

2026 Rule of Law Report - targeted stakeholder consultation

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

The annual Rule of Law Report lies at the centre of the Annual Rule of Law Cycle, which acts as a preventive tool, deepening multilateral dialogue and joint awareness of rule of law issues. So far, six editions of the Rule of Law Report have been published since 2020.

As every year, the Commission would like to invite the stakeholders to provide contributions to the 2026 Rule of Law Report. On the basis of these contributions and on-going developments, further targeted questions may be shared at a later stage of preparation of the 2026 Rule of Law Report, in particular in the context of country visits, or bilateral contacts.

The Commission invites stakeholders to provide contributions which include:

**(1) developments and measures taken in relation to the recommendations in the 2025 report,
(2) developments related to topics covered in the 2025 country chapters, as well as any other new developments related to the rule of law.**

The input should consist of a short summary, if possible in English, covering the areas referred to below. Legislation or other documents may be referenced with a link. Contributions should focus on significant developments since the last Rule of Law Report both as regards the legal framework and its implementation in practice.

This questionnaire also integrates the separate questionnaire on the single market from last year. In addition to these specific questions, respondents to the questionnaire are invited to consider the Single Market dimension, including any relevant cross-border issues, in all their answers.

Where questions of particular relevance under the single market dimension, this is indicated before the relevant question.

[1] Unless the information was already submitted in the input for the previous Rule of Law Reports.

Type of information to be included:

Under each of the four pillars, the replies should include references to the following types of information:

A) Legislative developments

- Newly adopted legislation
- legislative drafts currently discussed in Parliament
- legislative plans envisaged by the Government

B) Policy developments

- Implementation and enforcement of legislation
- evaluations, impact assessment, surveys
- white papers/strategies/actions plans/consultation processes
- follow-up to reports/recommendations of Council of Europe bodies or other international organisations
- important administrative measures
- generalised practices

C) Developments related to the judiciary / independent authorities

- important case law by national courts
- important decision/opinions from independent bodies/authorities
- state of play on terms, nominations and expired mandates for high-level positions (e.g. Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Council for the Judiciary, Prosecutor General, heads of independent authorities included in the scope of the request for input[2])

D) Any other relevant developments

- National authorities are free to add any further information, which they deem relevant; however, this should be short and to the point.

Where relevant, please also indicate whether the developments reported are linked to the implementation of reforms and investments under the national Recovery Resilience Plan. To simplify your answers to the questionnaire, if there are no developments, it is sufficient to indicate this and the information covered in the contributions for the previous Rule of Law Reports does not need not be repeated.

[2] Such as: media regulatory authorities and bodies, national human rights institutions, equality bodies, ombudsman institutions, supreme audit institutions and, where they exist, transparency authorities.

* I am giving my contribution as

- ☐ Academic/research institution
- ☐ Business association
- ☐ Civil society organisation/NGO
- ☐ International organisation
- ☐ Judicial association or network
- ☐ Media organisation or association
- ☐ Public authority or network of public authorities
- ☒ Other

If "Other", please specify

Bar Association

* Organisation name

250 character(s) maximum

Slovak Bar Association / Slovenská advokátska komora

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

Slovak Bar Association is an independent professional organisation established by law that represents and regulates practicing licenced lawyers and trainee lawyers, provides training, organises lawyers's exams, exercises disciplinary powers and keeps the rolls of lawyers, trainee lawyers and law firms. Membership base: 5821 lawyers with active licence, 954 lawyers with inactive licence, 1483 trainee lawyers and 1946 companies. More information available at <https://www.sak.sk/>.

Transparency register number

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

*Country of origin

Please indicate the country of origin of your organisation

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

- ☐ Sweden
- ☐ Other - please specify

First name

Michaela

Surname

Chládeková

Email Address of the organisation

chladekova@sak.sk

* 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

As regards the set of recommendations issued by the Commission, Slovak Bar Association issued several statements containing critical assessment of the fast-track legislative procedure in Slovakia in 2025. The Bar also agrees that criminal offence “bending (abusing) the law by judges in decision-making” has been problematic from the moment of its introduction and requires adoption of adequate guarantees. Currently, the Venice Commission is in the process of assessing the draft and undertakes consultations with third sector, including the Slovak Bar.

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

In 2025, Slovak Bar Association has submitted comments related to the allocation of cases in courts in two legislative processes:

LP/2025/605 - Draft Act on International Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters - We proposed to retain the jurisdiction of regional courts in extradition proceedings and the execution of the European Arrest Warrant - In this area, there is a stable and consistent case law of regional courts, which significantly contributes to the predictability of decision-making. Regional courts have long-term professional specialization and practical experience with the extradition agenda, which is necessary given the complexity of European and international mechanisms. Transferring this agenda to other courts would require extensive retraining and could temporarily lead to prolongation of proceedings, which is unacceptable in extradition proceedings given the need for speed and the principle of mutual trust.

LP/2025/370 - Draft Amendment of the Act on Courts - While understanding the legitimate aim of the proposed legislation to relieve the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic of excessive burden caused by the number of complaints about delays (making up approximately 30% of its agenda), we consider it essential to point out that the submitted proposal does not take into account the specificities and disproportionate burden of courts after the implementation of the new court map, especially in Bratislava. The draft law does not sufficiently reflect the uneven burden of regional courts after the implementation of the court map, which is supported by the statistics of the number of cases per judge or panel. Insufficient consideration of the objective state of the judicial infrastructure, especially with regard to the Municipal Court Bratislava IV, III and the Regional Court in Bratislava, carries a risk that the newly proposed legal remedy will become counterproductive in practice - instead of eliminating delays, it may further exacerbate their occurrence, since the Regional Court in Bratislava, given the proposed deadlines, will prioritize deciding complaints about delays in proceedings.

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

The Bar Association serves as the self-regulatory body of the legal profession and assists lawyers to maintain independence in providing clients unbiased advice and representation. The independence of a lawyer is functional in nature: it exists solely to enable the lawyer to protect and advance the legitimate interests of the client, without external pressure, interference or fear of reprisal. A bar association is deemed to be independent when it is free from external influence and can withstand pressure from external sources on matters such as the regulation of the profession, the development and implementation of codes of professional conduct and the right of lawyers to join the association. Slovak Bar Association is recognised as independent by law. In order to preserve the necessary independence of lawyers in protecting legal interests of a client it is imperative to preserve the independence of the Slovak Bar Association which oversees the respect for duties and obligations of lawyers and the ethical standards of practice. Without an independent legal profession in the exclusive interest of clients, the rule of law would be incomplete and the proper protection of a client's rights and functioning of justice jeopardized. Right to legal assistance is one of the constitutional rights derived from the Slovak Constitution which must be fully guaranteed. This would be, however, impossible for lawyers without independence from all subjects and Slovak Bar Association independence in the area of disciplinary powers. In Slovakia (and other post-communist countries) it is even more important to adhere to this principle that had been breached for 40 years. The last 35 years of independent legal profession proved its value.

Slovak Bar Association requires high ethical standards and consistently enforces it through its disciplinary bodies (Please see Slovak Bar Association Collections of Disciplinary Findings).

Slovak Bar Association serves as an institutional guarantee of independence in:

- Preventive phase
 - o Slovak Bar provides interpretation of regulation related to the legal profession and assesses compatibility of legal practice with other activities. Any activity that may cast doubt on the lawyer's autonomous and independent position in protecting the interests of a client must be declared incompatible, regardless of its legal form, circumstance, scope and length, remuneration or lack of it
 - o Slovak Bar provides mandatory training on deontology to all trainee lawyers.
 - o Slovak Bar adopts professional regulations clearly delineating duties and responsibilities of lawyers vis-a-vis their clients, emphasising loyalty, confidentiality and the primacy of the client's interests.
- Reactive phase
 - o Slovak Bar as a self-regulated professional body is responsible for decision-making on the professional misconduct of its members and issues disciplinary sanctions.
 - o The Supervision Committee, Disciplinary Committee and Disciplinary Committee of Appeal deal with any breach of obligation. The Slovak Bar Association Rules of Disciplinary Procedure provide for the strict system of disciplinary procedure and disciplinary sanctions, including disbarment. Annually the Disciplinary panels deal with several hundreds of cases (The functioning of the of Disciplinary Procedure provided by the Slovak Bar was positively evaluated by the Venice Commission in its report in 2021. For more information see: <https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/document/benatska>)
 - o The Slovak Bar issues Collections of Disciplinary Findings that provide for transparent, consistent and foreseeable decision-making, as well as awareness of the ethical nuances.

Despite the recognised importance of the independence of the legal profession in the rule of law state, it must be noted that lawyers in Slovakia are facing an indirect threat to their independence in two forms: first being the threats and harassment of lawyers from persons encountered in the course of their practice, and second, misidentification of lawyers with their clients, which is especially problematic in case of defence counsels. The role of defence counsel is frequently misunderstood by the public. Unfortunately, media often use expressions that intensify the wrong impression of lawyers and the concept of defence of rights. The fulfilment of a lawyer's duty to represent a client does not imply approval of the client's conduct, and lawyers cannot be harassed or prosecuted for the fulfilment of their statutory and constitutional duties.

The Bar presented its legislative proposal in 2023 to strengthen the protection of independent legal profession within the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and throughout the past year called on the Slovak government to sign and ratify the Council of European Convention on the protection of the profession of lawyer.

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

Slovak Bar Association regularly raises the issues of the lawyers' tariff in civil legal aid cases. The last amendment of the Regulation no. 655/2004 Coll. on Remuneration and Compensation of Lawyers for the Provision of Legal Services ("Lawyers' Tariff") in 2023 has not taken into account the need for the remuneration within legal aid system that more closely correspond to the real costs and to improve recoverability of compensations awarded to successful parties in the court proceedings. The issue of the lawyer's tariff determined in the Regulation related to the legal aid cases is not a question of lawyers' benefits, it is in the interest of the citizens themselves, whose rights were violated. The Slovak Bar Association continues to strive for the necessary improvement in this area. Legal aid differs from the pro bono services. Securing access to courts in legal aid cases by providing adequate funding is the responsibility of the state.

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

Slovak Bar Association provides training to its members on optional basis (qualified lawyers) and mandatory basis (trainee lawyers). Lawyers can undertake additional training choosing from among private providers depending on their area of expertise.

In 2025 the Bar organised 87 regular training events for 4270 participants (excluding events organised with external and foreign partners).

Slovak Bar Association organises regular weekly hybrid training events for lawyers, two annual two-day seminars, ad hoc seminars and several seminars initiated by regional representatives in regional towns.

Trainee lawyers must undertake mandatory seminar in ethics and four mandatory two-day seminars a year – theory and practice – with a follow-up practical seminars organised for small groups.

Slovak Bar Association has been involved in several training projects on EU law co-organised with its partners:

- Cooperation with Council of Europe as a partner in the HELP (Human Rights Education for Legal Practitioners) Programme, including the HELP in the EU IV.
- Cooperation with Academy of European Law (ERA) in organising and implementing projects Young European Lawyers Project – Contest (EU law and networking-oriented) and Academy (intensive training in EU law coordinated by ERA and focusing on trainee lawyers).
- Cooperation with European Lawyers Foundation (ELF) in implementing project on internships of young lawyers - LAWYEREX II, promoting ELF webinars on EU law and implementing the TRADICIL project.
- Cooperation with Council of Bars and Law Societies in Europe (CCBE) when appointing participants to training events.

In 2025 the Bar adopted regulation and recommendations related to the use of AI and is in the process of designing regular long-term training in AI related topics.

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

Slovak Bar Association organised a round table on AI in February 2025 (please see the press release: https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/news/form/list/form/row/2635809/_event) with representatives of judicial bodies, ministry and academia. Participants agreed on the following conclusions:

AI has the potential to significantly improve the efficiency of legal services and justice, especially in the areas of data processing, retrieval and analysis, translation and automated document processing. Judicial institutions should therefore support its use in a way that relieves the burden of routine tasks, but at the same time does not disrupt the essence of judicial professions.

The improper use of AI can lead to threats to the system of protection of rights and the rule of law. If the judiciary does not respond to the challenges associated with the advent of AI in a timely and adequate manner, this can lead to difficult-to-repair consequences for justice and democracy.

It is necessary to address all practical application and regulatory issues of AI in the judiciary, especially in the areas of information security, personal data protection, confidentiality of lawyer-client communication. These challenges should be addressed by each segment of the judiciary primarily within its competences or self-government.

Those present agreed that, in addition to regulatory and application issues, an appropriate response in the field of education and training is equally (if not more) important. This must not be reduced only to the technical aspects of AI, but must also strengthen appropriate teaching of legal doctrines and ethics of the legal professions. Future judges, prosecutors and lawyers must never become uncritical users of AI, but must maintain independent legal reasoning in all cases they handle in the exercise of their profession.

The profile of law school graduates and future judicial professionals must continue to be based on classical education, which is also a necessary condition for the correct and responsible use of AI. A thorough study of fundamental legal concepts – such as the art of good and just – is crucial, along with the acquisition of practical skills. The education necessary to cope with the challenges of AI cannot be achieved only in the online space. On the contrary, it requires, among other things, a thorough understanding of fundamental legal texts, including the theory, history and philosophy of law; the ability to critically discuss basic legal concepts and to be able to argue about them logically and independently (not only in the form of copying the outputs of AI applications). Practical mastery of AI tools, together with a strong emphasis on supporting classical education, needs to be appropriately reflected in the training programs of the Judicial Academy of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Bar Association. The same conclusion applies to the continuous improvement of university education.

Slovak Bar Association issued an amended recommendation for lawyers related to the use of AI in legal practice (please see the press release: https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/news/form/list/form/row/3130758/_event)

The changes to the rules themselves provide for exceptions to inputting data into AI, if the data does not leave the lawyer's infrastructure under his exclusive control, the lawyer has the client's explicit informed consent or contractually guaranteed data protection. The binding rules are accompanied by detailed methodological guidance, which offers a practical interpretation and establishes minimum standards for the use of AI tools in the lawyers practice while maintaining the fundamental principles of independence, confidentiality and the obligation to avoid conflicts of interest. The methodological guidance includes a decision-making methodological test before inserting any confidential information into an AI tool, as well as sample information clauses for the use of AI tools.

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

In January 2025 Slovak Bar undertook a survey on the use of AI among its members. 250 respondents took part in the survey. The following questions were addressed: do you use AI in your practice, how often, which AI tool, paid or unpaid version, for what tasks, what are the benefits and what are the risks, how effective the use of AI tools is, etc. The survey showed that statistically more than one half of lawyers in Slovakia already use generative AI as a tool in their practice. Summary available here: https://info.sak.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025_0225_SAK_prieskum_AI-3.pdf

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

Arbitration Court of the Slovak Bar Association provides for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms as regards commercial cases and continues to promote the ADR culture and awareness. More information available at: <https://info.sak.sk/sud/>

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

The Slovak Bar Association received a number of complaints about significant increase in the period of delays in the payment of costs to lawyers for mandatory defence in criminal proceedings. This is potentially a serious interference in the practice of legal profession and the proper functioning of the system of protection of rights in criminal proceedings. We have thoroughly examined these complaints and learned that it was not an isolated case and significant delays in the payment of ex officio defence costs by the courts appeared in all Slovak regions. The Slovak Bar Association appreciates the constructive approach of the Minister of Justice, but the situation has not been fully resolved by now. It appears that the current situation is a direct consequence of the insufficient coverage of the budget chapter of the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic. The Slovak Bar Association is aware of the urgent need to consolidate public finances, but in our opinion, this must under no circumstances be at the expense of ensuring the fundamental activities of the state. This is all the more true when it comes to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. The common goal must therefore be sufficient budgetary coverage of all basic obligations of the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic and proper financing for the rights protection system.

II. Anti-Corruption Framework

Where previous specific reports, published in the framework of the review under the UN Convention against Corruption, of GRECO, and of the OECD address the issues below, please make a reference to the points you wish to bring to the Commission's attention in these documents, indicating any relevant updates, changes or measures introduced that have occurred since these documents were published.

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding the anti-corruption framework (if applicable):

5000 character(s) maximum

A. The institutional framework capacity to fight against corruption (prevention and investigation / prosecution)

List any **changes** as regards relevant authorities (e.g. national agencies, bodies) in charge of prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption and the resources allocated to each of these authorities (the human, financial, legal, and technical/specialised resources as relevant), including the cooperation among domestic and with foreign authorities. Indicate any relevant measures taken to effectively and timely cooperate with OLAF and EPPO

5000 character(s) maximum

Please see the Slovak Bar Association public statement related to the government proposal to abolish the Office for the protection of Whistle-blowers under "Measures to ensure whistleblower protection and encourage reporting of corruption, including their application".

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

The Slovak Bar Association expressed fundamental reservations about the proposal of the Slovak government to abolish the Office for the Protection of Whistleblowers and replace it with a new office. In addition to the substantive objections, SAK is very critical of the proposal to present such a legislative proposal in an fast-track legislative procedure. The Bar has long called for the preservation of institutional stability. Independent institutions that act properly within the framework of legally established rules are key to a state governed by democratic and constitutional principles. Any proposals for changes of relevant institutions and the system of rights protection must therefore be subject to proper professional discussion. Any abolition and creation of new offices (if justified) should always be adopted in a proper legislative procedure, preceded by professional discussion and a thorough analysis of the functioning of the given office. Changes should therefore always be the result of conceptual reform efforts and never just a by-product of pursuing partial interests. According to the Bar, the conditions for the fast-track legislative procedure were not met in this case. We believe that the discussion on the draft law in a fast-track legislative procedure without relevant reasons may, in accordance with the case law of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, open a discussion on the compliance of such a procedure with the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. From a content point of view, view the newly adopted law (the effectiveness of which has been suspended by a resolution of the Constitutional Court pending a decision on the matter, case PL. ÚS 19/2025-48) narrows the protection of whistleblowers. Moreover, it narrows down the protection that stems directly from the obligations of the Slovak Republic towards the EU and thus the proposal creates a discrepancy between Slovak legislation and EU legislation. The method and form of the change in the management of the Office do not reflect the institutional independence of the Office as one of the guarantors of the protection of rights against state interference. The Bar is convinced that there is no social need for the proposed change. The activities of the Office have not been evaluated to date in a way that would even minimally signal the necessity of immediately abolishing this office and replacing it with another one, which will be under the leadership of a newly selected management. The Office fulfils an irreplaceable function in the fight against corruption and has proven its justification through effective legal activities over the several years of its existence. Please see the press release here:
https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/news/form/list/form/row/3130217/_event

[single market relevance] Specific measures to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability in sectors with high risks of corruption, with a view to monitor and prevent corruption and conflict of interests, and where applicable measures to prevent and address corruption committed by organised crime groups.

- *Such high-risk sectors could include: public procurement, including construction, transport/infrastructure, defence, cohesion, agriculture, environment, healthcare, investor residence schemes, large-scale investments of national interest and the spending of EU funds, urban planning.*
- *In particular, measures to mitigate high risks of corruption in the area of public procurement, such as enhancing transparency and oversight (for example through digital technologies) and promoting fair competition and accountability in public procurement (e.g. targeted actions to address the high share of*

single bids) and measures to guarantee the effective and independent functioning of the public procurement review bodies.

5000 character(s) maximum

[single market relevance] Measures for the prevention of corruption in relation to the issuing of official permits (e.g. related to environment, energy, service provision and various types of construction)

5000 character(s) maximum

C. Repression

The legal framework on the criminalisation and sanctions for corruption and related offences, including foreign bribery

5000 character(s) maximum

Official data on the number of investigations, prosecutions, final judgments and the application of sanctions for corruption offences (differentiated by offence if possible). Please indicate whether the cases: involve legal persons; are related to the implementation of EU or national funds; involve high level corruption. Please indicate which data is publicly available and how policy-making is informed by the data

5000 character(s) maximum

Potential obstacles identified in law or in practice to the investigation and prosecution of high-level and complex corruption cases (e.g. political immunity regulation, procedural rules, statute of limitations, cross-border cooperation, pardoning)

5000 character(s) maximum

Information on effectiveness of criminal and non-criminal measures and of sanctions (e.g. recovery measures and administrative sanctions) on both public and private offenders

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

III. Media pluralism and media freedom

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding media pluralism and media freedom (if applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

A. Media authorities and bodies

(Cf. Article 30 of Directive 2018/1808)

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

Safeguards against state / political interference, in particular:

- safeguards to ensure editorial independence of media (private and public)
- specific safeguards for the independence of heads of management and members of the governing boards of public service media (e.g. related to appointment, dismissal), safeguards for their financial and operational independence (e.g. related to reporting obligations and the allocation of resources) and safeguards for plurality of information and opinions
- **[single market relevance]** information on specific legal provisions and procedures applying to media service providers, including as regards granting /renewal/termination of licenses, company operation, capital entry requirements, concentration and corporate governance

5000 character(s) maximum

[single market relevance] Transparency of media ownership and public availability of media ownership information, including on direct, indirect and beneficial owners

5000 character(s) maximum

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

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

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

5000 character(s) maximum

The government's draft amendment to the Cadastral Act fundamentally complicates access to public data on property owners. If it was approved in the proposed form, the provision of legal services would become significantly more complicated, limited and expensive, which would lead to a decrease in the legal certainty of citizens and property owners. The Slovak Bar Association therefore proposes continuing professional discussions on the draft law with the aim of improving the legal regulation so that the legitimate goals are achieved without unjustified threats to other rights. The Office of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre of the Slovak Republic justifies the proposal with the protection of personal data. The Slovak Bar Association considers the topic of effective protection of personal data registered in the real estate cadastre to be relevant. However, radical restriction of access to data in the cadastre will fundamentally complicate the provision of legal services. One of the main problems of the draft amendment is the introduction of payments for the electronic extracts from the cadastre. The proposed charge will complicate citizens' access to effective and flexible legal services in several areas of law, where a reliable verification of facts is a prerequisite for qualified assistance. The proposal will prevent citizens from regular and free of charge checking the status of their property, which may lead to a decrease in the protection of owners against fraudulent transfers and limit the functional control tool of transparency.

The Slovak Bar Association therefore proposes to reopen a professional discussion on the topic and to adopt solutions that ensure adequate protection of personal data without disproportionate interference with other rights. From the perspective of the practice of legal profession, the Bar proposes, as a minimum requirement, an exemption for lawyers if they request data in connection with the provision of legal services. The comprehensive position of the SAK on the need for lawyers to have access to the real estate cadastre from the perspective of the GDPR: https://info.sak.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Stanovisko-SAK_pristup_28_6_2024.pdf

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

The Slovak Bar submitted comments to SLAPP related amendment of the Contentious Civil Procedure Code (LP/2025/667). Based on the discussion in the follow-up procedure with the ministry, the comments were considered relevant and accepted.

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

5000 character(s) maximum

IV. Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2025 Report regarding the system of checks and balances (if applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

A. The process for preparing, enacting and implementing laws

[single market relevance] Framework, policy and use of impact assessments and evidence based policy-making, stakeholders*/public consultations (including rules and practices on the transparent participation of civil society to policy development and decision-making processes), and transparency and quality of the legislative process in the preparatory, the parliamentary and implementation phase (including guidance on how to implement legislation)

* This includes also the consultation of social partners

5000 character(s) maximum

Slovak Bar Association repeatedly stated in the past year that thorough and data-based professional discussion with all relevant stakeholders is necessary element of all legislation-making processes. With this goal in mind, Slovak Bar invited leading experts from the field of law, academia, business, and other professions to discuss all aspects of the proposed wording of the new Civil Code. Slovak Bar thus coordinated preparation of 550 comments, organized working groups and exchange with the ministry and with the members of the codification commission. For more information please see:

https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/news/form/list/form/row/3054555/_event

As for criminal law, since the recodification of the criminal codes in 2005, the Bar has repeatedly criticized the tendency to create new criminal offences in direct response to topical social issues. Criminal law has long been misused as an instrument for addressing matters that should and could have been resolved by instruments of other legal branches. This has led to an overexpansion of criminal law and to a distortion of the fundamental principles on which modern criminal law should be based. In accordance with the long-standing positions of the Bar, we stated the same in relation to the proposed new criminal offenses (denial of the post-war settlement,

violation of the ban on obstructing an election campaign) with equal criticism. In our opinion, criminal law should never be used to find answers to open social questions. The improper use of criminal-law instruments for such purposes not only undermines criminal law itself but may also give rise to further legal and societal complications.

The Bar has always been equally critical of attempts to make non-systemic amendments to criminal procedural law. In the past, we have expressed serious reservations about the excessive use of several criminal law institutes, whether it is the excessive use of detention, but also, for example, the application of provisions regarding the cooperating accused, which is questioned by the professional community. The Bar agrees that criminal procedural law should be the subject of critical professional debate and, if necessary, appropriate changes. However, as with substantive criminal law, amendments to fundamental codes should never constitute an ad hoc response to isolated issues of application practice, but should always result from a systematic and professionally grounded reform process.

For more information please see:

https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/news/form/list/form/row/3153147/_event

[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

Please see the comments related to the Whistleblowers Protection Office concerning the fast-track procedure.

The Slovak Bar has expressed its concerns equally in relation to Criminal Code amendments :

The Slovak Bar Association reiterates its fundamental critical position on the practice of fast-track legislative proceedings, which in our opinion is no longer acceptable. We have raised concerns about the unjustified use of this procedure during every election period, including when fast-track proceedings were abused by referring to the Covid pandemic. Just as we have repeatedly warned about this unacceptable practice in the past, we are doing so now and will continue to do so in the future. In this context, we express our professional wish that either a clearer legislative regulation of the limits of fast-track legislative proceedings be adopted, or that the constitutional limits of this procedure be clearly formulated by the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic. Otherwise, fundamental areas of criminal law will continue to be damaged by non-systemic interventions with a negative impact on basic legal certainty.

Please see the complete press release here:

https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/news/form/list/form/row/3153147/_event

[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

Slovak Bar Association has issued a statement in relation to the amendment of the Slovak Constitution.

Please see the press release here:

https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/news/form/list/form/row/3044290/_event

SAK has no ambition to enter into the value or political aspects of this discussion. However, in the case of proposals that affect the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, we consider it our duty to point out the necessity of consistent consideration of the principles of the rule of law, in particular legal certainty, legislative clarity and terminological precision. Amendments to the fundamental law of the state with a potential impact on the system of human rights protection require thorough analysis, clear justification and, ideally, the broadest possible professional and social consensus.

The Slovak Bar Association considers it essential that the Slovak Republic, in any constitutional changes, maintains loyalty to European Union law and consistently respect its international obligations, especially in the area of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These principles are the basis of the rule of law and a prerequisite for the credibility of the Slovak Republic in the European and international space. When proposing amendments to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, it is therefore necessary to consistently take into account their possible effects not only on the national legal order, but also on the obligations of the Slovak Republic arising from membership in the European Union and from international treaties.

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

In April 2025, the Slovak Parliament adopted amendments to the law on non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which introduced new reporting and transparency requirements, including public disclosure of donor information and detailed financial reporting. These rules imposed significant administrative burdens on NGOs and may cause decrease and discourage civic activism, particularly among smaller organisations.

Slovak Bar Association also wishes to point out that there are case when lawyers as human rights defenders face threats.

The Slovak Bar Association strongly condemns attacks on lawyers for exercising their profession. Threats of physical violence are unacceptable in any social relations. However, if they are directed at the exercise of a profession aimed at protecting fundamental rights, it is not only an attack on a specific person, but also on the system of independent protection of rights. Therefore, criminal law enforcement authorities should always pay maximum attention to such cases.

We take this opportunity also to point out that there is no mechanism of protection of lawyers against threats, harassment or attacks that are in place in relation to other justice sector professions or even e.g. medical profession.

Please see the press release here:

https://www.sak.sk/web/sk/cms/news/form/list/form/row/2952611/_event

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

In cooperation with the Faculty of Law of the Comenius University in Bratislava, the Slovak Bar Association introduced a new internship programme for law students putting together legal practitioners and law firms wishing to provide an opportunity to students who appreciate a chance to gain practical experience in the law firm. The pilot project started in Autumn 2024 with 50 students.

In order to raise awareness about rule of law issues among younger people, the Bar initiated a project of pro bono lectures at primary and secondary schools. The call for volunteer was published in December 2024 and 60 lawyers signed for this activity. More than 30 lectures were organised so far with a positive feedback.

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