

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

International Press Institute (IPI)

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://ipi.media/>

IPI is a global network of journalists defending media freedom and independent journalism wherever they are threatened.

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

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* 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

Jamie

Surname

Wiseman

Email Address of the organisation

info@ipi.media

* 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

The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) has been only partially implemented in Slovakia. Legislation adopted in 2025 addressed some areas of the EMFA but not all. In particular, the legislation failed to incorporate the EMFA's provisions regarding the independence of the public broadcaster. On the contrary, the governing coalition in Slovakia passed a 2024 law that constitutes a clear breach of the EMFA. With the explicit political aim of capturing public service broadcasting, the government dissolved the public broadcaster RTVS and established a new entity, STVR, which is controlled exclusively by pro-government appointees. By 2025, these appointees had already implemented measures demonstrating that the direction of reform was toward a less independent and more politically captured broadcaster, in clear violation of the EMFA. Thus, the problem lies not only in practice, where political interference is evident, but also in law, as the legislation governing the public broadcaster remains unaligned with the EMFA's requirements.

Media services in Slovakia are overseen by an independent regulatory authority. Its members are elected by Parliament, and the current composition includes nominees from several political parties, including the opposition. However, the governing coalition has in the past year altered the balance within the regulator by appointing six new members to its board, five of whom are controversial figures previously associated with media capture

or linked to a government-aligned oligarch or a coalition politician. After these changes, the six out of nine members are nominees of the current coalition, which means the institution is partially captured.

Slovakia is in direct violation of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) regarding the independence of its public broadcaster. In 2024, the government dissolved the relatively independent RTVS and replaced it with a new institution, STVR, whose governance structure is fully dependent on the ruling coalition composed of the SMER, Hlas, and SNS parties. This restructuring enabled the government to replace the management, board of directors, and all oversight bodies with new politically aligned appointees. The nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS), which controls the Ministry of Culture and is responsible for media legislation, played a central role in designing and executing this reform. SNS leader Andrej Danko openly stated his desire for a “state television” rather than a public broadcaster.

service broadcaster, clearly signalling the coalition’s intention to dismantle its institutional independence. The STVR Board, comprising nine members, is entirely appointed by political authorities, four by the Ministry of Culture and five by Parliament, through a majority vote which ensures no opposition or independent representatives are elected. This has resulted in a board dominated by government-aligned nominees, including several controversial figures. Among them are David Lindtner, an advisor to Prime Minister Robert Fico and former judge who resigned after corruption charges; Igor Gallo, linked to an oligarch close to SMER; and Eva Koprena, a former government spokesperson. The board is led by Lukáš Machala, known for extreme views, including calls for public television to feature advocates of the Flat Earth theory. Moreover, during board meetings, he has reportedly urged the management to make news coverage less critical. ² In 2025, the board appointed Martina Flašíková as Director General of STVR. Flašíková, the daughter of Fedor Flašík, a co-founder of SMER and a key strategist for former Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, inherited her father’s pro-government website E-report in 2024. One of her first actions was to cancel several independent and critical programmes, including a discussion show by journalist Michal Havran and broadcasts debunking conspiracy theories. These developments represent a systemic political capture of Slovakia’s public broadcasting, both legally and institutionally. The STVR reform violates EMFA principles on editorial independence and governance safeguards, marking a clear regression in media freedom and pluralism in Slovakia.

There is currently no legislation in Slovakia that specifically regulates the distribution of state advertising or other forms of state expenditure on the media. In the absence of specific legislation, the general rules of public procurement apply. Each public entity is responsible for determining its own advertising channels.

There is currently no database that provides a user-friendly overview of where state advertising funds have been allocated. Information can be found in general registries, but the amount of analytical work needed to collate the data is significant, resulting in a lack of comprehensive information.

<https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/SLOVAKIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-2025-Final.pdf>

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

Media services in Slovakia are overseen by an independent regulatory authority. Its members are elected by Parliament, and the current composition includes nominees from several political parties, including the opposition. However, the governing coalition has in the past year altered the balance within the regulator by appointing six new members to its board, five of whom are controversial figures previously associated with media capture or linked to a government-aligned oligarch or a coalition politician. After these changes, the six out of nine members are nominees of the current coalition, which means the institution is partially captured.

The independence of Slovakia's media regulatory authority and its members is partially safeguarded by national legislation. The Media Services Act stipulates that board members may not hold positions in political parties or public office, and must not have any conflicts of interest with, or receive payments from, broadcasters or publishers. These provisions provide a basic legal framework for independence; however, their effectiveness in practice has been increasingly questioned due to politically sensitive appointments.

One such appointment is Juraj Rybanský, who previously served as a member of the communication teams of two ministries under SMER-led governments. Between 2017 and 2018, he was also implicated in the political capture of the public service broadcaster RTVS, where he briefly served as Director of News under General Director Jaroslav Rezník, an SNS nominee. Rybanský's tenure ended after widespread protests by RTVS journalists, who accused him of editorial interference. In October 2025, another member who was involved in the above-mentioned capture was appointed, Michal Dzurjanin, who served as the head of radio programming at RTVS from 2017 under Rezník. Previously, he worked as a member of the press team for the minister of economy under two Smer-led governments. Another former spokesperson for Smer politicians, Pavel Chovanec, was appointed in October 2025. He worked for Pavol Paška, one of the most prominent figures of Smer who served as Chair of the National Council (Slovak Parliament) between 2012 and 2015, and as Vice-Chair of the Smer Party.

Another nomination is Adam Valček, formerly an investigative journalist at daily SME. After leaving the newsroom to start his own media project, it was later revealed that two-thirds of his start-up funding came from the oligarchic conglomerate Penta, a company that appears to share many common interests with the Slovak government. Penta holds significant stakes across the Slovak media market and is widely perceived as instrumentalizing media outlets to serve its political and business interests. While past payments from Penta to Valček do not constitute a formal legal violation, they raise questions about compliance with the law's prohibition on board members receiving payments from publishers. Valček was nominated by the Association of Digital and Print Media of Slovakia and elected by parliament with a qualified majority.

Another politically sensitive nomination is Ondrej Krivuš, whose independence remains unclear. His CV lists experience as a media advisor to the minister of education, without specifying which minister. However, available evidence suggests that this role was held under a minister from the SNS party during a SMER-led government, raising further doubts about his political neutrality.

The sixth appointee, Rebeka Riabová, is a young disinfo-influencer with no previous work experience in media other than her Youtube channel. She was a candidate in the 2023 Parliamentary elections for the SNS, though was not elected. She has publicly praised the far-right conspiracist, Daniel Bombic known for his hate speech and smearing of journalists.

To sum up, five out of nine members have clear past affiliations with governmental politicians, parties or institutions, which can be judged as a situation of political capture.

<https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/SLOVAKIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-2025-Final.pdf>

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

There is currently no legislation in Slovakia that specifically regulates the distribution of state advertising or other forms of state expenditure on the media. In the absence of specific legislation, the general rules of public procurement apply. Each public entity is responsible for determining its own advertising channels. There is currently no database that provides a user-friendly overview of where state advertising funds have been allocated. Information can be found in general registries, but the amount of analytical work needed to collate the data is significant, resulting in a lack of comprehensive information. Investigative journalists or NGOs have produced ad hoc reports claiming that state advertising is distributed unevenly and not according to standard measures (such as audience reach). It is standard practice for independent media outlets without an oligarchic background, particularly those identified by the government as adversaries, to receive minimal or no funding from state advertising. This also applies to the majority of state-owned enterprises or organisations that are among the largest advertisers, including the state-owned betting company Tipos, postal and traffic services, and others. Some improvements were introduced in 2025 including greater transparency and enhanced regulatory oversight of state advertising. However, these measures remain largely on paper for now, and it remains to be seen how they will be implemented in practice.

The absence of transparency and coordination was clearly illustrated in August 2025, when Prime Minister Robert Fico sent a letter to all ministries requesting detailed information on advertising expenditures, disaggregated by recipient media outlet. The fact that the Prime Minister had to collect such data manually demonstrates that no centralised information system or unified database of state advertising exists in Slovakia. 50 These systemic flaws are routinely exploited for political gain. Advertising funds are directed preferentially toward government-friendly or oligarch-owned media, while independent and critical outlets are deliberately excluded. Prime Minister Fico has even publicly threatened certain media outlets with the withdrawal of state advertising in videos posted on social media, resulting in editorial interference and internal protests, most

notably at TV Markíza, where journalists resigned citing internal censorship.

Furthermore, the Office of the Government has approved financial subsidies for at least two disinformation websites that spread pro-Russian and pro-government propaganda while undermining the credibility of independent media. Such allocations were not based on any pre-defined or transparent criteria and were not open to public competition. 53 The 2025 EMFA implementation act formally empowered the RpMS to monitor state advertising practices. Public institutions and recipients of state advertising are now obliged to report annually on their advertising expenditures and to publish this data on their websites. The RpMS must incorporate these findings into its annual report, starting in 2026, and is authorised to sanction non-compliance.

The criteria for distributing state funding to media outlets are not publicly available in advance, nor are they published in an electronic and user-friendly format. Tender procedures for state-funded contracts with media organisations are neither transparent, impartial, nor free from discrimination. In practice, advertising contracts are often fragmented to circumvent public procurement rules. Rather than allowing the media to compete fairly for public advertising, public institutions arbitrarily decide where to allocate funds. State institutions that spend on advertising, such as ministries and other public bodies, both set the criteria and decide on the allocation of resources. Public funds are typically directed toward media outlets perceived as “friendly” or “non-hostile” to the government. Reliable and comprehensive data on this issue are scarce, as the relevant contracts are scattered across various public contract registries. Nevertheless, an analysis of past contracts and testimonies from media outlets labelled “hostile” by the government reveals a consistent pattern of discrimination. These outlets, perceived as critical of government policies, receive little or no state advertising, even when audience reach or market share would justify it. This pattern extends to state-controlled entities, including the postal service and the state-owned gambling company, which are among the country’s largest advertisers. 54 55 Information on public spending for state advertising is technically accessible through the public contracts registry. However, identifying relevant data requires extensive analytical work to extract individual amounts from numerous, dispersed contracts.

<https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/SLOVAKIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-2025-Final.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

In early May, a 7–2 majority of the current public broadcaster STVR's oversight Council elected Martina Flašíková, the daughter of a political strategist for the ruling Smer party and a close government ally, as director general in a closed-door vote. Journalists and members of the public were excluded from the election process, despite constitutional guarantees of public access to such hearings.

The government's campaign to take control over public service media began with a 30% budget cut to Radio and Television Slovakia (RTVS) imposed by Parliament at the start of 2024. The Ministry of Culture then pushed through a new media law, which replaced the public broadcaster Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) with a new entity, Slovak Television and Radio (STVR). The bill, approved by the President in June 2024, represented a clear attempt to restrict the editorial independence of the broadcasters.

Under the law, the former public broadcaster RTVS saw its Director General, Ľuboš Machaj, who was elected by Parliament to serve until 2027, replaced by an interim director nominated by the Speaker of Parliament based on an agreement of the ruling coalition. The RTVS Board was immediately disbanded.

Flašíková's appointment, which lacked transparency, represents a clear step by the ruling coalition to install a political ally to the management of the country's public broadcaster, with the aim of exerting greater control over editorial policy. This poses a major threat to the independent functioning and professionalism of STVR moving forward, in clear violation of requirements set out under the upcoming European Media Freedom Act (EMFA).

<https://ipi.media/slovakia-media-capture-deepens-as-government-tightens-grip-on-public-and-private-media/>

[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

In line with the Media Services Act, broadcasters, on-demand audiovisual service providers, video-sharing platforms, and individuals or entities that provide financial support for content services, are obliged to make information readily available pertaining to their legal name and contact details. According to the Publications Act publishers of periodicals are also obliged to comply with the same requirements. 63 According to legislation, the names of individuals or entities with a direct or indirect ownership interest in printed publications must be reported to the Ministry of Culture. Subsequently, the information is published on the relevant ministerial webpage. It is a legal requirement for all owners with a holding of over 20% to report this information. The same requirement applies to broadcasters, who must report any change of ownership affecting more than 10% of shares to the RpMS. 64 65 66 However, the register of media outlets, which should contain all of this information, is currently not functional. All relations between the state and the media are recorded in the state registry of partners of the public sector. The state does not own media in Slovakia although it has a significant role in the STVR. In the event that a state entity owns a stake exceeding 20% in a media outlet, it is obliged to report this fact in the registry of the Ministry of Culture. 67 It is a legal obligation for all audiovisual media services providers with economic activity to register with the Registry of the partners of the public sector. Only community media with revenue generated from advertising below €10,000 per year (with higher thresholds for television) are exempted, and so not required to register.

The Media Services Council, the regulatory authority for the media industry, monitors media outlets as part of the licensing process. However, the Council is not required to develop a national media ownership database. The register of media is an internal database, and while the law requires the creation of a register, there is no public registry in place apart from the annual report of the Media Services Council. The annual report issued by the regulator provides only a cursory analysis, quantifying the number of broadcasters on the market. The Council does not undertake a detailed examination of ownership structures and relations between different media owners.

According to the provisions set forth in the Media Services Act, a single beneficial owner is prohibited from exercising control over an aggregate share of more than 60% of the advertising market in Slovakia. The Antimonopoly Office of Slovakia and the Media Services Council are entitled to request this kind of information as part of the administrative process. 74 The regulator has yet to issue a regulation that specifies the procedure for the provision of this information. In their annual report, the Media Services Council claims that a regulation was in preparation, but the date of adoption is not yet known.

<https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/SLOVAKIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-2025-Final.pdf>

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

In January 2025, there was a physical attack against well-known Slovak media commentator Peter Schutz, who was hospitalised and underwent surgery for a fractured femur after the violent assault in Košice. Schutz, 70, has been a leading comment writer for the daily newspaper SME for decades and has also appeared on political talk shows. He has long provided commentary on political and social developments and has been strongly critical of the current government. According to SME and media reports, Schutz was attacked by an unidentified assailant in the public restroom of a shopping mall in Košice, in eastern Slovakia, where he was struck on the head from behind and fell, fracturing a femur that required surgery. Schutz was later found by a passer-by. Police have opened an investigation.

In the wake of the attack on 10 January, IPI calls on law enforcement authorities to swiftly establish the facts of the attack, utilise security camera footage to identify the suspected perpetrator and clarify whether the motive was linked to Schutz's media work. IPI also raises concern over the problematic response of some government officials, particularly the Minister of Interior Matúš Šutaj Eštok, who rather than simply denounce the event as an outright attack on a journalist, added comments which normalise or risk justifying violence against members of the press. We call on those elected officials to withdraw problematic elements from their online statements.

In a country scarred by the 2018 murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his partner, any physical violence against journalists in Slovakia should be immediately and unequivocally condemned by leading government figures, regardless of the victim's political opinions.

<https://ipi.media/slovakia-ipi-condemns-violent-attack-on-prominent-media-commentator/>

All media freedom violations in Slovakia recorded on the Mapping Media Freedom database of the Media

Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) - <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.mapmf.org/explorer?f.year%3D2025%26f.country%3DSlovakia%26show%3Dlist%26sort%3Dtimestamp%253Adesc&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1769189973186594&usg=AOvVaw2UvzwI3Y2pi2cxyYLeVeIO>

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

All legal threats and SLAPPs in Slovakia recorded on the Mapping Media Freedom database of the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) in 2025 -

https://www.mapmf.org/explorer?f.year=2025&f.country=Slovakia&f.type_of_incident=Legal+incident&show=list&sort=timestamp%3Adesc

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

5000 character(s) maximum

Alarm has been raised over Slovakia's ongoing and steady decline in media freedom. In recent months, the Slovak government has tightened its grip on the media by intensifying its control over the public broadcaster STVR and enacting the restrictive so-called "anti-NGO" law. Slovakia's leading commercial broadcaster, TV Markíza, has also come under political influence following the departure of its union leaders.

In early May, a 7-2 majority of the current public broadcaster STVR's oversight Council elected Martina Flašíková, the daughter of a political strategist for the ruling Smer party and a close government ally, as director general in a closed-door vote. Journalists and members of the public were excluded from the election process, despite constitutional guarantees of public access to such hearings.

The government's campaign to take control over public service media began with a 30% budget cut to Radio and Television Slovakia (RTVS) imposed by Parliament at the start of 2024. The Ministry of Culture then pushed through a new media law, which replaced the public broadcaster Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) with a new entity, Slovak Television and Radio (STVR). The bill, approved by the President in June 2024, represented a clear attempt to restrict the editorial independence of the broadcasters.

Under the law, the former public broadcaster RTVS saw its Director General, Ľuboš Machaj, who was elected by Parliament to serve until 2027, replaced by an interim director nominated by the Speaker of Parliament based on an agreement of the ruling coalition. The RTVS Board was immediately disbanded.

Flašíková's appointment, which lacked transparency, represents a clear step by the ruling coalition to install a political ally to the management of the country's public broadcaster, with the aim of exerting greater control over editorial policy. This poses a major threat to the independent functioning and professionalism of STVR moving forward, in clear violation of requirements set out under the upcoming European Media Freedom Act (EMFA).

Slovakia is facing not only the effective capture of the public broadcaster but also mounting pressure on private media, in particular, one of the country's most important news providers, TV Markiza. In May 2025, Viktor Vincze, a well-known Slovak television presenter, announced that he would no longer be anchoring 'Televízne noviny', the evening news programme on TV Markiza — the most-watched news show in Slovakia, and was leaving Markiza.

Vincze said that he was forced to resign after management removed him from his anchor role and asked him to move to a new digital channel for many more hours of work, but no more pay. This decision followed months of management pressure on him for his role leading the journalists union formed a year earlier to protect the editorial integrity of the newsroom. Vince said he was taking a case against TV Markiza for constructive dismissal.

TV Markiza has been under increasing pressure since the formation of the new government in September 2023. In November, Prime Minister Róbert Fico accused the TV station of being part of the "enemy media" and quickly threatened to cut contracts for state advertising in Markiza's broadcasting. A few weeks later, the station changed its director of news and introduced tighter editorial procedures for approving news content which led to significant newsroom protests in early 2024. Markiza journalists claimed that the independence of the newsroom was being curtailed and that political coverage was being stifled in order to appease the government. With the departure of Vincze and other union members, concerns are growing that Markiza is abandoning its critical watchdog reporting on the ruling coalition.

Finally, Slovakia's restrictive law requiring NGOs to prepare transparency reports and disclose information related to the management of public funds was passed in April and took effect on June 1. Under the law, non-profit organizations, foundations and associations with an annual income exceeding €35,000 are required to submit such a report. The law, introduced amid growing hostility toward media and civil society from the government, poses a serious threat due to its restrictive nature, the unnecessary administrative burden it places on NGOs and independent media which operate with an NGO status, and the potential for more repressive amendments in the future. The final text of the bill was watered down in the final legislative phase under pressure from the EU

<https://ipi.media/slovakia-ipi-condemns-violent-attack-on-prominent-media-commentator/>

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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

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