

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

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) + ActiveWatch

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

<https://rsf.org/en>

Transparency register number

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

612547127497-45

* 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

Julie

Surname

Email Address of the organisation

secretariat@rsf.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

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

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

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

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

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

This is joint contribution by Reporters Without Borders and ActiveWatch

There has been no significant progress in regards to the 2025 RoL Report Recommendation on media: “Step up efforts to strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance and editorial independence of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media.”

Romanian authorities should step up efforts to harmonize national legislation with the EU anti-SLAPP Directive and the European Media Freedom Act.

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

Some changes recorded. In an audiovisual market that is closely intertwined with the political landscape, the National Audiovisual Council (CNA) frequently fails to fulfil its mandate of defending the public interest. This shortcoming is reflected in its slow and hesitant approach to imposing deterrent sanctions. However, in 2025, CNA showed more determination in sanctioning television and radio broadcasters for serious violations of audiovisual legislation. A further constraint lies in the audiovisual legal framework itself, which requires updating, particularly with regard to the sanctions regime. A 20 million euros EU funded project aimed at the complete digitalization of CNA's activity started in 2025. The monitoring capacity of the institution is expected to be significantly improved following this investment.

<https://www.paginamedia.ro/cna/cna-digitalizeaza-pest-20-milioane-euro-cel-mare-proiect-istoria-institutiei-analiza-continutului-ajutorul-inteligentei-artificiale-platforme-interactiune-publicul-program-educatie-media-22048290>

CNA showed transparency and openness for public consultations during its regulatory efforts to adopt specific norms for audiovisual media, including the 2025 presidential elections. A new Code of audiovisual (secondary legislation issued by the CNA) was adopted in 2025. It is an important step forward, as it reformed the previous 2011 Code. However, some of the adopted regulations are problematic. CNA considers it has jurisdiction on most of the online audiovisual content, and issues orders to act against illegal content, as defined by Article 9 of the DSA, but these orders request the removal of content posted by regular social media platform users, or by unknown social media platforms users for being disinformation and infringing the audiovisual legislation. These orders to act against illegal content, that target disinformation, are incorrect because they fall outside the scopes of DSA and AVMSD, as provisions of audiovisual legislation are applied to users who are not media services providers. The Association for Technology and Internet and ActiveWatch have repeatedly criticised such CNA decisions, both for their inefficiency (focusing on individual social media posts, instead on coordinated inauthentic behaviours), as well as for their problematic legal basis. Nevertheless, the only progress made by CNA was the change of the name of their decisions from “order to remove the illegal content” to “order to act against illegal content”, and the avoidance of clearly categorising regular users as media services providers, as CNA used to do in the beginning, when issuing such orders.

<https://cna.ro/a-noul-cod-de-reglementare-a-continutului-audiovizual-cfdz2xg2moireiq44wwk5oec/>

<https://cna.ro/c-decizii-continut-ilegal-online-lhc3wh2kvf5obt8747lzu2pu/>

<https://activewatch.ro/articole/proiectul-cna-de-cod-alaudiovizualului-observatii-activewatch-si-apti/>

<https://activewatch.ro/articole/cna-nu-trebuie-s%C4%83-cenzureze-abuziv-dreptul-constitu%C8%9Bional-al-cet%C4%83%C5%A3enilor-la-libertatea-de-opinie/>

<https://apti.ro/content/cna-nu-poate-reglementa-tot-con%C8%9Binutul-video-online>

CNA is clearly understaffed and underfunded, especially given its new responsibilities related to online audiovisual content.

CNA's 2025 budget was initially increased compared to the previous one, only to be later adjusted in October 2025 with a €250,000 cut following the budget cuts introduced by the new government.

Among the austerity policies taken into consideration in 2025 by the new Government was a possible merger between CNA with ANCOM, the communications and postal regulator. The Government did not follow through with this measure, as it sparked strong opposition, because it would undermine the Council's role as guarantor of the public interest in audiovisual matters and its responsibilities under the DSA, EMFA, and as the Council of

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 CNA comprises 11 members, all of whom are approved by Parliament, after being nominated by the two chambers of Parliament, the Presidency, and by the Government. The six-year mandates of Council members are staggered to avoid an overlap with the political power term. CNA refreshed its membership in October 2024, as the mandate of 7 members expired. Some of them had their mandates renewed, while others were replaced by new members. Following the changes in membership, and probably, because of failed behind the doors political negotiations, CNA was left without a president, being led ever since by its vice-president. While this did not affect the functioning of the Council, it shows the impact political parties influence has on the autonomy of this important body.

<https://www.news.ro/politic-intern/parlamentul-votat-membri-consiliului-national-audiovizualului-vasilebanescu-partea-guvernului-daniela-barsan-partea-presedintiei-georgica-severin-monica-gubernat-luciandindirica-partea-psd-1922404801002024101821751238>

The law does not clearly define the performance or technical criteria to be used for the evaluation of the CNA's annual activity report, which leaves the authority open to political pressures. If the CNA's annual report is rejected by the Parliament, the CNA President is automatically dismissed. The Parliament then requests that Council propose a new candidate from among its members for the position (the law does not forbid the re-nomination of the dismissed President).

CNA has been affected in its decades long activity by a significant level of political influence. Many members, including the current vice-president, who is currently leading the Council, have previously been affiliated with political parties or had other political connections.

<https://ipi.media/publications/romania-media-capture-and-emfa-monitoring-report-2025/>

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

5000 character(s) maximum

The self-regulatory process has not been a success in Romania. Various initiatives failed to gather enough support among professional journalists. Currently, there are no credible or representative media councils or ethics codes in the Romanian media environment.

In 2023 a new attempt of a self-regulatory initiative emerged under the name of The Press Club. Some of its members were high ranking members of the defunct Romanian Press Club, like ex criminally convicted media owners, Sorin Roșca Stănescu or Maricel Păcuraru. There are many other controversial names among its members, such as Cozmin Gușă, a media owner, former politician, political consultant, and TV host, known for his pro-Russian narratives.

<https://clubuldepresa.ro/consiliul-de-onoare/>

<https://romania.europalibera.org/a/club-de-presa/32395106.html>

<https://www.g4media.ro/cine-e-maricel-pacuraru-omul-care-controleaza-realitatea-plus-principala-armamediatice-a-lui-calin-georgescu-afacerist-condamnat-la-inchisoare-si-la-un-pas-sa-obtina-anularea-sentintei-doua-dosa.html>

A new professional association was established at the end of 2025, including several prominent independent journalists. The association intends to adopt self-regulation mechanisms.

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

Romanian legislation provides a framework to ensure transparency, fairness, free competition and accountability in public procurement of goods and services. Nevertheless, the legal framework does not provide enough guarantees of transparency and fairness in the allocation of state advertising funds to media outlets. Public authorities have a tendency to award public advertising in a to favorable media outlets by exploiting the legal loopholes that permit them to allocate funds without a tender. The content produced under these state advertising agreements is sometimes crafted to promote high-ranking officials within local state bodies. Additionally, state advertising is used as a tool to deter the publication of critical material about these officials and their institutions.

Another method of fuelling public funds towards media outlets is through political party spending. It is a practice which was established in 2015, and was consolidated during the past years, with a record amount being channeled in 2024 (almost 80 million euros in total). This amount does not include the other subsidies from the state budget in 2024 for the four rounds of election campaigns. The newly installed government reduced by 10% the total amount of subsidies dedicated to the political parties in the last semester of 2025 and announced that it will apply the same measure in 2026.

<https://hotnews.ro/bolojan-s-a-tinut-de-cu-va-venea-dar-n-a-anuntat-guvernul-a-taiat-din-banii-partidelor-unii-dintre-liderii-partidelor-nu-au-stiut-2088480>

These funds are allocated and spent in a quite opaque manner. Political parties are required to report the total expenditures on political advertising to the Permanent Electoral Authority, providing detailed information. Contracts for such expenditures are not subject to the Public Procurement Law or related regulations. However, in principle, their content should fall under the provisions of the Law on Access to Public Information. In practice, both the Permanent Electoral Authority and the major political parties fail to provide detailed disclosures about parties' expenditures in the media. Additionally, many political parties channel their funds through advertising or PR agencies. This approach is commonly used because there are no legal transparency requirements for expenditures made through third parties. PSD and PNL, which are also the largest spenders, refuse to provide detailed information about the ultimate beneficiaries of these funds, even in cases where court rulings have mandated them to do so. Despite its proven intent to reduce the subsidies, the current prime-minister, Ilie Bolojan, has continued the policy of his predecessors at the leadership of the ruling PNL party in regards to the transparency of expenditures.

<https://hotnews.ro/prefer-sa-nu-mai-mintiti-fapte-din-spatele-unei-acuzatii-si-marea-miza-contractele-secrete-cu-presa-2068360>

<https://hotnews.ro/un-buboi-care-nu-se-mai-sparge-ca-sa-nu-spuna-public-cati-bani-au-bagat-in-presa-pentru-a-cumpara-stiri-lideri-din-psd-si-pnl-spun-ca-sunt-amenintati-cu-clauzele-de-confidentialitate-de-patronii-de-2095985>

The unethical and illegal practices of permitting political sponsorship of editorial audiovisual content during electoral campaigns, criticized by ActiveWatch during the electoral campaigns of 2024, were not clarified in 2025 by the National Council of Audiovisual. Nevertheless, the adoption by the Romanian Government and the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA) at the beginning of 2025 of harsh regulations in marking the electoral content for the presidential elections of May 2025, in the aftermath of the annulled presidential elections of

2024, partially reduced the practice of political sponsorship of editorial content at the main television channels, or, when it happened, it was more clearly marked as political advertising. At the same time, the PEA regulations were excessive and confusing, and content covered by freedom of political expression, including editorial freedom, was sanctioned (being removed from social platforms) for not being marked according to these provisions.

https://www.roaep.ro/legislatie/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/H-AEP-nr-9_2025_ENG.pdf

https://www.roaep.ro/legislatie/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/OUG-1-2025_prezi_loc_part_ENG.pdf

<https://apti.ro/opiniile-politice-ale-utilizatorilor-de-retele-sociale-sunt-parte-a-libertatii-de-exprimare-mai-ales-in-campania-electorala>

https://activewatch.ro/documents/277/freeex_digest_9_eng.pdf

The above AEP regulations were designed for the presidential electoral campaign of 2025. While AEP did not develop specific regulations for political advertising outside the electoral campaigns, the provisions of the EU Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising (TTPA) should apply. Nevertheless, as publicly admitted by the new leadership of AEP, in January 2026, TTPA is, de facto, not currently implemented in Romania.

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

Editorial independence

Editorial independence faces significant challenges due to the business or political interests of media owners and the financial reliance on state advertising or propaganda contracts from political parties. However, there is also a growing number of independent newsrooms that produce high-quality content.

The election campaign for the 2025 presidential elections became a new opportunity for political competitors to spend significant amounts on election advertising. In some cases, this electoral advertising turned into a mechanism for political parties to finance certain media entities. The situation is reflected in the editorial agenda of those media entities, which openly supported the electoral competitors. In fact, the Permanent Electoral Authority (AEP) refused to reimburse the AUR party more than €5 million for the electoral advertising paid by the party for their campaign on Realitatea TV, arguing that some of these advertising expenses were not eligible, and filed a criminal law complaint against AUR.

<https://snoop.ro/aur-pentru-realitatea-george-simion-a-dat-un-milion-de-euro-pentru-o-zi-de-promovare-si-aproape-jumatate-pentru-o-emisiune-cu-anca-alexandrescu-dar-fara-el/>

PSM

Political parties manifest little interest for the general situation of the public media and for the legal framework regulating their functioning. There are no legal guarantees in national law to ensure that the procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the members of the management board of PSM offer them enough independence. The rejection of the annual report submitted to Parliament leads to the automatic dismissal of the Board, which is a useful tool for politicians to exert pressure and control over the two institutions. The provision has been misused on numerous occasions, resulting in frequent changes to the Council of Administration with the formation of new parliamentary majorities. The law does not provide for any measurable and objective criteria to assess the performance of public broadcasters. Therefore, the two institutions are extremely vulnerable to political whims.

The funding mechanism, a state budget allocation, makes the public television and radio vulnerable to direct government influence.

The public television continued its downturn spiral. Despite broadcasting on 14 different channels, its audience is insignificant. Although its management complains about insufficient funding, it is noticeable that the public television runs a total budget of around 100 million euros, of which €83.5 million is provided by the state budget, representing almost a quarter when compared with the TV advertising market in Romania. In November 2025, TVR1 and TVR2, the company's flagship channels, had an average combined audience of around 150,000 viewers, less than 1% rating.

<https://www.paginademedi.ro/audiente-tv/audiente-prime-time-noiembrie-2025-22274292>

<https://mediafactbook.ro/television-market>

Public radio is in a much better position. Its larger accumulated audiences for its dedicated channels (news, music, culture, local) position the public radio stations as genuine alternatives to commercial radio stations.

<https://www.paginademedi.ro/audiente-radio/audiente-radio-toamna-2025-22314542>

<https://www.audienta-radio.ro/default.aspx?id=7>

<https://ipi.media/publications/romania-media-capture-and-emfa-monitoring-report-2025/>

Media service providers

The legal framework for media service providers is liberal, with regulations in place only for the audiovisual sector. However, the Audiovisual Law contains some excessive provisions, requiring online audiovisual media services providers the obligation to obtain an audiovisual licence. ActiveWatch and the Association for Technology and Internet criticized the provisions, arguing that a notification procedure, instead of a licencing procedure (a highly bureaucratic process, involving the approval of CNA before the broadcasting), should suffice in the case of online broadcasting. The same notification procedure should apply to media services on demand, where an approval from CNA is currently required before the offering of services.

<https://activewatch.ro/articole/propuneri-amendamente-proiect-legea-audiovizualului/>

The Parliament voted in November/December 2025 the new Councils of Administration of the public radio and television, after the mandate of the former councils expired. The Government proposed its own spokesperson as its representative in the Council of Administration of the public radio (SRR), without her renouncing the position at the government. This decision sparked strong condemnation from media NGOs, but, nevertheless, the Parliament voted for her membership in the Council. <https://activewatch.ro/articole/nominalizarea-purt%C4%83torului-de-cuv%C3%A2nt-al-guvernului-%C3%AEn-ca-al-srr-ridic%C4%83-probleme-de-compatibilitate-%C8%99i-de-independen%C8%9B%C4%83-institu%C8%9Bional%C4%83/>

[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

The regulatory framework for media ownership transparency is currently restricted to the broadcasting sector. In contrast, there are no existing regulations addressing the transparency of media revenues. Details about the ownership structure of broadcasters, including beneficial owners, are publicly accessible on the CNA's website.

However, ownership information for other media companies is available only through the National Commercial Registry database, which requires a fee and is not easily searchable.

Media ownership concentration is regulated by the Competition Law, which applies uniformly across all markets, and by the Audiovisual Law, which includes specific provisions exclusively for the broadcasting sector. Of particular relevance to media pluralism are the criteria outlined in the Audiovisual Law for identifying a "dominant position in shaping public opinion" within the audiovisual market. However, there are no legal requirements for assessing media market concentrations which could have a significant impact on media pluralism or editorial independence. None of the regulations mentioned above address the issue of vertical concentration within the media market. This is a significant concern, as the largest media groups in the country hold dominant positions across multiple sectors, including television, radio, and online platforms.

The provisions of the European Media Freedom Act related to transparency and concentration of the media markets have not been yet enforced.

<https://ipi.media/publications/romania-media-capture-and-emfa-monitoring-report-2025/>

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

The legislative framework is sometimes abused by the authorities, especially by law enforcement and judicial bodies. 2025 recorded new situations in which journalists or newsrooms were asked to reveal their sources or to hand over their documentation to prosecutors.

In December 2024, criminal investigators asked photo-journalist Andrei Pungovschi to hand over photographs he had taken at a neo-fascist commemoration, even though his photos were published, and even though the police and gendarmerie officers were present at the event and they usually take photos and video record. The photojournalist refused, stating that journalists should not do the authorities' work. On 14 May, three police officers visited him with a search warrant, and, to avoid the seizure of all his equipment, Pungovschi decided to hand over the requested photographs.

<https://cji.ro/perchezitiile-jurnalistor-care-documenteaza-subiecte-de-interes-public-reprezinta-o-limitare-abuziva-a-libertatii-presei/>

On March 17, 2025, investigative journalists Victor Ilie and Luiza Vasiliu revealed that in 2023, while working at Rise Project, Ilie was subjected to surveillance by the anti-corruption DNA Iași, including a two-month phone tapping, even after authorities learnt he was a journalist. At least three other journalists were similarly targeted by DNA Iași, based on complaints from subjects of journalistic investigations, with all cases ultimately closed. Nevertheless, such surveillance represents a serious infringement of press freedom.

https://substack.com/inbox/post/159209895?utm_source=post-email-

[title&publication_id=3412206&post_id=159209895&utm_campaign=email-post-](https://substack.com/inbox/post/159209895?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=3412206&post_id=159209895&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=1ul3t3&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email)

[title&isFreemail=true&r=1ul3t3&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email](https://balkaninsight.com/2025/03/17/becoming-the-story-how-journalists-are-being-targeted-by-romanian-law-enforcement/)
<https://balkaninsight.com/2025/03/17/becoming-the-story-how-journalists-are-being-targeted-by-romanian-law-enforcement/>

<https://activewatch.ro/articole/scrisoare-deschis%C4%83-mandatele-de-supraveghere-care-vizeaz%C4%83-jurnali%C8%99ti-periculoase-pentru-democra%C8%9Bie/>

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

5000 character(s) maximum

The political rise of far-right candidates and formations has coincided with a surge in acts of threats, intimidation or physical aggressions. Since December 2024, prior to the annulment of the presidential elections, there have been explicit threats and attacks directed at journalists, civic activists, and non-governmental organizations that advocate for the rights of minorities or other vulnerable groups. Many of the threats and attacks came directly from far-right politicians.

The first months of 2025 were marked by a series of protests organized by parties or sympathizers of far-right movements against the Constitutional Court's decision to cancel the presidential elections. In almost every one of these street actions, the participants threatened, insulted, assaulted or harassed the journalists who were documenting or broadcasting the events. This unprecedented wave of aggressions against journalists was met by a determined reaction from the Police and law enforcement, which identified, sanctioned or filed criminal proceedings against some of the perpetrators.

Several journalists were attacked by far-right supporters during a protest organized on 10 January. A reporter and cameraman from news channel Digi24 were attacked while trying to report live from the scene. The protestors threw several objects against the journalists. In a separate incident, the car of Antena3-CNN news channel was vandalized by participants at the protest. The Gendarmes identified and sanctioned seven perpetrators, and prosecutors opened criminal charges against one person for property damage and placed him under judicial control for a period of 60 days.

On 12 January, a crew from the news channel B1TV was attacked by the participants at the protest organized by the far-right party, AUR. The cameraman was pushed to the ground and hit by protestors, while the car of the news channel was vandalized. In a separate incident, a reporter from the news channel Digi24 was threatened, harassed and insulted by participants at the protest while reporting live from the middle of the crowd. The Police opened investigations into these incidents for the crime of physical assault.

Similar incidents occurred during other protests by the far-right on 24 January and 9 March, when a Digi24 TV news station's car was vandalized by protesters. <https://www.stareademocratiei.ro/raport-starea-democratiei-2024-si-putin-din-2025/>

In April and May 2025, journalists from the PressOne newsroom received repeated death threats after publishing investigations about neo-nazi organizations from Romania and Moldova. The case is under police investigation. <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/jurnalisti-de-la-pressone-amenintati-din-nou-cu-moartea-ziaristii-romani-tot-mai-supusi-amenintarilor-si-intimidarilor/33414906.html>

Hotnews also reported in May that the newsroom has received online threats after being the target of derogatory and inciting remarks formulated by far-right party AUR leader George Simion.

<https://hotnews.ro/amenintari-la-adresa-jurnalistilor-hotnews-dupa-ce-redactia-a-fost-nominalizata-de-george-simion-suntem-destui-care-va-vom-face-o-vizita-incepand-de-saptamana-viitoare-1973659>

Four months after the threats received by journalist Victor Ilie of Snoop, the prosecutors brought the case to trial. The journalist was threatened by a supporter of far-right presidential candidate Calin Georgescu, after publishing an investigation in December 2025 into Russian influence in the Romanian online space.

<https://hotnews.ro/bruno-mihailescu-sustinator-al-lui-calin-georgescu-a-fost-trimis-in-judecata-dupa-ce-a-amenintat-un-jurnalist-snoop-alte-4-persoane-ajung-in-instanta-pentru-incitare-la-ura-si-violenta-in-online-1928920>

<https://activewatch.ro/articole/sus%C8%9Bin%C4%83tori-ai-candidatului-c%C4%83lin-georgescu-amenin%C8%9B%C4%83ri-mafiote-la-adresa-jurnali%C8%99tilor-snoop/>

Despite such laudable rapid responses, the chronic delays that characterize the Romanian judicial system effectively foster impunity for some of those responsible for attacks against journalists, especially when such perpetrators hold high ranks. Three years after Parászka Boróka, journalist of the Hungarian-language public radio Radio Romania Târgu Mureș, became the victim of violent messages formulated publicly by the Hungarian far-right parliamentarian Bartha Barna, the Romanian justice has yet to officially prosecute the

perpetrator. <https://activewatch.ro/blog/instigare-publica-la-violenta-impotriva-jurnalistilor-trebuie-sanctionata-penal-solidaritate-a-reporteri-fara-frontiere-si-activewatch-cu-jurnalista-paraszka-boroka/>
Four years later, in the high-profile harassment and smear campaign against journalist Emilia Sercan, the authorities not only failed to render justice but they are also suspected of being complicit.

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

The law on access to information has not been changed.

The Romanian Constitutional Court formally announced its ruling declaring unconstitutional two provisions of Law No. 176/2010 on public integrity. The first provision concerned the requirement to include spouses' properties and revenues in the asset and interest declarations of public officials. The second removed the obligation for public officials to publish their asset and interest declarations on the website of the National Integrity Agency. Both rulings significantly restrict access to information that is essential for holding public officials accountable and seriously undermine the work of investigative journalists, who are deprived of key sources of information regarding the assets and interests of public officials and their families.

The newly elected president, all major political parties, the media, and civil society organizations criticized the Constitutional Court's decision, viewing it as a major setback in the fight against corruption.

<https://www.stareademocratiei.ro/2025/05/29/aparati-integritatea-publica/>

Romanian authorities continued to obstruct access to public interest information requested by journalists, citizens, or NGOs. While many refusals were challenged in court and subsequently overturned, even court rulings do not always ensure that the requested information is disclosed.

Almost 10% of the municipalities inquired at the end of 2025 by the journalists from Dela0 platform, on the basis of the law on access to public interest information, failed to respond. Among these 10% were large urban centers such as Bucharest and most of the capital's districts. Many of those municipalities who did answer, failed to provide full information, offered unsearchable scanned documents, and, in a few cases, replied with handwritten documents.

<https://beta.dela0.ro/digitalizarea-administratiei-locale-harta-interactiva/>

To give another example, mayor of Slatina, Mario Lucian De Mezzo, refused to answer a request formulated in February 2025 by local journalist, Ionuț Jifcu (reporter24.ro and gazetanova.ro), based on Law no. 544/2001 regarding free access to information of public interest. The mayor asked the journalist to prove his status as a journalist, labelling as "editorial slips" the content of his public communication in relation to the activity of the City Hall.

<https://activewatch.ro/articole/abuz-primarul-de-slatina-condi%C8%9Bioneaz%C4%83-accesul-jurnali%C8%99tilor-la-informa%C8%9Bii-de-interes-public/>

The new Prime Minister, Ilie Bolojan, has manifested a tendency towards opacity and avoidance in its relations with the media. An incident took place on 26 November 2025, in the halls of the Romanian Parliament, when several journalists were restricted and even pushed by a press officer under the Government's communication department when trying to get some statements from the Prime Minister. The Government Press Office announced following the incident that there would be a disciplinary investigation. At the same time, the current administration has prohibited the access of photographers and press cameramen to Government meetings at the Victoria Palace. Journalists accredited to the Government reported that the Prime Minister's agenda is consistently announced late, often after the events on the agenda have taken place. They also pointed out that some of the prime minister's meetings are not publicly announced. Following the 26 November incident, improvements were promised by the Government Press Office in informal meetings with the accredited journalists and with media and good governance NGOs. Nevertheless, the access of photographers and press

cameramen to Government meetings was to remain forbidden.

<https://activewatch.ro/articole/cabinetul-bolojan-opac-%C8%99i-agresiv-%C3%AEn-rela%C8%9Bia-cu-presa-scrisoare-deschis%C4%83-adresat%C4%83-prim-ministrului-rom%C3%A2niei/>

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

Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) continue to be widely employed by various actors against journalists, media outlets, civic activists or NGOs. One mechanism employed to harass or intimidate journalists and newsrooms are the exorbitant amounts requested by plaintiffs or the abuse of legal actions. The practice of the Courts is generally in line with the ECHR jurisprudence, although there are situations when the decisions involving the media are problematic, especially decisions of the Courts requesting media outlets to eliminate articles.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Smear campaigns against journalists and newsrooms have intensified in the midst of the tense political atmosphere generated by the successive rounds of elections which marked 2024 and 2025. They were instigated, conducted or promoted by politicians, influencers as well as by media outlets closely related to political actors. CNA issued a number of sanctions against the TV channels which broadcast such materials. <https://activewatch.ro/publicatii/soros-ad-portas-again-freeex-digest-no-10/>

George Simion, the president of AUR political party and its candidate in the 2025 presidential elections, secretly recorded and made public, without the consent of the participants, a conversation he had with representatives of the Digi24 television station regarding his potential participation in a televised debate between the two presidential candidates. <https://activewatch.ro/articole/r%C4%83zboiul-cu-presa-al-domnului-simion-reprezint%C4%83-fuga-sa-de-adev%C4%83r-%C3%AEncalc%C4%83-dreptul-la-libertatea-presei-%C8%99i-reprezint%C4%83-un-atac-la-democra%C8%9Bie/>

During the 2025 election campaign, George Simion also made several remarks about journalists or specific newsrooms, which have the potential to incite aggressive attitudes against the media and create an intimidating environment for journalists. <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/atacurile-simion---aur-la-adresa-media-o-retea-de-crima-organizata-presaminte-sistematic-inchideti-televizoarele-manipuleaza-/33408295.html>

In December, a documentary released by the investigative platform Recorder exposing failures within the Romanian justice system triggered hostile reactions from senior magistrates and several media outlets. The President of the Bucharest Court of Appeal declared that Recorder's documentary amounts to "public incitement against the constitutional order." Coming from a leader of an important court in the justice system, these statements represent a form of threat directed against journalists and media institutions who have documented a subject of major public interest. In parallel, some publications and TV stations ran a smear campaign against the Recorder newsroom.

<https://activewatch.ro/articole/scrisoare-deschis%C4%83-jurnali%C8%99tii-se-solidarizeaz%C4%83-reac%C8%9Bie-comun%C4%83-la-atacurile-%C3%AEmpotriva-recorder/>

The Romanian authorities have not made any significant steps in harmonizing the national legislation with the EMFA.

Romania is ranked 55 out of 180 countries in RSF's 2025 World Press Freedom Index.

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

[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

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

rule-of-law-network@ec.europa.eu