

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 / Reporters sans frontières (RSF)

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

Legislative framework and alignment with European standards
Amendments to media laws have not led to a substantial improvement in the independence of regulatory bodies or to an overall improvement in media freedom. Serbia adopted these amendments to further align with EU law and respond to the European Commission's 2024 Rule of Law Report, especially on freedom of expression, media pluralism, and the institutional media framework. The European Commission finds the impact limited due to uneven implementation and unresolved key problems. Consultations with media associations were very short, and the process was non-transparent, non-inclusive, and did not meet the legal requirement for a public debate, except for the Law on Public Media Services. Domestic and international media organizations assessed the changes as mainly formal compliance with Commission requirements, without real political will for effective implementation. Key problems identified in 2024 remain unresolved. A group of NGOs and media associations suspended all cooperation with legislative and executive authorities, withdrawing from all working bodies, stating that authorities simulate democratic processes, suppress protests, and undermine the rule of law, a core demand of the 2025 student and civic protests.
<https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/nuns-obustavlja-svaki-vid-saradnje-sa-organima-zakonodavne-i-izvrsne-vlasti/>
Eleven international media organizations concluded that the European Commission report does not fully reflect

the seriousness of the situation and that the EU must take stronger action.

<https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2025/07/11/serbia-media-freedom-continues-to-decline-at-alarming-speed-eu-must-take-action/>

Independence and functioning of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media

The European Commission's 2025 Report states that serious concerns remain regarding the independence and functioning of REM, highlighting delays, lack of transparency, and procedural flaws in selecting the REM Council. By January 2026, Serbia had not appointed the Council; two failed attempts were accompanied by allegations of legal violations and resignations, pointing to political manipulation aimed at controlling REM. Despite some progress, the selection process is used to establish political control rather than to form an expert and independent body.

Media pluralism and ownership transparency

The European Commission notes that formal mechanisms exist to protect pluralism and ownership transparency, but their implementation is limited. Ongoing concentration of media ownership and insufficient transparency of beneficial ownership harm content diversity. These issues continue to be systematically ignored and abused, as noted by domestic and international organizations. Media concentration linked to political and economic power centers remains strong, and authorities do not use existing mechanisms to ensure real pluralism. Telekom Srbija exploits the 2023 legal change allowing state-owned companies to own media, becoming owner of more outlets while its dominant distribution network favors pro-government media. Critical media are pushed out of cable offers, with visibility significantly reduced in 2025, including removals by smaller operators under constant pressure.

Journalists' safety and professional standards

The European Commission states that formal mechanisms to protect journalists exist but are insufficiently implemented, with continued threats, pressure, and attacks, especially amid political and social tensions. Domestic and international organizations say the report is too cautious and does not reflect the real scale of attacks. According to Reporters Without Borders, 100 physical attacks were recorded in 2025, a record since monitoring began (17 attacks recorded by NUNS in 2024). Police officers were involved in nearly half of the cases, and only one attacker was detained. Lack of effective investigations and sanctions fuels impunity.

Role of civil society and professional organizations

The European Commission notes a formal framework for involving civil society and media organizations in decision-making, but their real influence is limited. Participation is mostly formal and does not substantially affect decisions; authorities invite GONGO representatives to working groups while ignoring experienced and critical organizations. Police entered several major NGOs in February 2025, with no known court proceedings afterward.

<https://www.slavkocuruvijafondacija.rs/nevladine-organizacije-vlast-u-srbiji-koristi-priliku-da-se-obracuna-sa-nevladinim-organizacijama>

Key media decisions, including public service governance, are made without genuine consideration of independent experts. Even when views are formally considered, as with REM after EU and OSCE pressure, authorities avoid decisions that would reduce political control.

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

The independence of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) is guaranteed by the Law on Electronic Media. However, this independence has been undermined for years, and REM has functioned as a service in the hands of the authorities and media tycoons, who were able to violate laws and bylaws, as well as the elaborates on the basis of which they obtained national and regional licenses, without being sanctioned for this, or with occasional penalties being very mild.

Since November 2024, when the mandate of the members of the REM Council expired, this body has completely ceased to function. A new Council had not been formed by January 2026. Due to various irregularities in the process, 4 out of 9 members were elected.

The parliamentary committee elected two new candidates proposed by national minority councils, despite the opposition of the national councils that had nominated them and the fact that, as a result, four elected members of the REM Council submitted their resignations.

Due to repeated illegalities and manipulations committed during the procedure, several non-governmental organizations that proposed candidates announced that they would not participate in the repeated procedure for the election of the remaining four members of the Council.

“The media regulator, REM, failed to fully exercise its mandate and serious concerns persisted regarding its independence in practice,” states the European Commission report, which notes that REM has not imposed sanctions on broadcasters that frequently violate the rules, specifically mentioning reality programs “prone to violence”.

The REM professional service responsible for programme monitoring and analysis repeatedly proposed measures that should be imposed on broadcasters with national and regional licenses due to serious violations of the law and moral principles, but these measures can only be imposed by the Council, which does not exist.

At the end of 2024, a proposal to amend the REM Statute was submitted to the National Assembly of Serbia, which envisages the introduction of secrecy for certain internal documents, including reports of the professional services on the work of national television channels, program analyses, or minutes from Council sessions. The transparency of REM’s work would be called into question by the adoption of these amendments. The Assembly has still not adopted this proposal, but if it were adopted, it would be contrary to the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, as well as to European standards of regulatory transparency.

REM published the “Final Report on Media Monitoring of the Campaign Held in December 2023” one year and two months after the elections in December 2023, which is its legal obligation.

This report was adopted by the REM Council as early as July 2024, but remained unpublished and unavailable to the public until February 2025. Under the Law on Electronic Media, REM has an obligation to monitor and report on the work of electronic media during an election campaign.

<https://n1info.rs/vesti/uns-rem-posle-14-meseci-objavio-zavrzni-izvestaj-o-medijskom-pracenju-izbora-decembra-2023-godine/>

The tender for the fifth broadcaster with a national frequency was not completed by the end of 2025 either (which was not possible without a REM Council).

Russian propaganda and disinformation are increasingly spreading through the media space and social networks. RT Balkan, which REM granted a license to operate in 2024, plays a major role in this. They are spread particularly through locally adapted content and the reworking of Russian messages by RT Balkan, which are then taken over by other media and portals in Serbia.

According to an analysis conducted by the Center for Information, Democracy and Citizenship at the American University in Bulgaria in 45 countries, Serbia ranks 4th in the number of published articles by the Pravda network (Russia Today and Sputnik) in relation to the number of inhabitants.

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 conditions and procedure for the appointment and dismissal of the chairperson and members of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) are regulated by the Law on Electronic Media, which entered into force in November 2023. http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/zakoni/13_saziv/2032-23.pdf

Under the law, members of the REM Council must have appropriate education and experience, as well as professional reputation and integrity. Members are elected for terms of two, four, or six years, without the possibility of reappointment.

The National Assembly of Serbia elects members of the REM Council based on proposals from the Committee on Culture and Information, to which authorized nominators submit qualified and credible candidates.

By law, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media in Serbia must be independent, both legally and functionally, and must not be exposed to political pressure. This is precisely why the REM Council was not elected even more than one year after the start of the process.

During 2025, two selection processes for the REM Council were launched. The first failed after as many as 78 nominators and 16 candidates withdrew from the process due to violations of the law, the imposition of unauthorized nominators and candidates, and discrimination against certain candidates.

<https://www.cenzolovka.rs/drzava-i-mediji/odbili-da-ucestviju-u-krsenju-zakona-ko-sigurno-nece-bitu-savetu-rem-a/>

The process was then relaunched with mediation by the OSCE and the European Union, and at one point the delegation of the European Commission also joined. The process was returned to the legal framework and dialogue was opened between civil society and government representatives. However, this dialogue took place in an atmosphere of daily pressure on journalists and media, targeting of journalists coming from the highest state officials, and physical attacks during waves of anti-corruption protests.

In the end, the parliamentary committee selected 18 candidates, from whom the National Assembly was to elect 9 members of the REM Council. During the vote in the Assembly, however, a turning point occurred when MPs of the ruling party refused to vote for one of the two legally selected candidates proposed by national minority councils.

As a result, four already elected members of the REM Council called on the authorities to vote for the proposed candidates in that category. When this was refused and, after a repeated call, two new candidates in this category entered parliamentary procedure with the support of the authorities, the four members submitted their resignations.

<https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/cetvoro-clanova-saveta-rem-a-podnelo-ostavke-na-pisarnici-skupstine-srbije/>

After that, a new procedure was launched to elect four additional members of the Council. As of January 2026, the National Assembly of Serbia has still not elected 5 of the 9 members of the REM Council, despite the fact that the election process was initiated in November 2024.

<https://n1info.rs/vesti/odbor-za-kulturu-i-informisanje-usvojio-pokretanje-postupka-za-predlaganje-kandidata-za-rem/>

During a session of the Committee on Culture and Information, ruling party MPs openly stated that they had no intention of giving up control over REM and that an independent REM was “a fairy tale for small children.”

<https://www.cenzolovka.rs/drzava-i-mediji/maric-sns-prica-o-nezavisnim-kandidatima-za-savet-rem-a-je-za-malu-decu/>

Independent candidates who later resigned were accused by President Aleksandar Vučić of having the sole goal of shutting down the pro-government TV Informer, although this is not within the powers of REM Council members. The Association of Independent Electronic Media assessed that the President had unlawfully interfered in the REM Council selection process.

<https://www.cenzolovka.rs/drzava-i-mediji/neprimereno-mesanje-predsednika-drzave-u-izborni-proces-za-clanove-saveta-rem/>

President Vučić also complained to ambassadors in Belgrade that the talks on the REM Council, which helped return the process to the legal framework, were “humiliating,” that Serbia had agreed to “nonsense,” and listened to “insane and meaningless arguments.”

<https://n1info.rs/vesti/vucic-eu-savet-rem/>

Some of the largest civil society organizations that nominated independent candidates for the REM Council announced that they would not participate in renewed nominations due to violations of the Law on Electronic Media during previous selection processes and due to a lack of trust in the entire process.

<https://anem.org.rs/sr/strane/anem-nece-ucestvovati-u-predlaganju-kandidata-za-izbor-clanova-saveta-rem>

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

5000 character(s) maximum

The Press Council is an independent self-regulatory body established by relevant journalists' and media associations with the aim of monitoring compliance with the Journalists' Code of Ethics of Serbia in print and online media. The Council acts upon complaints from all persons who believe that their rights have been violated by media content, thus serving as a mechanism of public oversight of media work.

The work of the Press Council is regulated by the Law on Public Information and Media.

Amendments to the law adopted in 2023 further emphasized the link between respect for professional standards and access to public funds, as it was prescribed that, when deciding on project-based co-financing of media from the budget, it must be taken into account whether violations of the law and standards of professional ethics were established in the previous period. In this way, the Press Council effectively became one of the key mechanisms for assessing the professional integrity of media outlets applying for public funds. Analyses have shown that part of the funds previously intended for project-based co-financing has been redirected to public procurement, where criteria of professionalism and ethics are not clearly defined or are not applied consistently.

In practice, funds allocated for project-based co-financing have decreased, while allocations through other mechanisms have increased – primarily through public procurement and advertising by public enterprises and

institutions. In this way, the idea that compliance with the Journalists' Code should be assessed through competitive procedures has effectively been bypassed.

As a result, the legal provision linking public money to respect for the Journalists' Code remains formal, without real effect. Pro-government media that regularly violate the Journalists' Code continue to receive public funds through advertising by public enterprises and institutions, which also do not take into account the decisions of the Press Council.

There is significant room to strengthen the role of the Press Council through laws and rules related to public procurement and public advertising.

Open political attacks on the Press Council and attempts to delegitimize it have also been recorded.

Government representatives and pro-government media questioned its role, neutrality, and legitimacy, claiming that the Council is not the only relevant body for assessing media work or that it acts in a politically biased manner. Narratives relativizing the importance of self-regulation and undermining the authority of the Council were repeated in public discourse, while some pro-regime media openly denied any obligation to comply with its decisions.

The campaign against the Press Council also involved the Minister of Information and Telecommunications who stated that the Council had lost all meaning.

<https://savetzastampu.rs/lat/vesti/saopstenje-za-javnost-16/>

During 2025, initiatives aimed at creating parallel bodies or alternative "councils" reappeared, which would further weaken the existing system of self-regulation. These initiatives were interpreted as attempts to dilute the role of the Press Council and relativize its work at a time when its decisions had become relevant for the allocation of public funds.

Despite this, the Press Council continued throughout the year to regularly publish decisions, keep records of violations of the Code, and inform the public about the work of the Complaints Commission.

However, the absence of systemic consequences for media that continuously violate professional standards, as well as the circumvention of legal mechanisms through alternative funding models, left the Press Council without real power to influence the improvement of media practice in line with the law.

In some cases, media that formally accept the jurisdiction of the Council did not publish decisions of the Complaints Commission, although they are obliged to do so under the rules of self-regulation. At the same time, pro-government media, which in most cases do not recognize the Press Council, continued to receive public warnings, without any consequences for their business operations or access to public funds.

As noted by the European Commission in its report, in January 2025 Serbia established a Unified Information System on public co-financing of media.

The Unified Information System was intended to ensure public access to data, centralization, transparency, and the possibility to analyze all segments of project-based co-financing, independent evaluation of projects within the application itself, as well as online submission of projects and commission members.

However, as shown by the analysis of the implementation of the new Law for the previous year, it also became evident this year that this goal was not fully achieved and that new problems and new weak points emerged through which the Law can be bypassed, ANEM wrote. <https://api.anem.org.rs/storage/assets/analiza2025.pdf>

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 2025, Serbia took limited measures, mostly related to the transparency of procurement of media services and project-based co-financing, while the key mechanism for fair and transparent allocation of state advertising was not established through the Advertising Law, which remained in parliamentary procedure.

The European Commission again noted that measures to increase the transparency of public funding for media were only partially implemented, and that remaining public funds continue to be allocated through less transparent mechanisms, including the procurement of information services and advertising.

Civil society organisations stressed that without clear definitions, criteria, prohibitions, and publicly available data on state advertising flows, there can be no real transparency or fairness in allocation.

It is not clear why the Advertising Law was not adopted in 2025. The Draft Amendments to the Advertising Law had been discussed for a long time and commented on as early as 2024, as stated in the previous report. Eventually, it entered parliamentary procedure in early June 2025.

Measures requested by some civil society organisations during the public consultation were not included in the draft law. It was requested that the law define the concept of state advertising, introduce allocation criteria and mandatory transparency (publication of amounts and recipients), and prohibit state advertising in media that violate laws and professional and ethical standards. This last measure would have further strengthened the role of the Press Council (see: A3).

The adoption of rules on audience measurement and viewership was also requested. The proposals that were in procedure did not include these mechanisms.

The civil sector pointed out that the proposed or newly adopted measures do not address the core issue: state advertising still does not ensure fairness and verifiability of allocation.

Risks of abuse in the procurement of media services were highlighted, and stronger safeguards were proposed, including the prevention of hidden political promotion and criteria that would ensure public interest and integrity in spending.

<https://www.transparentnost.org.rs/sr/aktivnosti-2/saoptenja/12886-los-predlog-za-nabavke-medijskih-usluga>

The most concrete step in 2025 concerned an attempt to limit the non-transparent channelling of public money through the procurement of media services. In June 2025, amendments to media laws were adopted, including amendments to the Law on Public Information and Media.

Under this law, public procurement of media services must be conducted in a transparent, objective, and non-discriminatory manner, with criteria published on the authority's website. This represented an attempt to at least formally link part of information service procurement to publicly verifiable rules.

Organisations monitoring corruption risks and media policies warned throughout 2025 that the proposed solutions still do not prevent abuse, particularly because the link with the public procurement regime is not clearly established, no by-laws are envisaged to regulate the procedure in detail, and obligations may remain limited only to "public authorities," without clearly covering state-owned enterprises and other entities under state control, which are a significant source of state advertising.

http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/lat/pdf/predlozi_zakona/14_saziv/978-25-lat.pdf

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

Although there was a legal basis for protecting editorial independence, managerial autonomy, and pluralism, its implementation remained limited in 2025.

Key problems included the dysfunction of regulatory bodies, failed and non-transparent procedures for appointing the management of public service broadcasters, the limited reach of new mechanisms such as the audience rights commissioner, and ongoing political and financial pressure on the media.

In June 2025, the National Assembly adopted amendments to the Law on Public Media Services, the Law on Electronic Media, and the Law on Public Information and Media.

These laws, whose amendment is one of the conditions in the EU accession process, were changed with limited participation of relevant media and journalists' organizations. For example, three days before the Ministry of Information held a meeting with journalists' associations on amendments to the Law on Electronic Media, the government had already adopted the changes. The law was then sent to parliamentary procedure in that form.

ANEM stated that this approach does not contribute to strengthening trust, transparency, or inclusiveness in the process of amending media laws, reminding that amendments to two of the three laws were adopted without a public debate. <https://n1info.rs/vesti/anem-izmene-i-dopune-zakona-o-elektronskim-medijima-vlada-usvojila-tri-dana-pre-sastanka-ministarstva-i-medijskih-udruzenja/>

The Law on Public Media Services introduced the position of a commissioner for the protection of the rights of listeners, viewers, and readers, whose role is to consider audience complaints and report on the actions of public broadcasters.

However, this body has no powers to impose sanctions, which the professional community assessed as a serious shortcoming and an insufficient guarantee of independence.

The procedure for selecting the Director General of Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) was unsuccessful. The RTS Managing Board failed to choose a candidate, after which a new call was announced. The entire process was burdened by suspicions of conflicts of interest and claims that it was deliberately prolonged.

<https://nuns.rs/nuns-konkurs-za-direktora-rtis-a-opterecen-sumnjom-u-sukob-interesa-i-dvostruke-standarde/>

The independence of the regulatory body was further questioned due to the failed and months-long process of electing the REM Council (see A1 and A2). One of the legal obligations of the REM Council is to appoint members of the management boards of public service broadcasters.

Public service broadcasters continued to depend on a combination of licence fees and state budget funds, which was assessed as a potential channel of political influence. As previously noted by the European

Commission, risks to the financial autonomy of public broadcasters remain, and the funding model requires additional guarantees of independence.

Domestic and international organizations monitoring media freedom assessed that media pluralism in Serbia remains seriously threatened, especially due to political influence on media and journalists, the absence of a functioning regulator, and the economic dependence of media outlets.

During 2025, local government budgets for project-based media co-financing continued to decline. Several analyses and field reports showed that in some cities and municipalities funds were further reduced or fully redirected to other forms of public spending (see A3).

Independent reports indicated that some professional local media received no support despite meeting legal criteria.

In 2025, the directing of public funds toward media close to the authorities continued, including advertising by public service broadcasters in tabloids known for violating the Journalists' Code and running campaigns targeting critical voices. This is used as one of the mechanisms of indirect public financing of such media.

Under the Law on Public Media Services, RTS and RTV are obliged to independently shape their programs, promote pluralism of opinions, and inform the public impartially. However, monitoring by independent organizations showed that these obligations are often not met in practice. Some employees reported that Radio Television of Serbia dismisses freelance contributors who demanded objective reporting by the public service.

Various analyses showed that reporting by RTS and RTV on political topics in 2025 was not balanced, with systematic favoring of the authorities, and that a large part of the public is dissatisfied with their work.

A qualitative monitoring of the two most watched RTS programs, the Morning Program and the main news bulletin Dnevnik 2, conducted by Demostat, showed censorship of critical opinions and the opposition, with only slight changes visible after pressure from mass student and civic protests.

<https://demostat.rs/sr/vesti/ekskluziva/prof-snjezana-milivojevic-javnost-je-nezadovoljna-radom-rtv-a/2206>

[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 legal framework requires the publication of data on direct and indirect media owners and guarantees the public's right to access this information.

However, during 2025 the key problem remains that real (ultimate) owners are often difficult to identify due to complex ownership chains, linked companies, and weak verification mechanisms in practice.

At the same time, the media community points out that the European Commission's recommendations on protecting pluralism and reducing political influence are not implemented systematically. Instead, the trend of concentration and political-economic influence continues through ownership and distribution structures.

The most important development in 2025 in this area was the further expansion of the state-owned company Telekom Srbija in the media sector, made possible by the 2023 amendments to the media laws.

Telekom Srbija continued acquiring media outlets and smaller distribution networks.

Telekom's cable distribution network, the largest in the country, favored pro-government media by changing channel positions on program lists used by viewers. Critical media were pushed to less visible positions or

removed from the cable offer, and their visibility was significantly reduced during 2025.

Critical media were also removed from the offers of some smaller local cable operators. Operators have been under constant pressure, including physical cutting of cables in distribution networks in towns and villages, especially in southern Serbia.

<https://www.cenzolovka.rs/pritisci-i-napadi/nocna-seca-kablova-u-vranju-cenzura-se-uvodi-unistavanjem-imovine-jotela-dok-tuzilastvo-cuti/>

In September 2025, several sources reported that the Competition Protection Commission approved Telekom's takeover of Mondo INC, the publisher of media associated with Kurir (portal, newspaper, and TV). At that time, Mondo was owned by businessman Igor Žeželj, who is close to the ruling party.

<https://n1info.rs/vesti/telekom-kupuje-kurir-kako-se-novac-gradjana-koristi-za-kupovinu-medija-koje-ce-kontrolisati-vlast/>

In 2025, this case was highlighted as an example of the "return of the state to the media" through ownership structures and acquisitions by a state-owned company.

In August 2025, it was reported that Niš TV was broadcast illegally on Telekom platforms, without a license from the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media, whose Council had not been formed. The television is linked to a company whose majority co-owner is Alo Media System (publisher of the pro-government tabloid Alo), while the director and minority co-owner (49%) is Bojan Avramović, a former commissioner of the ruling party in southern Serbia.

<https://raskrikavanje.rs/telekom-izasao-u-susret-prorezimskoj-nis-tv-emituju-ih-bez-dozvole/>

Niš TV received money from the City of Niš budget despite not being registered as a media outlet.

<https://www.juznevesti.com/ekonomija/100-000-evra-za-nis-tv-iz-budzeta-grada/>

In November 2025, it was also reported that Telekom launched TS Media Live, another television service that broadcasts content but does not have a REM license and is not registered as a media outlet with the Business Registers Agency.

<https://raskrikavanje.rs/telekom-bez-dozvole-pokrenuo-ts-media-live-tvrde-da-nije-kanal-vec-privremeno-tehnicko-resenje/>

Such cases further blur the line between a "channel," a "platform," and a "media service," especially when it comes to broadcasting pro-government channels on Telekom Srbija's platform.

At the local level, analyses in 2025 further point to a high concentration of influence through networks of connected owners and budget funding, which indirectly affects ownership (non)-transparency and pluralism.

Among the largest local media owners are Radojica Milosavljević (owner of several local TV stations bought during media privatization, close to the authorities) and media outlets linked to the family of Serbia's Minister of Defence, Bratislav Gašić, and one of the closest associates of the President. The minister hides ownership by formally registering family members as owners. At the same time, these media receive the largest amounts of public money through project co-financing competitions.

At the same time, budget allocations were sharply reduced even for media outlets that had supported the government for years but began reporting on student and civic protests.

<https://www.cenzolovka.rs/drzava-i-mediji/medijskim-tajkunima-ortacki-iz-budzeta-radoici-milosavljevicu-132-miliona-gasicima-5>

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 Law on Public Information and Media guarantees freedom to collect and publish information and the right of journalists not to reveal their sources. Under this Law, only a court may order the disclosure of a source, and only when the information concerns a criminal offense punishable by at least five years in prison and "if the data for that criminal offense cannot be obtained in any other way."

During 2025, these guarantees were not sufficient to prevent the prosecution and the police, in several cases, from trying to bypass the law without a court decision and to put pressure on journalists and independent newsrooms, such as the daily newspaper Danas or the investigative portal KRIK.

The protection of journalistic sources was undermined by the actions of the police and the prosecution.

In December 2025, Danas journalist Uglješa Bokić was summoned for questioning by the Novi Sad police on the order of the prosecution, in connection with the publication of parts of an official police note. The journalist, the Danas newsroom, and journalists' associations assessed that such actions directly endanger the protection of sources.

"This practice has an intimidating effect on the entire journalistic community and sends a message that those who publish information of public interest will be exposed to police pressure, while sources will be further discouraged from speaking in the public interest," concluded the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina. <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/ndnv-poziv-na-saslusanja-novinara-danasa-je-direktno-ugrozavanje-zastite-izvora/>

The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade requested that the KRIK newsroom hand over an audio recording of a conversation between Telekom Srbija CEO Vladimir Lučić and United Group CEO Stan Miller, which OCCRP and KRIK had previously published, claiming that the recording was needed to verify allegations from a criminal complaint filed by United Group.

In a letter to the newsroom, the prosecution stated that this was for the purpose of checking the authenticity of the recording and the allegations in the complaint, warning that KRIK could be fined if it failed to submit the requested material.

The KRIK newsroom stated that the recording is available on their YouTube channel and refused to hand over the requested original recording, as it believes that handing over the material, including the original or copies, would endanger confidentiality of sources and thus violate the fundamental right of journalists to protect the identity of their whistleblowers and information sources.

Illegal surveillance of journalists remained a serious problem. In March 2025, Amnesty International reported that two BIRN journalists had been targeted with attempts to compromise their phones using Pegasus spyware, which endangered their communications and sources.

Amnesty International concluded that there is a strong likelihood that one or more actors from the Serbian state apparatus, or agents acting on their behalf, were involved in this latest use of Pegasus spyware.

The cases of the two BIRN journalists represent the fourth and fifth cases in the past two years in which Amnesty International's Security Lab detected the use of Pegasus spyware against representatives of the media and civil society in Serbia.

In addition, according to Amnesty's findings, in at least five more cases the Cellebrite and NoviSpy software tools were used to unlock or attempt to unlock the phones of journalists and activists.

The Security Information Agency, which installed this spyware on the mobile phones of activists and journalists, grossly exceeded its authority, as it did not have a court order for these activities. In Serbia, there is no legal basis for the use of any kind of spyware.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/03/serbia-birn-journalists-targeted-with-pegasus-spyware/>
<https://raskrikavanje.rs/drzavni-nadzor-novinaru-tajno-instaliran-spijunski-softver-u-telefon-tokom-ispitivanja-u-policijskoj-stanici/>

The Council of Europe registered several serious alerts from Serbia on its platform during 2025, including cases of police violence against journalists at protests and the targeting of journalists with spyware.

During this year, Serbia accounted for the highest number of alerts to the Council of Europe from the Western Balkans, 33 in total, more than all other countries combined.

In 21 cases, there was no response from the state to these alerts.

<https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107642584%3BglobalSearch%3Dfalse> <https://anem.org.rs/en/strane/savet-evrope-belezi-pretnje-novinarima-najvise-upozorenja-sa-zapadnog-balkana-ove-godine-stiglo-iz-srbije-33>

At the same time, the database of the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia NUNS, which records attacks, pressures, and threats against journalists, registered as many as 344 cases, the highest number since NUNS began keeping this record.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

There were serious shortcomings in the actions of the police and parts of the prosecution regarding attacks on journalists in 2025. This was particularly visible during protests, in cases of threats, obstruction of work, and attacks in the center of Belgrade, where an improvised camp of government supporters was set up and journalists were banned from entering.

Journalists were prevented from doing their work through threats and physical attacks in the presence of the police in front of the National Assembly of Serbia, where the camp was located. In all reported cases, the police did not react. By failing to act, they effectively protected the attackers in this usurped area in the city center, which was reduced in early January 2026 but still exists.

According to the KRIK database, the presence of persons convicted of serious crimes, including murder and rape, was recorded in this area. A TV N1 crew was attacked by a man previously convicted of murder.

According to Reporters Without Borders, at least 91 physical attacks on journalists and media workers were recorded in Serbia from January to the end of November 2025, compared to 17 such attacks in the whole of 2024.

<https://rsf.org/en/2025-deadly-year-journalists-where-hate-and-impunity-lead>

RSF also found that police were involved in almost half of the physical attacks on journalists.

<https://rsf.org/en/2025-deadly-year-journalists-where-hate-and-impunity-lead>

Journalists were targeted by the highest state officials throughout the year. From September to December 2025, the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation recorded at least 595 public attacks on journalists and media by state officials.

<https://anem.org.rs/sr/strane/pet-stvari-koje-su-obelezile-medijsku-scenu-u-srbiji-u-2025-godini>

Reporters Without Borders have, for the first time, included the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, on their list of "Press Freedom Predators," among 34 individuals linked by "hatred of press freedom."

<https://rsf.org/en/2025-press-freedom-predators>

According to prosecution data, by 30 November 2025, 117 cases related to threats and attacks on journalists were opened, an increase of 112% compared to the same period in 2024. There were 27 reports of physical

attacks on journalists, compared to five in the whole of 2024.

<https://anem.org.rs/sr/strane/stalna-radna-grupa-za-bezbednost-novinara-broj-fizickih-napada-na-medijske-radnike-povecan-za-440-odsto-u-2025-godini>

Most physical attacks occurred during student and civic protests. The attackers were often supporters of the ruling authorities. In many documented incidents, police officers were present but did not intervene, remove the attackers, or identify them.

<https://cpj.org/2025/11/protesters-attack-several-journalists-in-serbia/>

During protests, a police officer used a chemical agent against Radar journalist Vuk Cvijić, who temporarily lost his sight and required medical assistance.

<https://safejournalists.net/incident/actual-attacks-on-journalists-vuk-cvijic-belgrade-15-08-2025/>

At the end of December 2025, KTV Zrenjanin journalist Aleksandar Dikić was detained over a comment made on a TV show, on suspicion of advocating violent change of the constitutional order. He was later released to defend himself at liberty.

<https://n1info.rs/vesti/aleksandru-dikicu-ukinut-pritvor-pusten-da-se-brani-sa-slobode/>

Although many cases were opened in 2025, in most instances there were no effective investigations or final court judgments. Only one case of a physical attack on a journalist, the attack on an Insajder journalist, led to a more concrete response by the police and prosecution, after public pressure. This points to a deeply rooted problem of impunity.

<https://www.insajder.net/pritisci-i-napadi/napad-na-novinarku-insajdera-podneta-krivicna-prijava>

Impunity was one of the reasons why journalists' and media associations froze their participation in the Permanent Working Group for the Safety of Journalists in 2025. The associations cited the lack of concrete results, ineffective prosecution of attacks, and the fact that in a significant number of cases the police were directly involved in violence against journalists as the reasons for freezing their participation.

<https://nova.rs/vesti/drustvo/nuns-i-anem-zamrzli-clanstvo-u-stalnoj-radnoj-grupi-za-bezbednost-novinara/>

In most cases, there is political instrumentalization of the police, prosecution, and judiciary. Within the prosecution, there is an open division between those acting under the influence of President Aleksandar Vučić and those resisting such pressure, mainly within the Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime. No such visible division exists in the police, which remain a frequent actor in violence against journalists.

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 Free Access to Information of Public Importance guarantees citizens and journalists the right to request information held by public authorities, in the public interest of the right to know.

The institutional mechanism for protecting this right is the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, an autonomous and independent state authority.

The Law obliges public authorities to respond within a legal deadline (normally 15 days). If information is not provided or is refused, the requester may appeal to the Commissioner and, if necessary, initiate an

administrative dispute.

<https://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/zakon-o-slobodnom-pristupu-informacijama-od-javnog-znacaja.pdf>

In September 2024, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government initiated amendments to the Law, stating that the aim was to address abuses of requests, described as a major problem for citizens, institutions, the Commissioner, and the courts.

The Ministry stated that certain requesters and lawyers abused the right to access information for financial gain, thereby blocking the work of public authorities, the Commissioner, and the Administrative Court.

Civil society organizations gathered in the Coalition for Freedom of Access to Information and the National Convention on the European Union warned that proposals in the Draft Law reduce the achieved level of the public's right to know and leave room for excessive restrictions by public authorities. They stressed that the concept of abuse of rights should be removed from the Draft Law, given previous unlawful practices by public authorities.

The draft law was withdrawn from parliamentary procedure in March 2025. Partners Serbia stated that the withdrawal opens space for a "systemic and inclusive reform" and identified unresolved problems: non-enforcement of the Commissioner's decisions, ineffective inspection oversight, limited access to information on the work of key state bodies (the Government, the President of the Republic, and the National Assembly) because the Commissioner has no appeal jurisdiction over them, and the unfavorable position of civil servants handling requests.

<https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/vlada-povukla-zakon/>

The Ministry was called upon to include all identified problems if a new reform process is launched and to involve representatives of civil society, journalists' associations, the legal profession, and others in the drafting process.

The Commissioner has also publicly emphasized abuses of the system and the need for amendments, particularly regarding the "overloading" of authorities with requests and the role of lawyers.

In the annual report, the Commissioner states that complaints by journalists and civil society organizations most often concern: administrative silence (failure to respond within deadlines), refusals based on exceptions that prolong procedures, non-enforcement or partial enforcement of decisions that does not provide the substance of information, and specific problems with public enterprises and politically sensitive topics such as public funds, infrastructure projects, media co-financing, and environmental information.

https://www.poverenik.rs/images/stories/dokumentacija-nova/izvestajiPoverenika/2024/LATGodišnji_izveštaj_2024_002.pdf

The Commissioner states that overload and a high number of cases remain a central problem.

<https://www.poverenik.rs/sr-yu/o-nama/mesecni-statisticki-izvestaji.html>

Silence by public authorities is described as a particularly serious violation, especially when journalists act in the public interest.

Although the Commissioner may order disclosure and initiate accountability mechanisms, decisions are often not enforced, and some authorities prefer to delay or pay fines.

The Law allows limitations on access to information (for example, for security, personal data protection, or classified information), but in practice requests are often rejected due to broad interpretations of exceptions.

State institutions frequently avoid disclosure by falsely claiming that they do not possess documents they are

required to have. The Commissioner has no investigative powers to verify such claims. Forty percent of appeals submitted by journalists relate to silence by public authorities.

<https://www.cenzolovka.rs/drzava-i-mediji/drzavne-institucije-od-novinara-kriju-vazne-informacije-od-pritiska-do-apsurda-i-opstrukcija/>

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

During 2025, SLAPP lawsuits continued to be used as a form of pressure against independent media and journalists, through a combination of a large number of cases, disproportionate compensation claims, and, in some cases, attempts to use criminal prosecution and sanctions (including prison sentences and bans on professional activity) to intimidate and deter reporting on issues of public interest.

State authorities did not take formal steps to combat SLAPP lawsuits.

New civil society initiatives also emerged to systematically record these cases. According to the SLAPP database launched by the Association of Independent Electronic Media, there are 27 active court proceedings against journalists and media outlets, initiated since 2020.

<https://anem.org.rs/sr/strane/anem-baza-slapp-tuzbi-protiv-novinara-i-medija>

Plamena Halačeva, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia, stated at an anti-SLAPP conference in Belgrade that Serbia is among the countries with the highest number of SLAPP lawsuits in Europe, which raises serious concern.

She noted that the EU adopted an Anti-SLAPP Directive last year, which, among other things, allows courts to dismiss SLAPP lawsuits at an early stage. Serbia, as an EU candidate country, is expected to align with this directive. This did not happen in 2025.

The largest number of SLAPP lawsuits has been filed against journalists of the investigative portal KRIK, which had 15 such cases in January 2026.

In October 2025, Court of Appeal judge Dušanka Đorđević filed a new (third) lawsuit against KRIK journalists related to the database of judges and court proceedings, seeking criminal liability for the journalists, including ten months in prison and a two-year ban on practicing journalism.

As stated in a press release by the National Anti-SLAPP Working Group, it is particularly problematic when the plaintiff comes from the judiciary (a judge), as this sends a message about the abuse of the judicial system to exert pressure on the media.

<https://www.krik.rs/en/judge-dusanka-dordevic-files-third-lawsuit-against-krik-seeks-prison-sentences-for-two-additional-journalists/>

<https://slapp.rs/en/judge-dordevics-criminal-complaint-against-krik-is-a-new-intimidation-of-journalists/>

Proceedings based on lawsuits filed by three former members of the state security service against the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation continued during 2025. These individuals were previously charged and later finally acquitted for the murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija.

The Foundation's lawyer requested that these lawsuits be dismissed as malicious SLAPP lawsuits, but the

court rejected the request in proceedings in which the media noted clear bias by the judge in favor of the plaintiffs.

<https://www.slavkocuruvijafondacija.rs/advokatica-fondacije-curuvija-trazi-da-se-tuzbe-bivsih-pripadnika-sluzbe-odbase/>

In January 2026, the Supreme Court of Serbia ruled that the Court of Appeal, when issuing an acquittal for the defendants accused of the murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija, had “committed serious violations of the provisions of criminal procedure” and had interpreted some key evidence in a contradictory and unclear manner.

<https://www.slavkocuruvijafondacija.rs/en/scf-welcomes-supreme-court-ruling-finding-that-the-belgrade-court-of-appeal-committed-substantive-violations-of-criminal-procedure-in-the-slavko-curuvija-murder-case/>

At the end of 2025, local IN Medija (Indija) reported that the Belgrade Court of Appeal had upheld a judgment ordering the editor to pay compensation for non-material damage and court costs for publishing a photograph taken from an official municipal website, stating that this was the third SLAPP judgment issued “based on the same pattern” as the previous two. IN Medija faces a total of seven SLAPP lawsuits.

PANpress, a local media outlet from Pančevo, was also a victim of SLAPP lawsuits filed by a media owner who publicly supports the ruling Serbian Progressive Party. The same owner also filed a lawsuit against the portal Cenzolovka, published by the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation.

<https://inmedija.rs/treci-slapp-tuzba-protiv-in-medije-presuda-od-161-300-dinara-zbog-fotografije-sa-sajta-opstine/> <https://anem.org.rs/sr/strane/apel-za-pomoc-panpress-u-iz-panceva-kome-preti-gasenje-zbog-slapp-tuzbe-potrebna-hitna-reakcija-sugradana>

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

5000 character(s) maximum

RSF's recommendations

Campaigns against journalists

Authorities in Serbia should immediately stop publicly targeting and discrediting journalists and media, and publicly condemn smear campaigns and attempts to compromise journalists, especially when they come from state officials and politicians.

In 2025, campaigns against journalists and professional media intensified, reaching record levels. The database of the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia recorded more than 370 cases of threats to the safety of media workers. Many threats and attacks are not reported due to fear and lack of trust in institutions. Monitoring by the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation shows an extremely high number of attacks by politicians on journalists and media—at least 595 in four months. These attacks included public targeting, accusations, discrediting, and inflammatory rhetoric that preceded threats and physical attacks.

Response of state authorities

All attacks on journalists and media crews, including those during civic and student protests in 2025, must be urgently and effectively investigated and perpetrators prosecuted, including cases involving police officers. Despite a doubling of cases in the prosecutor's offices compared to 2024, the number of final court decisions remained extremely low. Many cases are still in pre-investigation stages or awaiting police action. There is clear intentional delaying by prosecutors and/or police in cases involving journalists who are prominent critics of the authorities, such as the case of Radar weekly journalist Vuk Cvijić, who was physically attacked three times without any completed investigation.

Unified and consistent criteria for prosecutorial action in cases of threats to journalists are necessary, so that

institutional protection equals that applied in cases of threats to public officials. The Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation found major disparities in such practices.

In only one of 91 cases of physical attacks on independent journalists was the attacker detained, and only after two months.

Impunity

The perpetrators of the murders of journalists Slavko Ćuruvija, Milan Pantić, and Dada Vujasinović, as well as the attempted murder of Dejan Anastasijević, have not been convicted. The long-standing problem of impunity for crimes against journalists continues.

The Supreme Court of Serbia found that the Appellate Court judgment acquitting those accused of Ćuruvija's murder seriously violated criminal procedure rules and interpreted key evidence in a contradictory and unclear manner. This decision has only formal significance, as under Serbian law the Appellate Court's decision is final. In the case of the arson attack on journalist Milan Jovanović's house, a conviction was issued, but damages have still not been compensated.

SLAPP lawsuits

A law protecting media and journalists from malicious SLAPP lawsuits should be adopted, in line with Council of Europe and European Commission recommendations.

In 2025, the practice of filing malicious lawsuits continued, aimed at intimidation, financial exhaustion, and discouraging reporting on issues of public interest.

Surveillance through spyware

Competent authorities must urgently examine allegations of surveillance and monitoring of journalists in 2025. New findings by international and domestic organizations on the use of spyware against journalists were published, without adequate and transparent institutional investigations.

Disinformation and propaganda

The spread of disinformation and propaganda continued and intensified. Russian state media banned in the European Union, but licensed in Serbia, remained highly present, including in many domestic media that republish their content.

An increased presence of Chinese propaganda was also recorded, especially in tabloids and online media.

Regulatory Body for Electronic Media

Throughout 2025, Serbia failed to constitute the REM Council, leaving no body able to make decisions or impose measures on broadcasters for legal and programming violations. Allegations of illegality and political manipulation of this process have lasted for more than a year.

Media laws

The process of amending and implementing key media laws in 2025 did not improve the protection of journalists or media pluralism. Implementation remained highly problematic and selective, reflecting a lack of political will to enforce existing legal solutions.

Local media

Project-based co-financing of media remained marked by selective rule application and political influence over fund allocation.

In some local governments, calls were not launched or funds were not allocated, leaving professional and critical local media without key funding sources.

State advertising remains unregulated, depriving local media of resources, while private advertisers are intimidated.

Serbia is ranked 96 out of 180 countries in RSF's World Press Freedom Index for 2025.

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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