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2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Lithuania

Accompanying the document

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

2025 Rule of Law Report The rule of law situation in the European Union

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ABSTRACT

The level of perceived judicial independence in Lithuania is high. Judicial appointments across all instances are taking place in good time, and further steps were taken to improve the transparency of the process. Efforts to support integrity within the justice system are underway. The regulation of ‘revolving doors’ in the Constitutional Court appointments is being discussed in Parliament. Lawyers continue to express concerns regarding the respect of lawyer-client confidentiality. The Judicial Council has presented a proposal to amend the Constitution to secure its right of constitutional appeal concerning legislation impacting the judiciary. While further efforts are being made to allocate adequate human and financial resources to the justice system, challenges persist, especially in recruiting court staff. The judicial map reform has been completed and is expected to balance the workload among courts. Steps were taken to finalise the reform of the legal aid system, such as implementing a pilot project aimed at ensuring an even workload distribution to legal aid providers. The justice system is highly digitalised, with ongoing enhancements to the courts’ information systems, contributing further to its efficient performance, including in commercial cases.

The first year of the implementation plan for the National Anti-Corruption Agenda was positively evaluated. An implementation plan was launched to address shortcomings in fighting against foreign bribery. The effective investigation and prosecution of corruption offences continues, although the rate of acquittals for all corruption charges remains substantially higher than for other offences. Various initiatives are being carried out to prevent corruption and promote integrity in the public and private sector. While non-legislative initiatives are taken to reinforce the existing rules on asset declarations, shortcomings remain in the legal framework. The new whistleblower protection framework is being implemented. The authorities continue monitoring and addressing the high-risk areas of corruption, including public procurement, through tailor-made initiatives.

Changes to the funding model of the public service broadcaster (LRT) are under discussion while actions by the LRT Council raised concerns. The human resources of the regulator for audiovisual media services (LRTK) increased slightly. The budget for the Media Support Fund has increased significantly, and new application rules make more media service providers eligible for funding. The implementation of the Government action plan for the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists continues, with the overall situation regarding the safety of journalists remaining favourable. The situation regarding access to documents improved, and journalists will have a right to access a new register of members of political organisations.

The Ministry of Justice is implementing measures to enhance the quality of legislation. The mandate of the Parliamentary Ombudspersons was extended, and resources have been further reinforced. Concerns remain among stakeholders regarding the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, concerning the recommendations in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania has made:

- Some further progress in finalising the reform of the legal aid system, in particular by reducing the administrative burden and ensuring adequate conditions for the participation of legal aid providers, taking into account European standards on legal aid.
- Some further progress in continuing efforts to improve the transparency of the system of appointments to judicial positions, notably to the Supreme Court, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments.
- Some further progress in continuing efforts to provide adequate human and financial resources for the justice system, taking into account European standards on resources for the justice system.

On this basis, and considering other developments that took place in the period of reference, it is recommended to Lithuania to:

- Finalise the reform of the legal aid system, in particular by ensuring adequate conditions for the participation of legal aid providers, taking into account European standards on legal aid.
- Step up efforts to improve the transparency of the system of appointments to judicial positions, notably to the Supreme Court, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments.

I. JUSTICE SYSTEM¹

Independence

The level of perceived judicial independence in Lithuania is high among the general public and average among companies. Overall, 60% of the general population and 58% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2025¹². Among the general public, this figure has increased in comparison with 2024 (56%), as well as in comparison with 2021 (55%). The perceived judicial independence among companies has decreased in comparison with 2024 (62%) and has slightly decreased in comparison with 2021 (60%).

Procedures for judicial appointments to all instances are taking place in good time, and there has been some further progress to improve the transparency of the process³. During the reporting period, while no changes were introduced to the system of appointments, stakeholders note that its functioning has improved, with appointments taking place without the delays that were previously observed⁴. The Judicial Council and the Office of the President of the Republic have been cooperating in order to clarify priorities in announcing competitions and appointing candidates, which has allowed for more straightforward selection processes. Fewer judicial posts remain vacant for long periods⁵. Regarding the transparency of judicial appointments, different initiatives have been announced. The Government programme envisages new measures on the assessment criteria for candidates⁶. Discussions are ongoing between the Office of the President of the Republic and the Judicial Council regarding the objectivity of the existing criteria for evaluating candidates to judicial posts⁷. The Judicial Council created a working group tasked with proposing concrete changes to the selection process, to improve its transparency and efficiency⁸. While the President of the Republic retains discretion in selecting candidates, with no obligation provided in the law to provide reasons⁹, the Office of the President of the

¹ An overview of the institutional framework for all four pillars can be found [here](#)

² Figures 50 and 52, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard and Figures 49 and 51, 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard. The level of perceived judicial independence is categorised as follows: very low (below 30% of respondents perceive judicial independence as fairly good and very good); low (between 30-39%), average (between 40-59%), high (between 60-75%), very high (above 75%).

³ The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Lithuania to: “[c]ontinue efforts to improve the transparency of the system of appointments to judicial positions, notably to the Supreme Court, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments”.

⁴ Country visit Lithuania, Judicial Council. In 2024, the President of the Republic appointed 28 judges to the positions of district court judges, 14 judges to the positions of judges of higher-level courts, 3 judges to the positions of court presidents, 8 judges to the positions of deputy presidents and 4 judges to the positions of presidents of a court division (ENCJ, written input, p. 27).

⁵ Country visit Lithuania, Judicial Council and National Courts Administration. ENCJ (2025), written input, p. 26. See also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 5.

⁶ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 3.

⁷ ENCJ (2025), written input, p. 26.

⁸ The working group’s conclusions are expected in October 2025. Country visit Lithuania, Judicial Council, Office of the President of the Republic.

⁹ Including when the decision diverges from the opinion of the Selection Commission, which continues to be object of discussion among stakeholders (Civil Liberties Union for Europe (2025), p. 629; EAJ, written input, p. 8). See also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 4. The Court of Justice of the European Union has underlined that it is necessary to ensure that the substantive conditions and procedural rules governing the adoption of judicial appointment decisions cannot give rise to reasonable doubts as to the imperviousness of the judges concerned to external factors and as to their neutrality with respect to the

Republic has adopted a practice aimed at improving the transparency of these decisions¹⁰. In particular, the Office of the President of the Republic now presents the reasons for the appointment decisions orally during the meetings of the Judicial Council, which are publicly broadcasted. Overall, since various measures have been taken, there has been some further progress in improving the transparency of judicial appointments.

The Judicial Council presented to the Speaker of Parliament a proposal to amend the Constitution in order to be granted the right of constitutional appeal regarding legislation affecting the judiciary. In October 2024, the General Meeting of Judges adopted a decision calling for the Judicial Council to address the Constitutional Court on the question of the compatibility of the specified acts with the Constitution and laws.¹¹ The Judicial Council considers this change essential to achieve balance among the state powers, as the executive and the legislative powers already have this right¹². This request was submitted to Parliament, proposing an amendment to Article 106 of the Constitution. No draft legislative proposals in this regard have been registered in Parliament so far¹³.

Initiatives to support integrity in the justice system are being implemented or are under discussion. The Special Investigation Service (STT) is providing training for district and regional courts, with the aim of fostering an anti-corruption environment in the judiciary¹⁴. The National Courts Administration has continued the work on the ‘risk map of the justice sector’¹⁵, and has developed risk scales and impact values for risk assessment¹⁶. The issue of ‘revolving doors’ in appointments to the Constitutional Court continues to be discussed¹⁷. A draft law concerning the grounds for self-disqualification and disqualification of judges is being debated in Parliament¹⁸. The procedure for the appointment of judges to the Constitutional Court was slightly changed by the Parliament in June 2025¹⁹.

Lawyers continue to raise concerns regarding the respect for lawyer-client confidentiality. Lawyers’ concerns stem from practices such as the digital copy of lawyers’ devices seized in the course of criminal proceedings, the video recordings of interactions with clients in detention facilities, and the alleged use of broad language in search warrants, allowing for the seizure of documents and materials that can be covered by professional

interests before them, once they have been appointed as judges (see, e.g., CJEU, C-896/19, para. 57, and the case law cited).

¹⁰ Country visit Lithuania, Office of the President of the Republic.

¹¹ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 6; ENCJ, p. 11. See also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 24.

¹² Country visit Lithuania, Judicial Council.

¹³ The Judicial Council does not have legislative initiative.

¹⁴ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 21.

¹⁵ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 6.

¹⁶ Country visit Lithuania, National Courts Administration.

¹⁷ See also 2023 and 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 6 and pp. 7-8, respectively.

¹⁸ The draft envisages the express provision for disqualification of judges who have submitted to parliament or voted the law which is under consideration, as well as of judges who had political affiliation with the party of one of the parties to the proceedings (Draft Law No. XVP-137).

¹⁹ The amendment of Art. 4(2) of the Law on the Constitutional Court (Law No. XV-256) aims at clarifying the timing of the presentation of the proposed candidates for appointments before Parliament and aligns the end of the term of Constitutional Court judges with the beginning of the Spring session of Parliament, in order to allow for a longer period of assessment of the candidates by Parliament. The Law also explicitly includes the requirement of the equal number of candidates submitted by the President of the Republic, the Speaker of the Seimas and the President of the Supreme Court in the process of the appointment of the candidates as judges by the Parliament.

secrecy, as well as information leaks²⁰. Lawyers consider that these practices may amount to violations of professional secrecy²¹. According to European standards, all necessary measures should be taken to ensure the respect of the confidentiality of the lawyer-client relationship. The Law on the Bar was amended to impose stricter conditions for access to the profession, and now provides more precise regulations for assessing good reputation, with a view to ensuring higher standards of professional ethics²². Lawyers continue to raise concerns as to the role of the Minister of Justice in access to the profession, as well as in disciplinary proceedings of lawyers, which they consider detrimental to perceptions of the independence of lawyers²³.

Quality

There has been some further progress in providing adequate human and financial resources for the justice system, although some challenges remain, particularly in attracting court staff²⁴. Following a request for a preliminary ruling from a Lithuanian court, the CJEU declared that the level of remuneration of judges must be sufficiently high, having regard to the economic, social and financial situation of the Member State concerned, in particular with regard to the average salary. The CJEU further clarified that judicial independence does not preclude their remuneration from being established at a level lower than that of the average remuneration of other legal professionals²⁵. The reforms of the remuneration systems for prosecutors, civil servants, and other court and prosecutorial staff were finalised in January 2025²⁶. The State budget for 2025-2027 increased the amount allocated to the justice system²⁷, and additional funds were allocated to the salaries of judicial assistants. Courts' administration can now transfer cost savings to a wage fund, which can be used for salaries²⁸. Despite these new arrangements, stakeholders report that salaries have not yet been raised in practice²⁹. No additional budget was allocated for the increase of salaries in the prosecution³⁰. Consequently, concerns remain among the judiciary and prosecution as to the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff,³¹ and salaries of judicial and prosecutorial staff remain comparatively low³². The need to renovate court buildings has also been raised³³.

²⁰ CCBE, written input, p. 132.

²¹ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 7. The case regarding alleged control of communications between lawyers and their clients brought by the Bar Association before the ECtHR (Application no. 64301/19) remains pending.

²² CCBE (2025), written input, p. 134.

²³ CCBE (2025), written input, p. 134. See also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 7.

²⁴ The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended Lithuania to: “[c]ontinue efforts to provide adequate human and financial resources for the justice system, taking into account European standards on resources for the justice system”.

²⁵ Judgment of the CJEU of 25 February 2025, joined cases C-146/23 and 374/23.

²⁶ Regarding these reforms, see also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, pp. 8-9.

²⁷ From EUR 120.4 million in 2024 to EUR 122.5 million in 2025. While the budget allocated to the justice system has been increasing since 2021, the expenditure on Lithuanian courts remains among the lowest in the EU, both in absolute terms and as percentage of the GDP (Figures 33 and 34, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard).

²⁸ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 4.

²⁹ Such concerns have been previously raised, see 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, pp. 8-9.

³⁰ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, pp. 19-20.

³¹ The National Courts Administration estimates that 11% of the posts for court staff remain vacant (Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 18). ENCJ, written input, p. 27. According to European standards, each State should allocate adequate resources to the courts, a sufficient number of judges and appropriately qualified support staff (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2010), para. 33).

³² Figure 36, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

The Judicial Council has called for a new court financing model, based on objective criteria³⁴. Overall, there has been some further progress in providing adequate human and financial resources for the justice system.

The reform of the judicial map has been finalised and is expected to lead to a more even distribution of workload among courts. Following the implementation of the final phase of the reform of the judicial map in January 2025, there are now 11 district courts and 26 court chambers (previously, 12 district courts and 43 court chambers). This was accompanied by amendments to the Code of Civil Procedure and to the system of allocation of cases, allowing for the automatic allocation of cases in district courts. This allocation, done through the Lithuanian Courts Information System, is based on an assessment of the workload of the courts and judges. It is expected to ensure a more even distribution of the workload among courts, allow a higher specialisation of judges, and lead to efficiency gains³⁵. Moreover, as the optimisation of the existing resources is expected to lead to savings, the authorities plan to reinvest the savings in the justice system³⁶.

There has been some further progress towards the finalisation of the reform of legal aid³⁷. The Minister of Justice has prepared a draft order aimed at ensuring an even workload distribution to legal aid providers. This envisages the creation of a point system, based on the complexity of the cases allocated to lawyers, according to which the number of cases allocated to the same lawyer will be determined. The system was tested as a pilot project between March and May 2025, after which it will be discussed with the Bar Association and amended as necessary³⁸. There are also efforts to reduce the administrative burden for legal aid providers through the simplification of the Legal Aid Information System³⁹. However, while the Government programme foresees an increase of remuneration of legal aid providers⁴⁰, no further measures in this regard were adopted so far, and the remuneration of legal aid for defence lawyers in criminal cases is the lowest in the EU⁴¹. The Bar Association has voiced its concerns, calling also for the revision of the value added tax on legal aid providers⁴². According to European standards, an appropriate level of remuneration needs to be ensured for legal aid providers⁴³. The Supreme Administrative Court has submitted a petition to the Constitutional Court concerning provisions of the Law on State Guaranteed Legal Aid⁴⁴. Overall, some further progress has been made in implementing this recommendation.

The level of digitalisation is high, and further improvements are being made to the Lithuanian Courts Information System. Electronic communication tools continue to be

³³ ENCJ (2025), written input, p. 32.

³⁴ ENCJ (2025), written input, p. 27.

³⁵ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 11.

³⁶ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 4.

³⁷ The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended Lithuania to: '[f]inalise the reform of the legal aid system, in particular by reducing the administrative burden and ensuring adequate conditions for the participation of legal aid providers, taking into account European standards on legal aid.'

³⁸ Country visit Lithuania, Ministry of Justice.

³⁹ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Country visit Lithuania, Ministry of Justice.

⁴¹ Figure 25, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

⁴² While legal aid providers whose annual income meets the threshold of EUR 45 000 are subject to VAT, the hourly fee of EUR 25 remains unchanged in such cases. CCBE, written input, p. 135.

⁴³ Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2021), para. 22. See also CCBE (2023), point 3.

⁴⁴ Country visit Lithuania, Constitutional Court.

widely available, both for courts and the prosecution service. Digital solutions to conduct and follow proceedings in criminal cases could be improved, as it is not yet possible for defendants in detention to use ICT facilities to prepare for hearings, and defendants cannot communicate confidentially with their lawyers during remote hearings⁴⁵. The project to integrate the European Case Law Identifier (ECLI) into the Lithuanian Courts Information System was finalised. A speech recognition software was introduced in courts, which is now being assessed for further improvement. The court information system is being modernised, including through the integration of data from different portals, and is expected to be finalised on 3 November 2025⁴⁶.

Efficiency

The justice system continues to perform efficiently, particularly at first instance courts.

In 2023, the disposition time in first instance civil and commercial cases (120 days), as well as in administrative cases (64 days) remained the lowest in the EU⁴⁷. The number of pending non-criminal first instance cases remained stable and comparatively low. Courts continued to be able to resolve more cases than those received, keeping a positive rate of case resolution. While no commercial courts exist and general courts have jurisdiction over commercial cases, stakeholders report that this system works well in practice⁴⁸. The amendments to the Law on Mediation adopted in June 2024 have entered into force and are expected to reduce the number of cases brought before courts, thus further contributing to the efficiency of the justice system⁴⁹.

II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

The perception among experts, citizens and business executives is that the level of corruption in the public sector remains relatively low. In the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Lithuania scores 63/100 and ranks 12th in the European Union and 32nd globally⁵⁰. This perception has been relatively stable over the past five years⁵¹. The 2025 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 80% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 69%) and 23% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 56% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 63%) and 21% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 35%). Furthermore, 45% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 36%), while 49% of companies believe that

⁴⁵ Figure 46, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

⁴⁶ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 22.

⁴⁷ Figures 5 and 7, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

⁴⁸ Country visit Lithuania, Confederation of Lithuanian Industrialists.

⁴⁹ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, pp. 23-24. See also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 (2025). The level of perceived corruption is categorized as follows: low (the perception among experts and business executives of public sector corruption scores above 79); relatively low (scores between 79-60), relatively high (scores between 59-50), high (scores below 50).

⁵¹ In 2020, the score was 60, while, in 2024, the score is 63. The score significantly increases/decreases when it changes more than five points; improves/deteriorates (changes between 4-5 points); is relatively stable (changes from 1-3 points) in the last five years.

people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 33%)⁵².

The first year of the implementation plan for the National Anti-Corruption Agenda was evaluated. Based on the agreed methodology⁵³, the first year of the implementation plan 2023-2025 of the National Anti-corruption Agenda for 2022-2033⁵⁴ was evaluated positively, with progress on 74% of the measures, and many initiatives implemented ahead of schedule. The implementation was coordinated by a working group composed of the representatives of the institutions responsible for the implementation of the Plan and observers from civil society organisations.

The effective investigation and prosecution of corruption offences continues, although the rate of acquittals remains substantially higher than for other offences. In view of addressing the length of investigations, including those on corruption, a working group has prepared draft amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which have been submitted to the Ministry of Justice⁵⁵. While the number of reports on corruption decreased (5 529 in 2024 compared to 6 599 in 2023), the number of pre-trial investigations stemming from them increased (72 in 2024, compared to 44 in 2023), suggesting an improvement of their quality⁵⁶. Overall, in 2024, the Special Investigation Service (STT) opened 103 pre-trial investigations, including one case related to misuse of the EU funds under the competence of EPPO, and transferred 75 pre-trial investigations to court⁵⁷. Overall, 120 persons were convicted in 2024, of which 7 persons were sentenced to imprisonment, while 27 persons were acquitted⁵⁸. Around 88% of convictions were accompanied by fines. According to the Prosecutor General's Office, between 1 January and 30 November 2024, 220 offences (compared to 269 offences in 2023 for the same period) of a corruption (bribery, influence trading, abuse of office) were registered. Between January and June 2024, 21% persons were acquitted of corruption-related offences (compared to 18.8% in 2023) while the average acquittal rate is around 1.5%⁵⁹. In January 2025, seven high-level and complex corruption cases were being investigated⁶⁰. On 24 October 2024, the Supreme Court ruled in a high-level corruption case, upholding the convictions imposed by the Court of Appeal⁶¹.

An implementation plan was launched to address shortcomings in fighting against foreign bribery. In view of addressing the recommendations of OECD⁶², in November 2024, an implementation plan was approved by the Minister of Justice. It outlines the steps, timing

⁵² Data from Special Eurobarometer 561 (2025) and Flash Eurobarometer 557 (2025).

⁵³ STT (2024), No. 2-95.

⁵⁴ According to the OECD criteria, Lithuania scores above the EU average on the coverage of strategic framework (7 out of 7), on the adequacy of implementation structures and reporting (13 out of 15) and implementation of activities (80 out of 100) but below the EU average on transparency of evaluation practices and use in decision making (1 out of 5).

⁵⁵ Country visit Lithuania, Public Prosecutor's Office.

⁵⁶ Country visit Lithuania, STT.

⁵⁷ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 39. Overall, two cases of corruption were investigated in 2024 under the control of EPPO. EPPO (2025), p. 41.

⁵⁸ Those sentences were given by the first instance court and/or higher instance court, if a different decision was adapted in the appeal instance. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 39. For 2023 see also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 13-14.

⁵⁹ Country visit Lithuania, Public Prosecutor's Office.

⁶⁰ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 39.

⁶¹ Lithuanian Supreme Court, judgment no. 2K-7-119-719/2024.

⁶² OECD (2023); 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, pp. 14-15.

and responsible authorities that are to address the recommendations put forward by OECD⁶³. A project ‘Prevention and Investigation of Corruption, including Bribery in International Business Transactions’ is being implemented with the aim to use good practices to strengthen capabilities to prevent bribery in international business transactions, identify and investigate such international criminal acts of corruption, as well as enhance awareness raising⁶⁴.

Various initiatives are being carried out to prevent corruption and promote integrity in the public and private sector. The evaluation report⁶⁵ of the amendments to the Law on Prevention of Corruption was open for public consultation and was finalised on 2 May of 2025. The results of the evaluation were publicly presented during a dedicated event, highlighting the impact of the current legal framework on corruption prevention⁶⁶. In relation to the implementation of the Law on Prevention of Corruption, in 2024, the Guidelines for Creating an Anti-Corruption Environment in the Public Sector were updated, and several events were organised related to building an anti-corruption environment, including with business associations⁶⁷. The new Regulation for the Integrity Academy was adopted to establish the capacity building programme for corruption prevention specialists of the public sector entities⁶⁸.

While non-legislative initiatives are taken to reinforce the existing rules on asset declarations, shortcomings remain in the legal framework. Despite previous announcements and identified shortcomings in the asset declaration process⁶⁹, there are no plans to change the existing legal framework⁷⁰. As a result, it remains the case that declarations of private interests are not checked systematically⁷¹. Nevertheless, implementation of the current rules is being actively pursued by the Chief Official Ethics Commission (COEC), through the development of the new distance learning programmes on the post-service restrictions as well as on the identification and management of conflicts of interest and lobbying⁷². The COEC is cooperating with the relevant institutions through actions including meetings with compliance officers and recommendations in the area of integrity⁷³.

⁶³ Country visit, Lithuania, STT.

⁶⁴ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 27.

⁶⁵ The results of the evaluation are expected to provide guidance on potential further improvement of the legislative framework and the implementation mechanism. Order on the approval of the ex-post assessment plan of the legal regulation of the law on the amendment of the law on the prevention of corruption. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 40.

⁶⁶ Lithuanian Government (2025b).

⁶⁷ During the meeting with the business associations and confederations, the Special Investigative Service (STT) and private sector exchanged views on possible cooperation in identifying possible corruption risks in both the private and the public sectors (Lithuanian Government (2025b)).

⁶⁸ Order No 2-116 on the approval of the regulation of the activities of the Integrity Academy Initiative.

⁶⁹ Including lack of manual check of submitted declarations and need for clarification of the mandatory data to be provided in the declarations. 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁰ The Law on the Adjustment of Public and Private Interests. Country visit Lithuania, COEC.

⁷¹ While the number of notifications received is decreasing (215 notifications were received in 2024 in comparison to 247 in 2023), the proportion of irregularities found remains high (in 2024, 28 conducted investigations led to confirmation of 25 infringements. COEC (2024), p. 7.

⁷² In 2024, as regards lobbying, 17 notifications were received, 6 preliminary investigations were opened, 2 investigations were carried out and one decision of COEC was challenged before a court. COEC (2024), p. 8.

⁷³ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 31.

The new whistleblower protection framework is being implemented. The amendments to the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers⁷⁴ aiming at adjusting the rules on processing of personal data, as well as establishing a prohibition against adverse effects, entered into force in November 2024⁷⁵. A public awareness campaign that started in September 2023 and continued in 2024 led to positive results, according to the authorities⁷⁶. In 2024, a total of 80 whistleblower reports were submitted⁷⁷ and 64 of them were sent for investigation. Whistleblower status was granted 40 times. In 2024, a total of 10 pre-trial investigations were initiated, while 18 other cases resulted in decisions not to proceed with launching such investigations⁷⁸. General trainings were organised to enhance the capacity of institutions and professionals with regard to whistleblowing⁷⁹. The Office of the Prosecutor General has developed recommendation guidelines to support whistleblowers and strengthen internal reporting channels, and is in the process of developing further recommendations for prosecutors dealing with cases arising from whistleblower reports, in view of ensuring effectiveness and consistency in handling of cases across all stages of the criminal investigation procedure⁸⁰.

The authorities continue monitoring and addressing the high-risk areas of corruption, including public procurement, through tailor-made initiatives. Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU show that 32% of companies in Lithuania (EU average 25%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender or a public procurement contract in practice in the last three years⁸¹. 49% of companies perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review bodies (district courts) as very or fairly good⁸². The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in Lithuania reports 37% of single bids for 2023 (29% EU average). In 2024, the STT carried out nine corruption risk analyses and more than 20 anti-corruption assessments of legislation in high-risk areas. Since 2024, STT has started promoting strategic anti-corruption recommendations for each newly appointed minister and will be monitoring their implementation⁸³. The National Audit Office carries out regular assessments of corruption risks in various sectors⁸⁴. In 2024, a project was launched aiming at identification of corruption risks based on artificial intelligence in cases of use of public

⁷⁴ Articles 7 and 10, Law on the protection of whistleblowers.

⁷⁵ In particular, the amendments explicitly establish a prohibition against adverse effects on a broader range of persons, including facilitators who support the process of reporting information on infringements obtained in work-related circumstances, as well as legal entities owned by, employing or otherwise associated with the whistleblower in work-related circumstances. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 32.

⁷⁶ The number of the whistleblower reports increased from 53 in 2022 to 80 in 2024. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input.

⁷⁷ In comparison to 76 reports received in 2023. 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 18.

⁷⁸ For the 2023 data, see 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁹ In 2024, 8205 persons attended extensive training sessions (online and in person). In addition tailored sessions were also organised for the healthcare sector (2160 persons attended), municipalities (1313 persons attended) auditors and public procurement experts. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 36.

⁸⁰ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 38.

⁸¹ Flash Eurobarometer 557 on Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU (2025). This is 7 percentage points above the EU average.

⁸² Figure 59, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

⁸³ Those recommendations target both the integrity of the office as well as the main corruption risks in the area of responsibility of each minister and bring potential good practices in tackling them. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 35.

⁸⁴ In 2024, the National Audit Office analysed the use of public procurement, organising, maintenance and development of roads of national significance, and did financial audits of various public sector bodies. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input.

and EU funds. In 2024, the Procurement Office established a department responsible for procurement governance⁸⁵ and presented analytical findings revealing the reasons for the persistently high single supplier indicator⁸⁶. In the context of centralisation of activities related to public procurement, the first round of inspections of 14 central contracting authorities at municipal level was carried out⁸⁷.

III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM

The human resources of the regulator for audiovisual media services, *Lietuvos radijo ir televizijos komisija* (LRTK), have slightly increased. Even with the additional competences⁸⁸, the funding of the LRTK is still assessed as sufficient and the human resources were slightly increased. From July 2025, LRTK will take on additional responsibilities regarding accessibility of media services⁸⁹. In view of these new responsibilities, the human resources might increase even further. The LRTK continued to implement the prohibition of the retransmission or internet distribution of television and radio channels and programmes that can be linked to Russia or Belarus⁹⁰. The Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM 2025) reports a continuously low risk for the independence and effectiveness of the audiovisual media authority⁹¹. The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics observed a continued increase in complaints about disinformation⁹², while the media self-regulatory body reported an increase of complaints in relation to the activities of influencers and the use of artificial intelligence in media⁹³.

Changes to the funding model of *Lietuvos nacionalinis radijas ir televizija*, the public service broadcaster (LRT) are under discussion while actions by the LRT Council raised concerns. The LRT continued to operate independently. The amendment of the Law on the LRT of June 2024 introduced additional safeguards for greater transparency and independence of LRT, including through new rules for the appointment of its supervisory body, the LRT Council. LRT broadly welcomed the additional safeguards but noted since 8 out of the 12 members are appointed by political institutions, there continues to be a risk of political influence on the Council⁹⁴. Following criticism from stakeholders⁹⁵, the Government

⁸⁵ The aim was to assess procurement governance practices, identify both good and poor practices, compile annual summaries based on these findings, and actively promote the importance of effective procurement governance. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input.

⁸⁶ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 33. The 2024-2026 Supplier Engagement Action Plan was also approved in 2024. The purpose of the Plan is to ensure a consistent increase in the number of newly registered suppliers in the Central Public Procurement Information System during each reporting year of the 2024–2026 period and to enhance their interest in participating in public procurement processes. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 33. Due to the delay of the new e-procurement system SAULE, an interim system was put in place. 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 19.

⁸⁷ The obligation for the municipalities to have at least one central contracting authority has been in force since 1 January 2023. Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 33.

⁸⁸ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 20.

⁸⁹ As set out in the Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services.

⁹⁰ Exceptional derogations to this prohibition can be authorised by the LRTK. Country visit Lithuania, LRTK. Media Pluralism Monitor (2025), p. 20.

⁹² Country visit Lithuania, Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics.

⁹³ Country visit Lithuania, Public Information Ethics Association.

⁹⁴ Country visit Lithuania, Lithuanian Radio and Television.

⁹⁵ Council of Europe Safety of Journalist Platform (2024) and Mapping Media Freedom (2024); The Safety of Journalist Platform reported the draft amendment as a serious threat to media freedom as it would risk the financial stability of LRT.

withdrew from Parliament a draft law introduced in June 2024, which aimed at changing the funding rules of the public service broadcaster by removing the main guarantee for minimum funding. A revised draft amendment submitted in July proposed changing the funding model by linking funding adjustments to the growth of the GDP, which according to LRT would introduce an element of unpredictability⁹⁶. Additional criticism was raised by stakeholders in relation to an internal audit commissioned by the LRT Council on whether journalists at LRT adhere to the principles of political neutrality in content creation and management. The head of the internal auditor and the Chair of the LRT Council criticised the audit and resigned from their positions. The Director-General of LRT also expressed concerns that the audit might infringe the editorial independence of its journalists⁹⁷. Parliament tasked the National Audit Office with a further audit, inspecting the accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of LRT between 2021 and 2024. The audit is expected to be concluded by November 2025⁹⁸. The MPM 2025 confirms that the independence of public service media is at low risk⁹⁹.

The budget for the Media Support Fund has increased significantly, and new application rules make more media service providers eligible for funding. The budget allocated to Media Support Fund¹⁰⁰ is EUR 10.5 million, EUR 4 million over the initial budget. The 2025 revised budget application rules include lower minimum requirements for all funding programmes, which are expected to help emerging media to apply¹⁰¹. While the revised rules were broadly welcomed, the Lithuanian Journalists' Union reported that the rules still favour existing and larger media service providers, making it difficult for smaller and new media service providers¹⁰². The data from *Viešosios informacijos rengėjų ir skleidėjų informacinė Sistema* (VIRSIS), a public information system, shows that state advertising is not distributed to a wide plurality of media service providers¹⁰³. While technical changes to VIRSIS improved access and export of information from the system, the current legal regime still does not account for ownership via proxies¹⁰⁴. According to the MPM 2025, media ownership transparency is at low risk. While news media concentration is very high, Lithuanian law does not provide for specific rules on market concentration in the media sector¹⁰⁵. A working group tasked by the Ministry of Culture with adapting the national legislative framework to the rules of the European Media Freedom Act is examining necessary changes, including measures to address media concentration¹⁰⁶.

The situation regarding access to documents improved, and journalists will have a right to access a new register of members of political organisations. The guidelines for the reconciliation of personal data protection requirements and freedom of expression and information continue to be implemented by public authorities at all levels of government. The compliance with the guidelines improved and public authorities generally provide the

⁹⁶ Country visit Lithuania, Lithuanian Radio and Television.

⁹⁷ Country visit Lithuania, Lithuanian Radio and Television. See also LRT (2025).

⁹⁸ LRT (2025).

⁹⁹ Media Pluralism Monitor (2025), p. 20.

¹⁰⁰ Established by the Government in September 2023 to promote media pluralism.

¹⁰¹ Country visit Lithuania, Ministry of Culture.

¹⁰² Country visit Lithuania, Lithuanian Journalists Union.

¹⁰³ Media Pluralism Monitor (2025), p. 23.

¹⁰⁴ Country visit Lithuania, Ministry of Culture.

¹⁰⁵ Media Pluralism Monitor (2025), p. 16.

¹⁰⁶ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 43.

requested information¹⁰⁷, with the exception of public authorities at lower levels of government, who seem more reluctant to provide access to information¹⁰⁸. To further improve compliance with the guidelines, outreach measures were conducted to inform public authorities and media about their rights and responsibilities¹⁰⁹. In November 2024, the Law on Political Organisations was amended, establishing the right for journalists to receive data concerning members of political organisations free of charge from a register. The register will become operational in April 2026¹¹⁰.

The implementation of the Government action plan for the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists continues, with the overall situation regarding the safety of journalists remaining favourable. The situation regarding the safety of journalist remains overall good¹¹¹. Since the publication of the 2024 Rule of Law Report, no new alerts have been published regarding Lithuania on the Council of Europe’s Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists¹¹². However, verbal attacks against journalists aiming to discredit their work were reported¹¹³. In this context, the Mapping Media Freedom platform issued an alert in relation to a member of a governing party discrediting LRT in relation to its alleged USAID funding¹¹⁴. The implementation of the Government action plan for the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists continued. During 2024 different public authorities conducted training sessions for the judiciary and law enforcement on various safety-related topics¹¹⁵. However, the implementation of some other actions is delayed or no longer envisaged¹¹⁶. Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs) remain a minor occurrence in the country¹¹⁷. The procedural safeguards of the civil justice system are considered sufficient to prevent SLAPPs against journalists¹¹⁸. The Ministry of Justice is preparing amendments to the Code of Civil Procedure to implement the anti-SLAPP Directive¹¹⁹.

IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES

The Ministry of Justice continues to implement measures to improve the quality of legislation. Responding to the Legislative Methodological Recommendations and Recommendations for Codification of 2024, the Ministry of Justice is organising training for staff in ministries who are responsible for drafting legal acts, aiming at ensuring a higher quality of legislation and making legislative practice more consistent¹²⁰. The Ministry has also prepared ‘Recommendations for Draft resolutions of the Government’, which are

¹⁰⁷ Country visit Lithuania, Ministry of Culture.

¹⁰⁸ Country visit Lithuania, Lithuanian Journalists Union and The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics.

¹⁰⁹ Country visit Lithuania, The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics.

¹¹⁰ The register was originally foreseen to be operational in July 2025; Country visit Lithuania, Ministry of Culture.

¹¹¹ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, pp. 22-23.

¹¹² Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists (2025).

¹¹³ Delfi (2025).

¹¹⁴ Mapping Media Freedom (2025).

¹¹⁵ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 44.

¹¹⁶ Country visit Lithuania, Ministry of Culture.

¹¹⁷ Country visit Lithuania, Internet Media Association, Lithuanian Radio and Television and The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics.

¹¹⁸ Country visit Lithuania, The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics.

¹¹⁹ ‘Strategic lawsuits against public participation’ Directive; Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 44.

¹²⁰ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, pp. 45-46.

intended to bring a more uniform drafting of Government resolutions in response to draft legal acts of Parliament. In the context of the legislative process, the Ministry also conducts a systematic assessment of compliance of the drafts with the applicable legislative principles and may propose changes¹²¹. The assessment of regulatory burden for businesses is underway, and a compliance cost reduction goal has been established¹²².

Over half of the companies surveyed in Lithuania express confidence in the effectiveness investment protection. 59% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts¹²³. Stakeholders consider that the short timeframes for public consultations, as well as the fact that these only take place in the final phase of the reforms, negatively affect the protection of investors¹²⁴. As regards authorities relevant for economic operators, 41% of companies perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (the Competition Council of the Republic of Lithuania) as very or fairly good¹²⁵. A number of judicial mechanisms are in place at the level of the Supreme Administrative Court to ensure the implementation of administrative court judgments, including disciplinary actions against the responsible officials, the possibility to substitute the annulled administrative act, and to award direct and consequential damages and compensation¹²⁶.

On 1 January 2025, Lithuania had 20 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, a decrease of 2 compared to the previous year¹²⁷. At that time, Lithuania's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 68% (compared to 66% in 2024; 32% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 4 years and 7 months (compared to 3 years and 8 months in 2024)¹²⁸. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for almost 17 years, concerns the lack of legislation governing the conditions and procedures relating to gender reassignment¹²⁹. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2024 there were no cases awaiting confirmation of payments (same as in 2023)¹³⁰. On 16 June 2025, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had decreased to 18¹³¹. Following the European Court of Human Rights decision in *Macatė v Lithuania* and subsequent Government application to the Constitutional Court, this Court declared the contested provision of the Law on the Protection of Minors incompatible with the Constitution¹³².

¹²¹ Lithuanian Government (2025b), written input, p. 9.

¹²² Lithuanian Government (2025b), written input, p. 10.

¹²³ Figure 54, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard. 27% and 21% of the surveyed investors respectively perceive the frequent changes in legislation or concerns about the quality of the law-making process, and the quality, efficiency or independence of justice, respectively, as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection.

¹²⁴ Country visit Lithuania, Confederation of Lithuanian Industrialists.

¹²⁵ Figure 60, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹²⁶ Figure 49, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard. The data presented reflects exclusively the mechanisms in place at the level of the highest administrative jurisdictions; the same or other mechanisms may be in place at lower instance administrative courts.

¹²⁷ For an explanation of the supervision process, see the [website](#) of the Council of Europe.

¹²⁸ All figures calculated by the European Implementation Network (EIN) and based on the number of cases that are considered pending at the annual cut-off date of 1 January 2025. EIN (2025), written input, p.6.

¹²⁹ Judgment of the ECtHR, 27527/03, *L. v Lithuania*, pending implementation since 2008.

¹³⁰ Council of Europe (2025), p. 157.

¹³¹ Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).

¹³² Constitutional Court of Lithuania, No KT101-N15/2024. 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 25. ECtHR, *Macatė v Lithuania*, case no. 61435/19.

The resources allocated to the Parliamentary Ombudspersons further increased, in line with the extension of its mandate. In November 2024, the mandate of the Seimas Ombudspersons was extended to include the role of ‘National rapporteur on trafficking in human beings’, and additional budget was allocated in this regard¹³³. While concerns remain regarding the adequacy of the resources to fulfil the broad mandate of the institution, it is acknowledged that the situation is improving¹³⁴. In May 2024, the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudspersons was re-accredited with ‘A’ status¹³⁵. While the accreditation committee recommended to ensure the formalisation of a clear, transparent, and participatory selection and appointment process of Ombudspersons, and to provide for an independent and objective dismissal process, the Government is not envisaging changes¹³⁶. It is reported that 98% of the recommendations made in 2024 by the Parliamentary Ombudspersons were implemented or taken into account, and the institution can exercise its mandate without any threats, intimidation or harassment¹³⁷. However, challenges remain regarding the Ombudspersons’ access to policy makers and the involvement in the legislative process, as there is no systematic notification of draft laws by the parliamentary committees¹³⁸.

Stakeholders continue to express concerns regarding the effective participation of civil society in decision-making processes, in particular at local level. While the civic space continues to be considered open¹³⁹, civil society organisations (CSOs) continue to report some challenges regarding their participation in decision making, particularly the short and unclear consultation timelines, and the lack of clear feedback mechanisms, especially at local level¹⁴⁰. Stakeholders have called for minimum consultation periods to be established¹⁴¹. Non-governmental organisations’ (NGOs) right of access to information from the Centre of Registers remains subject to evidence of direct interest and to the payment of a fee, which further limits their capacity to participate in the decision-making process¹⁴². The National NGO fund continues to be an important source of financing for NGOs, and feedback on its functioning is positive. However, challenges remain regarding the limited availability of funds and the bureaucratic hurdles to access them¹⁴³. NGOs have welcomed amendments to the Law on Personal Income Tax that came into force and provide that taxpayers can allocate a certain percentage of their income tax to non-profit organisations. However, these NGOs have also expressed concerns about the obligation to have an ‘NGO marker’ to be eligible for

¹³³ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 49; ENNHRI (2025), p. 4.

¹³⁴ ENNHRI (2025), pp. 4 and 5. 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 26; Country visit Lithuania, Office of the Parliamentary Ombudspersons. The 2024 Rule of Law Report considered that Lithuania had made significant progress concerning the 2023 recommendation on the resources at the disposal of the Ombudspersons (2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 2).

¹³⁵ Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) (2024).

¹³⁶ GANHRI (2024); ENNHRI (2025), p. 1.

¹³⁷ Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 49; ENNHRI (2025), p. 5.

¹³⁸ ENNHRI (2025), p. 4.

¹³⁹ Rating by CIVICUS; ratings are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

¹⁴⁰ According to a study of the Office of the Seimas Ombudspersons, municipalities do not always consult with the public and non-governmental organisations when making important decisions (Lithuanian Government (2025a), written input, p. 46). Country visit Lithuania, Human Rights Monitoring Institute, NGO Coalition.

¹⁴¹ Civil Liberties Union for Europe (2025), pp. 638-639. Country visit Lithuania, Confederation of Lithuanian Industrialists.

¹⁴² 2024 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 27. Country visit Lithuania, Human Rights Monitoring Institute, NGO Coalition.

¹⁴³ For instance, NGOs criticise that the regulation of public procurement is not clear, as some agencies that provide funding for NGOs automatically apply public procurement rules (Country visit Lithuania, NGO Coalition).

these allocations¹⁴⁴, as they fear this may open the door to abuses by for-profit organisations. Concerns have also emerged about incidents of negative rhetoric targeting certain NGOs and calls for disclosure of data on foreign funding, which were subsequently accompanied by social media posts revealing the identity of some of the beneficiaries.

¹⁴⁴ Country visit Lithuania, Human Rights Monitoring Institute, NGO Coalition. Civil Liberties Union for Europe (2025), p. 642. See also 2023 Rule of Law Report, Lithuania, p. 23 (Law on Personal Income Tax).

Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order*

* *The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2025 Rule of Law report can be found at https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2025-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en.*

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Annex II: Country visit to Lithuania

The Commission services held virtual meetings in February 2025 with:

- Bar Association
- COEC
- Confederation of Lithuanian Industrialists
- Constitutional Court
- Human Rights Monitoring Institute
- Judicial Council
- Lithuanian Journalists Union
- Lithuanian Radio and Television
- Media Authority – Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Justice
- National Courts Administration
- National NGO Coalition
- Office of the President of the Republic
- Office of the Prosecutor General
- Office of the Seimas Ombudspersons
- Online Media Association
- Public Information Ethics Association
- Public Procurement Service
- Special Investigation Service
- Supreme Court
- Transparency International Lithuania

* The Commission also met the following organisations in a number of horizontal meetings:

- Amnesty International
- Araminta
- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Civil Society Europe
- European Civic Forum
- European Partnership for Democracy
- European Youth Forum,
- International Commission of Jurists
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- JEF Europe
- Philea – Philanthropy Europe Association.
- Transparency International