

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

Professional Federation

* Organisation name

250 character(s) maximum

European Federation of Journalists

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

europeanjournalists.org

Transparency register number

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

27471236588-39

* 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

Camille

Surname

Petit

Email Address of the organisation

secretariat@europeanjournalists.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

Media Freedom Rapid Response - MFRR's flagship Mapping Media Freedom (MapMF), recorded 1481 press freedom violations affecting 2377 journalists and other media professionals during 2025 across the European Union member states and candidate countries. The rise in the number of alerts in 2024 and small discrepancies with the numbers in 2025 show that this has become a consistent trend. The main difference compared to 2024 lies in the severity of attacks, with 2025 marking four deaths of journalists, compared to one in 2024. Although three of these cases occurred in Ukraine and one in Turkey, they highlight that impunity remains high, as crimes against journalists and murders often remain unsolved for years.

According to MapMF data, government and public officials were responsible for approximately one in five (21%) of all recorded incidents in EU member states during 2025. This marks a sharp increase from 2021, when such officials were implicated in just 10% of incidents. The online environment remains the most common setting for attacks, with incidents steadily rising in recent years. In 2025, 23.5% of all recorded incidents in the EU occurred online, with spoofing, identity disguise, and deepfakes emerging as growing concerns. Intimidation and threats were the most frequent types of attacks, accounting for 19% of cases documented by the MFRR. Another alarming trend, which surged in 2024 and persisted through 2025, is the proliferation of foreign-agent laws inspired by Russian models. These laws have raised significant concern among media organisations, with repeated threats of adoption and troubling reports emerging across both EU member states and candidate countries. MapMF recorded 72 threats of foreign agent laws in 2025, with a rise of alerts in EU member states - 34 in 2024, escalating from 20 incidents in 2024. This legislation risks silencing and exiling independent media entirely. While Hungary and Slovakia have intensified their push for these laws, similar threats from political figures have been observed in other EU countries. The spread of foreign-agent laws reflects growing illiberal influences in Europe, and the EU must firmly oppose any such proposals.

These types of threats tap into already existing legal threats, such as Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) and criminalisation of defamation, one of the largest and most powerful tools used to intimidate journalists and media outlets. The MFRR submission and the upcoming monitoring report aim to emphasise the importance of timely and robust transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive by highlighting concerning cases.

Elections and protests were among the most dangerous environments for journalists in 2025. MFRR has registered 110 election-related alerts throughout the year. In terms of protests, Serbia serves as a stark example, recording the highest number of alerts last year (208), which affected 358 journalists and media workers. In April, the MFRR organised an urgent mission to Serbia to draw attention to the challenges journalists face during protests. The incidents reported there are wide-ranging, including spyware abuse, raids on newsrooms, intimidation, violence, and media capture. While most of these incidents are not directly linked to protest coverage, Serbia's case illustrates how governments are intensifying their crackdown on independent journalism amid nationwide unrest.

Last, but not least, discriminated groups remain most vulnerable to different types of attacks. Recognising that many of them go unregistered due to a distrust in official institutions, it is important to emphasise that they contribute to a general sense of insecurity among independent journalists. Thus, gendered-based attacks remain a concern, with 56 gender-based attacks recorded in 2025, compared to 38 in 2024, and 16 attacks related to the sexual orientation of journalists or media workers. Journalists in exile are particularly vulnerable, and MFRR has started recording cases specifically related to them. With many cases still to map out, MapMF has registered four such cases in 2025.

This text is part of Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) joint input to the Rule of Law Report, and is submitted by the following consortium members: European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Article 19, European Federation of Journalists, Free Press Unlimited, International Press Institute, Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa.

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

A. Media authorities and bodies

(Cf. Article 30 of Directive 2018/1808)

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Over the past year, Serbia's Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) has remained effectively non-operational for more than a year, which in practice prevented it from performing its statutory role in safeguarding media pluralism and overseeing broadcasters. The (re)appointment process for the REM Council was marked by a series of contested steps: the annulment of the previous call from November 2024; a non-transparent procedure; the selection of eight out of nine members on 12 November; the failure to elect the member representing a national minority, widely seen as the result of political manipulation by the parliamentary majority; and, subsequently, the resignation of four credible elected members on 19 December, citing that the process had been emptied of meaning. This triggered a new procedure to elect four members at the end of December, which was also annulled on 19 January 2026 on the grounds that no applications had been received. A REM without legitimacy and operational capacity translates into a regulator without real power to protect the public from media abuses and political propaganda; in that context, REM's political independence is seriously compromised, with direct spill-over effects on the entire system of regulation and oversight of electronic media.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Self-regulation exists but remains structurally weak in a media environment shaped by strong political and financial pressures. Only a small number of media outlets have internal acts that clearly separate editorial

decision-making from ownership interests. Through cooperation with the Press Council and the Coalition for Media Freedom. The Press Council's latest monitoring covering the last six months of 2025 recorded 4,506 articles breaching the Journalists' Code, with 7,346 total violations. The highest number of breaches was found in progovernment tabloids Alo (1,205 articles), followed by Informer (837) and Kurir (811).

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

In practice, the allocation of state advertising and public procurement remains a major channel of political and economic influence over the media. Pro-government outlets receive disproportionate financial support through both public procurement and content co-financing schemes, while independent media are often sidelined or structurally disadvantaged. Available analyses (including BIRN's findings referenced by stakeholders) indicate that spending data on state-funded media advertising are not sufficiently transparent or easily accessible, and that the amounts paid by state advertisers, as well as media revenues from such advertising, are not systematically publicly available or fully traceable via the public procurement portal. Monitoring of advertising in daily newspapers in the second half of 2025 also indicates that ads from state advertisers account for more than 38% of ad space in the daily press. State-owned (fully or partially) companies tend to advertise predominantly in outlets that, according to Press Council data, are among the most frequent violators of professional and ethical standards, suggesting that advertising is used to reward "loyal" media rather than to serve objective public-interest criteria.

Project co-financing of media content similarly continues to raise systemic concerns. In 2025, the state on all levels planned EUR 13.84 million for project co-financing and allocated EUR 12.58 million. The implementation of the state Unified Information System was marked by serious shortcomings, technical failures, poor usability, limited ability to correct submissions without administrator intervention, delays in publishing ranking lists, and risks of non-transparent changes or backdating. Although the development of this platform reportedly cost around EUR 715,000, the core issue, politicised distribution of public funds and continued financial support to outlets that breach the Journalists' Code, remained visible.

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

Despite legislative changes intended to strengthen editorial independence, such as amendments to the Law on Public Information and Media introducing Article 39a, which should safeguard editorial autonomy in outlets owned by the state or by companies where the state is the majority owner, recent practice indicates that these safeguards are not effectively implemented. In a weak and highly pressured media market, state-linked ownership structures frequently translate into informal leverage over editorial decisions. In practice, journalists and editors who resist pressure may face disciplinary measures, sanctions, or dismissal. Experiences from outlets linked to Telekom Srbija (a state-owned company), including reported dismissals and declarations of redundancy at Euronews Serbia, illustrate how ownership can become a mechanism for “disciplining” newsrooms and shrinking professional space. In 2025, at least 20 cases of dismissals or disciplinary measures were reported against journalists who refused political misuse of their newsrooms, predominantly in outlets owned by Telekom and at public service media.

Media concentration through state-owned actors further amplifies these risks. Following Telekom’s acquisition of media assets associated with Mondo Inc, Telekom reportedly added 11 more outlets to its portfolio, reaching 35 media in total. Under conditions of weak regulation, limited transparency, and persistent state influence, further consolidation through a state-owned operator increases the likelihood of easier control, greater newsroom dependency, and reduced editorial autonomy. Structural risks to pluralism also remain acute, including serious concerns regarding reports of potential government involvement in relations between Telekom Srbija and the owners of United Media, which, if substantiated, would further undermine editorial independence. While the legal framework formally regulates licensing and market entry in the broadcasting sector, effectiveness depends on an operational, legitimate and independent regulator. Given the prolonged non-functionality of REM and the contested appointment process for the REM Council (as described above), procedural safeguards in licensing, renewal and oversight cannot deliver their intended effect in practice. This institutional gap weakens enforcement, increases legal uncertainty, and contributes to a permissive environment for concentration and politically driven corporate governance patterns in the media sector. The fifth licence for national coverage has still not been issued.

[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

Transparency of media ownership remains insufficient in practice, particularly regarding the public availability and accessibility of complete information on direct, indirect and beneficial ownership. In an environment marked by non-transparent market dynamics and consolidation via state-linked entities, limited ownership transparency makes it difficult for the public and watchdog actors to track influence, assess conflicts of interest, and identify risks to pluralism. Strengthening accessible, comprehensive ownership disclosure, especially on beneficial owners, and ensuring reliable enforcement are therefore critical to improving transparency and accountability in the media market.

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

In 2025, NUNS recorded a sharp deterioration in the safety environment: 380 cases of threats/pressures against journalists and media workers (168 in 2024), including 113 physical attacks and 165 threats. International monitoring reflects the same trend: Mapping Media Freedom registered 203 cases, placing Serbia among the highest-risk environments in Europe, while cases from Serbia accounted for 15.9% of all alerts published on the Council of Europe Platform across 46 member states. Beyond direct attacks, intimidation is increasingly normalised through political rhetoric: in the last five months of 2025 alone, the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation recorded at least 674 verbal attacks by public officials against critical journalists and media. The end of 2025 and early 2026 were additionally marked by threats and the shutdown/suspension of media accounts, which is widely perceived as a spillover effect of sustained smear campaigns portraying independent voices as “enemies” or “traitors,” with a chilling impact on editorial independence and journalists’ ability to work safely.

At the same time, no progress has been achieved in resolving the killings of journalists from 1994, 1999 and 2001, with at least one case having reached the statute of limitations. In the high-profile Ćuruvija murder case, proceedings have produced three mutually contradictory outcomes: an initial conviction at first instance, a final acquittal on appeal, and, most recently, the Supreme Court, in legality-protection proceedings, finding that the acquittal decision was unlawful because key evidence was not properly assessed. This legal uncertainty, combined with prolonged delays, reinforces a perception of entrenched impunity and weakens confidence that the system can deliver effective protection for journalists.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

A particularly alarming development in 2025 was the growing role of the police as a risk factor rather than a protection provider. According to official prosecution data, in 2024 prosecutors recorded 64 cases concerning threats to journalists’ safety, and in 34 of those cases the police did not act on prosecutorial instructions. In 2025, prosecutors recorded 134 cases (the highest figure since systematic records began in 2016), and the police reportedly failed to act in 50 cases. From March to December 2025, NUNS additionally documented 77 incidents in which police either passively observed attacks on clearly identifiable journalists or actively used force against them, signalling a troubling shift from “inaction” to “action against journalists.” Effectiveness outcomes remain weak: in 2025, only one case resulted in a conviction, underscoring persistent impunity and limited deterrence.

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 circle of available information is narrowing and transparency is declining. Journalists are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain official information, abuses of the right of access to information of public importance are becoming more frequent, and the legislature appears to be moving towards expanding institutions' discretionary powers to refuse disclosure. Data from the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection and Access to Information of Public Importance for 2025 are still not publicly available.

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 and abusive litigation remains a structural concern for independent journalism, particularly when combined with hostile public rhetoric and weak institutional safeguards. NUNS recorded five new cases in 2025. A new risk is spyware targeting journalists' phones, one confirmed compromise and at least three unsuccessful attempts.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Several media and journalist associations suspended participation in the Standing Working Group for the Safety of Journalists, citing the inefficiency of competent authorities in processing cases and broader concerns about the authorities' failure to uphold basic democratic and rule-of-law standards.

In 2025, amendments to three core Serbian media laws, the Law on Public Information and Media, the Law on Electronic Media, and the Law on Public Media Services, were pushed to the final stage through an accelerated process marked by short deadlines, limited transparency, and no public debate on the final draft versions. Although certain provisions of the Law on Public Information and Media (Articles 84 and 85) were revised following input from professional stakeholders, several fundamental problems remained unresolved: unclear rules for public procurement of media-related services, the re-entry of the state into media ownership structures, and Article 39a, which introduces obligations for media outlets under direct or indirect state ownership without effective independent oversight or sanctions. In the Law on Electronic Media, the opportunity was again missed to regulate electoral campaigning; so-called "officials' campaigning" and political marketing largely remain outside the regulatory framework. In late November, the Ministry reopened a new round of amendments and launched the drafting of a new Media Strategy 2026–2030, but the process was characterised by the inclusion of numerous government-organised actors (GONGOs) and the marginalisation of key independent associations and trade unions; on 27 November, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) formally declined to participate under such conditions.

For more information please contact:

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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

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