattern raises serious concerns from the perspective of the rule of law and effective judicial protection. When ordinary courts do not consistently apply the Constitution, engage with constitutional jurisprudence or make use of available mechanisms for constitutional review, access to constitutional justice becomes delayed and burdensome for individuals. This weakens the coherence of the constitutional system, undermines the practical effectiveness of fundamental rights and adversely affects public trust in the justice system.

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

[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

Investigative journalists have revealed a systematic fraudulent scheme in Lithuanian municipalities. Members of municipal councils illegally misappropriated public funds allocated for their official duties by falsifying documents. As a result, numerous municipal council members nationwide have been charged with fraud, abuse of power and forgery of the documents. Several convictions have been issued, with lower courts imposing criminal sanctions, including the restriction of the right to hold public office. According to the Office of the Prosecutor General, approximately €3 million has been recovered to municipal budgets in these cases in the public interest.

At the same time, certain political figures publicly criticised lower court judgments, particularly what they described as excessively strict sanctions in corruption-related cases. Such actions undermine the judiciary's role in combating corruption and creates political pressure on higher courts to overturn or mitigate these judgments. This pressure appears to have had an effect. On 5 March 2025, the Supreme Court of Lithuania (SCL) overturned lower court judgments and terminated criminal proceedings against a politician accused of abuse of power, document forgery, and misappropriation of municipal funds (case No. 2K-47-648/2025). The SCL held that the damage caused was insufficient to establish criminal liability, as material damage did not exceed €12,500. It also ruled that references to non-material damage, such as reputational harm or erosion of public trust, were too abstract to assess the significance of the damage.

The acquitted politician is one of the most influential leaders of the ruling Social Democratic Party, which won the parliamentary elections in October 2024. The SCL failed to reasonably explain why this acquittal resulted in inconsistent judicial practice and apparent double standards. Only two months earlier, on 23 January 2025, the SCL convicted the head of a municipal library for abuse of power in a case involving material damage ten times lower, while recognising significant non-material damage (case No. 2K-50-489/2025).

Following lower court decisions, members of the Seimas affiliated with the ruling party initiated amendments to the Criminal Code (Draft Law amending Articles 68-1 and 228, registered on 17 January 2025, No. XVP-106). These amendments aimed to reduce liability for abuse of office and to allow offenders to avoid restrictions on holding public office. Several initiators of Draft Law No. XVP-106 were themselves subject to pre-trial investigations for similar offences. After revision by the Committee on Legal Affairs, the Seimas adopted the amended Draft Law on Articles 228, 229 and 230 of the Criminal Code (No. XVP-106(2)) on 23 September 2025. Of the 75 members registered to vote, 64 voted in favour, 5 against, and 3 abstained. Those voting in favour included members with a direct personal interest in the law's adoption. Although the President vetoed the law, it was adopted without amendments on 16 October 2025.

Both the initiation and adoption of the law disregarded legislative procedures established by the Seimas. In particular, Article 18 of the Statute of the Seimas, which requires members to avoid conflicts of interest, recuse themselves when necessary, and prohibits misuse of the parliamentary mandate, was violated. Article 11(1) of the Law on the Coordination of Public and Private Interests was likewise breached, as it prohibits participation in decision-making where official duties are linked to private interests.

Since members of the Seimas with a personal interest in mitigating sanctions both initiated the draft law and later voted for it, a serious violation of the legislative procedure established by laws, including the Statute of the Seimas, must be considered to have occurred. Members of opposition parties have therefore applied to the Constitutional Court, challenging the compatibility of the Criminal Code amendments with the Constitution, including the principles of the rule of law and responsible governance (application No. 1B-16/2025, case No. 18 /2025).

Taken together, these developments raise serious concerns regarding judicial independence and the effectiveness of Lithuania's anti-corruption framework. Legislative amendments, political criticism of the judiciary, and controversial court rulings create a risk of impunity for corrupt practices and further erode public trust in democratic institutions.

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

In 2025, investigative journalism played a decisive role in uncovering several major corruption-related situations in Lithuania, demonstrating its importance as an early-warning and accountability mechanism in the investigation of high-level and complex corruption.

First, investigative journalists revealed a systematic fraudulent scheme across multiple municipalities. The investigations disclosed that members of municipal councils had illegally misappropriated public funds allocated for official duties by falsifying expense documents. As a result, numerous municipal council members across Lithuania were charged with fraud, abuse of office and document forgery. This case illustrates the direct contribution of investigative journalism to the detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption.

Second, in the same year, investigative journalists exposed corruption-related schemes involving the former Prime Minister, Gintautas Paluckas, which ultimately led to his resignation from office. The reporting raised serious questions regarding conflicts of interest and improper conduct at the highest level of government and triggered public and institutional scrutiny. These revelations further underline the role of investigative journalism in bringing to light corruption risks involving senior political figures.

However, both cases were followed by a significant political backlash targeting investigative journalists and media professionals involved in the reporting. This backlash manifested through personal attacks, delegitimising narratives and accusations, particularly on social media, seeking to frame investigative journalism as politically motivated rather than engaging with the substance of the allegations. These efforts were reinforced by hostile rhetoric from political actors, contributing to an environment of pressure and

intimidation for investigative journalists.

Moreover, following these investigative disclosures, political initiatives were proposed that would have restricted the professional activities of specific journalists, including initiatives aimed at preventing certain investigative journalists from hosting programmes on the national public broadcaster (LRT). Moreover, these developments coincided with legislative initiatives affecting the governance, funding and leadership safeguards of the LRT.

Taken together, these developments indicate that, while Lithuania's formal legal framework does not prevent the investigation or prosecution of high-level corruption, practical obstacles may arise when investigative journalism is met with political backlash, public delegitimisation and targeted pressure.

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

The effectiveness of criminal and non-criminal anti-corruption measures depends not only on the existence of investigative powers and sanctions, but also on the extent to which risk assessments and preventive findings of competent anti-corruption authorities are taken into account in the legislative and decision-making process.

In this regard, recent developments raise concerns as to the practical effectiveness of Lithuania's non-criminal anti-corruption framework. The Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania (STT), acting as the national anti-corruption authority, carried out an anti-corruption assessment of the proposed legislative amendments to the Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television. In its assessment, the STT identified corruption-related risks and concluded that the introduction of secret voting for the dismissal of the Director General of the LRT may be incompatible with the principles of transparency, openness and public accountability, which constitute essential components of democratic governance and the rule of law.

Despite these findings, the legislative initiatives in question were not withdrawn or substantially revised to address the risks identified by the STT and continued to advance under accelerated parliamentary procedures. This situation highlights a structural weakness in the effectiveness of preventive, non-criminal anti-corruption measures, insofar as formal mechanisms for risk identification exist, but their impact on the final regulatory outcome remains limited.

Where anti-corruption assessments identifying concrete risks do not lead to corrective legislative action, this may undermine the deterrent and preventive function of the anti-corruption framework as a whole, even in the absence of established criminal liability.

Accordingly, while Lithuania possesses established criminal and non-criminal anti-corruption instruments, the recent practice illustrates that their effectiveness may be reduced if findings of the national anti-corruption authority are not reflected in law-making procedure.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

An issue of concern in the anti-corruption framework relates to the application of parliamentary immunity and its impact on the effective investigation and prosecution of corruption-related offences.

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, a member of the Seimas enjoys personal immunity. Pursuant to Article 62 of the Constitution, a member of the Seimas may not be held criminally liable, arrested or otherwise have their liberty restricted without the consent of the Seimas. The lifting of parliamentary immunity requires a motivated request by the Prosecutor General, which must be examined and approved by the Seimas in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 23 of the Statute of the Seimas.

In several criminal investigations related to corruption cases, which are addressed in another section of this questionnaire (see Part II, Anti-Corruption Framework, Section C), prosecutors sought to bring criminal charges for offences such as abuse of office, forgery of documents and misappropriation of property against individuals who were serving as members of the Seimas. Despite the existence of reasoned requests submitted by the Prosecutor General, the Seimas has on multiple occasions refused to lift the immunity of members of parliament belonging to ruling political parties (including, inter alia, members of the Seimas A. Nedzinskas and A. Dudėnas).

This parliamentary practice raises concerns from an anti-corruption and rule-of-law perspective. By declining to lift immunity in such cases, the Seimas effectively prevents the judicial authorities from assessing criminal liability on the merits and places itself in a position of evaluating prosecutorial work. Such decisions risk undermining the independence and effectiveness of law enforcement authorities and may contribute to a perception of selective accountability.

While parliamentary immunity serves legitimate constitutional purposes, including the protection of parliamentary independence, its repeated use to block criminal investigations into alleged corruption-related offences risks weakening public trust in anti-corruption efforts. The refusal to lift immunity in cases involving credible allegations of abuse of public funds may also be perceived as tolerating or normalising corrupt practices, thereby undermining the deterrent function of criminal law.

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

No substantive measures have been adopted to address the concerns identified in the 2025 Rule of Law Report regarding media freedom. On the contrary, developments in 2025 indicate a deterioration of the legal and institutional environment for public service media, in particular with regard to the independence of the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT).

Following the parliamentary elections of October 2024, a ruling coalition was formed comprising the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, the Nemuno aušra ("Nemunas Dawn") party and, subsequently, the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union. Since December 2024, this coalition has initiated or supported a series of legislative and institutional actions directly affecting the governance, funding and leadership safeguards of the LRT.

Several of the relevant legislative initiatives were pursued under accelerated parliamentary procedures without

any objectively demonstrated justification, and without ensuring meaningful participation of affected stakeholders or adequate public consultation, which raises concerns regarding their compatibility with European standards on transparent, accountable, inclusive and democratic law-making procedures.

Further details are provided in Sections III.A and III.B.

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

Since December 2024, a sequence of specific legislative and institutional actions has cumulatively affected the independence of the LRT.

First, on 27 November 2025, the Seimas adopted Law No. XV-618 amending Articles 11 and 19 of the Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television, which entered into force on 3 December 2025. This law introduced substantial changes to the financing model of the LRT. It froze the LRT's annual budget at the 2025 level for the years 2026–2028, regardless of inflation, and provided that, as of 2029, the share of personal income tax allocated to the LRT would be reduced from 1% to 0.75%, and the share of excise tax revenue from 1.3% to 0.8%. In practice, these measures amount to a structural and long-term reduction of public funding for the national public broadcaster. The amendments were adopted under an accelerated parliamentary procedure, with the law being adopted within approximately two weeks from its submission, and without reference to any exceptional fiscal circumstances or economic crisis that would have justified such urgency. Second, in parallel, legislative initiatives were launched to lower the safeguards protecting the LRT's leadership against early dismissal. On 24 November 2025, Draft Law No. XVP-1052 was registered in the Seimas, proposing amendments to Article 13 of the Law on the LRT. The draft law seeks to: reduce the majority required for the dismissal of the LRT Director General from a two-thirds majority to a simple majority of all members of the LRT Council; introduce secret voting for decisions on dismissal; and remove the requirement that dismissal be based on clearly defined public-interest grounds. Despite a critical opinion issued by the Legal Department of the Seimas on 26 November 2025, warning of possible incompatibility with the Constitution and EU law, the draft law passed its first reading on 27 November 2025 and was initially intended to be adopted under an accelerated timetable.

This initiative was followed by Draft Law No. XVP-1119, registered on 10 December 2025 and submitted for first reading on 11 December 2025, which proposed additional grounds for early dismissal of the Director General, including dismissal following a vote of no confidence linked to the non-approval of the annual activity report, again by a simple majority of the LRT Council.

Draft Law No. XVP-1119 was subsequently revised by the Committee on Culture of the Seimas, acting as the lead committee, resulting in Draft Law No. XVP-1119(2), entitled Law Amending Articles 12, 13, 15 and 17 of the Law on the LRT. This revised draft significantly expanded both the scope and the institutional impact of the proposed amendments.

Whereas Draft Law No. XVP-1119 focused exclusively on the early dismissal of the Director General of the LRT, Draft Law No. XVP-1119(2) extends the simplified dismissal mechanism to additional key offices within the LRT structure. As with Draft Law No. XVP-1119, Draft Law No. XVP-1119(2) primarily seeks to simplify the earlier dismissal of the Director General of the LRT. Under the amended Article 13(2), the Director General of the LRT is to be appointed and dismissed by the LRT Council by secret ballot. Article 13(5) is amended to establish two alternative grounds for the early dismissal of the Director General before the expiry of the term of office. Under the proposed wording, the Director General may be dismissed due to a vote of no confidence if either 1) he or she

improperly performs the functions of the Director General; or 2) the LRT Council does not approve the annual activity report of the LRT, provided that more than half of all members of the LRT Council vote in favour of such a vote of no confidence. The same simplified dismissal mechanism is extended to other key positions within the LRT, i.e. LRT Ethics Controller and Head of the LRT Internal Audit Service.

Accordingly, the proposed amendments no longer affect only the head of the public broadcaster but also extend political vulnerability to the bodies responsible for ethical oversight and internal audit. This expansion represents a qualitative and systemic escalation. By subjecting the Director General, the Ethics Controller and the Head of the Internal Audit Service to dismissal on identical and minimal grounds, Draft Law No. XVP-1119 (2) undermines the entire governance structure of the LRT. Taken together, these changes risk transforming the LRT Council into a body exercising direct political control over management, ethical supervision and internal audit. Such a model is incompatible with the constitutional principle of independence of the national public broadcaster and with European standards, including Article 5 of the European Media Freedom Act. The continuation is provided in the following question and should be read together with this answer.

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

The existing legal framework governing the LRT provides strong safeguards for the independence of its leadership. Under Article 13(5) of the Law on the LRT, the Director General may be dismissed before the expiry of the term of office on grounds of loss of confidence only where a vote of no confidence is explicitly justified by considerations of public interest, adopted by at least a two-thirds majority of all members of the LRT Council, and conducted by open ballot.

However, as set out in the previous section, the legislative initiatives affecting the LRT would significantly lower the safeguards protecting its leadership. This section continues that description and should be read together with the previous answer.

Final adoption of the proposed amendments to the Law on the LRT was planned for mid-December 2025 but was interrupted due to the sudden deterioration of the health of the Chair of the Seimas Committee on Culture, which prevented the committee from completing its examination within the planned timeframe.

These developments occurred against the background of a state audit conducted by the National Audit Office (NAO), covering the period 2021–2024 and published in October 2025. The NAO did not identify any serious violations of legal acts and did not recommend changes to the LRT's funding model or governance structure.

The Special Investigation Service of Lithuania (STT), acting as the national anti-corruption authority, assessed the proposed amendments and identified corruption-related risks. In particular, it concluded that the introduction of secret voting for the dismissal of the Head of the LRT may be incompatible with the principles of transparency, openness and public accountability, which are essential to democratic governance and the rule of law.

The combined effect of funding amendments and initiatives lowering leadership safeguards triggered significant public and professional reactions. Throughout 2025, journalists' organisations, media professionals and civil society actors repeatedly expressed concern about threats to the independence of the public broadcaster. In late 2025, public demonstrations were held in Vilnius in defence of the LRT, with approximately ten thousand participants attending the largest protest. A public petition opposing the legislative initiatives attracted more than 100,000 signatures, indicating a high level of societal concern.

These legislative initiatives were pursued under accelerated parliamentary procedures without any objectively demonstrated justification, and without ensuring meaningful stakeholders participation or adequate public consultation. This raises concerns regarding their compatibility with European standards on transparent, accountable, inclusive and democratic law-making procedures.

After the planned adoption of the legislative initiatives was interrupted due to the sudden illness of the Chair of the Seimas Committee on Culture, the Seimas established a special working group to further examine the proposed amendments concerning the governance of the LRT. While this step temporarily postponed the

adoption of the amendments, the proposals themselves were not withdrawn. Concerns have been raised regarding the composition, mandate and working methods of the working group, which appear to limit pluralistic participation and structurally favour political actors, raising doubts as to whether the process is intended to facilitate genuine and inclusive deliberation or rather to advance predetermined legislative outcomes. Also, the President of Lithuania expressed support for the political majority's approach to reforming the LRT and criticised the use of LRT airtime for journalists' protest actions undertaken in defence of freedom of expression, including the broadcasting of minutes of silence, at a time when the contested legislative amendments were under consideration. Such actions of the President risk contributing to political pressure on the public service media.

In December 2025, the Venice Commission decided to examine the adopted and proposed amendments affecting the governance and financing of the LRT under an accelerated procedure, acknowledging the seriousness and urgency of the situation. The examination is ongoing. The issue was also addressed at EU level: the European Parliament held a debate and adopted a resolution, formally recognising the implications for media freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Taken together, the adoption of funding restrictions affecting the LRT and legislative initiatives aimed at simplifying the dismissal of its leadership are incompatible with European standards on media freedom, including Articles 5 and 21 of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA).

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Lithuania has a governance and oversight body for its public service broadcaster, the LRT Council, established under Article 10 of the Law on Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT).

The LRT Council consists of 12 members appointed for six-year terms. Four members are appointed by the President of the Republic; four by the Seimas (including two nominated by opposition parliamentary groups); and four by other appointing bodies, namely the Research Council of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Council of Education, the Lithuanian Artists Association, and the Lithuanian Bishops Conference.

The current composition and appointment procedures of the LRT Council raise concerns regarding its potential politicisation. A substantial number of Council members are appointed directly by political institutions, while the remaining appointing bodies are not independent media self-regulatory organisations and may reflect specific institutional, religious or ideological interests. This institutional design creates structural risks of political influence over the functioning and decision-making of the LRT Council.

As a result, the current legal framework governing the composition of the LRT Council poses risks to media freedom. In the absence of sufficiently robust safeguards, the politicisation of supervisory bodies may have broader implications for the rule of law, as it can undermine the independence of the LRT and weaken the effective protection of freedom of expression and media freedom.

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

While the legal framework in Lithuania formally guarantees journalists' access to information and transparency of parliamentary proceedings, recent practice reveals incidents that raise concerns regarding the effective protection of journalistic activity and access to public decision-making processes.

On 17 December 2025, during a public meeting of the Seimas Committee on Audit, the Chair of the Committee requested that a journalist and a camera operator leave the meeting room while they were preparing a report on the discussion of the State Audit Office's findings concerning the activities of the national public broadcaster (LRT). As a result, journalists were effectively prevented from attending a public parliamentary committee meeting and from carrying out their professional duties of gathering and disseminating information on matters of

public interest.

This incident occurred despite the fact that, under Article 53(7) of the Statute of the Seimas, meetings of parliamentary committees are, as a rule, open to representatives of the media, unless a meeting is formally declared closed. In the case at issue, the meeting had not been declared closed, nor was there any indication that classified or otherwise legally protected information was being discussed. The removal of journalists therefore lacked a legal basis and was contrary to the imperative nature of the statutory guarantee of media access to parliamentary committee meetings.

The importance of this guarantee is further underscored by the fact that Lithuanian law provides for administrative liability for obstructing journalists in the performance of their professional duties. This reflects a legislative assessment that interference with journalistic activity constitutes a serious threat to the public interest and democratic transparency. Accordingly, the exclusion of journalists from a public committee meeting cannot be regarded as a merely formal or minor procedural irregularity.

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 legal framework in Lithuania, including the Statute of the Seimas and the Law on the Fundamentals of Legislative Procedure, establishes requirements for transparency, stakeholder involvement and public access throughout the legislative process. However, recent legislative initiatives concerning the governance of the LRT reveal shortcomings in the practical application of these principles, particularly as regards public consultations, stakeholder participation and transparency at the parliamentary stage. As detailed above, the amendments to the Law on the LRT were prepared and advanced without meaningful engagement with relevant stakeholders and civil society. Despite their significant institutional and constitutional implications for media freedom, journalists' organisations, media professionals and representatives of the LRT were not systematically consulted.

[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

Lithuania's constitutional framework clearly defines the conditions under which fast-track and emergency legislative procedures may be applied.

In its ruling of 16 April 2019 concerning amendments to the Law on Forests, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania established binding constitutional standards governing the use of urgency in the legislative process. The Court held that accelerated procedures constitute an exception to the ordinary legislative process and must therefore be applied restrictively and in compliance with the principles of the rule of law, responsible governance, transparency and legislative quality. According to the Constitutional Court, the urgent procedure may be applied only in exceptional circumstances where, due to specific political, social, economic or other developments, it is necessary to adopt or amend legislation swiftly in order to safeguard

important public or State interests or to protect constitutional values. Even in such cases, the use of urgency must be duly reasoned and must not undermine the essential stages of parliamentary scrutiny, stakeholder involvement and public transparency. The special urgency (emergency) procedure is subject to even stricter constitutional constraints. The Constitutional Court has made it explicit that this procedure may be used only in exceptional and constitutionally justified situations, where there is an immediate need to protect vital public or State interests. Such situations include, inter alia, the introduction of a state of war or emergency, mobilisation, decisions on the use of armed forces in the event of armed aggression, the need to fulfil international obligations with extreme urgency, or extraordinary circumstances such as natural disasters or serious threats to public or State security. Any legal framework or practice allowing the use of special urgency outside such narrowly defined circumstances is incompatible with the Constitution.

Despite this clear constitutional guidance, recent legislative practice indicates that these standards are not consistently observed.

First, with regard to the governance of the LRT, legislative initiatives were advanced through an accelerated parliamentary procedure in the absence of circumstances meeting the constitutional threshold for urgency. The use of a fast-tracked procedure in this context effectively excluded meaningful stakeholder consultation and civil society participation, and significantly reduced the scope for public debate. This lack of transparency is particularly problematic in a policy area with clear constitutional and democratic implications, notably for media freedom and independence of the national public broadcaster. Second, with regard to the funding of the LRT, legislative amendments were introduced shortly before their adoption, adopted on the eve of a new financial year, and approved without adequate parliamentary deliberation or public consultation. This legislative timing and manner of adoption raised serious concerns among media freedom stakeholders regarding legal certainty, the protection of legitimate expectations and compliance with the principle of *vacatio legis*, which is inherent in the rule of law.

Third, the Draft Law amending Articles 228, 229 and 230 of the Criminal Code (No. XVP-106(2)), aimed at reducing liability for abuse of office and allowing offenders to avoid restrictions on holding public office (see further details in section II.C), was also adopted under an accelerated (urgent) procedure.

This practice illustrates a broader structural concern: although the Constitution and the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court establish clear substantive limits on the use of urgency in law-making, these limits are not always fully internalised in parliamentary practice. As a result, fast-track procedures continue to be employed in politically sensitive contexts where comprehensive legislative scrutiny and inclusive public debate would be constitutionally required.

[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 effective implementation of final judicial decisions by public authorities constitutes a core element of the rule of law and is directly relevant to the functioning of the EU single market, as it underpins legal certainty, equality before the law and trust in State institutions. In Lithuania, rulings of the Constitutional Court (CCRL) are constitutionally binding on all public authorities, including the Seimas and the Government, and form an integral part of the domestic legal order (see Article 107(2) of the Constitution).

In its ruling of 17 April 2025 (No. KT21-N5/2025, case No. 12/2024) concerning the legal recognition of partnerships, the CCRL examined the consequences of the legislature's prolonged inaction in this field. The CCRL found that the legislature's failure for more than twenty years to adopt legislation regulating the registration of partnerships constitutes a violation of the constitutional principles of the rule of law and responsible governance. The CCRL further held that the existing and non-entered-into-force legal framework, insofar as it limited partnership exclusively to a union between a man and a woman, was incompatible with multiple provisions of the Constitution, including those protecting human dignity, private and family life, equality and non-discrimination.

Importantly, the CCRL emphasised that the legislator has a positive constitutional duty to act within a reasonable time and to establish a comprehensive and adequate legal framework ensuring effective legal recognition and protection of stable family-type relationships outside marriage, covering both property-related and non-property aspects of family life. While the legislature retains discretion as to the specific legal form of such recognition, this discretion is constitutionally limited by the requirement that the protection afforded be genuine and sufficient.

Despite the binding nature of the ruling, public criticism voiced by the leader of the ruling party and by the Minister and Vice-Minister of Justice (who bear primary responsibility for legislative implementation) raises concerns regarding institutional compliance with constitutional adjudication. Such reactions risk undermining the authority of the CCRL and weaken the practical effectiveness of constitutional review.

From a broader rule-of-law perspective, the non-implementation or delayed implementation of constitutional judgments poses systemic risks. The Venice Commission's Updated Rule of Law Checklist emphasises that public authorities are under a duty to ensure compliance with binding judicial decisions and that the effective implementation of such decisions is essential for legality, legal certainty and the functioning of checks and balances. The Checklist further specifies that decisions of constitutional courts must be binding on all public authorities, including state and local self-government bodies and their officials, and must be implemented in good faith. It emphasises that failure to execute such decisions constitutes a violation of the supremacy of the constitution, and that other state authorities, when adopting new individual acts, are required to take into account the legal reasoning set out in constitutional court decisions (see Checklist, paras 38, 58, 149, II.A.8, II.G.4).

To date, there is no clear timetable, draft legislation or structured parliamentary debate aimed at giving effect to the CCRL's judgment. As a result, individuals seeking legal recognition of their partnerships are effectively compelled to pursue judicial proceedings on a case-by-case basis, relying on constitutional jurisprudence before ordinary courts.

Thus, the absence of timely legislative follow-up limits the practical effectiveness of judicial protection. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has consistently held that the effective execution of final judicial decisions constitutes an integral element of the right to a fair trial under Article 6 (1) of the ECHR. While Article 6 (1) guarantees the right of access to a court, that right would be illusory if a State's legal system allowed a final and binding judicial decision to remain unenforced. The ECtHR has emphasised that interpreting Article 6 as protecting procedural guarantees alone, without ensuring the implementation of judicial decisions, would lead to situations incompatible with the principle of the rule of law (*Hornsby v. Greece*, para 40)

In conclusion, the continued non-implementation of final constitutional judgments, especially when accompanied by open political contestation of their authority, raises serious concerns from the perspective of the rule of law. These concerns are not merely domestic in nature but are also relevant to the EU legal order and the proper functioning of the single market, which depends on the effective and uniform application of fundamental rights standards by Member State authorities.

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

Contact

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