

Serbia

I Justice System

In 2025, the Council of Europe organised a series of activities to support **uniformity of judicial practice** and **legal certainty** through regular quarterly meetings between appellate courts and the Supreme Court, covering civil, labour and criminal jurisdictions. These exchanges contributed to **case-law harmonisation**. The support also focused on **professional ethics**, **internal governance** and **transparency** within the prosecution service, including strengthening ICT capacities in public prosecutors' offices. Analytical work addressed **ethical standards**, **safeguards against undue influence**, **material guarantees of judicial independence** and emerging challenges related to the **use of artificial intelligence** in the judiciary. The implementation of the new frameworks for the elections of members of the High Prosecutorial Council and the High Judicial Council were assessed in practice, including the elections held in December 2025 and January 2026.

Serious concerns arose following the adoption in January 2026 of amendments to key judicial and prosecutorial laws. The amendments weaken judicial and prosecutorial autonomy, reintroduce risks of political influence and contradict the 2023 reform framework and Serbia's EU accession commitments. The European Commission invited the authorities to suspend implementation of these amendments and to engage in consultations with the European Commission and the Venice Commission.

The amendments to the Law on Public Prosecution, adopted without public debate or the Venice Commission review, represent a step back from the 2022 constitutional referendum aimed at strengthening judicial independence. They introduce mandatory instructions in individual cases, weaken internal safeguards and extend mandates of court presidents and chief prosecutors - contrary to the Venice Commission recommendations. These developments risk undermining the autonomy and credibility of the High Prosecutorial Council and the High Judicial Council and the ongoing elections to the Councils.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

At the end of 2025 ten new judges were elected to the Constitutional Court by the President of Serbia and by the National Parliament. However, the Constitutional Court is not functioning in full capacity as there are yet three vacant positions. These positions should be filled by judges elected by the Supreme Court upon a joint proposal by the High Judicial and High Prosecutorial Councils.

The [Council of Europe](#) provides support to the Constitutional Court in maintaining regular dialogue with the European Court of Human Rights to enhance the national implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

GOVERNMENT AGENT

The [Council of Europe](#) provides support to the Government Agent before the European Court of Human Rights and relevant state authorities to efficiently execute the European Court of Human Rights judgments against Serbia. As noted in the Council of Europe [assessment report](#), the procedure for executing the European Court of Human Rights judgments is underregulated. This concern has been repeatedly acknowledged in the EU Commission's progress reports on Serbia, the [latest](#) of which states in regard to the execution of judgments that “the government agent needs to be given a coordination role and the authority to fulfil it”, which is in line with the Council of Europe assessment report. However, no steps have been taken so far in this respect.

CEPEJ

The European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) regularly collects data on judicial systems concerning efficiency and quality of the justice system. In the framework of the Dashboard Western Balkans project, CEPEJ prepares annually Country profiles. [Country profile – Dashboard western Balkans - Serbia \(2024 data\)](#)

EXECUTION OF JUDGMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Official statistics on the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights are published in the Committee of Ministers [Annual reports on the execution](#) (next edition to be published in March 2026). The Department for the Execution of Judgments can be consulted for any question on statistics: DGI-Execution@coe.int.

[Jevremovic](#) (3150/05) (closed): concerns violations of the applicants’ right to a fair trial on account of excessive length of different types of judicial proceedings (civil, family-related and commercial), as well as a lack of an effective remedy under domestic law at the relevant time for the applicants’ complaints about the length of some of these proceedings. Remaining issues followed under [Kajganić](#).

Latest decisions of the Committee of Ministers: [CM/Del/Dec\(2025\)1537/H46-35](#)

Latest submissions: [DH-DD\(2025\)707](#)

[Kajganić](#) (27958/16): concerns excessive length of civil proceedings before the first two levels of jurisdiction. Issues followed under standard procedure focus on tackling the remaining backlog.

Latest submissions: [DH-DD\(2025\)707](#)

[Mitić](#) (59711/21): concerns excessive length of the criminal proceedings in context of organised crime.

Latest submissions: [DH-DD\(2025\)1495](#)

[Selimi and Krasnici](#) (20641/20) concerns, inter alia, the unreasonable length of administrative and connected judicial proceedings.

Latest submissions: [DH-DD\(2025\)1278](#)

[R. Kačapor and Others](#) (2269/06) (enhanced supervision): concern violations of the applicants’ right of access to a court and the peaceful enjoyment of their property due to non-enforcement or delayed enforcement of domestic judicial decisions given in the applicants’ favour against socially/State-owned companies ordering them to pay their debts for salary arrears or their commercial debts.

Latest decisions of the Committee of Ministers: [CM/Del/Dec\(2025\)1531/H46-35](#)

Latest submissions: [DH-DD\(2025\)433](#)

HELP PROGRAMME

Through the translation and adaptation of 30 HELP courses to the national legislation and practice, the **Council of Europe HELP Programme has enabled 1,918 legal professionals in Serbia to access high-quality training on human rights, including its EU dimension**. This has resulted in 2,787 enrolments and 574 certifications through self-learning, complemented by 51 tutored courses delivered in cooperation with the national partners (Judicial Academy and Bar Association), reaching 1,374 participants with a 80% success rate.

General information

- Number of **users** of HELP Platform from Serbia: **1,918**
- Number of **HELP courses** translated and adapted in Serbian: **30**
 - **2,787 enrolments, 574 certifications in self-learning**
 - **51 tutored courses organised since 2016 (1,374 participants, 80% success rate)** implemented in partnership with the **Judicial Academy and Bar Association** and in cooperation with various Council of Europe projects (mainly implemented within the *Council of Europe Office in Belgrade*)

HELP in the Western Balkans has a long-established cooperation with the **Judicial Academy** of Serbia. Immediately after the new Director took his appointment, he accepted the invitation to participate in the annual HELP Conference in Strasbourg. Although the number of tutored HELP courses decreased in comparison with previous years, the commitment of the Judicial Academy for the implementation of HELP courses stayed firm.

By the end of 2025, the Judicial Academy of Serbia transferred 16 HELP courses from the HELP Platform to its own e-learning platform ([Правосудна академија, ПАРС](#)). The courses will be used both in the initial and continuous education of legal professionals of Serbia.

The HELP course on [Combating Trafficking in Human Beings](#) was implemented in April 2025 for 31 candidate judges and prosecutors with the support of EU/CoE “Strengthening anti-trafficking action in Serbia”.

- The HELP in the Western Balkans project is targeting the implementation of the HELP courses that correspond to the priorities of the CoE [Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights](#). In 2026, HELP in the Western Balkans will seek the support from other CoE projects and actions for the implementation of the following priority topics as defined by the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights country [factsheet](#)
 - Security forces - use of force and effective investigations
 - Risk of Ill-treatment in the case of extradition
 - Enforcement of judicial decisions
 - Length of judicial proceedings
 - Protection of Private and Family life
 - Discrimination

The HELP course on [Admissibility Criteria in applications submitted to the European Court of Human Rights](#) was translated and adapted to Serbian in cooperation with the EU/Council of Europe project [“Strengthening human rights protection in Serbia”](#). The tutored course will be implemented in May 2026 for staff of the [Representative of the Republic of Serbia before the European Court of Human Rights](#) and the Bar Association of Serbia.

VENICE COMMISSION

[CDL-AD\(2024\)036-e](#) - Opinion on the draft Law on the Judicial Academy and draft amendments to the Law on Judges and the Law on the Public Prosecutor’s Office, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 141st Plenary Session (Venice, 6-7 December 2024).

GENDER-EQUALITY

Western Balkans - Judicial training institutions in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia are applying new competencies to enhance equal access to justice for women and men through an innovative peer-to-peer mentoring programme for legal professionals, supported by the cooperation project, [“Women’s access to justice in the Western Balkans”](#).

II Anti-corruption framework

HELP PROGRAMME

The HELP course on [Introduction to Corruption Prevention](#) was translated and adapted to Serbian in cooperation with the CoE project “[Countering Economic Crime in Serbia](#)”. The tutored course will be launched in 2026 for the staff of the [Agency for Prevention of Corruption](#) of Serbia.

III Media pluralism

PACE

Monitoring committee

Serbia | [Doc. 16316](#)

The situation has also been followed by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Michael O’Flaherty, who visited Serbia in April 2025 and expressed concern about increased levels of the use of force by the police during protests as well as arbitrary arrests and detention of protesters. The state of freedom of expression and media remains an issue of concern. In 2025, the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists issued at least 11 alerts, including cases of denigration of journalists criticising the government, physical attacks or other harassment against journalists covering protests and Pegasus surveillance.

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

As of the date of publication of the 2025 Rule of Law Report, the concerns remain unchanged. The appointment process for Serbia's Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) Council has encountered significant challenges, raising [concerns](#) about transparency and political influence. On a positive note, the Administration of REM decided to [systematically publish complaints](#) against broadcasters and the corresponding reports prepared by REM's expert services and in accordance with by-laws developed with EU/Council of Europe [support](#). This step improves public insight into regulatory oversight processes, strengthens accountability and allows stakeholders to better understand how alleged violations of media legislation are assessed at technical level. Although these publications do not replace formal Council decisions, they represent a positive interim measure that contributes to transparency, predictability and public trust in regulatory work during the period of institutional transition. The safety of journalists including SLAPPs are as well under spotlight, with Journalists Associations [noting](#) 38 incidents involving journalists and media workers, indicating a continued rise in threats, insults, and intimidation against media professionals.

[Council of Europe Division for Cooperation on Freedom of Expression](#) continued to engage in freedom of expression and media field through EU/CoE Joint Action “[Protecting freedom of expression and of the media in Serbia \(PROFEX\)](#)”. With the 2025 RoL Report explicitly identifying rising SLAPP pressure and gaps vis-à-vis EU acquis, the Action's work on legal guidance and capacity-building for legal professionals and journalists directly supports earlier identification of abusive claims, more consistent reliance on ECtHR standards, and better institutional awareness of protective measures. The Action provided Serbian language versions of the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)2 and the EU Directive (EU) 2024/1069 on countering Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) to Judicial Academy, with provided [capacity building and awareness raising of over 50 judges](#) and members of CSOs who form Anti-Slapp coalition in Serbia. These efforts were fortified by development of the new [Guide for Legal Professionals on Freedom of Expression, SLAPPs and Related ECHR Standards](#), that assists lawyers defending journalists and civil society organisations targeted by Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), as well as judges adjudicating such cases in understanding European standards.

The Action has delivered concrete, evidence-based support to the regulatory environment through its cooperation with the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM). Prior to this, REM lacked systematic empirical data necessary to fully implement its mandate under Article 7 of the Law on Electronic Media, which requires the regulator to “conduct research on the needs of media service users and protect their interests.” As a result, key regulatory decisions were often not supported by comprehensive audience data. This was particularly relevant in the context of earlier Council decisions on the allocation of national broadcasting

frequencies, which were widely perceived by stakeholders as favouring pro-government media and were not underpinned by transparent public interest assessments. Through the implementation of comprehensive research on media user preferences in Serbia, in January 2026 the Action has provided REM with robust, representative data on audience needs, trust and media consumption patterns. This enables REM to operationalise its legal mandate in a measurable and transparent way, strengthening evidence-based licensing, monitoring and by-law development.

IV Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

PACE

Monitoring committee

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The co-rapporteurs of the Monitoring Committee closely followed the situation in Serbia, although a visit to the country could not be organised due to the political developments (see below) and changes in the rapporteurships. The Monitoring Committee discussed the situation in Serbia during its meetings in March, April and May 2025. At the April meeting, it held a hearing on “Revelations concerning surveillance of journalists and activists and the situation of civil society”. The Assembly held two current affairs debates – on 8 April (“Protests and rallies in the Western Balkans and Central Europe”) and on 1 October (“Political crisis in Serbia”) – during which it discussed the situation in the country.

The co-rapporteurs, Mr Axel Schäfer and Ms Victoria Tiblom, issued a few statements, in which they expressed concern about the deterioration of the situation in the country due to the escalation of mass protests since November 2024. Note The unrest began after a tragic accident in November 2024 – the collapse of the Novi Sad railway station canopy – that left sixteen people dead. Initially driven by student-led protests, the movement quickly expanded nationwide, encompassing a wide spectrum of Serbian society. Protesters demanded new elections, transparency, accountability, and the eradication of corruption that they claim erodes the rule of law and public trust. Huge protests took place in Belgrade and other major cities in March, June and August 2025. The March protest, although largely peaceful, was disrupted when a loud blast, possibly from a Long-Range Acoustic Device (LRAD), caused panic and injuries. The June and August protests culminated in violent clashes between demonstrators and police. On 1 November 2025, a big march was organised in Novi Sad to commemorate the first anniversary of the tragic incident at the railway station.

The co-rapporteurs urged Serbian authorities to respond with dialogue rather than force. They condemned all forms of violence – whether by the State, pro-government groups, or protesters and expressed concern about incidents of police brutality (including excessive use of tear gas and batons), arbitrary detentions, the use of surveillance against journalists and activists and harassment of civil society groups.

In February 2025, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (“Framework Convention”) issued its Fifth Opinion on Serbia. It concluded that although Serbia has a strong legal framework for the protection of minority rights, progress is still needed on the practical level. Persons belonging to national minorities face ongoing difficulties in fully enjoying their rights under the Framework Convention. These challenges are influenced by shifting political priorities, social polarisation, and inter-State relations. There are notable regional inequalities, with stronger minority rights protection in Vojvodina compared to southern Serbia, underscoring the need for a more consistent, nationwide approach. Additionally, Roma communities experience significant obstacles in accessing their rights across multiple areas.

The co-rapporteurs will carry out a fact-finding visit to Belgrade on 23-24 March 2026.

MONEY LAUNDERING AND FINANCING OF TERRORISM

Serbia – December 2025

In December 2025, the Council of Europe's anti-money laundering body, MONEYVAL, adopted a [report](#) assessing the effectiveness of Serbia's measures against money laundering, countering terrorist financing and proliferation financing (AML/CFT/CPF). The report emphasises improvements in country's understanding of money laundering and terrorism financing risks' understanding, as well as in prosecution of different types of money laundering offences and confiscation of proceeds thereof. Nonetheless, the report acknowledges that further steps are needed in supervision of financial institutions' and designated non-financial businesses and professions' compliance with preventative AML/CFT measures, as well as in effective use of financial intelligence. Serbia is placed under regular follow-up procedures of MONEYVAL, and will report again in December 2028.

COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

[Statement](#) by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on 28 April 2025, following his mission to Serbia from 25 – 27 April. The Commissioner observes that it is critical to maintain the framework for democratic policing to ensure the safety of all citizens, in line with Serbia's obligations under international human rights standards. The authorities should avoid stigmatising demonstrators, thereby creating a risk of perpetuation of the violence against them, and effectively investigate all acts of violence committed during demonstrations to bring the perpetrators to justice. Concerning the alleged illegal use of a sonic weapon during the peaceful demonstration on 15 March, the Commissioner urges the authorities to conclude the ongoing investigations swiftly and ensure accountability. The Commissioner expresses concern about the unfavourable working environment for NGOs and human rights defenders, which has been further negatively affected by the alleged use of spyware on human rights defenders and journalists, "foreign agent" type smear campaigns and the leaking of personal data in the media, and urges the authorities to refrain from such action and create an enabling environment for human rights defenders and for civil society work.

[Statement](#) by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on 4 July 2025, expressing concern about the human rights situation in Serbia, where, despite the assurances he received during his visit in April, excessive use of force is being applied to curb demonstrations. The Commissioner observes that freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are key human rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and it is Serbia's duty to protect peaceful demonstrations as legitimate tools for civil society to show discontent, including with the political situation. He notes the increased levels of the use of force by the police as well as arbitrary arrests and detention, and expresses his particular concern about the arrest of children and the number of students being charged for criminal offences or hospitalised for the treatment of injuries. The Commissioner notes that the use of batons, tear gas, stun grenades and, in general, the use of force by police against protesters to remove blockades, may fail to meet the requirements of necessity and proportionality as enshrined in international human rights law. He further finds it unacceptable that the four individuals who were on trial for causing serious bodily injuries to two students last January have been granted a pardon and calls on the authorities to investigate all acts of violence, including those perpetrated by law enforcement, and ensure that there is no impunity for such acts.