

Annual Rule of Law Report - Council of Europe contribution



2026

Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I)

General issues

VENICE COMMISSION

[CDL-AD\(2025\)019](#)

Brief to the Constitution Committee of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom in relation to its inquiry into the Rule of Law.

[CDL-PI\(2025\)020-bil](#)

Information on the follow-up to the Brief to the Constitution Committee of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom in relation to its inquiry into the Rule of Law (CDL-AD(2025)019)

[CDL-AD\(2025\)002](#)

The Updated Rule of Law Checklist.

[CDL-PI\(2025\)021-bil](#)

Information on the follow-up to the report on a Rule of Law and human rights compliant regulation of spyware (CDL-AD(2024)043)

I Justice Systems

PACE

Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

- In [Resolution 2599 \(2025\)](#) on the Implementation of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (paragraph 14), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted the following text relating to the European Commission's Rule of Law Reports:

“14. The Assembly welcomes the contribution that the European Commission has made in its Rule of Law Reports, which highlights problems with the implementation of the Court's judgments. The Assembly invites the European Commission to more frequently include the implementation of the Court's judgments in its lists of recommendations in the country chapters of Rule of Law Reports, by:

14.1 recommending that States implement particular judgments which are significant for ensuring the protection of the rule of law; and/or

14.2 recommending that States improve their overall record of implementing judgments in leading cases of the Court, in countries that have a significant problem with the execution of these judgments.”

- In [Resolution 2599 \(2025\)](#) on the Implementation of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (paragraph 6), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe highlighted that nine Council of Europe member States have over 40 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation. Five of these States are subjects of the Commission’s Rule of Law reports: Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Romania.
- In the 12th Report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, the rapporteur highlighted the following judgments and groups of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights that are pending implementation, concerning the protection of democratic principles, which also relate to issues covered in the European Commission’s Rule of Law Reports, and which concern states that are to be covered in the European Commission’s next Rule of Law Report:
 - Bulgaria:
 - [Miroslava Todorova v. Bulgaria](#), Application No. 40072/13, judgment of 19 October 2021
 - [UMO Ilinden and Others v. Bulgaria](#), Application No. 59491/00, judgement of 19 January 2006
 - Greece:
 - [Bekir Ousta v. Greece](#), Application No. 35151/05, Judgement of 11 October 2007
 - Hungary:
 - [Baka v. Hungary](#), Application No. 20261/12, judgment of 23 June 2016
 - Italy:
 - [Belpietro v. Italy](#), Application No. 43612/10, judgment of 24 September 2013
 - Poland:
 - [Kurlowicz v. Poland](#), Application No. 41029/06, judgment of 22 June 2010
 - [Juszczyszyn v. Poland](#), Application No. 35599/20, judgment of 6 October 2022
 - [Broda and Bojara v. Poland](#), Application Nos. 26691/18 and 27367/18, judgment of 29 June 2021
 - [Zurek v. Poland](#), Application No. 39650/18, judgment of 16 June 2022
 - [Tuleya v. Poland](#), Application No. 21181/19, judgment of 6 July 2023
 - [Xero Flor v. Poland](#), Application No. 4907/18 judgment of 7 May 2021
 - [Reczkowicz v. Poland](#), Application No. 43447/19, judgment of 22 July 2021
 - [Dolińska-Ficek and Ozimek v. Poland](#), Application Nos. 49868/19 and 57511/19, judgment of 8 November 2021
 - [Wałęsa v. Poland](#), Application No. 50849/21, judgment of 23 November 2023
 - [Grzeda v. Poland](#), Application No. 43572/18, judgment of 15 March 2022
 - [Advance Pharma sp. z o.o v. Poland](#), Application No. 1469/20, judgment of 3 February 2022
 - Romania:
 - [Ghiulfer Predescu v. Romania](#), Application No. 29751/09 and others, judgment of 27 June 2017

CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN JUDGES (CCJE)

[CCJE Opinion No. 28 \(2025\)](#) on the importance of judicial well-being for the delivery of justice

CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN PROSECUTORS (CCPE)

[CCPE Opinion No. 20 \(2025\) on diversity and inclusivity within prosecution services](#)

CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN PROSECUTORS (CCPE)

[Thematic study of the CCPE on the use of artificial intelligence \(AI\) in the work of prosecution services \(2025\)](#)

Opinions of the CCJE/CCPE are applicable to all member States of the Council of Europe. Thematic studies of the CCJE/CCPE are applicable to member States having responded to the respective questionnaires.

CRIMINAL LAW

2025 saw the adoption of the [3rd Additional Protocol](#) the Council of Europe Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (the Valletta Protocol). The Protocol makes electronic channels of communication the default option, and embracing digital tools. This update marks a significant step forward in modernising judicial cooperation to fight crime across borders. The Valetta Protocol has been signed by 17 Council of Europe member States, including 10 EU member States (Belgium, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Sweden) and one of the candidate countries: North Macedonia.

Recommendation: Encourage EU promotion among its member States and the four candidate countries to sign and ratify the third additional Protocol to the Convention on **Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters** to modernise cross-border judicial cooperation (17 signatories to date, priority under the EU's Cypriot Presidency).

HELP PROGRAMME

HELP courses enable legal professionals to better protect human rights at national level and keep up to date with the ever-evolving European standards and case-law of the European courts. HELP courses also cover the European Union legal system where applicable, by including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and relevant EU law and jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the EU. The **HELP Catalogue covers issues related to the Rule of Law**, with numerous courses addressing issues like efficiency of justice, the role of judges in upholding the rule of law, ethics, introduction to corruption prevention, safety and protection of journalists etc.

When contextualised to the national legislation and practice, HELP courses contribute to address **training needs** identified by various Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms, **including the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights**. They also contribute to achieving the objectives set in the **EU Judicial Training strategy**.

The **Council of Europe HELP Programme has enabled 77,239 current and future justice professionals (71,014 from EU member States and 6,225 from Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) to access high-quality training on human rights, including its EU dimension** and has supported national partners (Judicial Training Institutions and Bar Associations) enhance their training offer in line with the CoE and EU requirements.

Specific data by topic or by country is available in the [most recent HELP Annual Report](#) or upon demand to the HELP Secretariat.

Country	HELP users as of 31/12/2025	Country	HELP users as of 31/12/2025
Italy	13,797	Slovakia	834
Spain	12,090	Lithuania	795
France	7,610	Slovenia	625
Portugal	5,280	Austria	621
Romania	5,161	Hungary	617
Greece	4,722	Finland	480
Cyprus	2,714	Sweden	479
Czechia	2,440	Malta	349
Poland	2,334	Luxembourg	308
Belgium	1,994	Denmark	205

Germany	1,787	Estonia	153
Ireland	1,378		
Netherlands	1,287	Albania	1,896
Bulgaria	1,058	Serbia	1,844
Croatia	959	North Macedonia	1,633
Latvia	937	Montenegro	852

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

In 2025, the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers continued to supervise the implementation of a significant cluster of Roma-related leading cases, revealing persistent structural shortcomings across several member States. Newly-added leading cases in 2025 — *Salay v. Slovakia*, *B.T. and B.K.Cs. v. Hungary*, and *B.B. v. Slovakia* — highlight systemic issues such as segregation in education, disproportionate child-protection interventions, and failures to protect victims of trafficking. These join other leading cases under enhanced supervision, including *Szolcsán v. Hungary*, *Elmazova and Others v. North Macedonia*, *X and Others v. Albania*, *Horváth and Kiss v. Hungary*, and *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic* concerning school segregation; *Paketova and Others v. Bulgaria*, *R.R. and R.D. v. Slovakia*, *Lingurar v. Romania*, *Fedorchenko and Lozenko v. Ukraine*, and *Soare and Others v. Romania* addressing policing, hate-crime investigations, and *Yordanova and Others v. Bulgaria* concerning forced evictions; *Centre for Legal Resources (Valentin Câmpeanu) v. Romania* on the protection of persons with intellectual disabilities; and *Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* on discriminatory electoral legislation. In parallel, several Roma-related cases under standard supervision — such as *Budinova and Chaprazov v. Bulgaria*, *Hirtu and Others v. France*, *A.P. v. Slovakia*, *Balázs v. Hungary*, and *Winterstein and Others v. France* — concerning hate speech, hate crimes, housing and evictions remained under active examination. These structural problems faced by Roma individuals in various member States indicate that sustained structural reforms are still needed to address discrimination and ensure full compliance with the Convention.

VENICE COMMISSION

Forthcoming: Compilation on Judicial Councils

[CDL-AD\(2025\)003](#) -Urgent Report on the cancellation of election results by Constitutional Courts.

[CDL-PI\(2025\)023](#) - Updated compilation of Venice Commission opinions and reports relating to qualified majorities and anti-deadlock mechanisms in relation to the election by parliament of constitutional and supreme court judges/presidents, prosecutors general, members of judicial and prosecutorial councils, independent/non-political bodies and ombudspersons.

II Anti-corruption framework

VENICE COMMISSION

Forthcoming: Report on Foreign Influence and Foreign Interference.

III Media pluralism

PACE

The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media is currently preparing a report on “[Media concentration and threats to media pluralism and independence](#)” (Rapporteur: Ms Valentina Grippo, Italy, ALDE) to be debated by the Assembly during its fourth part-session of 2026.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

The SOGIESC Unit worked with media and journalists to support ethical reporting on LGBTI people and issues. Building on the work of 2024, sessions to emphasise the importance of promoting positive and diverse LGBTIQ narratives while avoiding discrimination were organised in Poland and Moldova, together with local organisations and with the support of national public authorities. Additionally, during the No Hate Speech Week 2025, participants from civil society, faith-based organisations, law enforcement, media and journalists, as well as public authorities at local level were invited to Strasbourg for a SOGIESC study visit, comprising of four different sessions and time to network and connect with other participants of the event. This allowed attendees to challenge stereotypes and prejudices about each other's work and build bridges and partnerships.

VENICE COMMISSION

Forthcoming: Interim report on the balance between fundamental rights and freedoms relevant to violent pornography in the case law of European constitutional courts and international tribunals.

Forthcoming: Report on freedom of expression, prohibition of hate speech and promotion of pluralism in the context of electoral campaigns.

IV Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

VENICE COMMISSION

[CDL-AD\(2025\)049](#) - Report on the status of the European Charter of Local Self-government in the domestic legal order

[CDL-AD\(2025\)045](#) - Report on the impact of the pre-trial detention of mayors on the exercise of local democratic governance

[CDL-AD\(2024\)039](#) - Report on election observers as human rights defenders, approved by the Council for Democratic Elections at its 81st meeting (Venice, 5 December 2024) and adopted by the Venice Commission at its 141st Plenary Session (Venice, 6-7 December 2024)

[CDL-PI\(2025\)022-bil](#) - Information on the follow-up to the Report on Term Limits – Part I – Presidents (CDL-AD(2018)010)

[CDL-PI\(2025\)017](#) - Compilation on out-of-country voting

[CDL-PI\(2025\)014](#) - Compilation of Venice Commission Opinions and Reports on Parliamentary Autonomy

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

In view of the increasingly oppressive context for LGBTI persons and the clampdown on LGBTI civil society in some States, online peer-to-peer exchanges between human rights defenders from countries including Armenia, Georgia, Hungary, Serbia and Türkiye, aimed at collective reflection, strategic planning, and the sharing of knowledge among human rights defender who face, or have faced, similar pressures in their countries were organised.

The continued adoption of Foreign Agent laws in some States has been one of the factors leading to a shrinking civil society space. LGBTI civil society organisations, amongst certain others, are particularly impacted by these laws due to their reliance on foreign funding. This creates institutional barriers to civil society involvement in policy making and service provision.

The Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) launched an [online data base of tools for preventing and combating hate crime](#) to support member states with the implementation of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4](#).

Risks that artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithmic decision-making (ADM) systems can pose to equality and non-discrimination principles during the delivery of public and private sector services are being addressed with new tools including an [online course](#) for Equality Bodies and other regulators and [EU-Council of Europe joint project](#) to increase their readiness to uncover discrimination in the public administration's deployment of artificial intelligence, including providing legal assistance to those who are discriminated against by AI, in line with the EU and Council of Europe standards and national legislation. Early 2026, two studies were published on "[European policy guidelines on AI and algorithm-driven discrimination for equality bodies and other national human rights structures](#)" (also available in [FRA](#), [DUT](#), [POR](#), [FIN](#), [SWE](#)); and "[Legal protection against algorithmic discrimination in Europe: current frameworks and remaining gaps](#)" in full (also in [FRA](#), [DUT](#), [POR](#), [FIN](#), [SWE](#)).

§§ 16-27 and 30-37 of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 on combating hate speech](#) contain a comprehensive set of recommendations for ensuring respect of the criminal, civil and administrative law provisions prohibiting hate speech on the Internet. Respect of such legislation on the internet is crucial for the effectiveness for the rule of law. CDADI will conduct an implementation review of those provisions in 2026-2027. Respect of anti-discrimination legislation by AI systems, LLMs and AI powered agents will also be crucial in the future.