

Horizontal issues

2. The action plans for Chapters 23 and 24 (including coordination mechanisms, monitoring, reporting, early warning mechanism and involvement of civil society)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Regarding our initial question on the status of the case related to the police search of four CSO offices in February 2025, the Ministry of the Interior has informed that *“police officers from the Anti-Corruption Department acted upon the request of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, specifically the Special Department for the Suppression of Corruption (KTRKO-232/25, 25.02.2025). On March 3, 2025, the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office submitted a report for further jurisdiction and decision. Following the submission of the report, no additional requests were received.”* Could the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office please clarify the state of play? To whom was the March 2025 report of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office submitted to for further jurisdiction and decision? And what is the expected timeline for the decision?

Supreme Public Prosecution

The Higher Public Prosecution Office in Belgrade, Special Department for the Suppression of Corruption, provided information that this Prosecution Office did not submit any reports to any authority for further jurisdiction or decision-making in March 2025.

According to the response of the Higher Public Prosecution Office in Belgrade, in its case KTRKO No. 232/25, the Higher Public Prosecution Office in Belgrade, Special Department for the Suppression of Corruption, **received a report from the Ministry of Interior**, Police Directorate, Criminal Police Directorate, Anti-Corruption Department dated 31 March 2025, in which **the police officers** of the Anti-Corruption Department **stated that they submit this report with the annexes to the Higher Public Prosecution Office in Belgrade for further jurisdiction and decision-making**. This report was not sent by this Prosecution Office to any other authority.

Regarding the state of play of this case related to four CSO, the Higher Public Prosecution Office in Belgrade stated that after reviewing all gathered evidence, the Higher Public Prosecution Office in Belgrade, Special Department for the Suppression of Corruption, found that there were no grounds to initiate criminal proceedings in relation to two CSO: „Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA)” and the association “Civic Initiatives (Građanske inicijative)” concerning the spending of USAID funds, bearing in mind that no irregularities were found, nor was it established that the reported actions contained elements of any criminal act prosecuted ex officio.

On 2 December 2025, the Higher Public Prosecution Office in Belgrade, Special Department for Suppression of Corruption, received the response of the United States Department of Justice in connection with the request for mutual legal assistance in criminal matters sent by this prosecution office on 24 February 2025.

The Higher Public Prosecution Office in Belgrade, Special Department for the Suppression of Corruption, has continued its inquiries in relation to other two CSO: the “Trag Foundation” and the association “National Youth Council of Serbia”. Upon completion of the said inquiries, a decision on these two CSO will be made without delay.

3. Fundamental rights

3.1. Ombudsman (*implementation of the 2021 law; work and capacity of the institution*)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Your written contribution notes that while the proposed salary increases to attract and retain qualified personnel were not included in the law, the April 2024 Rulebook on internal organisation and job classification “*contributed to improving the material status of employees.*” Could you please inform whether you have observed any effects of this Rulebook on reducing staff turnover or improving employee retention since its adoption? (CH 23 IBM 36)

Ombudsman

The new Rulebook on Internal Organization and Job Systematization in the Secretariat of the Protector of Citizens from April 2024 has had positive effects on employee retention, employee advancement, and the attraction of new employees:

- through a competitive procedure conducted in 2025, two civil servants who were employed on a fixed-term basis were granted permanent employment (open-ended contracts);
- in the same competitive procedure, two civil servants in permanent employment were promoted to positions with higher titles;
- one civil servant whose fixed-term contract had expired was retained in the institution by being appointed as an advisor to the Protector of Citizens;
- five civil servants were hired on a permanent employment basis: two civil servants were transferred from other state authorities, while the remaining three were hired through a competitive procedure.

Employee turnover is at a very low level and is primarily the result of natural attrition:

- Since the adoption of the New Rulebook on Internal Organization and Job Systematization in the Secretariat of the Protector of Citizens, a total of five civil servants have left the institution, two of whom met the requirements for retirement.

3.2. Protection of national minorities (*including commitments on Roma inclusion under the Poznan Declaration; update on preparing a new ‘action plan on the realisation of the rights of national minorities’; minority languages; situation of refugees and IDPs*)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- You reported that “*the number of persons belonging to national minorities in the judiciary in total is 647 (according to the latest data 2024/25)*”. Could you please clarify the total number in the previous year in order to establish the trend? Please also provide the missing data for number of persons belonging to national minorities in the public administration and in the police. (CH 23 IBM 46)

Ministry of Justice

According to the latest data for 2024/25, the number of persons belonging to national minorities in the judiciary in total is 647.

According to the data for 2023/24, the number of persons belonging to national minorities in the judiciary in total was 617.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government does not maintain records on the number of employees belonging to national minorities in public administration, that is, in local self-government units, nor does it possess the requested data.

Ministry of Interior

The Ministry of Interior reaffirms its previously submitted written contribution.

- The answer to our initial question (“*Please inform on possible improvements, since the last JLS subcommittee, in public broadcasting services in minority languages*”) describes a number of programmes without specifying the date of their introduction. It is therefore not possible to establish whether there were improvements since the last JLS subcommittee in March 2025. Could you please clarify? (CH 23 IBM 46)

Ministry of Information and Telecommunications

RTV

The public media institution "Radio Television of Vojvodina", as a public service media, strives to meet the needs of national communities with its program content and contribute to their enrichment in the field of information and knowledge, and the cultivation of heritage, cultural traditions and regional specificity.

Programs in national minority languages are broadcast on the Second Television Channel, the Second and Third Radio Channels, and there are special subpages in national minority languages on the RTV website.

RTV – OTHER TELEVISION PROGRAM

24-hour program in several languages of national minorities.

The percentage of media content in minority languages in the period between **March 2024 and March 2025** is shown in the following table.

Editorial office	Total minutes	% compared to the total broadcast program
TV program editorial office in the Hungarian language	133,969	25.43
TV program editorial office in the Slovak language	54,414	10.33
TV program editorial office in the Romanian language	55,951	10.62
TV program editorial office in the Russian language	55,701	10.57
TV program editorial office in the Romani language	42,639	8.09
TV program editorial office in the Croatian language	19,279	3.66
TV program editorial office in the Bunjevac language	8,312	1.58
TV program editorial office in the Ukrainian language	9,959	1.89
TV program editorial office in the Macedonian language	8,580	1.63
Other television programs, beyond editorial offices	4,589	0.87

The percentage of media content in minority languages in the period between **March 2025 and January 2026** is shown in the following table (at the time of submitting the report, data for January 2026 was the last month statistically processed).

Note: the report for February and March 2026 arrives in March and April of the current year.

Editorial office	Total minutes (in 10 months)	% compared to the total broadcast program
TV program editorial office in the Hungarian language	128,887	26.49
TV program editorial office in the Slovak language	51,417	10.57
TV program editorial office in the Romanian language	51,428	10.57
TV program editorial office in the Russian language	52,509	10.79
TV program editorial office in the Romani language	41,196	8.47
TV program editorial office in the Croatian language	18,397	3.78
TV program editorial office in the Bunjevac language	7,951	1.63
TV program editorial office in the Ukrainian language	9,209	1.89

TV program editorial office in the Macedonian language	8,212	1.69
Other television programs, beyond editorial offices	6420	1.32

From the attached tables, it can be noted that in each editorial office of TV programs in minority languages, there is an increase in the minutes of programs produced and broadcast, which clearly shows that the content of programs in minority languages is expanding and increasing.

In September 2025, a new show in the Macedonian language started: Muabetenja.

In September 2025, a new show in Hungarian was launched: The Magic of Sound – a children's show.

In October 2025, new shows in Hungarian were launched: Academy, Voice of Women, Ecology.

In January 2025, a new show, Cultural Encounters, started on TV Channel Two.

Our intention is to expand the program even further in the future, to increase the number of premiere shows in minority languages.

SECOND RADIO PROGRAM

24-hour program in the language of a national minority – Hungarian.

There were no changes in the number of minutes compared to the previous period (since it is a 24-hour program).

THIRD RADIO PROGRAM

24-hour program in several languages of national minorities.

Report for the period March 2025 – March 2026

(relative to the period March 2024 – March 2025)

RTV Third Radio Program continued the consistent implementation of programs in the languages of national communities, providing informative, cultural, educational and entertainment content for all communities in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The continuity of high-quality broadcasts was preserved, with the introduction of new program content into regular program schedules, with the aim of providing better information system, strengthening identity content and attracting a younger audience.

The total growth of the program for the period 2025/2026 compared to 2024/2025 is 7.14%, which represents real, officially confirmed data.

The new shows, optimization of program schedules and the introduction of additional content have increased monthly minutes by approximately 3,176 minutes per month, or 38,118 minutes per year, which represents 7.14% of the total annual broadcast minutes. This increase is the result of the introduction of new thematic shows for youth, culture, education, sports and religious content, the expansion of existing formats, an increased number of field recordings, interviews and reports, as well as improved digital availability of content.

Total minutes and increase by editorial department

According to official statistics, RTV Third Radio Program produced on an annual basis

- **Period March 2024 - March 2025:** 533,803 minutes of programming
- **Period March 2025 - March 2026:** 571,921 minutes of programming

The total increase is 38,118 minutes of programming, or 7.14% growth in total programming production.

This growth represents a significant increase in the scope of the Third Radio Program and is the result of a systematic improvement of program schedules, increased production and optimization of broadcasting.

Increase by editorial office (approximate)

- **Slovak language:** 148,260 minutes broadcast in 2024/2025, with an approximately **7.5% increase** in new programs, including thematic programs and children's programs.
- **Romanian language:** 147,925 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **7.0% increase** in new shows, with added content on culture and local festivals.
- **Rusyn (Ruthenian) language:** 143,375 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **7.3% increase** in new interviews and documentaries.
- **Ukrainian language:** 15,570 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **7.0% increase** in broadcasts and field reporting.
- **Romani language:** 56,040 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **6.8% increase** in drama programs for children, including the radio drama "Agni - God of Fire".
- **Croatian language:** 3,210 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **6.9% increase** in cultural and educational sections.
- **Bunjevac language:** broadcast for 1,620 minutes, with an approximately **6.5% increase** in thematic broadcasts on tradition.
- **Macedonian language:** broadcast for 1,620 minutes, with an approximately **5.5% increase** in short news sections.
- **German language:** 1,560 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **5.5% increase** in cultural and educational programs.
- **Montenegrin language:** broadcast for 1,560 minutes, with an approximately **5.5% increase** and continuity of the half-hour daily program.
- **Bulgarian language:** 1,560 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **5.5% increase** in new programs for the promotion of culture.
- **Russian language:** 1,590 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **5.5% increase** in cultural and educational programming.
- **Czech language:** 1,560 minutes broadcast, with an approximately **5.5% increase** in new news items.

- **Albanian language:** broadcast for 1,590 minutes in the period 2024/2025, while in the period 2025/2026 the program was not implemented.

Daily and weekly broadcasts were introduced in Slovak, Romanian, Ruthenian and Ukrainian with a focus on education and preservation of cultural heritage.

Key reasons for growth

- Introducing new thematic shows for youth, culture, education, sports and religious content
- Expanding existing formats
- Increased number of field recordings, interviews and reports
- Strengthening of the documentary and educational segment
- Improved digital content accessibility

The third program of the RTV radio fully implements the legal obligations of the public media service towards national minorities, with a clear trend of growth and program improvement. The achieved increase of **7.14%** confirms the stable development of the program, organizational efficiency and professional engagement of the editorial staff. Retaining qualified staff remains a key prerequisite for maintaining the achieved level of quality and continuing the development of programs in the languages of national minorities.

Radio Television of Serbia (RTS)

In order to fulfil the legal obligation of RTS, defined by the Law on Public Broadcasting Services, a program in the languages of national minorities was introduced within the First Program of Radio Belgrade.

Within the aforementioned editorial department, there is a section called Program in Romani, which plans, prepares and produces the program in Romani and Serbian, ROMANO THEM. The program is broadcast seven days a week from 7:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., which is a total of 210 minutes per week.

Thematic channels of Radio Belgrade – RTS Pletenica, RTS Dzuboks, RTS Rokenroler, promote the musical traditions of national minorities through broadcasted sections.

The show "1001 traces", "Songs from my region", "Kolovodjo, move your feet" were broadcast on "RTS Pletenica". The show lasted 15minutes, and was broadcast three times a week (premiere and 2 reruns).

3.3. Non - discrimination and gender equality (including work of the Commissioner for Equality, rights of children, persons with disabilities and LGBTIQ persons)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Regarding the reasons for the number of vacancies in the Office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality (43 staff members vs 60 systematised posts), in your written input you indicate that *“the National Assembly gave its consent to the Rulebook on Internal Organization and Systematization of Jobs in the Professional Service of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, which determined that the total number of systematized jobs*

in the Professional Service is 60 civil servants and state employees. However, this level has not yet been reached.” What is preventing additional recruitment? (CH 23 IBM 40)

- As per our initial question, could you please inform on the staffing in the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue’s Department for anti-discrimination policy and promotion of gender equality? Does the Department have sufficient funding to proceed with recruitment of additional staff in line with the systematisation plan? (CH 23 IBM 40 and 41)

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue

Within the Sector for Anti-Discrimination Policy and Gender Equality Improvement, three internal units are established, namely: the Department for Anti-Discrimination Policy, the Group for the Advancement of Gender Equality, and the Department for the Advancement of the Position of Roma. The total number of staff members within the Sector is 12. Taking into account the scope and complexity of the tasks performed, there is a recognized need for additional staffing. However, it is noted that any further recruitment is subject to prior approval by the Ministry of Finance.

We would like to underline that the Sector for Human Rights, staffed by six established civil servants, is also entrusted with the monitoring of the implementation of international and regional treaties, as well as domestic legislation concerning the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination (including on the grounds of birth, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, and age), and the monitoring of the implementation of affirmative (positive) action measures introduced in national legislation with a view to achieving full equality, in line with the EU anti-discrimination acquis and applicable international human rights standards. Within the Sector for Human Rights, all treaties falling under the United Nations human rights system are systematically monitored, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Furthermore, a liaison officer to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has been appointed within the same Sector. The responsibilities of the liaison officer include the preparation of reports within the framework of the relevant monitoring cycle, as well as ensuring follow-up to the implementation of ECRI recommendations and recommendations issued by other relevant Council of Europe monitoring bodies in the field of combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and other forms of intolerance, including hate speech and hate crime.

- As per our initial question, could you please inform on the process and timeline for amending the Law on gender equality to align further with the EU acquis and Council of Europe’s standards? (CH 23 IBM 41)

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue

Given that the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia has not yet rendered its final decision regarding the Law on Gender Equality, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue is currently not in a position to proceed with further alignment of the aforementioned Law with the EU acquis.

- As per our initial question, could you please inform on the pilot project on which Serbia reported at the last JLS subcommittee, aimed at improving record keeping of cases of violence against women. In addition, in your written input, you inform that “Central Records on Cases of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence” have not been established so far. Could you please clarify what the next steps are to allow for their establishment? (CH 23 IBM 41)

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice has developed a project for the establishment of a Central Register of Domestic Violence, which will be interconnected with all authorities that will be participants and users in this system.

FEMALE VICTIMS	
MEN – WOMEN	
Husband – wife	2245
Ex-husband – ex-wife	692
Common-law husband – common-law wife	1092
Boyfriend – girlfriend	703
Ex-boyfriend – ex-girlfriend	453
Son – mother	765
Father – daughter	524
Brother – sister	307
Father-in-law – daughter-in-law	123
Grandfather – granddaughter	73
Grandson – grandmother	60
Stepfather – stepdaughter	57
Son-in-law – mother-in-law	67
Brother-in-law – sister-in-law	41
FEMALE VICTIMS	
WOMEN – WOMEN	
Mother – daughter	184
Daughter – mother	168
Sister – sister	108
Mother-in-law – daughter-in-law	108
Granddaughter – grandmother	31
Grandmother – granddaughter	34
Stepdaughter – stepmother	34

Daughter-in-law – mother-in-law	105
Other family relationships	118
MALE VICTIMS	
MEN – MEN	
Son – father	573
Father – son	504
Brother – brother	395
Father-in-law – son-in-law	53
Son-in-law – father-in-law	66
Stepfather – stepson	43
Grandfather – grandson	68
Grandson – grandfather	69
MALE VICTIMS	
WOMEN – MEN	
Wife – husband	297
Ex-wife – ex-husband	110
Common-law wife – common-law husband	142
Girlfriend – boyfriend	108
Ex-girlfriend – ex-boyfriend	54
Mother – son	156
Daughter – father	66
Sister – brother	78
Mother-in-law – son-in-law	35
Daughter-in-law – father-in-law	56
Stepmother – stepson	27
Grandmother – grandson	33
Other family relationships	110

- Your written input shows that the total number for shelters has remained the same (14 or 15 depending on the years since 2020), including 6 shelters for victims of violence. Could you please inform on the needs assessment for this topic in the related ‘Strategy for Preventing and Combating Gender-Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence’ 2021-2027? Namely, how many new shelters are expected to be created and by when? (CH 23 IBM 41)

The Strategy for Preventing and Combating Gender-Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence deals in a separate section with shelters for women victims of violence and the problems related to insufficient accessibility and geographical coverage. The GREVIO Committee recommended to Serbia that the existing accommodation capacities in shelters for women victims of violence be expanded from the current 110 to 690 places (in relation to the number of inhabitants and according to GREVIO criteria). The main problem with expanding these capacities is that shelters are under the jurisdiction of local self-governments, which are independent in making decisions on which services to develop in their territory and for which groups of beneficiaries. In this sense, the state has no mechanism to influence local self-governments except through advocacy and campaigns that these services are needed. Furthermore, for those local self-government units that are below the national level of development, the state transfers funds for the development of services through the mechanism of earmarked transfers, but a small number of local self-governments opt for the establishment of shelters. The Law on Social Protection provides for the possibility of establishing services at the inter-municipal level through cooperation between two or more territorially close municipalities.

The only shelter that is under the jurisdiction of the Republic in terms of funding is the shelter for urgent accommodation of victims of human trafficking at the Centre for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking, which is intended for girls and women aged 16 and older and can also accommodate mothers with children. It is a facility with high security measures and is intended primarily for victims at high security risk. The capacity of the Shelter is 6 victims of human trafficking with the possibility of additionally accepting their children, and there are plans to further expand this capacity. In 2025, the Ministry has given the Centre an apartment for use in which it is expected to establish an accommodation service for male victims of human trafficking, which we will report on in the coming period, given that the apartment has not yet been brought to its intended purpose.

Regardless of the limited capacity, shelters in the territory of the Republic are available to all victims of violence without discrimination, their services are free of charge and the majority of them remain in contact and provide support to women who leave the service, they are open to the community in terms of prevention and informing potential victims of gender-based violence.

- Could you please provide an update on the establishment of the working group for drafting the Family Law? Could you please clarify the timeframe for drafting this law, public consultations, consultations with the European Commission and expected date of adoption? (CH 23 IBM 41, 42 and 43)

Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Ministry for Family Care and Demography has established the Working Group to draft a law on amendments and supplements to the Family Law. WG consists not only from representatives of key institutions linked to this very important systemic law, but also from members of NGOs. In line with standards of wide consultation process in this field the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, in cooperation with Ministry for Family Care and Demography, announced Public Call to civil society organizations to

submit applications for membership in the Working Group. The Public Call was announced on the web sites of both ministries on 1st December 2025

According to the timeframe for drafting law, with developing phases and steps, the Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Family Law is planned to be adopted by the end of the Q3 2026, in September, and no later than the end of 2026. Public consultations will be conducted in accordance with positive legal framework and praxis, and consultations with EK has also been planned.

- Could you please clarify why the Council on the Rights of the Child has not been re-established since the appointment of the new government in April 2025? In addition, the European Commission's annual reports on Serbia underlined the importance of setting up a technical body and a cross-sectoral group to support the work of the Council on the Rights of the Child; could you please provide an update on this? (CH 23 IBM 42)

Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Ministry for Family Care and Demography has initiated the process of establishment a new Council for the Rights of the Child. After analyzing the previous Government Decision on establishment of Council for Rights of the Child (with focus on last three decision from 2018, 2021 and 2023), the key institutions, academic community and civil society organizations were mapped. After the sending the request for nomination the representatives, it is expected that Government established a Council for the Right of the Child in March 2026 and the first session is expected to be held soon after the establishment of this governmental body.

- In the six-monthly report on the implementation of chapter 23 action plan, you inform that a new strategy and action plan related to violence against children is planned for Q4 2026. Could you please clarify why its adoption cannot take place earlier in 2026, also considering that the previous strategy expired in 2023? (CH 23 IBM 42)

Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Ministry for Family Care and Demography in the previous period of time had intensive contacts with UNICEF on this important topic and discussed the possibility of UNICEF to support the development of the Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence, having in mind that UNICEF supported the development of the previous VAC Strategy. As a key result of these dialogues, the development of the VAC Strategy with Action Plan is part of the UNICEF Country Work Plan for the period 2026 - 2027, which is in the final stage of signing. In accordance with Article 23 of the Regulation on the Methodology for the Development of Public Policy Documents, the Ministry has requested an opinion from the Republic Secretariat for Public Policy on the type and scope of the public policy document that needs to be developed in this field. Ministry has already started close cooperation with UNICEF and technical consultations have been completed to develop a timeframe for main activities that would lead to the final adoption of the VAC Strategy. Despite the initial very ambitious plan, according to this common adopted time framework, the Working Inter-Sectoral Group is planned to be established in March. Having in mind the complexity of the theme and the necessity of conducting a wide

consultative process within conducting ex-post analysis of previous Strategy and ex-ante analysis, including the state of play in the protection of children from violence, presenting the first draft of VAC Strategy is planned in October and final draft of the Strategy with Action Plan in December. After the call for public hearing and discussion on the proposed draft of the VAC Strategy and Action Plan and organization of public discussions on proposed draft, the Strategy is planned to be adopted in the first half of 2027.

- In your written input, you inform that in your contacts with UNICEF there are no plans to prepare a new national plan of action for children. Could you please clarify why this is the case? (CH 23 IBM 42)

Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

The National Plan of Action for Children, for the period from 2004 to 2015, is a strategic document, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, at the initiative of the Council for the Rights of the Child. The National Plan of Action for Children is a strategic document adopted by the Government of Serbia to define general goals for improving the position of children, ensuring their rights, providing quality services and protecting children without parental care. This plan focuses on creating conditions for the effective protection and development of children across various social sectors. In the meantime, Serbia adopted the new Law on the Planning System in 2018. This Law does not recognize the term of “The National Plan of Action” as a public policy document, but it would be necessary to obtain the opinion of the Republic Secretariat for Public Policies on the type of document that would be developed in the future and which would deal exclusively with the rights and protection of children as an Inter-Sectoral matter. In contact with UNICEF we have ensured support for VAC Strategy, but not for NP of action for children. It is very important to mention that although Serbia did not have a focused or targeted public policy document in this field, we had intensive work on improving children's rights and access to services for children through improving the legislative and strategic framework. In addition, since last year, Serbia is discussing the possibility joining EU Child Guarantee and, in this process, Serbia named a focal point from the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy.

- Could you please clarify when was the ‘Draft Law on the Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Communication Procedures’ adopted, as you written input indicates it was planned for the fourth quarter of 2025? (CH 23 IBM 42)

Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Please note that Ministry for Family Care and Demography did not participate in this process nor is it fully responsible for its adoption, but Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue.

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue

Pursuant to its statutory competences, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue has initiated the procedure for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedures. Upon receipt of opinions from the competent authorities, the competent proponent is expected to submit to the Government, for adoption, the Draft Law on the Ratification of the Optional Protocol at the beginning of the second quarter of 2026.

- Based on your written input, could you please further clarify the dates of adoption of the various sectoral protocols for the protection of children from abuse and neglect which were already adopted, and the expected dates of adoption of the others? (CH 23 IBM 42)

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Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

Ministry for Family Care and Demography, in accordance with the General Protocol for the Protection of Children from Violence, is not obliged to adopt sectoral protocol for the protection of children from abuse and neglect. According to the final articles of the General Protocol, the obligation to adopt specific protocols is imposed on ministries whose scope of activity includes education, social protection, youth and sports, internal affairs, health, justice, culture, trade, tourism, telecommunications and transport, as well as other legal entities whose activities involve working with children. Regarding ministries, so far, the separated sectoral protocols are adopted by Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy.

- Your written input indicates that only 70 out of 170 Centers for Social Work submitted annual reports in 2024, which means that *“the data for 2024 are not representative and therefore not suitable for publication”*. Could you please inform how you will ensure that Centres for Social Work fulfil this legal obligation in the future? (CH 23 IBM 42)

Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs is planning several measures to overcome the emerging problem associated with the digitalization of the social protection system and the connection of all centres for social work into a single network - SOZIS.

An analysis of the current situation has determined that one of the key causes of data inconsistency lies in the lack of clarity of implementing legislation that would precisely define the process of collecting information. In this regard, we are taking the following steps:

1. Development and harmonization of legislation

We have recognized that the current legal framework does not provide, in sufficient detail, the data sets that centres for social work are required to keep, which leads to different interpretations in the field.

- Formation of a working group: we will urgently proceed with the formation of an expert working group that will work on the development of new regulations on social protection records.

- Definition of a minimum data set: the new acts will list in detail the “set of mandatory data” for each beneficiary and each service, thus ensuring that every centre in the Republic of Serbia collects identical parameters.

- Legal basis for the obligation: these acts will precisely define the dynamics of data entry and responsibility for the accuracy of data, thus creating a direct legal basis for control and sanctioning of omissions.

2. Improvement of the information system

In parallel with the development of legal acts, the information system will be upgraded to ensure that it is fully compliant with the new regulations.

3. Strengthening inspections

After the adoption of the new legal acts, the competent social protection inspection will carry out supervision primarily relying on the new standards. The focus will be on checking whether records are kept in accordance with the newly defined data set.

4. Education and professional support

Immediately after the adoption of the new regulations, we will organize instructional seminars for data operators and administrators in the centres, in order to ensure the correct application of the new legal solutions in practice.

The existence of a clear and binding legal basis is a prerequisite for obtaining quality statistics. By developing these acts, we will lay the foundation for a transparent and reliable reporting system that will be suitable for public disclosure and further analysis.

- You indicate in your written input that in December 2025, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, initiated the preparation of an analysis on the framework for the legal recognition of same-sex unions. Could you please inform on the current status of this analysis and, once it is completed, what are the planned next steps for the adoption of the law? (CH 23 IBM 40)

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue

Taking into account that a broader societal consensus has not yet been reached with regard to same-sex unions, it is noted that the Ministry, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, is currently preparing a comparative analysis of possible legal solutions for the regulation of same-sex partnerships in the Republic of Serbia. It is further underlined that, with the support of the Council of Europe, the Ministry has developed questionnaires which have been circulated to the relevant institutions. The collection of responses from the institutions is ongoing, noting that the response rate to date has been limited.

- Based on your written input, could you please clarify why three years are needed for the entry into force of the amendments to the Law on the Civil Register which simplify and shorten the procedure for entering data on gender change into the Civil Register? And could you please clarify the exact date of the entry into force? (CH 23 IBM 40)

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

The simplification and shortening of the deadline for recording data on a change of gender in the Birth Register represents only one of the innovations and improvements in the field of civil registration introduced by the new Law on the Civil Register.

The new law establishes a completely new system for maintaining Civil Registers, which will be more functional, efficient, and improved in numerous segments, both in terms of data quality and the provision of services to citizens.

The deferred application of the Law on the Civil Register is envisaged in order to ensure that the new system becomes fully operational with the highest quality of data and services. The Law will be applied in its entirety three years after its entry into force.

In the area of de-institutionalisation, you report that “significant progress has been made in recent years: the number of licensed service providers has increased from 1 (2013) to 338 (2023)” and that “The number of municipalities in which licensed services are provided has also increased, and the number of employees providing the services has also increased”. Could you please provide statistics on each of these aspects and on an annual basis since the adoption in 2022 of the Strategy for Deinstitutionalization and Development of Community-Based Social Protection Services? (CH 23 IBM 43)

Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs

The Republic Institute for Social Protection (RISP) published a new Report on Social Protection Services at the Local Level Provided by Licensed Providers at the end of 2025 with data for 2024 and it is available at the link: [izveštaj-o-lokalnim-uslugama-socijalne-zaštite-2024.pdf](#) The Report presents an analytical and statistical overview of the state of services in the social protection system at the local level and is the result of a continuous research process that the RISP has been conducting since 2016, within the framework of its legally established competences in the field of official social protection statistics.

It is evident that there is progress in terms of the development of community-based services that support family reintegration and prevent institutionalization, although the geographical distribution of these services is still uneven, especially in rural areas.

According to the data from this Report, the total number of all licensed service providers at the local level is **323**, while the number of active providers in 2024 was **261**. It should be noted that in the social protection system, services were also provided by providers who did not have a license at that time, but were in the process of relicensing. Since the unit of measurement for this research is the license of a service provider, these providers were not included in the report, and therefore their beneficiaries were not included in the calculation of the indicator. This indicates that the number of providers and the number of beneficiaries is slightly higher than the number shown in this Report.

Since the adoption of the Deinstitutionalization Strategy 2022, the number of licensed service providers ranged from:

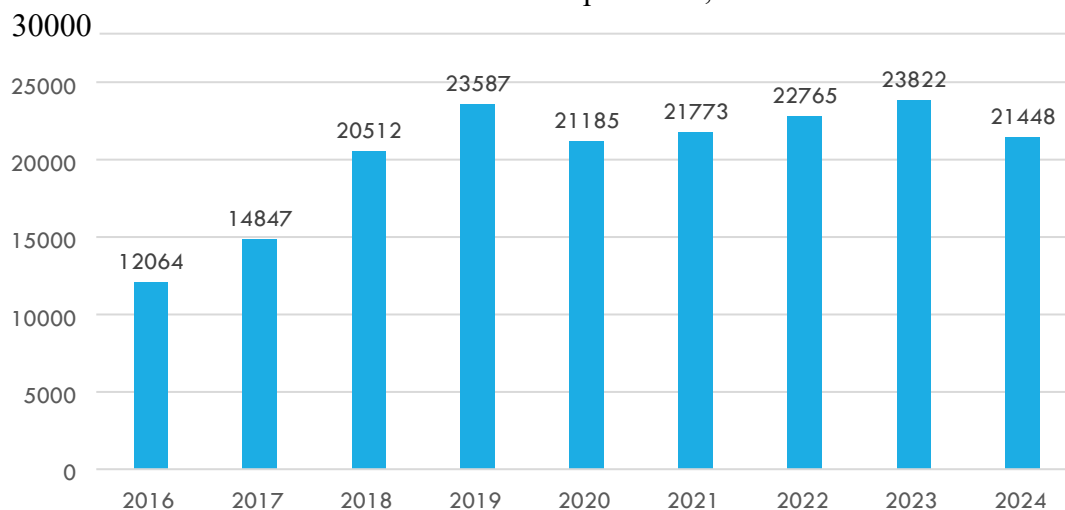
2022 – 303 licensed community-based service providers, of which 252 active during the year,

2023 – 338 licensed providers, of which 288 active during the year,

2024 – 323 licensed providers and 261 active during the year.

The number of beneficiaries of services provided by licensed providers in 2024 was 21,448 with a higher representation of women (59.4% women and 40.6% men). The largest share of beneficiaries was for home help services, for which the largest number of providers was licensed. In second place by the number of providers was the service of a personal child companion.

Number of beneficiaries of licensed local service providers, 2016-2024



Source: RISP, Reports on LLSPs 2016-2024

When it comes to the prevalence of services, in 2024, 158 municipalities (98.1%) provided the use of at least one service for their citizens. The general (aggregate) coverage rate for Serbia in 2024 was 30.4 beneficiaries of services provided by licensed local service providers (LLSPs) per 10,000 inhabitants. Three municipalities did not provide any services to the population in 2024 (Osečina, Pećinci, and Ražanj).

The coverage rate by age group shows that the development and availability of services are not uniform. The highest coverage was recorded among the elderly (72.4), followed by children (46.8), while young people (15.4) and adults (8.7) were the least covered by LLSPs services.

When it comes to the pluralism of service providers, the trend of a higher representation of providers from the general sector continued in 2024, with 62.5%. In the case of two services, shelter and respite accommodation, the participation of the public sector as the founder dominates, and in the case of day care, both sectors are equally represented. The continuation of the trend also means a weaker participation of the Republic of Serbia and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina as the founders of LLSPs and the dominance of the general sector, which is in line with the goals of the social protection reform, i.e. encouraging the inclusion of other entities as founders of local services.

The development of local services should be viewed in the context of its multiple effects. In addition to the primary goals related to improving the accessibility and quality of support to citizens, the development of services has also achieved significant effects on the microeconomic level. During 2024, this sector provided a total of **8,667** jobs throughout Serbia, thus directly contributing to reducing unemployment and strengthening local economies. In this way, each newly established service represented not only an improvement in the social protection system, but also a concrete development resource for the local community.

Employees of active LLPs per service type, 2024

Number of employees	2024
Total number of employees in the year	8667
Total number of employees on 31 December 2024	7050
Home help	1960
Day care	741
Personal companion	4921
Drop-in centre	17
Personal assistant	656
Supported housing	27
SOS helpline	28
Shelter	229
Respite accommodation	88

Source: RISP, Reports on LLSPs 2024

- Could you please clarify when the pending ‘Rulebook on Incident Situations’ implementing the law on temporary social care residents of December 2021 is planned to be adopted? Has the timeline been inserted in the Action Plan 2025-2026 for the implementation of the Strategy for Deinstitutionalization and Development of Community-Based Social Protection Services? If not, why not? (CH 23 IBM 43)

Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs

The Rulebook on the manner and detailed conditions of the institution's, or service provider's, conduct in incident situations has unfortunately not yet been adopted and was not part of the 2025/2026 Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Deinstitutionalization and Development of Community-Based Social Protection Services, because the funds that would be presented in this Action Plan were not provided for the development of the Proposal Rulebook. In the meantime, we have had discussions with several potential donors for financing the development of the Proposal (for hiring consultants) and it is currently included in the draft Action Plan for the Implementation of the Social Protection Strategy 2026-2031, through the following activities within Measure 4.2.:

- Development and adoption of the Rulebook on the manner and detailed conditions of the institution's or service provider's conduct in incident situations (based on Article 34 of the Law on Temporary Care Residents);
- Creation of training for professionals in the social protection system for the implementation of the Rulebook on the manner and detailed conditions of the institution's or service provider's conduct in incident situations;
- Accreditation of training for professionals in the social protection system for the implementation of the Rulebook on the manner and detailed conditions of the institution's or service provider's conduct in incident situations;
- Implementation of training for professionals in the social protection system for the implementation of the Rulebook on the manner and detailed conditions of the institution's or service provider's conduct in incident situations.

In addition, the Rulebook is included in the draft Action Plan and at the indicator level within Measure 4.2. Development and improvement of specialized knowledge and skills of professionals and professional associates in the social protection system, under the title "Adopted Rulebook on the manner and detailed conditions of the institution's or service provider's actions in incident situations".

- As per our initial question on alignment with the EU *acquis* on accessibility, could you please clarify the following: since Serbia's self-assessment of January 2025 mentions measures related to the accessibility of the built environment, has the voluntary European Standard EN 17210 on accessibility and usability of the built environment been considered? (CH 23 IBM 43)

3.4. Protection of personal data (PDP) – *implementation of the new PDP strategy and action plan, and of the PDP law and its revision*

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- In your written input, you indicate that amendments to the PDP law are expected to be adopted by 4Q 2026. Could you please clarify the timeline for public consultations, and for consultations with the Commission? (CH 23 IBM 50)

Ministry of Justice

As soon as the Special Working Group drafts the amendments and supplements to the Law on Personal Data Protection, the public debate will be conducted. The public debate on this Draft Law will last for at least 20 days, possibly even longer. Due to the great interest of the public, as well as business entities, this process will probably include the organization of a round table. Afterwards, the Draft Law on amendments and supplements to the Law on Personal Data Protection will be sent to the European Commission for an expert opinion.

- Could you please inform whether the draft PDP amendments will be aligned with the Artificial Intelligence Law, considering that both legislations include provisions related to the new PDP standards deriving from the European Artificial Intelligence Act, in order to ensure that there is no overlap or inconsistency between the two processes? (CH 23 IBM 50)

Ministry of Justice

There will be no overlapping between the Draft Law on amendments and supplements to the Law on Personal Data Protection and the Law on Artificial Intelligence, having in mind that when it comes to artificial intelligence, the Draft Law on amendments and supplements to the Law on Personal Data Protection will contain only the most important provisions relevant for the protection of personal data. The Ministry of Justice monitors the work undertaken regarding the Law on Artificial Intelligence with the goal of mutual alignment, noting that certain members are part of the Working Groups for both laws.

Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection

The actors involved in drafting these two laws in 2025 established regular communication to harmonize them, including their so-called horizontal linking. In accordance with the above, the principal solutions in the text of the amendments or the new Law on the Protection of Personal Data, which regulate the processing of personal data using artificial intelligence systems/models, are moving in the direction of:

- 1) limitations in terms of the purpose of processing - processing in artificial intelligence systems/models is possible if it is in accordance with the original purpose for which the data was collected, and in exceptional cases based on the legitimate interest of the controller or a third party, which outweighs the rights and freedoms of the person whose data is being processed;
- 2) the content that is the product of the use of artificial intelligence systems must be visibly and clearly marked;
- 3) the obligation of the controller to implement appropriate technical, organizational, and personnel data protection measures, in particular to ensure compliance with the principle of minimization, which includes pseudonymization or anonymization;
- 4) the rights of the person whose data are processed to access and object (unless this would significantly impede the achievement of the purpose or if the controller cannot identify that person);
- 5) the obligation to delete the data after the purpose of the processing has been fulfilled;
- 6) additional obligations of the controller depending on the artificial intelligence system/model in which the personal data are processed, as follows: – when processing personal data using high-risk artificial intelligence systems – the obligation to prepare an assessment of the impact of the processing on fundamental human rights and freedoms; – when processing personal data using an artificial intelligence system that communicates directly with an individual – if the person is informed that they are interacting with the system, i.e. that it is a system that generates synthetic content.

- Could you please inform whether amendments to the Law on data secrecy are planned? (CH 23 IBM 50)

Ministry of Justice

The amendments to the Law on Data Secrecy are planned to be adopted by the end of 2026.

Having in mind that the adoption of the amendments to the Law on Data Secrecy are neither a part of the IBM 50, nor they have been discussed at the operational meetings with the European Commission regarding the fulfillment of the interim benchmarks for Chapter 23, the amendments to the Law on Data Secrecy are planned to be adopted by the end of 2026 and within the regular dynamic of normative activities of the Ministry of Justice.

- Could you please provide an update on the process of fulfilling the legal obligation to harmonise all relevant laws containing data protection standards with the PDP law? (CH 23 IBM 50)

Ministry of Justice

It is envisaged that the new Law on Personal Data Protection, upon its adoption, will also contain specific provisions regulating the manner in which other laws are to be harmonized with this Law, as well as the timeframes in which such harmonization must be completed.

- Could you please clarify when Serbia will start monitoring the implementation of the PDP strategy? In your written input, you inform that no annual implementation reports have been prepared since the adoption of the strategy and that the working body for monitoring it has not been reestablished since the formation of the new government in April 2025. (CH 23 IBM 50)

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice has asked the state authorities and competent institutions to appoint new members of the Working Body for monitoring the implementation of the Personal Data Protection Strategy. Accordingly, the formation of the new composition of the Working Body is expected in the shortest possible time. After its formation, the Working Body will immediately commence its work.

3.5. Procedural rights for suspects and accused persons and victims' rights – *including implementation of the free legal aid law and implementation of the national strategy and the second action plan on victims and witnesses of crimes*

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Based on your written input, could you please elaborate on efforts made by criminal courts to improve the application of the 'Guidelines for the improvement of judicial practice in

proceedings for compensation to victims of serious crimes in criminal proceedings’? (CH 23 IBM 44)

Supreme Court

Concerning application of the Guidelines for Improving Judicial Practice in Proceedings for Compensation of Damage to Victims of Serious Crimes in Criminal Proceedings (from 2019)¹ please note that their application has consistently been included in trainings organized by the Judicial Academy specifically or within other relevant training programmes such as during 2025, "Implementation of the principle of non-punishment of victims of human trafficking" for a total of 76 participants (four trainings were held on the topic).

Herein, we note that the application of these Guidelines has been improved comparing to 2019. In our last year submissions we presented several examples from judicial practice. Now we present additional examples of relevant judgments: a review of 4 judgments of the Higher Court in Novi Sad (from 2022, 2023 and 2025), in which the injured parties (victims) were awarded compensation for non-pecuniary damage suffered in whole or in part by adopting a compensation claim in criminal proceedings.

Within this review the following will be included:

- a conviction for serious crimes;
- the sentence imposed;
- the amount awarded and the basis for compensation of damage to the injured parties (victims) in criminal proceedings.

Example 1 - judgment of the Higher Court in Novi Sad no. K 67/22, dated 13.02.2023-

CONVICTION FOR CRIMINAL OFFENCES

-rape in continuation under Art. 178, paragraph 4 in connection with paragraph 1 and Art. 61 of the Criminal Code and the criminal offense

-endangering security under Art. 138, paragraph 2 in connection with paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code,

Previous convictions:

-suspended sentences imposed in 2002, 2006, January 2007 and April 2007

The defendant has been previously convicted, as follows:

-by the judgment of the Municipal Court in Novi Sad, case number K 299/99 dated 04.12.2002 for the criminal offense under Art. 166, paragraph 1, item 1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Srpska to a suspended sentence with a prison sentence of ten months and a probationary period of four years,

-by the judgment of the Municipal Court in Novi Sad, case no. K 1970/04 of 24.08.2006 for the criminal offense of violent behavior under Art. 344, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code to a suspended sentence with a prison sentence of three months and a probationary period of three years, -by the judgment of the Municipal Court in Novi Sad, case no. K 757/04 of 15.01.2007 for

¹ For Serbian version of the *Guidelines* please see chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.pars.rs/public/Dokumenti/Publikacije/1159/Smernice-za-unapredjenje-sudske-prakse-u-postupcima-za-naknadu-stete-zrtvama-teskih-krivicnih-_dela-u-krivicnom-postupku.pdf

the criminal offense under Art. 221, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code, to a suspended sentence with a prison sentence of three months and a probationary period of two years and
-by the judgment of the District Court in Novi Sad, case no. Kž 210/06 of 25.04.2007. for the criminal offense under Art. 195, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code to a suspended sentence with a six-month prison sentence and a two-year probationary period,
SENTENCE

- a single imprisonment sentence of 12 years and 4 months
- for the extended criminal offense of rape under Art. 178, paragraph 4 in connection with paragraph 1 and Art. 61 of the Criminal Code, an imprisonment sentence of 12 (twelve) years; and
- for the criminal offense of endangering security under Art. 138, paragraph 2 in connection with paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code - an imprisonment of 6 (six) months;

AWARDED DAMAGE COMPENSATION TO THE INJURED PARTIES (VICTIMS)

- to the (minor) injured party (victim) - by partial acceptance of the compensation claim: 600,000 RSD (approx. 5,100 euros), with reference to litigation for the remaining part of the compensation claim (up to 3,000,000 RSD).

TYPES AND LEGAL GROUNDS OF AWARDED DAMAGE COMPENSATION

- non-pecuniary damage due to mental anguish due to violation of human dignity.

For the remaining amount over the awarded 600,000.00 dinars up to the requested 3,000,000.00 dinars, the injured party with the excess compensation claim is referred to litigation.

Example 2 - judgment of the Higher Court in Novi Sad No. K 158/21, dated 12.06.2023-

CONVICTION FOR A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

- murder under Art. 113 of the Criminal Code.

SENTENCE

- imprisonment for a single term of 12 years.

AWARDED AMOUNTS OF DAMAGE COMPENSATION TO THE INJURED PARTIES (VICTIMS):

Amount of compensation to injured party No. 1 (mother of the deceased injured party): 1,000,000 RSD (approx. 8,500 euros).

Amount of compensation to injured party no. 2 (brother of the deceased injured party): 500,000 RSD (approx. 4,250 euros)

TYPES AND LEGAL GROUNDS OF AWARDED DAMAGE COMPENSATION

- non-pecuniary damage, death of a close person.

Example 3 -judgment of the Higher Court in Novi Sad no. K 12/25, dated 28.03.2025-

CONVICTION FOR CRIMINAL OFFENCES

- rape under Art. 178, paragraph 4 in conjunction with paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code - imprisonment for 15 (fifteen) years
- inducing a child to participate in sexual acts under Art. 185a, paragraph 2 in conjunction with paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code - imprisonment for 3 (three) years
- domestic violence under Art. 194, paragraph 3 in conjunction with paragraphs 2 and 1 of the Criminal Code, committed against a minor L.B. - imprisonment for 3 (three) years
- domestic violence under Art. 194, paragraph 3 in conjunction with paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code committed against a minor N.B. - a prison sentence of 2 (two) years

- for the criminal offense of domestic violence under Article 194, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code committed against S.Č (mother of minors L.B. and N.B) - a prison sentence of 6 (six) months.

AWARDED AMOUNTS OF DAMAGE COMPENSATION TO INJURED PERSONS (VICTIMS)

by adopting the compensation claim, compensation for non-pecuniary damage (physical pain, fear suffered, mental anguish suffered due to violation of honor and reputation, mental anguish due to violation of freedom and personal rights) was awarded to two minor injured parties. The third injured party was directed to pursue the compensation claim in litigation.

TYPES AND LEGAL GROUNDS OF AWARDED DAMAGE COMPENSATION

-Compensation for non-pecuniary damage to injured party no. 1 (minor injured party – victim, L.B.) in the total amount of 1,100,000.00 (approx. 9,370.00 euros), as follows:

-for physical pain suffered, the amount of 300,000.00 dinars (approx. 2,500 euros)

-for fear suffered, the amount of 200,000.00 dinars (approx. 1,700 euros)

-for mental pain suffered due to injury to reputation and honor, the amount of 300,000.00 dinars (approx. 2,500 euros)

-for mental pain suffered due to injury to freedom and personal rights, the amount of 300,000.00 dinars. (approx. 2,500 euros).

-Compensation for non-pecuniary damage to injured party no. 2 (minor injured party – victim, N.B.), as follows:

- for the fear suffered in the amount of 150,000.00 (one hundred and fifty thousand) dinars (approx. 1,250 euros)

- for the physical pain suffered in the amount of 300,000.00 dinars

- for the fear suffered in the amount of 200,000.00 dinars

- for the mental pain suffered due to the violation of reputation and honor in the amount of 300,000.00 dinars

- for the mental pain suffered due to the violation of freedom and personal rights in the amount of 300,000.00 dinars,

while injured party no. 3 (S. Č.) was referred to litigation with a compensation claim.

Example 4 - judgments of the Higher Court in Novi Sad no. K 124/21, dated 11.04.2022-

CONVICTION FOR CRIMINAL OFFENCES

-criminal offense of murder under Article 113 of the Criminal Code.

SENTENCE IMPOSED

- imprisonment for a term of 14 (fourteen) years.

AWARDED AMOUNTS OF DAMAGE COMPENSATION TO THE INJURED (VICTIMS)

Type and legal grounds of damage compensation: non-pecuniary damage, death of a close person.

Based on Article 258, paragraph 4 of the Criminal Procedure Code, compensation claims were awarded to the injured parties for compensation for non-pecuniary damage due to mental anguish related to the death of a close person, as follows:

-injured party O.B. (to a close person – the wife of the injured party J.B.)

1,200,000 RSD (approx. 10,200 euros)

-to the injured party A.B. (the former common-law wife of the convicted person, and also the daughter of the injured party J.B.)

800,000 RSD (approx. 6,800 euros)

-to the injured party I.B (a close person – the son of the deceased injured party J.B.)

300,000 RSD (approx. 2,500 euros).

Moreover, it should be noted how **other standards on victim protection** have been applied:

IN CAMERA HEARINGS – PROTECTION OF THE MINOR VICTIMS' INTERESTS

In the first and third judgments pursuant to Article 363, item 3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the public was excluded from the entirety of main hearing by decision of the trial panel, due to the assessment that the interests of protecting the minor, taking into account the nature of the criminal offenses, require an exception from the general rule of criminal procedure (that the main hearing is open to the public);

APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS - ECHR JURISPRUDENCE

In some of the above judgments, the Court also took into account the application of all measures prescribed by the European Convention on Human Rights, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse², as well as the standards from the practice of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, in relation to Articles 3, 8 and 13 of the ECHR.

USE OF VIDEO LINK – PROTECTION OF VICTIMS (INJURED PARTIES)

In those judgments where minors were among the subjects of the proceedings (K 67/22 and K 12/25), the Court presented evidence without re-examining the minor injured parties at the main hearing, and by reproducing the audio-video recording of their interrogations conducted during the investigation, in the presence of a psychologist, physically separated from the defendant and other participants in the proceedings.

PROTECTION OF MINORS FROM DOUBLE HEARING

Regardless of the provision of the Law on Juveniles from Article 152, paragraph 2 (which in principle allows for the interrogation to be conducted a maximum of two times, and exceptionally more than once if necessary to achieve the purpose of the criminal proceedings), the trial court, in those judgments where minors were among the subjects of the proceedings (K 67/22 and K 12/25), and taking into account the findings and testimony of the expert team, assessed that this was not necessary and protected the minor victims from repeated interrogation.

- Could you please clarify how many CSOs have been monitored and analysed, and in which ways, by the Ministry of Justice to extract findings that will support the establishment of a ministerial fund to help finance CSOs (which will form part of the victims' support network)? (CH 23 IBM 44)

Ministry of Justice

The adoption of a new strategic framework for the improvement of the support system for victims and witnesses of crime in the Republic of Serbia is planned. In the forthcoming period, also envisaged is the development of a cooperation model with civil society organizations for providing specialized support and cooperation within the victims and witnesses support system.

² CETS 201, Lanzarote, 25.10.2007.

- Based on the data you provided, could you please inform on how you analyse the fact that, apart from some higher courts, there are overall few victims which have requested support? Could you please inform on how you intend to remedy this situation? (CH 23 IBM 44)

-

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice is monitoring and analysing the work of the victims support services currently established within some higher courts in the Republic of Serbia. On the basis of these findings, the new strategic framework in the area of rights of victims and witnesses in the Republic of Serbia will be developed. The concrete steps regarding this issue are to be precisely planned within the new National Strategy for the Rights of Victims and Witnesses of Crime in the Republic of Serbia with the accompanying Action Plan.

On free legal aid (FLA):

- Could you please clarify the sequencing of legislative reforms indicated in your written input: by when do you intend to amend the Civil Code and, afterward, the FLA law? (CH 23 IBM 44)

Ministry of Justice

Regarding the sequencing of legislative reforms, it is planned that the amendments of the Civil Procedure Code will be adopted by June 2026. Following this, the amendments to the Law on Free Legal Aid will be adopted.

- Could you please clarify how the state could fully assume the financing of FLA costs, given that FLA is a state obligation, while local self-government units currently bear part of the costs and the burden of pre-financing? We note that, due to difficulties of local self-government units with covering the pre-financing, the budget available for FLA at the state level is actually under-used. (CH 23 IBM 44)

Ministry of Justice

In the period from January 1st, 2025 until December 31st, 2025, a total of RSD 4,560,600.00 was paid for received requests related to free legal aid.

In the period from January 1st, 2024 until December 31st, 2024, a total of RSD 4,769,625.00 was paid for received requests related to free legal aid.

- Would you consider that there is room to introduce a single application for FLA in domestic violence cases that would cover all related family law proceedings, without requiring repeated proof of financial status? (CH 23 IBM 44)

Ministry of Justice

Regarding the introduction of a single application for free legal aid in domestic violence cases that would cover all related family law proceedings, without requiring repeated proof of financial status, we inform you that all relevant aspects and needs, including this issue, will be assessed as part of the analysis of the implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid which will serve as a basis for the future interventions in the text of the Law.

- Could you please inform on how the assessment of financial eligibility could be normatively simplified through the automatic recognition of the right to FLA for persons earning the minimum wage, in order to ensure faster and more efficient access to this right? (CH 23 IBM 44)

Ministry of Justice

The procedure for exercising the right to free legal aid is regulated by the Law on Free Legal Aid as urgent. In accordance with the provisions of the Law on Free Legal Aid, the administrative body shall issue a decision on the request within eight days from the date of receipt of the request, or within eight days from the date of submission of the requested additional documentation. If there is a risk of irreparable damage to the applicant or if the deadline within which the applicant is entitled to undertake a procedural action would expire, the administrative body shall be obliged to decide within three days from the date of filing the request.

Article 4 of the aforementioned Law prescribes the conditions that a person must meet in order to obtain the status of a beneficiary of free legal aid. The Law distinguishes between:

- persons who meet the conditions for exercising the right to financial social assistance in accordance with the Law on Social Protection or the right to child allowance in accordance with the Law on Financial Support for Families with Children and Their Family Members; and
- persons who do not meet the above conditions, but would, due to the costs of legal aid in a specific legal matter, meet the conditions for acquiring the right to financial social assistance or child allowance.

In addition to the above, the Law on Free Legal Aid also provides for special protection for 13 particularly vulnerable groups of persons.

The Regulation on the layout and detailed content of the application form for the approval of free legal aid prescribes the data and evidence on the property status on the basis of which the administrative body determines the fulfilment of the conditions from Article 4 of the Law on Free Legal Aid. The fulfilment of the conditions is determined by reviewing the official evidence at the disposal of the administrative body, as well as on the basis of documentation submitted with the request or subsequently submitted upon the administrative body's invitation.

The administrative body is obliged, ex officio and in accordance with the Law, to inspect the data on the facts necessary for decision-making, which are kept in official records, and to submit and process such data.

According to statistical data published in regular annual reports on the implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid, free legal aid is approved in more than 95% of submitted requests, which indicates a high level of legal regulation.

- Could you please inform on how decision-making on FLA applications and the provision of FLA could be systemically organised and clearly separated within local self-government units, in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, in order to improve the quality of the FLA system? (CH 23 IBM 44)

Ministry of Justice

As to the decision-making on free legal aid applications and the provision of free legal aid, it should be noted that all relevant aspects and needs, including this issue, will be assessed as part of the analysis of the implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid. That is the main goal of the analytical work when it comes to this Law. Therefore, the Ministry of Justice wants to determine the current state of play, how is the system operating, whether there is room for improvement, and what is the best way to conduct that improvement.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

The Ministry of Justice is the proposer of the Law on Free Legal Aid (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 87/2018) and monitors the implementation of the regulations governing free legal aid, supervises their enforcement in accordance with the law, and ensures the overall functioning of the system at the national level. Decision-making on applications and the organization of the provision of free legal aid in local self-government units are carried out in accordance with that Law and under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice.

On the other hand, the role of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government in the area of free legal aid is not normative in nature; rather, it is reflected in providing support and coordination to the authorities of local self-government units in the exercise of their competences, as well as in improving the work of local self-government bodies. Such support may include issuing opinions regarding the organization of work within local self-governments, coordinating the exchange of good practices, and undertaking other activities related to the functioning of local self-government authorities. The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government may provide institutional and organizational support in the form of recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency and quality of work within local self-government units.

3.6. Freedom of expression and media freedom (*work of REM and safety of journalists*)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Regarding co-financing of media content of public interest, and in the context of information received in the RGF third payment request, we would like to receive clarifications on the report submitted by the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications. For each call launched in 2025, the following information was missing from the report in order to assess the compliance with Article 24 of the Law on public information and media (LPIM), as required by the RGF step:
 - how “*public interest objectives*” have been defined and how each project proposal has been assessed with regard to these objectives, in line with paragraph 1 item 1) of Article 24 LPIM;
 - how “*gravity on the breach*” has been taken into consideration, in line with paragraph 3 of Article 24 LPIM (the report only contains information on the “*number of imposed measures*”, not the “*gravity*”);
 - how “*detailed criteria*” were defined for each call, in line with paragraph 4 of Article 24 LPIM;
 - could you please also provide an English translation of the “Rulebook on Co-financing of Projects for the Realization of Public Interest in the Field of Public Information”?
 - could you please confirm our understanding, based on the Ministry’s report, that voting members in several calls did not abide by the scoring system set in the Rulebook but that grants were nevertheless awarded based on such incorrect scoring?(CH 23 IBM 39)

Ministry of Information and Telecommunications

Each project proposal is assessed based on two criteria. The first criterion (paragraph 1, item 1) of Article 24 of the LPIM) is the extent to which the proposed project activities are appropriate for achieving public interest in the field of public information, in accordance with Article 15 of the LPIM.

Based on this measure, the following are specifically assessed:

- 1) **relevance of the project;** (relevance points 0,3,6,8 and 10)
 - realization of public interest in the field of public information;
 - realization of the purpose of the open call;
 - alignment of the project with real problems, needs and priorities of target groups;
 - compliance of the planned activities with the objectives and expected results of the project;
 - feasibility of the project implementation plan.
- 2) **feasibility of the project;** (feasibility points 0,5,10,15 or 20)
 - compliance of the content with the set goals;
 - author's approach and journalistic initiative;

- innovative element in the project;
- defining the genre;
- specifying the duration of individual media content;
- determining the format;
- representation of the research approach;
- determining the topics of individual media content;
- defining key interlocutors;
- adaptation of the content to people with sensory disabilities.

3) monitoring of the project implementation; (points 0,3,6,8, or 10)

- defining of expected results;
- measurability of indicators;
- project sustainability;
- planning of the internal monitoring and evaluation;
- identifying difficulties that may arise during implementation and proposing measures to eliminate them.

4) Capacity of the project applicant; (the points of the following 4 capacities are added together)

- length of operation (number of years) 0 - (less than 1 year), 1 - (from 1 to 3 years), 2 - (from 4 to 6 years) 3 - (from 7 to 10 years) 4- (more than 10 years)
- average number of employees and work engagements at the project applicant 0 - (no employees); 1 - (from 1 to 3 employees); 2 - (from 4 to 6 employees); 3 - (from 7 to 10 employees); 4 - (more than 10 employees)
- possession of equipment and other technical means for the implementation of the project 0 - does not possess (rental required) or 5 - possesses (rental not required)
- continuity in informing the target group for which the project is intended 0 – No or 2 - Yes
- (whether the applicant has produced content for the target group for which the project is intended in the previous year)

5) accessibility of the content to the target group (points 0,3,6,8, or 10)

- accessibility of the content to the target group (points 0,3,6,8, or 10)
- broadcasting and distribution methods (terrestrial / cable / satellite / electronic editions) in the territory where the target group for which the content is intended lives;
- data on viewership, audience, publication frequency and average circulation (daily, weekly or monthly) of the newspaper, i.e. the number of unique visitors to the portal, in the month preceding the announcement of the open call, based on relevant measurements;
- continuous media reporting from the territory where the target group for which the content is intended lives (on a daily, weekly, monthly or periodic basis);
- publication of the content in multiple media;
- publication of the content on multiple platforms.

6) budget and justification of costs (points 0,5,10,15 or 20)

- the precision and elaboration of the project budget, which shows the correspondence of the estimated cost with the project activities;
- the economic justification of the budget proposal in relation to the goal and project activities;
- the correspondence of the proposed costs with market costs.

The first criterion (paragraph 1, item 1) of Article 24 of the LPIM) is **the extent to which the media outlet through which the project will be implemented adheres to professional and ethical standards.**

Based on this measure, a separate assessment is made (0 - the imposed measure was not published, 5 - several measures were imposed that were published, 10 - the imposed measure was published and was not repeated, 15 - no measure was imposed):

- whether the media outlet through which the project will be implemented has been imposed measures by state authorities, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media or the Press Council, in the last year, for violating professional and ethical standards;
- the severity of the violation and the frequency of repetition

Public interest in the field of public information, represents:

1) Provision of accurate, unbiased, timely and full information available to all citizens of the Republic of Serbia;

2) Provision of information in the mother tongues and scripts of members of national minorities;

3) Provision of information on topic of local and regional importance;

4) Provision of information to the foreign public in foreign languages and scripts, where this is of interest for the Republic of Serbia;

5) Provision of information in the Serbian language and Cyrillic script for Serbs living outside of the Republic of Serbia;

6) Promoting media and journalistic professionalism and ethical standards, safety and protection of journalists and media professionals;

7) Supporting the production of media content in order to foster and preserve national identity of the Serbian people and of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia;

8) Supporting the production of media content with a view to protecting and promoting human and minority rights and democracy, promoting the rule of law and the welfare state, promoting the free character development and protection of children and youth, as well as other social groups, promoting cultural and artistic creativity, promoting the development of education, including media literacy as part of the education system, promoting the development of science, sports and physical culture and protecting the environment and human health;

9) Supporting the production of media content intended for persons with disabilities and adapting the content to the Serbian sign language, the braille code, audiodescription and other forms suited to persons with sensory and intellectual disabilities;

10) Supporting the production of media content aimed at increasing citizens' interest in the way publicly-owned assets are managed;

11) Supporting the production of media content aimed at promoting tolerance, gender equality and intercultural dialogue, preventing all forms of discrimination in the public space in

order to promote mutual respect and understanding among citizens who live in the Republic of Serbia, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender or religious identity;

12) Developing and implementing a coordinated national policy on media, information and digital literacy;

13) Providing information on Serbia's European integration process, the common European cultural, historic and geographic area and the policies, values and future of the European Union;

14) Supporting the production of media content aimed at improving the safety and protection of journalists and media professionals;

15) Supporting the production of media content aimed at promoting awareness on equality, improving gender equality and eliminating stereotypes and prejudice about members of groups at risk of discrimination.

The Republic of Serbia, the Autonomous Province or the local self-government unit shall ensure the achievement of public interest objectives by promoting media content diversity, freedom of expressing ideas and opinions, free development of independent and professional of the media and an environment conducive to media sustainability, all of which will contribute to meeting citizens' needs for information and content on all areas of life, without any discrimination.

Based on this measure, a separate assessment is made (0 - the measure was not published, 5 - several measures were published, 10 - the measure was published and not repeated, 15 - no measure was imposed)

- whether the media through which the project will be implemented has been imposed measures by state authorities, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media or the Press Council, in the last year, for violating professional and ethical standards;
- the severity of the violation and the frequency of repetition.

When imposing measures by the Press Council, the severity of the violation refers to the difference between a public warning and a violation of the Code. The members of the commission that evaluate projects have insight into the severity of the measure that the Press Council itself enters next to the project and, based on this information, they score the project.

PRESS COUNCIL

Media outlets that accept the jurisdiction of the Press Council are obliged to publish the decision of the Complaints Commission that they have violated the Code. Media outlets that do not accept the jurisdiction are issued a public warning, which they are not obliged to publish.

In practice, the Press Council can:

1. issue a public warning or multiple warnings (when a media outlet repeatedly violates the Code)
2. issue a decision that the Code has been violated, and the media outlet publishes the decision (or does not publish it)

Project evaluation criteria are defined every year on the basis of current strategic documents and the needs analysis, whereby the state monitors changes in the interests of the public as well as social priorities.

The authority that announces the open call shall conduct the media content needs analysis at least once every three years, bearing in mind the definition of public interest in the field of public

information from Article 15 of the Law on Public Information and Media, and shall prepare a report on that analysis, which shall constitute an integral part of the public open calls.

In the process of analysis and preparation of the report, the public authority may engage accredited higher education institutions and scientific research organizations that have expert knowledge regarding the production of media content. In order to obtain proposals from the professional and general public, in the process of analysis, the public authority referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall conduct public consultations that may not be shorter than 30 days.

The members of the commission evaluate the projects independently and autonomously, in their personal capacity, in accordance with the criteria specified in the public call and the regulations governing the co-financing of projects in the field of public information. In the evaluation process, the members of the commission may not represent the views and interests of any organization, interest group, media publisher, other legal or natural person, nor the views of the applicant whose proposal was selected.

Projects are assessed based on two equal, elaborated criteria:

- 1) The extent to which the proposed project activities are appropriate for achieving public interest in the field of public information,
- 2) The extent to which the media outlet through which the project will be implemented adheres to professional and ethical standards.

If a project receives a high score based on the first criterion, that project may rank high in the ranking list and be supported.

- Could you please provide information on the number of local municipalities and self-governments that did not launch calls for media co-financing in 2025 and please provide accompanying explanation and information on follow-up measures to ensure full implementation of the Law on public information and media in this regard? (CH 23 IBM 39)

Ministry of Information and Telecommunications

In 2025, all local self-government units announced open calls for media co-financing content production projects. In 2025, the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications initiated 12 misdemeanor proceedings against heads of public authorities for violating Article 20, paragraph 3 of the Law on Public Information and Media because they failed to announce open calls within the legally prescribed deadline. Misdemeanor proceedings were initiated against the heads of the municipalities of Čuprija, Arandelovac, Batočina, Gadžin Han, Žitorađa, Rača, Svilajnac, Sjenica, Topola, Tutin, Crna Trava and the mayor of the city of Prokuplje.

- Could you please inform on whether any TV channels started broadcasting without possessing the required airing licence, in the absence of the REM Council which is in charge of issuing licences? Could you please also inform on whether there were any cases of publishers of such channels which received public funds and, if so, from which budget lines? (CH 23 IBM 39)

Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media

After the Council terminated its mandate, certain number of request of the legal entities were received by the Regulator on obtaining licences for cable distribution of the program. However, at that moment Council was no longer in function, so the expert department informed legal entities that upon their request will be decided after the election of the new Council members. For the time being, Regulator have indirect information (from media) of the existence of some legal entities that broadcast the program without the licence via cable distribution. Action against such illegal behavior, can only be the taken by the Council (when it is formed) and not by expert department.

- We note from the written answer of the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications that our initial question on measures to ensure fair and transparent allocation of state advertising was transmitted to “the competent institutions in that field”. Please could you ensure we receive an answer at the same time as for the other written questions in this document? As Serbia’s media strategy includes several measures on advertising aspects (under Measure 2.2.1, Measure 2.3.2, Measure 2.4.7., Measure 2.5.4 and Measure 3.2.4), we would like to receive an update on the state of their implementation. (CH 23 IBM 39)

Ministry of Information and Telecommunications

The Ministry of Information and Telecommunications is currently in the process of drafting the Final Report on the Implementation of the Media Strategy, i.e. in the process of collecting all relevant information on the level of implementation of the aforementioned measures. In addition, we note that OSCE is the partner for the implementation of certain measures.

Regarding the measure 2.5.4, in 2024, the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications supported the Media Association's project entitled "Visits, views, listenership and readability of media per click" with 800,000.00 dinars. The project concerns the development of an interactive, unique platform on which data on visits, views, listenership and readability of media per click are available. Media that, primarily for financial reasons, are unable to pay measurement auditors, which is the case with local and smaller media, have the opportunity to display the data they have on the mentioned platform, for example: analytics, their own measurements, in a clearly defined procedure. The Media Association did not participate in the competitions in 2025. The Media Association did not participate in the open calls for projects in 2025.

Furthermore, we inform you that advertising is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal and Foreign Trade.

- Could you please provide an update on the remaining privatisation of media outlets, as foreseen by Serbia's media strategy? (CH 23 IBM 39)

Ministry of Information and Telecommunications

The media privatisation process has been completed, except in the case of Politika a.d. Belgrade and Radio – Televizija Kragujevac d.o.o. Kragujevac.

3.7. Freedom of assembly

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please inform us on plans to align further Serbia's legal framework on freedom of assembly with European standards, including the joint Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR Guidelines, and to address the concerns raised in the Conclusions of March 2024 of the UN Human Rights Committee over notification requirements?

Ministry of Interior

Freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (Articles 54 and 55). This Constitution states that citizens have the right to assemble peacefully without requiring approval or registration for gatherings in closed spaces. It also ensures the freedom to associate politically, as part of a trade union, or in any other manner, while also protecting the right to refrain from joining any association.

The Law on Public Assembly governs public gatherings in the Republic of Serbia. According to this law, an assembly is defined as a gathering of more than 20 people aimed at expressing, realizing, and promoting state, political, social, and national beliefs and goals, as well as other freedoms and rights in a democratic society. Additionally, gatherings for religious, cultural, humanitarian, sports, entertainment, and other interests are also recognized as assemblies under this law.

The Law on Associations outlines the establishment and legal status of associations.

The principles of freedom of peaceful assembly are in accordance with the ODIHR Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly.

Article 12 of the Law on Public Assembly states that any public assembly held in an open space must be reported to the Ministry of Interior or the relevant organizational unit in charge of the location where the assembly will take place, or where it will begin. The organizer of the assembly must submit a written application, which can be done in person, by registered mail, or electronically. This application must be submitted no later than five days before the scheduled start time of the assembly.

According to the Law on Public Assembly, the following activities are not permitted:

- Whenever there is a threat to safety, property, public health, morals, the rights of others, or the security of the Republic of Serbia.
- If the goals of the assembly encourage or incite armed conflict, violence, or violate human and minority rights.
- When there is a risk of violence, property destruction, or any large-scale disruption of public order.

If the competent authority identifies any of these concerns, they will issue a decision prohibiting the assembly. This decision must be communicated no later than 96 hours before the scheduled start time.

If an assembly is interrupted, the competent authority will provide an oral order to the organizer to cease the gathering for the stated reasons. A written order to officially terminate the assembly will be delivered to the organizer within 12 hours of the verbal notification.

- We note that police officers still lack visible identification during protests, despite legal requirements and the Ombudsman recommendation of 2022 on this matter. Could you please inform us what measures have been taken to address this? (CH 23 IBM 36)

Ombudsman

Following a recommendation issued by the Protector of Citizens, the Decree on the Uniform and Insignia of Police Officers was adopted in 2023, according to which police officers must visibly wear identification marks (insignia) on their uniforms. Over the past year, the Protector of Citizens has not received any complaints regarding the failure to wear identification marks, nor has it undertaken any additional activities regarding this issue following the issued recommendations.

Ministry of Interior

We maintain our position as stated in the previous answer.

- Regarding our question on the interim measure of the European Court of Human Rights of 29 April 2025 regarding the alleged use of a sonic weapon, the answer of the Ministry of the Interior seems to have been accidentally truncated, as one of the sentences is not complete; could you please re-send it in full?

Ministry of Interior

At the citizens' gathering held on March 15, 2025, the police did not deploy a sound cannon. Pursuant to the Law on Police, the so-called "sound cannon" is not prescribed as a means of coercion, nor in any other form, so there no legal basis for its use.

All members of the Ministry of Interior, General Police Directorate who were engaged in securing the public gathering on 15.03.2025. gave written statements regarding the information regarding the alleged use of a means, more precisely a weapon or a pyrotechnic device, the so-called "sound cannon" which could have posed a threat to the life or body of all citizens present at the aforementioned gathering (which is an integral part of the Report), where it was stated that no organizational unit used the so-called "sound cannon".

In the Law on Police, the so-called "sound cannon" is not prescribed as a means of coercion, nor in any other form, so there is no legal basis for its use.

Regarding the protection measures, it is necessary to point out that they can be found, as publicly available information, i.e. on the website of the device manufacturer.

3.8. Prevention of torture and ill-treatment (*recommendations of the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) on Serbia's third regular report and of the 2022 CPT report on Serbia, work of the National Preventive Mechanism*), prison conditions and alternative sanctions

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Based on your written input, could you please provide an update on the formation of the working group consisting of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office, with the aim of drafting instructions for public prosecutors and police officers on the use of premises equipped with audio and/or video equipment for recording interrogations of suspects in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code, and which is a longstanding recommendation of the CPT as regards the prevention of torture and ill-treatment? (CH 23 IBM 37)

Ministry of Interior

The contribution from the Ministry of Interior is included in the response for the next question.

- Could you please complement the written input of the Ministry of the Interior regarding recommendation n°40 of the CPT report of March 2022, as this recommendation relates not only to the delivery of food but also of basic hygiene products to detained persons? Could you please also clarify whether the Rulebook on the Conditions of Detention Premises was amended accordingly, as recommended by the CPT? (CH 23 IBM 37)

Ministry of Interior

Regarding the recommendation contained in paragraph 40 of the CPT Report published in 2022, it does not contain a request to amend the Rules on the conditions that should be met by premises for the detention of persons.

In the recommendation contained in paragraph 45 of the CPT Report of March 2022, the Committee recommends that detainees be provided with food and water after eight hours from the beginning of their deprivation of liberty and indicates that the relevant provision of the Rules on the conditions of detention facilities should be amended accordingly.

In the previous period, the Ministry of the Interior adopted the Regulation on the conditions that should be met by detention facilities ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 34/2028"), which did not stipulate the provision of food to detained persons, and for this reason there was no obligation to amend the aforementioned Regulation in accordance with the recommendation contained in point 45 of the CPT Report. The aforementioned Regulation is fully in line with the recommendations and standards of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).

The nutrition of detained persons is regulated by the Regulation on Police Powers ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 41/2019 and 93/2022"), where in Article. 37. stipulates that a person must be provided with one meal within six hours of the moment of detention, and if the detention lasts longer than 12 hours, the person will be provided with three meals. The police officer draws up a Record of Detention of a Person on the detention of a person, which, among other things, contains data on the rights exercised by the detained person. The right to provide nutrition to a detained person is mandatory information that is recorded in the Record of Detention of a Person.

In 2024, the Police Directorate conducted an analysis of the diet of detained persons for up to 12, 24, or 48 hours in the detention facilities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, after which the Police Directorate, in cooperation with the Logistics Sector, examined the possibilities of organizing the diet for detained persons in all organizational units where persons are detained in the Ministry's detention facilities in accordance with Article No. 37. Paragraph No. 3, of the Regulation on Police Powers ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska", No. 41/2019 and 93/2022), i.e., it is mandatory to provide food from the facilities of the Department for Organizing Nutrition, Logistics Sector, Ministry of the Interior.

Following the above, the organizational units were ordered by the dispatch of the Police Directorate, No. 214-131904/2024 dated 16.05.2024, measures regarding the method of organizing nutrition for detained persons in the detention facilities of the Ministry of the Interior, in accordance with which meals for detained persons are provided from the restaurant of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Srpska.

Meals for those brought in and detained are provided in accordance with the health, religious, and other needs of detained persons. In this regard, from January 01, 2025, to Jun, 2025, a total of 12.853 meals were provided for the needs of detained persons.

Following the recommendations made in the CPT's final report, following its visit to the Republic of Serbia in March 2023, the Ministry of the Interior has developed a Plan for Improving the Treatment of Police Officers towards Citizens, to Prevent Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Punishments or Procedures for the Period 2024-2027, which was signed by the Minister of the Interior on 09.07.2025, defining the activities for the implementation of the recommendations set out in the CPT's report.

To implement the activities defined in the Plan for Improving the Treatment of Police Officers towards Citizens, to Prevent Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Punishments or Procedures for the Period 2024-2027. The following was undertaken:

In the part relating to the use of rooms equipped with audio and video equipment for questioning suspects, at the initiative of the Commission for the Implementation of Standards of Police Conduct in the Field of Torture Prevention, the Criminal Police Directorate has set priorities for equipping 33 rooms for questioning persons and conducting interviews in Police Directorates that will be equipped with audio and video recording equipment.

According to the data available to the Commission, 17 rooms have been equipped with audio and video equipment, as follows: in the Service for Combating Organized Crime, 5 rooms for questioning persons have been equipped, in the Police Department for the City of Belgrade, 9 rooms have been equipped, namely in the Police Department, PS Stari Grad, PS Rakovica, PS Zemun, PS Palilula, PS Novi Beograd, PS Savski Venac, PS Voždovac and PS Zvezdara, and one room each in the Police Department in Niš, the Police Directorate in Valjevo and Čačak

Moreover, at the initiative of the Commission for the Implementation of Standards of Police Conduct in the Field of Torture Prevention within the framework of the activities envisaged by the Plan for Improving the Conduct of Police Officers Towards Citizens, to Prevent Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Punishments or Procedures for the Period 2024-2027. The process of forming a Working Group consisting of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office is underway, intending to draft instructions for public prosecutors and police officers that would regulate the use of premises equipped with audio and/or video equipment for recording interrogations of suspects in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code.

The Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office has submitted proposals for members of the Working Group to the Ministry of the Interior on behalf of the prosecutor's office, and the appointment of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior who will be members of the aforementioned Working Group is underway.

Furthermore, the Working Group formed within the framework of the Council of Europe project "Strengthening the Protection of the Human Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty and Convicted Persons in Serbia - Phase 2", in which, in addition to representatives of the Commission for the Implementation of Standards of Police Conduct in the Field of Prevention of Torture, representatives of the Criminal Police University, the Police Directorate, the Criminal Police Directorate, the Internal Control Sector and the Police Training Center participated, developed a Manual for Collecting Information and Interrogating in Pre-Investigation Procedures. The final version of the manual was adopted on February 02, 2024, after which the Police Training Directorate, in cooperation with the Commission and the Uniformed Police Directorate, developed a seminar "Interrogation in Pre-Investigation Procedures".

The implementation of the seminar began in July 2025. So far, 5 seminars have been implemented, attended by 60 police officers and trainers, who are obliged to implement the aforementioned training with police officers in their organizational units.

Also, the Commission for the Implementation of Standards of Police Conduct in the Field of Torture Prevention, in cooperation with the Uniformed Police Directorate and the Police Training Directorate revised the Training Program on the Treatment of Arrested and Detained Persons, on which occasion the "Course Program for Trainers in the Field of Treatment of Arrested and

"Detained Persons" was created, which was adopted on May 16, 2025, and a seminar on the topic "Treatment of Arrested and Detained Persons", which is included in the Professional Development Program for Police Officers for 2025.

- Could you please complement the written input of the Ministry of the Interior regarding recommendation n°42 of the CPT report of March 2022? Namely, out of 49 direct controls and 19 review of case files in relation to the use of coercive means, were there any cases found not to be compliant with Article 105 of the Police Law and its principles of necessity, proportionality and legality, and if so, how many? Could you please also clarify the reference period for these statistics? (CH 23 IBM 37)

Ministry of Interior

Regarding the recommendation contained in point 42 of the CPT Report published in 2022, which refers to the procedure for reporting on the use of means of coercion and the assessment of the justification and regularity of the use of means of coercion, we point out that the Police Directorate and the Commission for the Implementation of Standards of Police Conduct in the Field of Torture Prevention continuously conduct control activities in all organizational units of the MOI, the subject of which is the work of police officers in the performance of police duties and the application of police powers, with a special emphasis on the treatment of brought and detained persons, the use of means of coercion, the condition and conditions of detention facilities, as well as compliance with the measures ordered on the method of organizing the nutrition of detained persons in the detention facilities of the Ministry of the Interior

In this regard, in 2025, the Commission for the Implementation of Standards of Police Conduct in the Field of Torture Prevention carried out three control activities covering 5 organizational units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while the Police Directorate carried out 22 control activities in 13 police departments (Police Directorates in Valjevo and Niš), covering 8 police stations in the headquarters of the police departments, 15 police stations and one reception centre for foreigners.

On this occasion, in the part of the control of the use of means of coercion in individual organizational units, certain irregularities were identified, which mainly relate to the failure of the immediate superiors of police officers who used means of coercion to act fully in accordance with Article No. 104, of the Rules on Police Powers regarding the consideration of submitted reports and the acquisition and delivery to the authorized police officer of all documents that are important for assessing the use of coercive means.

In 2025, by reviewing the application "Use of Coercive Means, analyses of cases of the use of coercive means and assessments of the justification and regularity of the use of coercive means were carried out in 4 police departments, on which occasion a total of 2.112 incidents of the use of coercive means were reviewed and analyzed of the above number.

3.9. Property rights, including implementation and review of the 2011 Law on restitution

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Since detailed information has been established on how much land is needed and in which municipalities the allocated land is fully exhausted, could the Agricultural Land Administration in the Ministry of Agriculture please clarify when it is going to expand the List of Plots eligible for return in the restitution procedure in order to settle the remaining claims for restitution?

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

In accordance with Article 2, paragraph 3 of the Decree on the Criteria for Determining the Area of Agricultural and Forest Land in the Procedure of Returning Confiscated Property (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 29/2018), the Directorate for Agricultural Land timely determined the cadastral parcels in state ownership in the area indicated by the Restitution Agency as necessary to complete the restitution process, and promptly submitted this information to the Agency.

The application of Article 2, paragraph 6 of the Decree, i.e., the expansion of the list of parcels or the determination of new parcels outside the established fund, is possible only after it has been unequivocally determined that the entire area of the original fund has been exhausted. Information on the returned area, the remaining fund, and the total area claimed under unresolved requests can only be provided by the Restitution Agency.

However, to date, the Agency has not provided complete and verifiable data on the exhaustion of the fund, explaining only that it is “almost completely exhausted.” At the same time, the Agency continues to issue decisions on the restitution of land from the same fund and has independently established a new fund for the return of so-called “aronded” land, returning 6,357.2358 ha in the territory of the city of Subotica. At present, it is not possible to reliably determine the area required to complete the restitution process, as there are no consistent and comparable data on the land returned so far and the total area claimed under unresolved requests.

In view of the above, without clear and verifiable data on the total area returned and the remaining fund, there is no legal basis for further action by the Directorate regarding the expansion of the existing list of parcels or the establishment of a new fund. Until complete and accurate data are provided by the Agency, action on this matter does not fall within the Directorate’s competence.”

4. Judiciary

4.1 Independence and accountability - including follow-up to constitutional amendments (adoption of the implementing judicial laws and related by-laws), the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (implementation of the codes of ethics, application of rules for appointments, promotions, update on disciplinary actions) and public comments on on-going court proceedings and on judges and prosecutors

Additional questions (to be answered in writing)

- Regarding the Law on Judicial Academy, could you please explain if you will implement the recommendations of the latest Venice Commission opinion in the draft amendments and when you will request a new follow-up Venice Commission opinion prior to adoption? The Venice Commission recommended that the Judicial Academy should be effectively protected from any possible undue influence and recommended to reconsider the ex-officio membership of the minister of Justice in the Management Board of the Judicial Academy. (CH 23 IBM 3)

Ministry of Justice

On 13 February 2026, the Ministry of Justice submitted to the Venice Commission a revised version of the Draft Law on Judicial Academy for the purpose of obtaining a follow-up opinion. Regarding the changes in the Article 13 of the Draft Law on Judicial Academy, although the Minister of Justice is a member of the Management Board, the Draft Law establishes a mechanism that excludes his participation in decision-making on certain matters, in order to avoid the possibility of eventual undue influence on the matters that are of importance for the procedure of selection candidates for admission to the prior training programme and for the conduct of the final examination upon completion of such training. The Minister of Justice cannot participate in the adoption of decisions of the Management Board of the Judicial Academy proposing members of the Commission for the entrance exam for prior training, proposing members of the Appeals Commission, proposing members of the Commission for the final exam for prior training, and giving consent for a decision on appointment of members of commissions of the Programme Council. This solution is in line with the positions expressed by the Venice Commission and aims to prevent any undue influence on the decision-making of the Management Board of the Judicial Academy in matters that are of particular importance for the independence of the judiciary and the autonomy of the Public Prosecutor's Office.

- The Venice Commission has further stated its clear preference for rendering to the Judicial Academy exclusive competence for the entry into judicial and prosecutorial service. What is the timeline for the public consultation and eventual adoption? (CH 23 IBM 3)

Ministry of Justice

Once we have the standpoint of the EC we will proceed with the necessary activities regarding the adoption which is expected during the 2nd quarter 2026. The public consultations have already been organized in the period from October 1st until November 1st 2024.

- We are aware of the critical points raised by the High Judicial Council, contesting the new draft Judicial Academy law – could you please inform about the response to their comments? (CH 23 IBM 3)

Ministry of Justice

During the work on the Draft Law, the Ministry of Justice, both through the work of a working group whose members included representatives of all relevant judicial institutions, as well as representatives of civil society, and through a transparent process of public debate, gave the opportunity to all interested parties to give their input. The text of the Law is in accordance with the opinion of the Venice Commission. In this sense, and as the Venice Commission itself noted (preferable alternative), the Republic of Serbia decided on the option of the Judicial Academy being a single-entry point into the judiciary. In this sense, and as already discussed with the European Commission on December 19, 2025, the Ministry of Justice additionally revised the text regarding the participation of the Minister of Justice in the work of the Management Board of the Judicial Academy. The revised text was sent to the Venice Commission for a follow-up opinion on February 13, 2026.

- With regard to undue influence, is the HPC going to amend Article 8 of the bylaw “Rulebook on the HPC’s actions in connection with undue influence” to oblige the Commissioner for Independence to clarify and explain his position to the HPC even on cases even where he believes there is no undue influence, to align with the process in the HJC? We understand that there are currently reflections on this and would like to know why it has not yet been done? (CH 23 IBM 3)

High Prosecutorial Council

At the end of 2025, the Council formed a working group to re-evaluate all the bylaws of the legal framework regarding the competencies of the Council, including the one regulating the work of the Commissioner for Autonomy. After the evaluation, the Council intends to change the by-law where needed, in order to improve the efficiency and transparency of the work of the Commissioner for Autonomy and the Council itself.

The main challenge in achieving this is the current situation regarding the election process of the new members of the Council from the ranks of public prosecutors. After the new members of the Council are elected, Council will decide about further actions regarding re-evaluation of certain or all bylaws. After the evaluation, the Council will change the bylaws where needed, in order to remove detected shortcomings and improve the efficiency and transparency of the work of the Council.

- Could you please provide an update on the implementation of all other by-laws (excluding the not yet adopted bylaw on Courts Rule of Procedure)? In the written input, it is reported that implementation has shown shortcomings – what are these and how do you plan to address them? (CH 23 IBM 3)

The High Judicial Council

The High Judicial Council has adopted all by-laws provided for in the Law on Judges (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 10/23) and the Law on Organization of Courts (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 10/23), except for the Court Rules of Procedure. The aforementioned acts were adopted during 2023 and 2024 and were published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia and on the website of the High Judicial Council.

All adopted by-laws of the Council have entered into legal force and are applied in the area they regulate, with the exception of the Rulebook on the evaluation of the work of judges and court presidents, which was adopted at the Council session held on 17 April 2024 and published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 10/23, the implementation of which has been postponed until 1 January 2026.

The implementation of this Rulebook has been postponed due to the fact that the introduction of new qualitative criteria for evaluating the work of judges and court presidents, as well as the establishment of evaluation commissions under the new rules, requires adequate time for the effective implementation of this Rulebook.

During 2025, a so-called “pilot” project for the evaluation of judges and the President of the Higher Court in Belgrade was conducted, with the aim of assessing the manner of implementation of the Rulebook on the evaluation of the work of judges and court presidents (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 34/24). The results of the experimental evaluation are currently being reviewed.

The Court rules of procedure are jointly adopted by the Minister responsible for justice and the High Judicial Council. The High Judicial Council has carried out a revision of the text of the Court rules of procedure. At the Annual Conference of Judges held in Vrnjačka Banja in 2025, a special session was dedicated to the Court rules of procedure. As a contentious issue, a judge raised the question of judicial practice, specifically regarding the authority of the head of the judicial practice department to return a decision that is not in accordance with established case law to the acting judge for the purpose of harmonization with judicial practice.

Proceeding from the opinion of the Venice Commission that case law is not a source of law, judges take the view that the decisions of judicial practice departments are not binding and that the positions of the Supreme Court, as the highest court, cannot be binding, but that the Supreme Court should, through the quality of its decisions, contribute to lower courts respecting the positions expressed in its decisions.

The High Judicial Council will conduct an analysis of the provisions of the Rulebook on the protection of judges and courts from undue influence and will propose potential amendments in order to enable the Council to respond more effectively and efficiently in such cases.

In 2025, four requests for protection against undue influence were submitted. At the session held on 15 May 2025, a decision was made on one request that had been received by the Council in 2024. By its decision of 15 May 2025, the Council determined that there was undue influence on the work of the Basic Court and the Higher Court in Novi Sad. The decision was published on the website of the High Judicial Council. Proceedings concerning the remaining requests are ongoing.

The judge competent to act upon the request for protection against undue influence conducted confidential interviews, during the proceedings, with the judges who had submitted the request. All applicants emphasized that the exercise of undue influence had not affected the course or outcome of the judicial proceedings, but rather, as they stated, had constituted a violation of the judge’s honor and reputation.

Article 3 of the Rulebook on the protection of judges and courts from undue influence (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 110/23) defines undue influence as follows:

“In order of preserving the authority and impartiality of the court, undue influence on a judge in the performance of judicial function is prohibited, in particular any form of threat or coercion towards a judge, the use of public position, media, and public statements *aimed at*

influencing the course and outcome of judicial proceedings. Any other undue influence on the court, as well as pressure on a participant in judicial proceedings, is also prohibited.

Undue influence exercised by another judge with the aim of *limiting or preventing the independent and impartial performance of judicial office* (hereinafter: internal undue influence) is likewise prohibited.

The exercise of rights prescribed by law by participants in judicial proceedings, reporting on the work of the court and commenting on ongoing proceedings or judicial decisions in accordance with regulations governing public information, as well as professional analysis of judicial proceedings and judicial decisions, shall not be considered as undue influence within under paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article.”

High Prosecutorial Council

The problem of prolonging the election process of new Council members is the main challenge in this issue as well and it is uncertain when this problem will be resolved.

After the new members of the Council are elected, Council will decide about further actions regarding re-evaluation of certain or all bylaws. After the evaluation, the Council will change the bylaws where needed, in order to remove detected shortcomings and improve the efficiency and transparency of the work of the Council.

- The reporting on the cases of undue influence complaints received by the HPC and HJC from 2024 is quite shallow and does not give reasoning on the specific cases. Also, the reports on the ethics and disciplinary bodies leave room for improvement. Are there plans to improve the quality of the reporting in these cases? (CH 23 IBM 5)

The High Judicial Council

We submit a detailed report of the Disciplinary Prosecutor, the Disciplinary Commission and the Ethics Committee, as well as a report on undue influence.

Report on the work of the Disciplinary Prosecutor of the High Judicial Council for 2025

During 2025, a total of **448** disciplinary complaints were submitted to the Disciplinary Prosecutor of the High Judicial Council. From the previous reporting period, **202** disciplinary complaints remained unresolved; therefore and a total of **650** disciplinary complaints were processed.

In the reporting period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, **286** disciplinary complaints were resolved, of which **5 proposals to initiate disciplinary proceedings** were submitted to the Disciplinary Commission, while **364** disciplinary complaints remained in the process.

The largest number of disciplinary complaints was filed against judges acting in basic and misdemeanor courts mostly by citizens and lawyers, while two were submitted by court presidents.

With regard to the type of disciplinary offenses, the majority of submitted complaints concerned violations of the principle of impartiality, followed by unjustified delay of the

proceeding or unjustified failure to schedule a hearing or search or unjustified delay in drafting decisions, obviously incorrect treatment of participants in court proceedings and the court staff, and a major violation of the provisions of the Code of Ethics determined by the Ethics Committee, from Article 97, paragraph 1, items 1, 3, 7 and 20 of the Law on Judges.

Report on the work of the Disciplinary Commission for 2025

During 2025, the Disciplinary Commission received **9 (nine)** new cases, of which **5 (five)** were proposals submitted by the Disciplinary Prosecutor, **2 (two)** were submitted to the Disciplinary Prosecutor for jurisdiction, and **2 (two)** cases have not yet been submitted to the Disciplinary Prosecutor for jurisdiction due to the fact the Disciplinary Commission does not have a President of the Disciplinary Commission.

Of the **5 (five)** submitted proposals for conducting disciplinary proceedings, **3 (three)** proposals were submitted for a severe disciplinary offense under Article 97, paragraph 2 of the Law on Judges, and **two** for a disciplinary offense under Article 97, paragraph 1 of the Law on Judges.

Considering that **3 cases** remained unresolved from the previous year, the Commission had a total of **12 cases** in progress in the observed period.

Resolved cases:

- one case from 2024 in which the proposal of the Disciplinary Prosecutor was adopted and the judge was declared responsible for disciplinary offense of a major violation of the provisions of the Code of Ethics, which was determined by the Ethics Committee under Article 97, paragraph 1, item 20 of the Law on Judges, and a disciplinary measure of a reprimand was imposed,
- two cases from 2025 upon the report of the party.

Nine unresolved cases remained in the process.

Report on the work of the Ethics Committee for 2025

The Rules of Procedure of the Ethics Committee, prescribe, inter alia, that the Ethics Committee work and adopts decisions at sessions. In 2025, **8 (eight) sessions** of the Ethics Committee were held, during which a total of **32 (thirty-two) initiatives** were considered, namely **7 (seven) initiatives** received in 2024 and **25 (twenty-five) initiatives** received in 2025. No decision was made regarding **3 (three) initiatives** received at the end of 2025.

Considering that the submitted initiatives contain multiple requests, the Ethics Committee of the High Judicial Council adopted a total of **39 (thirty-nine) decisions**.

With regard to **7 (seven) initiatives** received in 2024, **9 (nine) decisions** were adopted. Of these, **2 (two) were opinions in principle** issued upon requests of the Disciplinary Prosecutor of the High Judicial Council to determine of a major violation of the provisions of the Code of Ethics, one submission was not taken into consideration because it was not considered as initial act, and one because it related to the behavior of a judge that was not relevant to the application of the Code of Ethics, two requests for the determination of a major violation of the provisions of the Code of Ethics were rejected as acts submitted by unauthorized persons, two requests were rejected because such an assessment is not within the competence of the Ethics Committee, and one because there is a prior decision of the Ethics Committee on the same issue.

Regarding **25 (twenty-five) initiatives** submitted in 2025, **30 (thirty) decisions** were adopted, as follows:

-7 (seven) opinions in principle, of which 4 (four) were opinions in principle regarding the request of the Disciplinary Prosecutor of the High Judicial Council for the determination of a major violation of the provisions of the Code of Ethics,

-3 (three) requests for the determination of a major violation of the provisions of the Code of Ethics were rejected as acts submitted by unauthorized persons,

-14 (fourteen) requests were rejected because such an assessment is not within the competence of the Ethics Committee,

-3 (three) requests were rejected because they concern behavior that is not relevant to the application of the Code of Ethics,

-3 (three) requests were rejected because there is a prior decision of the Ethics Committee on the same issue.

During 2025, there were no requests for action by the confidential advisor.

Report on cases of undue influence

In 2025, four requests for protection from undue influence were submitted. At the session on May 15, 2025, a decision was made on one request received by the Council in 2024. By decision of May 15, 2025, the Council determined that there was undue influence on the work of the Basic and High Courts in Novi Sad. The decision was published on the website of the High Judicial Council. The procedure regarding the remaining requests is ongoing.

High Prosecutorial Council

The problem with the election process stated above is the main issue here as well and it is uncertain when it will be resolved.

After the new members of the Council are elected, Council will decide about further actions regarding re-evaluation of certain or all bylaws. After the evaluation, the Council will change the bylaws where needed, in order to remove detected shortcomings and improve the efficiency and transparency of the work of the Council, including the ones regarding undue influence, as well as the work of ethics and disciplinary bodies of the Council.

- In its written reply, the High Prosecutorial Council has stated a high number of undue influence on the prosecution in the reporting period. How many statements has the High Prosecutorial Council issued in this regard and in case the number is low, what is the reason for this? (CH 23 IBM 5)

High Prosecutorial Council

The Council has issued a total of 8 public statements condemning the most grievous instances of undue influence on public prosecutors and public prosecutors' offices:

- Public statement on the 14th of January, condemning the public address of the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, pressuring the work of the Council by calling for the resignation of the President of the Council.

- Public statement on the 2nd of April, condemning the external undue influence on the Council, the Supreme Public prosecutor and the work of the Public Prosecutors Office for Organized Crime.
- Public statement on the 9th of May, regarding the 4 decisions of the Council on the existence of external undue influence on the work of the public prosecutors and chief public prosecutors, which are based on the recommendations of the Commissioner for Autonomy.
- Public statement on the 18th of August, regarding the physical attacks on public prosecutors' offices in Valjevo.
- Public statement on the 30th of September, condemning the protests organized in front of the Council, during disciplinary proceedings against a public prosecutor.
- Public statement on the 22nd of October, condemning the various obstruction attempts of the Second High Prosecutorial Council Conference.
- Public Statement on the 8th of November, regarding the public address of the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade and the subsequent media coverage.
- Public statement on the 15th of December, regarding the public statement of MP Ugljesa Mrdic, as well as the subsequent media coverage.
- What were the concrete legal reasons for the Constitutional Court to grant the complaints regarding the selection of the prosecutorial members of the High Prosecutorial Council? (CH 23 IBM 3)

Constitutional Court

Regarding the question: "Which were the specific reasons why the Constitutional Court upheld appeals filed in connection with the election of members of the High Prosecutorial Council from among the public prosecutors?" we would like to point out the following:

Elections for High Prosecutorial Council members from among public prosecutors were held at 13 polling stations on 23 December 2025. Six members of the public prosecution who had voted at these elections filed complaints to the High Prosecutorial Council for the violation of their electoral rights at a total of four polling stations where they voted. The complaints were rejected by the High Prosecutorial Council Decisions A. No.1251/2025, 1253/2025, 1254/2025, 1255/2025, 1256/2025 and 1257/2025, all of them dated 26 December 2025.

The same members of the public prosecution on 27 December 2025 filed appeals to the Constitutional Court against the aforementioned High Prosecutorial Council decisions.

Under Article 99 paragraph 2 and in connection with Article 103 of the Law on the Constitutional Court (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 109/07, 99/11, 18/13 – CC decision, 40/15 – other law, 103/15, 10/23 i 92/23), the Constitutional Court requested from the High Prosecutorial Council to submit its response to the appeals, and all of the case files.

After inspecting the challenged documents, responses of the High Prosecutorial Council and all of the case files submitted to the Court by the issuer of the challenged acts, the Constitutional Court, in the implemented procedure, determined that for the purpose of deciding on the submitted complaints, the president of the High Prosecutorial Council (hereinafter referred to as: the HPC) did schedule the 21st extraordinary session of the HPC for 25 December 2025 at 10:00 AM and, within the material for the session, sent to all HPC members the complete material of importance for deciding on the complaints, but that this session was postponed since the required number of HPC members was not present. The Constitutional Court then determined that the HPC

president had informed the HPC members by email at 11:45 AM about the reasons for “continuing” the 21st extraordinary session electronically, resending all of the material that had already been sent or handed over to the HPC members on the occasion of the extraordinary session. At the session, decisions were issued rejecting the applicants’ complaints, and the reasoning stated that after implementing the decision-making procedure the HPC did not make decisions upholding the complaints.

The Constitutional Court points out that the requirements for scheduling an extraordinary session electronically are referred to in Article 29 paragraph 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the High Prosecutorial Council. Under this provision, an extraordinary session can be held electronically for reasons of urgency where the decision on the agenda does not require a discussion and inspection of the material. The Constitutional Court notes that the reasonings of decisions rejecting the complaints stated that the HPC president had sent again to HPC members by email all the material that had been sent or handed over to the HPC members for the purpose of holding the extraordinary session on that and the previous day. The Constitutional Court notes that the reasonings of the challenged decisions stated in detail what had been submitted within the material for the session to all HPC members.

In view of the above, i.e., the fact that the election material had been submitted for inspection to HPC members for the purpose of deciding on the filed challenges at the electronically held extraordinary session, and that, in accordance with the above-mentioned provision of Article 29 paragraph 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the High Prosecutorial Council, the extraordinary session may be held electronically for reasons of urgency only where the decision on the agenda does not require a discussion and inspection of the material, the Constitutional Court assessed that, in this specific case, the requirements prescribed in the aforementioned provision of the Rules of Procedure for the scheduling and holding of an electronic session of the High Prosecutorial Council where the challenged decisions were made, had not been met.

The Constitutional Court also points out that the nature of the election procedure, especially where complaints point to irregularities in the implementation of elections that may be so serious as to represent a violation of electoral rights, requires that the authority deciding on that potential violation conduct a full, comprehensive and direct inspection of the election material, to determine the facts properly and completely and to make a lawful decision. This is not possible without holding a discussion which, not only according to the applicable legal framework, but also according to the nature of the matter, cannot be held in any other way but in person, i.e. by holding a session that requires the physical presence of the required number of members of the competent body.

In addition to the above, the Constitutional Court indicates that the challenged decisions cannot be regarded as decisions adopted by the HPC as a collegial body in a procedure prescribed by law and rules of procedure. It results from the reasonings of the challenged decisions and submitted case files that the proposed agenda was not adopted by the required majority of votes, which is a necessary procedural prerequisite for the beginning of a session and valid decision-making. Indeed, reviewing the case files, the Court determined that six HPC members had stated in their e-mails that they agreed with the proposed agenda, while two HPC members stated that they abstained from voting for the adoption of the agenda. For this reason, it cannot be regarded that the HPC, as a collegial body, in the composition prescribed by law, decided on the stated complaints at all. At the same time, the statement in the contested decisions that “none of the HPC members who expressed their opinions stated that they were in favour of accepting the complaints” cannot, by itself, constitute legally valid grounds for deciding to reject the complaints,

since it does not result from the reasonings of the challenged decisions that the vote was conducted in accordance with the law, or that there was a clear majority for making such a decision.

The Constitutional Court also indicates that the Election Commission of the High Prosecutorial Council, at the session held on 13 October 2025, issued Decision A. No. 895/25 under which Predrag Milovanović, public prosecutor at the Second Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, was declared a candidate for the elective member of the High Prosecutorial Council from among the public prosecutors, at the list of candidates for basic public prosecutors' offices. With regard to this, the Constitutional Court points out that in the decision-making process on the submitted complaints that directly refer to the election procedure in which one of the currently elected members of the High Prosecutorial Council participated as a candidate, there was an objective and indisputable circumstance that required his exemption for the purpose of preserving the principle of impartiality and trust in the work of this body. The Constitutional Court also notes that Predrag Milovanović himself said in his statement that he had the obligation to exempt himself from the discussion and deciding on all submitted complaints, because he is a candidate for the level of basic public prosecutors' offices, but that he believes that he should also be exempted from decision-making even concerning complaints filed for the level of higher public prosecutors' offices.

Based on everything said above, the Constitutional Court, in accordance with provisions of Article 41 item 4) of the Law on the High Prosecutorial Council, at the session held on 15 January 2026, observing the statutory deadline of 72 hours from the receipt of the appeals together with the case files, issued Decision VIIIU-265/2025, upholding the submitted appeals and annulling the decisions of the High Prosecutorial Council.

In addition to this, in view of the fact that Article 40 paragraph 2 of the Law on the High Prosecutorial Council prescribes that the High Prosecutorial Council decides on a complaint by a decision within 48 hours from the moment of receipt of the complaint, with the express legal consequence that, in case of failure to make a decision within this deadline, the complaint is considered to be adopted, and that the Constitutional Court assessed that HPC decisions of 26 December 2025 did not have a legal effect, as well as that the Law did not prescribe the possibility of extending, renewing or resetting the deadline for deciding on complaints or that the Constitutional Court was not authorized for setting such a deadline, the Constitutional Court noted in its Decision that by force of law, the relevant complaints were to be regarded as upheld and that the HPC was therefore required to annul the elections at the polling stations referred to in the submitted complaints, and to repeat them within the statutory deadline of eight days.

On the basis of the Constitutional Court Decision VIIIU-265/2025, the High Prosecutorial Council issued the Decision A. No. 20/26 of 19 January 2026, noting that complaints submitted to the High Prosecutorial Council on 24 December 2025 were to be regarded as upheld, that election activities and elections at the Kragujevac 2, Novi sad 2, Niš 3, i Kragujevac 3 polling stations were to be annulled, and that the electoral activities and elections were to be repeated within 8 days in accordance with the Law.

- Could you please provide an answer to the question: *“whether any awareness raising or training measures were undertaken with regard to undue influence?”* (CH 23 IBM 5)

The High Judicial Council

As already written, the High Judicial Council will analyze the provisions of the Rulebook on the protection of judges and the courts from undue influence and propose possible amendments so that the Council can respond more effectively and efficiently in these cases.

When analyzing the provisions of the Rules, the issue of conducting training for judges and other measures to raise awareness regarding undue influence will be considered.

High Prosecutorial Council

Challenges of public prosecution in Serbia were the main topic of the Second High Prosecutorial Council Conference, held in October 2025. Undue influence, both internal and external, is recognized as one of the most prominent of those challenges, and as such was thoroughly discussed at the Conference on multiple panels, raising awareness on the issue within the public prosecutor community. Apart from the aforementioned public statements, there were no other awareness raising or training measures undertaken.

- It is reported that “the model for the detection of offenders and the proving of criminal offences related to the disclosure of official secrets ("leaking information to the media") has been developed” and that “its implementation is being monitored through established channels”. What are these channels?

Supreme Public Prosecution

Chief public prosecutors of lower public prosecution offices (Basic, Higher and Appellate Public Prosecution Offices, as well as Public Prosecution Office for Organized Crime and Public Prosecution Office for War Crimes) are obligated to inform the Supreme Public Prosecution Office if the violation of regulations on the disclosure of information occurred. Therefore, the aforementioned established channels refer to the usual internal communication channels between lower public prosecution offices and the Supreme Public Prosecution Office.

- Could you please provide an answer to the question “*Could you please provide an update on the number of transfers of judges and prosecutors with and without consent?*” In the written input, only the number of transfers without consent for judges (none) is mentioned, but no figure is provided on transfers with consent. For prosecutors, the number of transfers with consent is provided, but no information on transfers without consent.

The High Judicial Council

The Law on Judges (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 10/23 and 9/26) in Article 18 stipulates that a judge has the right to permanently perform his/her function in the court to which he/she is elected, except in the cases prescribed by the Constitution and this Law (paragraph 1). A judge may only be with his/her consent permanently relocated or temporary assigned from one court to another, to the High Judicial Council, to the ministry in charge of the judiciary, to the Judicial Academy or to an international judicial organization (paragraph 2). Such

consent shall be given in writing, and must precede the decision on permanent relocation, temporary assignment or assignment (paragraph 3).

Article 19 of the Law on Judges regulates permanent transfer. Article 19, paragraph 1, stipulates that a judge may be permanently relocated, with his/her written consent, to another court of the same type and the same or lower instance, if there is an need to urgently fill a vacancy, which cannot be resolved by electing or temporary assigning a judge, provided that the presidents of both courts have given their consent. *Notwithstanding Paragraph 1 of this Article, a judge may be permanently relocated to another court without his/her written consent, in case of the abolishment of a court or revocation of the prevalent part of the jurisdiction of the court to which he/she is elected.* The prevalent part of the court's jurisdiction is revoked if the necessary number of judges in the court is reduced due to a change in the substantive jurisdiction of the court, the establishment of a new court or a change of the area in which the court exercises its jurisdiction. In case of the situation referred in Paragraph 2 of this Article, a judge may only be permanently relocated to a court of the same instance which takes over the jurisdiction of the abolished court or a court whose prevalent part of jurisdiction has been revoked. If the jurisdiction of an abolished court has been assumed by two or more courts, or if the predominant jurisdiction of a court has been assumed by one or more courts, when adopting a decision on the permanent transfer of a judge, the High Judicial Council shall take into account the judge's place of residence, length of judicial service, and the type of work performed by the judge. A judge continues to perform his/her judicial function permanently at the court to which he/she is relocated. The High Judicial Council issues a decision on permanent relocation. A judge has the right to lodge an appeal against the decision on permanent relocation with the Constitutional Court within 30 days from the day of receipt of the decision, which excludes the right to submit a constitutional appeal.

Article 20 of the Law on Judges refers to temporary assignment to another court. A judge may be temporarily assigned to another court in which the absence, inability, exemption of judges or other reasons make the work of the court more difficult. A judge may only be temporarily assigned to work in another court of the same type and the same or directly lower instance for a period not longer than one year, without possibility to be temporarily assigned again to the same court. The High Judicial Council, with a written consent of a judge, shall issue the decision on temporary assignment of the judge from Paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article. Prior to the adoption of a decision on temporary assignment of the judge from Paragraphs 1 through 3 of this Article, the High Judicial Council shall obtain an opinion from the session of all the judges of the courts in which the judge is elected and to which the judge is temporary assigned. *Exceptionally, in case of revocation of the prevalent part of the jurisdiction of the court to which the judge is elected, a judge may be temporarily assigned to another court of the same level that took over the prevalent part of the court's jurisdiction without his/her written consent.* A judge has the right to lodge an appeal against the decision on temporary assignment with the Constitutional Court within 30 days from the day of receipt of the decision, which excludes the right to submit a constitutional appeal.

From the above legal provisions, it can be concluded that a judge may only be exceptionally (*in case of the abolishment of a court or revocation of the prevalent part of the jurisdiction of the court to which he is elected*) permanently relocated or temporarily assigned to another court without his consent. In case of permanent relocation or temporary assignment, a judge may file an appeal with the Constitutional Court against the decision of the High Judicial Council, thereby ensuring judicial protection.

In 2025, the Council adopted 1 decision on the permanent relocation of a judge and 3 decisions on the temporary assignment of a judge to another court. In all cases, the judges gave their written consent.

High Prosecutorial Council

There were no transfers of public prosecutors without consent in the reporting period.

- Could you please explain about the reasons for the changes on the Law on the Seats and Territorial Jurisdiction of Courts and Public Prosecutor's Office through the recent judicial amendments, while Serbia had stated at the last JLS Subcommittee in 2025 and its written replies in 2026 that there was no need for change in this respect? (CH 23 IBM 3)

Ministry of Justice

The adoption of this law was conditioned by the need to improve the efficiency, accessibility and functionality of the judicial system through the harmonization of the network of court and public prosecutor's offices with realistic demographic, territorial, economic and organizational conditions. This law represents a necessary and systemically justified step towards relieving the burden on the Belgrade courts and public prosecutors' offices, ensuring conditions for efficient work and preparing the judicial system for a significant increase in the number of cases, especially in light of the upcoming EXPO 2027 activities. Taking into account all the above circumstances, the adoption of this law is necessary in order to improve legal certainty in the work of judicial authorities.

The overload of the existing Third Basic Court in Belgrade is one of the reasons that imposes the need to establish a new Fourth Basic Court in Belgrade. In 2024, the Third Basic Court in Belgrade received 7,778 new cases, and in 2025, 6,815 new cases were received, with a significant increase in the inflow of lawsuits against banks recorded in September 2025. This data includes only new cases and does not include a large number of old cases that are still ongoing, which arose during a period when one judge of the litigation department was in charge of almost 5,000 cases, which represents an objective systemic limit of efficiency.

The future growth in the volume of cases in the territory of Surčin, due to the EXPO 2027 project, is also a criterion for intervening in the judicial network in Belgrade. The upcoming international event EXPO 2027 is causing very intensive development in the area of the city municipality of Surčin, which will be the central location of most infrastructure, urban, residential, business and commercial projects. The following is expected:

- a large volume of new construction;
- increase in the number of construction and property law proceedings;
- increase in the number of administrative disputes related to building permits, expropriation and urban plans;

- increase in litigation and non-litigation cases arising from rapid urbanization and investment activities.

All of the above indicates that Surčin will become one of the most judicially burdened areas in Serbia in the coming years, which deems it necessary to promptly make adjustments to the court network.

Following the principles of rationality, accessibility and efficiency of the judicial system, as well as harmonization of the public prosecutor's office network with the court network, it is decided that the seat of the current Basic Public Prosecutor's Office be in Surdulica instead of Vladičin Han, where a basic court already exists, where there are better infrastructural and logistical conditions, a larger population, better transport connections and a higher expected influx of cases.

The establishment of the court unit in Kosjerić was based on the criteria of territorial distance, access to the court, number of inhabitants, volume of cases, economic activity and the need to enable the citizens of Kosjerić to exercise their right to a trial within a reasonable time and legal certainty.

The previous statements of the Ministry of Justice regarding the amendments to this Law were made in the context of the adopted Constitutional amendments. Namely, when the revised Action Plan for Chapter 23 was adopted in July 2020, there was a list of seven laws that needed to be amended in accordance with the Constitutional Amendments. Bearing in mind that the adopted Constitutional amendments did not in any case refer to the matter regulated by this Law, its amendments were not approached. The reasons for these changes that were adopted are not related to the Constitutional amendments, they are related only to one court and one public prosecutor's office in Belgrade.

- Could you please specify the timeline for electing the president and individual members of the Disciplinary Commission, which is reported to be underway? (CH 23 IBM 8)

The High Judicial Council

At the session of the High Judicial Council, to be held on 5 March 2026, one of the items on the Agenda provides that the Council shall invite court presidents to propose candidates who meet the requirements for appointment as members of the disciplinary bodies (the President of the Disciplinary Commission and two Deputy Members of the Disciplinary Commission, as well as the Deputy Disciplinary Prosecutor), all in accordance with Article 15, paragraph 10 of the Rulebook on the procedure for determining the disciplinary responsibility of judges and court presidents ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 24/24).

4.2. Professionalism, competence and quality - update on judicial training, budgetary planning, implementation of the human resources and the ICT strategies for the judiciary as well as the case management system and the allocation of court cases

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- We understand that the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is working on a new law for the judiciary administration, concerning the clerks and assistants working in PPOs and courts. There is lack of these staff across the judiciary. Apart from potentially changing the status of this group of public officials, is the intention to allow the councils greater mandate to manage the staff in a more extensive way than earlier, reducing the competency of the MoJ in this regard? While the working group for the law has already been established are the councils invited to participate in these meetings (as they are not members of the working group)? (CH 23 IBM 11)

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice has always been responsible for staff working in courts and public prosecutor's offices. Currently, these employees are in the same legal regime as civil servants. The Ministry of Justice will certainly remain responsible for the position of employees in the judiciary who are not judges and public prosecutors, and the goal of drafting the Law is to improve their position through the establishment of a special category, so that their position would not be the same as the position of civil servants. According to the Constitution and the normative framework, the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council do not have any authority to deal with this issue. The competence of the councils refers exclusively to judges and public prosecutors.

- Regarding information on the implementation of the ICT strategy, could you please provide us with the answer whether a detailed implementation report is being prepared and when the Commission can expect to receive it? Could you please also inform about the steps taken so far, as well as the challenges identified, in implementing the HR strategy? (CH 23 IBM 1, 2, 6)

Ministry of Justice

The report on the state of the ICT System in the judiciary, as well as the report on the implementation of the Strategy of Human Resources in the Judiciary, will be prepared and used in the work on the new Judicial Development Strategy, which is expected to be adopted by June 2026.

- What investments into ICT has the MoJ done during the last year, after many ICT systems were taken down in July, concerning both HR and hardware and software? (CH 23 IBM 1, 2, 6)

Ministry of Justice

In the preceding period, the Ministry of Justice has carried out multiple investments aimed at improving cybersecurity and ICT infrastructure, including the implementation of a SIEM solution, advanced endpoint protection systems, as well as the establishment of a Security Operations Centre (SOC). As regards the hardware infrastructure, the replacement of equipment that is no longer covered by manufacturer support is planned.

- Only 10 out of 28 systematized positions for IT are filled in the Ministry of Justice, who is also in charge of the capital budget for the judiciary in this area. What is the ministry doing to fill the vacant positions? (CH 23 IBM 1, 2, 6)

Ministry of Justice

The preparation of a proposal for a new systematization of ICT positions within the Ministry of Justice is currently underway, with the aim of assessing the existing capacities and improving human resources in the field of information and communication technologies.

- The Software Application for Prosecutor's Office (SAPO) does not include a random allocation of cases, which is an IBM requirement. When will such a system be put in place? (CH 23 IBM 6)

Supreme Public Prosecution

As already noted, at this moment the potential financial resources for the development of this software have not been secured; therefore, there is no expected timeline for its implementation.

Hopefully, with the assistance of the Ministry of Justice, pursuant to its competence in infrastructural investments in judicial authorities, this will be accomplished in due time.

- Could you please inform us about alternative options for the procurement of the software solution for courts? (CH 23 IBM 6)

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice plans to use the Budget funds for the development of software. However, this depends on the official end of the EU funded Project “SUPER SAPS”. We have not received any official letter regarding the end of the project from the EU Delegation. Once we have this official response we will be available to proceed with further actions.

- We understand that system administration and user roles and responsibilities as well as change management procedures for the case management system in the prosecutors’ offices are regulated by a Technical Instruction prepared by the Contractor. Are there plans for this to be regulated through a Legal Act of the Supreme PPO to ensure its mandatory application by all SAPO users and administrators throughout the country? (CH 23 IBM 6)

Supreme Public Prosecution

The Working group established by the Supreme Public Prosecution, with the assistance of the experts provided by the Council of Europe, drafted the General Mandatory Instruction on the Implementation of the SAPO Case Management System in Public Prosecution Offices.

This mandatory instruction envisages mandatory use of the computer program for automatic case management and the manner of its use by all categories of users, with the aim of ensuring the proper and uniform registering of cases within the application.

It should be noted that in September 2021 the Republic Public Prosecutor issued the General Mandatory Instruction on the Implementation of the SAPO Case Management System in Public Prosecution Offices; however, the implementation of that Instruction was suspended until the commencement of the implementation of the new SAPO CMS.

This Mandatory Instruction issued in 2021 is now in force in ten public prosecution offices in which the implementation of new SAPO began during 2025.

- It is stated in your written contribution that specialised training in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT), for IT professionals were held on 29 October 2024 and on 29 and 30 November 2025 in cooperation with the Council of Europe and European Union. Could you please provide us with additional information on the topics/curricula, number of participants, their profile - IT staff or prosecutorial staff? (CH 23 IBM 14)

Supreme Public Prosecution

The specialised training in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), organised in cooperation with the Council of Europe, held in 2024, was of particular importance as IT professionals from all public prosecution offices were gathered in one place for the first time. This training was not only a form of professional development, but also a platform for mutual acquaintance, exchange of experiences and identification of common challenges in managing ICT systems. Through this exchange of information and direct communication, the foundations were laid for further improvement of cooperation, standardisation of approaches and planning of future activities in the field of digitalisation and cybersecurity.

The programme covered topics related to IT infrastructure management, information system security, data protection and practical aspects of system administration within the judicial environment. The participants were IT staff employed in public prosecution offices.

The training held in 2025 represented a continuation of the initiated process and had a more advanced character. The focus was on further strengthening cybersecurity, improving digital workflows and exchanging good practices. The majority of participants were IT professionals in prosecution offices. However, a smaller number of other employees in prosecution offices were present in relation to the application of digital tools in daily work.

The training contributed to strengthening the professional network of IT experts within the prosecution system and represents an important step in the process of systemic improvement of ICT capacities.

- Could you please provide an overview of the budget for the judiciary according to CEPEJ indicators (calculated in EUR) for the last three years and the budget for the High Judicial

Council, i.e. the budget falling under its competence, (including the original amount of the proposal by the HJC to Ministry of Finance). Please also provide a review of the expenses for court staff, maintenance of equipment and courthouses, expenses for investments and capital investments in courts, organisation and development of the judicial IT system, which fall under the MoJ. (CH 23 IBM 10)

Ministry of Justice

In our previous response, we provided information on the budget falling within the competences of the Ministry of Justice in relation to the courts.

As regards the budget for the random allocation of cases for the Public Prosecutor's Office, no funds are currently planned.

The High Judicial Council

Attached is a table containing the requested data.



Izvestaj za Evrop.
komisiju 2026..xlsx

- The agreement of Appellate Courts and the Supreme Court on mechanism for case law harmonisation has expired in 2025. When will this agreement be signed again to enable continuation? The ECtHR assessed this mechanism as important for harmonisation of case law. Is there a plan for a new/different mechanism?

Supreme Court

The new Agreement of the Presidents of the Courts of Appeal regarding the organization, place and time of the joint sessions of the Courts of Appeal has been drafted and signed on 25 February 2026. In principle, the same mechanism for case law harmonisation will remain in place with the aim of harmonizing the case law of courts in the Republic of Serbia and further improve the quality of court decisions through consistent interpretation of the law.

As evidence of the existence of an effective mechanism for case law harmonisation stands the recent judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of October 7, 2025, in the case of Šabanović and Others v. Serbia, nos. 39819/16, 39902/16, 60773/16, 17816/17, 31419/17. ECHR concluded that the domestic authorities harmonized case law within a reasonably short period of time and the harmonisation mechanism has proven to be effective (see paragraphs 106, 112).

- The HJC and the HPC are currently housed in the same building, and there is not enough space to house their administrative secretariats, as fully systematized. When will they be given an appropriate space to work? (CH 23 IBM 5)

Ministry of Justice

This important issue is being currently analyzed and we expect that the solution will be found during 2026.

4.3. Efficiency – update on adoption of legislative amendments (civil and criminal procedure), backlog reduction and mediation/alternative dispute resolution

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide more precise data concerning the number of judges (how many total positions of judges are there, and out of these positions, how many judges are in office and how many are vacant?). Data provided currently does not seem to match with the most recent data (2025 Enlargement report). (CH 23 IBM 10)

The High Judicial Council

Evidences on the number of judges and the number of vacant positions are managed by the professional services of the High Judicial Council and these data are updated on a daily basis.

We would like to point out that the number of judges is a variable category, bearing in mind that judges reach retirement age on a daily basis, i.e. retire, pass away, or submit requests for termination of their judicial function at their personal request.

As of February 24, 2026, 2,661 judicial positions were filled, and 466 positions were vacant.

5.1. Judicial cooperation in civil matters

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide an answer to the question: *Please update on the state of play/developments on joining the HCCH 2000 on the International Protection of Adults. Have any steps been taken towards Serbia joining the Convention?* (CH 24 IBM 20, 22)

The ratification process of the HCCH 2000 on the International Protection of Adults has not been initiated.

5.2. Judicial cooperation in criminal matters including cooperation with Eurojust, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and participation to Joint Investigation Teams (JITs)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please clarify the state of play on the planned establishment of a working agreement with the EPPO? We understand that online meetings with EPPO have taken place to discuss this matter and that a meeting was supposed to take place in January or February. (CH 24 IBM 20)

Ministry of Justice

As regards cooperation with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), the analysis of the modalities of cooperation with the EPPO was carried out in 2025 through the project "IPA 2019, EU for Fight against Corruption and for Fundamental rights." The Ministry of Justice is currently considering the optimal modality of cooperation with EPPO.

In the previous period, the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office submitted to the Ministry of Justice the text of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the EPPO and the Republic of Serbia. The text of the Memorandum was deemed unacceptable because it conflicted with international treaties and our national legislation. The submission of an extradition request cannot be carried out by the EPPO, but only by the relevant state.

The Ministry of Justice proposes to hold an online meeting with the EPPO in January or February 2026 to discuss the details of cooperation.

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Justice cooperates with the EPPO on the basis of letters rogatory, which are submitted via contact points (public prosecutor's offices) to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice then forwards these letters to the competent courts and public prosecutor's offices for further action. All letters rogatory submitted to date have been complied that is, the request was granted.

Mutual legal assistance in criminal matters takes place continuously.

6. Fight against corruption

6.1. Law on the prevention of corruption (implementation) and other legislation (Law on access to public information; Law on financing of political activities; Law on whistle-blower protection)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide an answer to the question, including data, when it becomes available: *Regarding whistleblowing, please provide details on how many reports on corruption cases were received, followed-up to, sent to the competent law enforcement authorities. What is the overall value of whistle-blower reports for the detection of corruption? How many protection statuses were granted?* We understand that the data is not yet available but will be after the report on the Work of the Courts is published in March 2026. (CH 23 IBM 31)

Ministry of Justice

The Annual Report on the Implementation of the Law on Whistle-blowers for 2025 will be prepared and published on the website of the Ministry of Justice in June 2026.

With regards to the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers, it is worth noting that the first EU Directive on whistleblower protection was largely inspired by the Serbian law. The first step will be to prepare an analysis identifying which parts of the Law require amendments in light of the

new Directive (EU) 2019/1937. That analysis will be part of the package of activities foreseen for IBAR, and work is expected to commence in the coming weeks. The Ministry of Justice will contact the EU Delegation to seek possible expert support for drafting the analysis, if there is scope and availability for such cooperation. Ideally, expert support would come from an EU Member State where the Directive has already been fully implemented and which can provide a strong comparative analysis with recommendations. The process will start with the preparation of the analysis with clear recommendations; what makes the work easier is that these are amendments and supplements to the existing Law rather than drafting an entirely new Law, therefore the normative workload is not expected to be excessive.

Supreme Court

With regards to whistleblowers we submit herein the preliminary statistical data on implementation of the Law on whistleblowers' protection for the period January 1– December 31, 2025 (all courts).

No.	Court name	Matter	Number of judges in matter	Pending at the beginning	Total incoming	Total caseload	Total disposed	Pending at the end	
								Remaining caseload as pending	Length of proceedings from the initial act more than 36 months
1.	Supreme Court	Rev-uz	0	1		1		1	1
		Rev2-uz	2	6	3	9	1	8	7
TOTAL				7	3	10	1	9	8
1.	Appellate courts	Gž-uz	7	1	13	14	14		
		Gž1-uz	15	3	17	20	17	3	2
2.	Higher courts	P-uz	15	23	13	36	16	20	7
		Ppr-uz	1	1	18	19	15	4	
3.	Basic courts	P1-uz	3		11	11	5	6	
4.	Administrative Court	U-uz	8	1	8	9	5	4	1
5.	Misdemeanor Appellate Court	Prž-uz							
6.	Misdemeanor courts	Pr-uz	1	1		1	1		
TOTAL FOR ALL COURTS WITHOUT THE SUPREME COURT				30	80	110	73	37	10
TOTAL FOR ALL COURTS				37	83	120	74	46	18

As it can be seen from the data above, in all courts were filed in total 80 new cases, disposed 73 cases and 37 cases remained pending (without cases filed to the Supreme court).

It should be noted that judicial protection under The Law on Protection of Whistleblowers does not entail granting of whistleblower status, accordingly, we cannot answer regarding this question. Namely, judicial protection implies prohibition against disadvantaging whistleblowers (eg in connection with employment, acquiring the status of an intern, education, training and professional development, termination of employment, wages and other employment benefits etc.) Please note

that the list is not exhaustive, but can also entail other actions, which are characterized as whistleblower retaliation. In cases of inflicting harm due to whistleblowing, a whistleblower shall have the right to compensation for damage in accordance with the law regulating contract and torts.

As we mentioned earlier, judicial protection is exercised by filing a lawsuit for protection related to whistleblowing before the competent court. Judicial protection proceedings related to whistleblowing shall be dealt with urgency.

In the civil lawsuit it could be claimed (in terms of Article 26 of The Law on Protection of Whistleblowers): to establish that whistleblower was subjected to a harmful action, to prohibit execution and repetition of a harmful action, to eliminate the consequences of harmful action, to compensate pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages and to publish the judgment rendered in the lawsuit for the stated reasons.

In terms of the burden of proof, it is important to keep in mind that if during the proceedings, the plaintiff (whistleblower) has demonstrated likelihood that he/she suffered a harmful action due to whistleblowing, the burden of proof shall be on his/her employer who has to prove that the harmful action is not causally related to whistleblowing (Article 29).

Furthermore, the Law prescribed prior protection and interim measures. In terms of Article 27 of the Law, the trial court may order an interim measure as provided by Law on enforcement and security.

The interim measure can be ordered prior to initiating judicial proceedings. In a motion for an interim measure (Article 34 of the Law) the court may be requested to stay the legal effect of an act, to prohibit performance of a harmful action as well as to order the removal of consequences that the action caused.

6.3. Anti-Corruption Council (Government decision regulating the work of the Anti-Corruption Council, cooperation with prosecution services and with the Government, follow-up to the 2024 annual report recommendations)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- With regards to the reports submitted by the Anti-Corruption Council to the Supreme Public Prosecution, could you please update on how the findings of the reports have been followed-up on? Have any investigations been initiated? (CH 23 IBM 24)

Supreme Public Prosecution

The Anti-Corruption Council submits reports to the Supreme Public Prosecution, which then forwards it to the competent prosecution offices for further action. Annually, the Supreme Public Prosecution informs the Council about the actions of the competent prosecution offices in relation to their reports.

According to the information provided by competent prosecution offices, in 1 case first instance court decision was rendered against 25 defendants (19 defendants were convicted and 6 acquitted), in 2 cases court trials are ongoing, in 15 cases pre-investigation proceedings are underway and in 7 cases decisions that there were no grounds to initiate criminal proceedings were rendered.

6.4. Cooperation and coordination mechanisms in the prevention and the fight against corruption (implementation of National Anti-corruption Strategy and preparation of action plan for 2026-2028)

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide a revised reply to the question *“What are the financial gaps to fully implement the Action Plan within the set timeframes?”* considering the comments by the Commission and TAIEX expert report. (CH 23 IBM 22)

Ministry of Justice

At the time of drafting the Action Plan for the period 2026-2028 for the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy for the period 2024-2028 (AP 2026-2028), 50% of the activities under the Action Plan for the period 2024–2025 that had fallen due up to and including the second quarter of 2025 had been implemented. The non-implementation of the remaining activities may be categorized under three types of factors: the complexity of implementing activities, which requires more time than planned, a lack of resources, and socio-political reasons that affected the postponement of legislative activities (the calling of elections, due to which the then Government functioned in a caretaker capacity until the elections were held and a new Government was formed). All such factors were duly considered in the preparation of the AP 2026-2028, with a view to establishing realistic implementation deadlines and ensuring that the resources required for the implementation of activities are planned within the state budget (in particular so as to limit reliance on donor funding to the extent possible). During the drafting of AP 2026-2028, the competent institutions were advised on the SMART methodology for formulating activities, the need to set realistic and achievable deadlines, and the budget as a key element for activity planning. In this context, the draft AP 2026–2028 provides budgetary projections for the vast majority of activities. For a small number of activities, the absence of budgetary indications has subsequently been addressed.

6.5. State of play regarding (a) conflict of interest cases, (b) asset declaration and verification system, (c) political activity financing, (d) access to information of public importance, (e) code of conduct for civil servants

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide a revised reply to the question *“Please inform whether the planned analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of sanctions for the criminal offence of failing to*

declare assets and income or providing false information regarding assets and income has been carried out by the deadline stipulated in the Action Plan (4Q 2025), and kindly share it with us.”? (CH 23 IBM 27)

Ministry of Justice

The planned analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of sanctions for the criminal offence of failing to declare assets and income or providing false information regarding assets and income will be carried out through the Action Plan for the period 2026-2028, aimed at implementing the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2028 that will be adopted no later than the first quarter of 2026.

6.6 Anti-corruption measures in vulnerable areas (focus on the area of public procurements)

- Could you please provide further information on measures taken to decrease the risk of corruption in public procurement, including in large-scale investment projects which are particularly vulnerable to corruption, and to ensure proper application of the safeguards stipulated in the Law on public procurement? (CH 23 IBM 32)

Public Procurement Office

The Public Procurement Development Program in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2024-2028 includes, as one of its specific objectives, the reduction of the risk of irregularities in public procurement. This planning document defines measures for achieving the stated objective, which, among other things, include strengthening monitoring of the implementation of public procurement regulations, strengthening cooperation between institutions in the public procurement system, as well as strengthening the capacity of institutions.

In order to prevent, detect and eliminate irregularities that may arise or have arisen in the application of the Public Procurement Law ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 91/19 and 92/23; hereinafter: PPL), the Public Procurement Office (hereinafter: PPO) monitors the application of public procurement regulations, in accordance with its legally prescribed competencies.

The monitoring conducted by the PPO includes regular monitoring, which is carried out on the basis of the annual monitoring plan, and extraordinary monitoring, which is carried out upon requests sent by the competent prosecutor's offices, special departments for the prevention of corruption, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and other competent authorities, but also upon requests from economic entities and other interested persons. During 2025, the PPO, as part of regular monitoring, monitored the public procurement procedures of 25 contracting authorities.

When determining the monitoring subjects, the PPO took into account the balanced representation of all contracting authority structures, both in terms of the type of activity they

perform and in terms of territory. The risk assessment was also carried out on the basis of the supervision carried out in previous years and the analysis of the status of previously conducted activities of the PPO and information and reports received from other state bodies, as well as from special departments for combating corruption of higher public prosecutors' offices, the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

When conducting monitoring, the PPO acts in accordance with its legally prescribed competencies, in the manner prescribed by the PPL and the by-law regulating the manner of conducting monitoring, in an equal manner, regardless of the value of the public procurement in relation to which monitoring is conducted.

Considering that inter-institutional cooperation is an indispensable factor in combating and preventing irregularities in public procurement procedures, as well as in preventing corruption in this area, in 2025, in addition to acting upon the requests of the competent authorities for monitoring, cooperation continued with other authorities whose scope of work includes activities of direct importance for the field of public procurement, and in particular with the Special Departments for Combating Corruption of the Higher Public Prosecutors Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Republic Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures, the Commission for the Protection of Competition, the Budget Inspection under the Ministry of Finance, the Agency for Prevention of Corruption and the Misdemeanor Courts.

For this purpose, during 2025, in November and December, two two-day workshops were held for representatives of the Special Departments for Preventing Corruption of the Higher Public Prosecutors Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At these workshops, representatives of the PPO presented to the participants advanced functionalities of the Public Procurement Portal of importance for the work of the competent authorities. Also, the role and importance of the liaison officer were presented to the training participants, as well as the most common irregularities in public procurement procedures that were observed during monitoring. A significant part of these workshops was dedicated to the exchange of experiences between the PPO and representatives of the prosecutor's office regarding observed irregularities in public procurement procedures.

Also, in order to support the strengthening of the capacity of the Budget Inspection at the Ministry of Finance, which, in accordance with the provisions of the PPL, supervises the execution of public procurement contracts, two workshops were held in March 2025 on the topic of legal solutions on the technique of framework agreements and contracts concluded on the basis of framework agreements. Representatives of the Budget Inspection in Belgrade and Niš, in addition to the provisions of the Public Procurement Law regulating the subject area, were presented with the work on the Public Procurement Portal, as well as practical examples from the practice of the PPO.

In November 2025, a working meeting was held between representatives of the PPO and judges of misdemeanor appellate courts, judges and judicial assistants of misdemeanor courts, at which the participants had the opportunity to exchange views and experiences from the perspective of their respective competences regarding issues of liability for misdemeanors, initiation and conduct of misdemeanor proceedings for misdemeanors in the field of public procurement;

Within the framework of inter-institutional cooperation, and in accordance with the Cooperation Agreement concluded between the PPO and with the Republic Public Prosecutor's Office, the PPO submits copies of all requests for the initiation of misdemeanor proceedings to the Prosecutor's Office.

In December 2025, a Cooperation Agreement was signed between the Public Procurement Office and the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, with the aim of improving cooperation in areas of common interest, with special emphasis on the exchange of data relevant to the performance of tasks within the legally prescribed competences of both institutions.

In the same period, the PPO held 4 training sessions for employees of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption. The training sessions presented the method of searching data on the Public Procurement Portal, all with the aim of performing tasks within the competence of the Agency.

In the aforementioned period, the PPO, in addition to submitting requests to initiate misdemeanor proceedings for violations prescribed by the PPL, also initiated the annulment of a contract concluded without applying the PPL, by submitting a request for annulment of the contract to the Republic Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures, which was adopted by the aforementioned body and the contract in question was annulled.

In cases where, during monitoring, it was established that irregularities committed in public procurement procedures may constitute a basis for taking actions within the competence of other authorities, namely the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Budget Inspection and the Commission for the Protection of Competition, the PPO forwarded the available documentation obtained in the monitoring procedure to the aforementioned authorities, in order to consider whether the conditions for taking activities within their competence have been met in specific cases.

In the upcoming period, the PPO will continue to implement activities aimed at reducing risks to regularity in public procurement, in accordance with the 2026 Action Plan for the Implementation of the Public Procurement Development Program in the Republic of Serbia for period 2024-2028, the adoption of which is currently underway.

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide a reply to the following question (from written questions sent in December): *“Please inform of the number of public procurement procedures with only one tender submitted”*. (CH 23 IBM 32)

Public Procurement Office

The total share of public procurement procedures when there is only one tender submitted in the total number of public procurement procedures during 2025 (preliminary data) is 47,03% (40.88% for goods, 43.19% for works, 55.94% for services). Compared to the previous year, this is significant progress. Namely, in 2024 the share of public procurement procedures when there is

only one tender submitted in the total number of public procurement procedures was 50.75% (43.59% for goods, 46.22% for works, 61.24% for services). In 2023 the total share was 51% and in 2022 it was 51.6%.

Annual Report on Public Procurements for 2025 has not yet been published. Bearing in mind Article 182, paragraph 2 of the PPL which prescribes the deadline for the preparation of this report, which is March 31 of the current year for the previous year, the official data can be provided in March 2026 by PPO.

- Could you please provide a reply to the question (from written questions sent in December): *“Please inform on the percentage of measures from the Action Plan implemented in vulnerable sectors including construction, transport/infrastructure, defence, cohesion, agriculture, environment, healthcare, citizen/residence investor schemes, urban planning, disbursement of EU funds, and measures to combat corruption committed by organised crime groups infiltrating the public sector”?* (CH 23 IBM 32)

The Agency for Prevention of Corruption

The Anti-Corruption Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan are not structured around sectors particularly vulnerable to corruption. Instead, the specific objectives are defined horizontally and apply to the entire public sector. These include strengthening the normative framework, enhancing the institutional framework, increasing transparency, reinforcing integrity, and raising awareness of the harmful effects of corruption. Within these overarching objectives, several measures relate to specific high-risk areas.

For example, the only measure addressing **public procurement** is Measure 4.7: Establishing effective oversight of public sector operations in the implementation of public procurement at all stages. Under this measure, the current Action Plan defines seven activities, of which two (29%) have been implemented, while the remaining five (71%) have not. As a reason for non-implementation, the responsible entities stated that these activities were to be supported by the USAID project “Improvement of Public Procurement in the Republic of Serbia,” which was subsequently discontinued.

The **healthcare sector** is covered by one measure — Measure 4.5: Strengthening the ethical infrastructure in the healthcare sector — which includes three activities, as well as one additional activity under the first specific objective. Out of the four activities related to this sector, none have been implemented.

Regarding **the police**, Measure 4.3 focuses on improving anti-corruption mechanisms within the Ministry of the Interior and includes 17 activities, along with one activity under each of the measures within the first and fifth specific objectives. Of the total 19 activities concerning the police, 53% (10 activities) have been implemented, while 47% (9 activities) remain unimplemented.

With respect to **the tax system**, Measure 2.5 (Strengthening the capacity of the Tax Administration) defines four activities, of which two (50%) have been implemented and two (50%) have not.

The customs system is addressed by Measure 2.4: Strengthening the efficiency of the customs system. This measure includes six activities, none of which have been implemented.

The construction and infrastructure sector is covered by two activities under Measure 3.4: Strengthening the proactive publication of information of public interest and data in open format. Both activities, for which the Republic Geodetic Authority was responsible, have been implemented.

The education sector (more specifically, inspection oversight within the education system) is addressed under Measure 2.3: Strengthening capacities in conducting inspection supervision and internal inspection control. This measure includes four activities, as well as one activity under the first and two activities under the fifth specific objective. Of the six activities in total, four (66.6%) have been implemented, while two (33.3%) remain unimplemented.

The area of **oversight of political finance** is covered by four activities classified under Measures 1.2 and 2.8. Of these four activities, three (75%) have been implemented, while one (25%) has not.

Privatization is addressed under Measure 1.2: Improving the normative framework to reduce opportunities for corrupt conduct in the public sector and in relations between the public and private sectors. Within the scope of privatization, seven activities are foreseen, none of which have been implemented.

Public enterprises are addressed through two activities under Measure 1.3; however, these activities have not been implemented.

Measure 1.5 regulates **the alignment of the normative framework with the European Union acquis in the field of anti-corruption**, as well as with relevant international standards, principles, and best practices. Three activities are defined within this measure. Reports on their implementation have not yet been submitted.

Regarding **the protection of the European Union's financial interests**, one activity is defined under Measure 1.5, and the implementation report has not yet been submitted.

Under Measure 1.1, aimed at improving the normative framework for combating corruption to ensure more effective detection and prosecution of corruption-related criminal offences, six activities are defined. Measure 2.1, concerning the strengthening of administrative capacities and financial resources of state authorities responsible for combating corruption, includes 12 activities. These activities are primarily focused on strengthening the judiciary's capacity to **combat corruption, particularly in relation to collusion between organized criminal groups and the public sector**. Implementation reports for these activities have not yet been submitted.

Other sectors are not specifically addressed within the anti-corruption strategic documents. As noted above, a significant number of measures are horizontal in nature, applying to the entire public sector rather than targeting specific high-risk areas.

- Could you please provide a reply to the question (from written questions sent in December): *"Please inform as to any safeguards put in place to mitigate risks of corruption and to ensure transparency as regards the Lex specialis adopted for the General Staff building"*? (CH 23 IBM 32)

General Secretariat of the Government

SAFEGUARDS TO MITIGATE RISKS OF CORRUPTION AND TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY OF THE LAW ON SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT FOR THE REVITALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCATION IN BELGRADE BETWEEN KNEZA MILOŠA, MASARIKOVE, BIRČANINOVE AND RESAVSKA STREETS ("OFFICIAL GAZETTE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA NO 96/25)

Article 1, paragraph 2. Unless otherwise provided by this Law, the provisions of the Law regulating planning and construction and the Law regulating general administrative procedure shall also apply.

The Law on Planning and Construction "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 72 of September 3, 2009, 81 of October 2, 2009 - correction, 64 of September 10, 2010 - US, 24 of April 4, 2011, 121 of December 24, 2012, 42 of May 14, 2013 - US, 50 of June 7, 2013 - US, 98 of November 8, 2013 - US, 132 of December 9, 2014, 145 of December 29, 2014, 83 of October 29, 2018, 31 of April 29, 2019, 37 of May 29, 2019 - etc. law, 9 of February 4, 2020, 52 of May 24, 2021, 62 of July 27, 2023, 91 of October 23, 2025, 2 contains numerous mechanisms that constitute prevention and protection from corruption, see the Law on <https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2009/72/11/reg>

The Law on General Administrative Procedure ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 18 of March 1, 2016, 95 of December 8, 2018 – Authentic Interpretation, 2 of January 13, 2023 – Const Court) prescribes strict rules of conduct, and these rules shall be applied to each phase of planning and construction of the future facility(ies).

This Law does not provide for an exception to the Law on Public Procurement, so that any future procurement of goods, works and services shall be subject to the application of the provisions on public procurement.

The Law on Special Procedures for the Implementation of the Revitalization and Development Project for the Location in Belgrade between Kneza Miloša, Masarikova, Birčaninova and Resavska Streets ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" No. 96/25) DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR DEVIATIONS from all provisions of the Law on Planning and Construction and the Law on General Administrative Procedure that would violate the system of protection and prevention of corruption or diminish the transparency of its implementation. The essence, or rather the goal of enacting a special law, is contained in the obligation of all state bodies to

issue acts without delay, and that the construction of future facilities is considered a project of special importance for the Republic of Serbia.

It is thus stipulated that all procedures carried out in accordance with the provisions of this law are considered urgent and all state bodies and bodies of local self-government units, companies, as well as other bodies and institutions exercising public powers are obliged to issue acts within their competence without delay and to implement the project in phases.

This Law itself contains protective mechanisms, namely in the following articles:

Article 4.

Before being presented for public inspection, the draft planning document is subject to expert control.

The presentation of planning documents for public inspection is advertised in a daily newspaper and lasts 15 days from the date of advertising.

Article 6.

Location conditions, construction permit, work registration and use permit are issued to the investor, in accordance with the provisions of the law regulating the construction of facilities, unless otherwise prescribed by this Law.

Article 8.

The expert control and audit committee referred to in Article 131 of the Law on Planning and Construction may, when assessing the fulfillment of the conditions established by special regulations, standards and other acts, accept proof of fulfillment of the requirements according to international standards, as well as according to recognized calculation methods and models if they are provided for by those regulations, in order to fulfill the basic requirements for the facility, as well as the requirements for its design, construction and maintenance. This law does not provide an exception from the Public Procurement Law, so any future procurement of goods, works and services is subject to the application of public procurement provisions.

Horizontal matter

7. Criminal justice chain

7.1 Implementation of the law on the organisation and jurisdiction of state authorities in suppression of organised crime, terrorism and corruption

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide an answer to the question: *Regarding the measure, in the Action Plan of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, on adopting the bylaw referred to in Article 16, paragraph 4 of this Law to regulate the deadlines, procedure and manner of official communication between the police and the public prosecutor's office in cases of organised crime and corruption by 4Q 2025, could you please inform whether work on this bylaw has begun and **what the timeline is for its adoption?*** (CH 23 IBM 22)

Ministry of Justice

The analysis of the Law on the Organisation and Jurisdiction of State Authorities in the Suppression of Organised Crime, Terrorism and Corruption that will be conducted is part of the interim benchmark number 33: "Serbia makes an analysis of its organizational structures and bodies prior to amending the Law on Organization and Jurisdiction of State Authorities in Combating the Organized Crime, Terrorism and Corruption". In this sense, based on this analysis, work will be done to further strengthen the capacity of the Public Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime.

Following the completion of the analysis, the Ministry of Justice will prepare the Draft Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Organization and Jurisdiction of State Authorities in Combating the Organized Crime, Terrorism and Corruption.

Finally, with regard to the by-law referred to in Article 16, paragraph 4 of this Law, drafting will commence after the adoption of the amendments to the Law.

- You explain in the written replies that *“Current occupancy of work places in the Section for Combating High Corruption is 50 percent in relation to systematized work places. There is no interest of police officers in working in this organizational unit.”* Are there any strategic, policy or legislative measures being planned to deal with this challenge, given the relevance of fully staffed and trained institutions for the achievement of a track record in the fight against corruption? (CH 23 IBM 34)

Ministry of Interior

We acknowledge the ongoing efforts of the Criminal Police Directorate aimed at addressing personnel needs across all its organizational units, including those focused on combating corruption, such as the Anti-Corruption Department and the Department for Suppression of High Corruption. We believe that the data provided reflects the current situation, and we anticipate significant improvements in the future.

We understand the critical importance of equipping and training the institutions responsible for fighting corruption. However, we also emphasize the necessity of proper selection and filling of positions within these departments. To support our view that the current situation is factual rather than a strategic challenge, we would like to highlight that the Department for Suppression of High Corruption is a part of the Department for Suppression of Organized Financial Crime, which currently has an occupancy rate of 82.05% for its systematized positions. This rate is considerably higher than that of the Department for Suppression of High Corruption.

8. Fight against serious and organised crime and corruption, in particular high-level corruption, including pro-active investigations and prosecutions, freezing and confiscation of criminal assets, role and practices of security services in the investigation of serious and organised crime cases

- Regarding the Task Force for investigation of financial flows related to the project of “Modernization and reconstruction of Hungarian-Serbian railway line Novi Sad - Subotica – state border (Kelebija)” formed by the Public Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime

formed in February 2025, we would like to receive more details from the Ministry of Interior and director of police on the reasons for the non-extension of the police officers' engagement or replacement by experienced investigators, as well as the reason for not delivering the evidences collected by the Task Force in full and without delay. (CH 24 IBM 25)

Ministry of Interior

The General Police Directorate received notification from the Public Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime regarding an order issued on August 28, 2025. This order amends and supplements the previous Order from February 28, 2025, which established the Task Force for Investigating Financial Flows Related to the "Modernization and Reconstruction of the Hungarian-Serbian Railway Line on the Route Novi Sad-Subotica-State Border (Kelebija)." The new order extends the Task Force's operation for an additional six months. Additionally, the order from June 2, 2025, which also amends the February 28, 2025, order, includes changes to the members of the Task Force.

On September 4, 2025, the General Police Directorate informed the Public Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime that, as of June 2, 2025, there had been a change in the members of the Task Force. This change was made without obtaining the necessary consent from the authorized manager, as required by Article 23, paragraph 2 of the Law on the Organization and Competence of State Bodies in Suppression of Organized Crime, Terrorism, and Corruption.

Due to the lack of requested consent from the Police Directorate for the change in Task Force members, it was only on September 2, 2025, that a decision was made to extend the period for which the Task Force was formed. Additionally, due to the amended Regulations on Internal Organization and Systematization of Jobs in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there would be personnel changes within the Police Directorate. Consequently, the Police Directorate retracted the consent previously granted on February 28, 2025, for the participation of police officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Task Force's activities.

It was emphasized during this process that any personnel changes would not affect the operations of the Police Directorate. The police would continue to act at the request of the competent public prosecutor in compliance with the Criminal Procedure Code, the Police Law, and applicable regulations in this area.

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide the number of public prosecutors who participated in specialised training sessions on seizure and confiscation of proceeds of crimes? Could you please also provide information on the number of judges who participated in training sessions on seizure and confiscation of proceeds of crimes? (CH 24 IBM 29)

Judicial Academy

During 2025, Judicial Academy has conducted the following activities which included a number of participants from the abovementioned target groups:

- In cooperation with the OSCE Mission, Judicial Academy conducted four one-day seminars in Novi Sad and Belgrade on the topic: "Improved and new scientific methods in the area of crime forensics- Inspection as an Evidentiary Action- module 3- digital forensics" for a total of 160 participants (59 public prosecutors, 16 prosecutorial assistants, 82 police officers, 3 from other groups).
- In cooperation with the OSCE Mission, Judicial Academy conducted four one-day seminars in Novi Sad, Kragujevac Niš and Belgrade on the topic: "Inspection as an Evidentiary Action- Improved and new scientific methods in the area of crime forensics- for a total of 105 participants (54 judges, 41 judicial assistants, 10 from other groups).
- In cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Judicial Academy conducted one two-day and three one-day trainings on the topic: " Key evidence from the National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Proliferation Financing 2024 and its significance for internal policies", in Belgrade, Vrnjačka Banja, Niš and Novi Sad, for a total of 165 participants (28 judges, 10 judicial assistants, 50 public prosecutors, 24 prosecutorial assistants, 12 police officers, 41 from other groups).
- Judicial Academy has conducted two two-day workshops at Zlatibor and in Belgrade, on the topic: "Confiscation of proceeds of crime", for a total of 40 participants (14 judges, 19 public prosecutors, 2 judicial assistants, 5 police officers).
- In cooperation with the OSCE Mission, Judicial Academy conducted two three-day trainings in Belgrade, on the topic: "Investigation and confiscation of cryptocurrencies", for a total of 22 participants (6 judges, 5 public prosecutors, 2 judicial assistants, 9 police officers).
- In cooperation with the OSCE Mission, Judicial Academy conducted six two-day trainings in Niš, Belgrade, Sremska Kamenica and Vrnjačka Banja, on the topic: "Methods of managing electronic devices, electronic evidence and electronic evidence carriers", for a total of 74 participants (6 judges, 8 public prosecutors, 3 judicial assistants, 4 prosecutorial assistants, 53 police officers).
- Judicial Academy conducted a two-day workshop in Belgrade on the topic: "International Legal Assistance in Cases of Serious and Organized Crime", for a total of 18 participants (7 judges, 6 public prosecutors, 1 prosecutorial assistant, 4 police officers).
- In cooperation with the OSCE Mission, Judicial Academy conducted one three-day training at Zlatibor, on the topic: "Fighting Money Laundering", for a total of 26 participants (6 judges, 6 public prosecutors, 5 police officers, 9 from other groups).

8.4 Asset Recovery Office

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Could you please provide the numbers of criminal investigators/police officers in the financial investigation units (and its two departments). (CH 24 IBM 28)

Ministry of Interior

Concerning the filling of job positions, we would like to clarify that the Rulebook on Internal Organization and Job Classification within the Ministry of Interior (MoI) is currently in progress. The final number of systematized and filled positions in the relevant units will only be determined once this process is complete.

- Thank you for providing the list of databases ARO has access. Could you please list the databases that ARO does not have access yet and the steps you are taking to allow access ARO? (CH 24 IBM 29)

Ministry of Interior

The Financial Investigation Unit/ARO has access to a variety of databases from key state bodies and institutions, enabling it to gain comprehensive insights into relevant information. This integrated system allows for the real-time collection, analysis, and processing of data, facilitating the creation of detailed financial and asset portfolios for both individuals and organizations undergoing verification.

This infrastructure enhances the efficiency, accuracy, and timeliness of its operations and improves coordination with other competent authorities. The Financial Investigation Unit/ARO is committed to continuously enhancing and upgrading its technical capabilities in collaboration with all state bodies that have access to these databases. This is essential for the effective, timely, and reliable functioning of the real-time data exchange system. Ongoing improvements to the system bolster data reliability and accuracy. Furthermore, efficient real-time data exchange promotes better coordination among institutions, a more rational use of resources, and an overall increase in operational efficiency.

Does the ARO have easy access to standardised financial data from banks? Could you please update on steps taken to improve the private and public sector cooperation in exchange of financial data, for the ARO to access financial data from banks digitally? (CH 24 IBM 29)

The Financial Investigation Unit/ARO has access to the National Bank of Serbia's database, which includes information on active and closed dinar and foreign currency accounts belonging to individuals and legal entities in all commercial banks within the Republic of Serbia. This unit also has information on individuals authorized to manage funds in these accounts, as well as access to data on safe deposit box leases in all commercial banks across the country.

To carry out actions such as checking bank accounts (including the account owner and account number), obtaining documentation from banks, determining account balances, and providing transaction data, the Financial Investigation Unit/ARO requires an appropriate order from a competent Public Prosecutor in the Republic of Serbia.

The Financial Investigation Unit/ARO maintains active, regulated, and ongoing cooperation with key state bodies, organizations, institutions, and private financial sector entities, including commercial banks, payment institutions, the Central Registry,

Depository and Clearing of Securities, and other relevant organizations. This collaboration is founded on legal authority, mutual trust, and timely data exchange.

To facilitate efficient and effective communication, the Financial Investigation Unit/ARO has established a system of liaison officers in important state bodies, organizations, institutions, and the private financial sector. These contact persons serve as direct links to the Unit, acting on requests for checks and ensuring timely delivery of the requested information. This system streamlines processing times and enhances the quality of exchanged data.

Does the ARO have easy access to standardised financial data from banks? Could you please update on steps taken to improve the private and public sector cooperation in exchange of financial data, for the ARO to access financial data from banks digitally? (CH 24 IBM 29)

9.2 Child sexual abuse, including online

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- In your written input, concerning the question on steps taken to address recommendations of the Lanzarote's committee, you note that the recommendations were officially published on 15 November 2025 and sent to the relevant institutions on 16 November 2025. Could you please explain what are the next steps beyond this, is there a monitoring mechanism regarding the implementation of the recommendations? (CH 24 IBM 32)

Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography

THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA: Implementation Report on the Third Monitoring Round of all States Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse to Lanzarote Committee (2023-2025)

Based on the list of recommendations from the Lanzarote Committee regarding the implementation of the third monitoring round, recommendations that directly pertain to the Republic of Serbia and the general recommendations addressed to all States Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse – the Republic of Serbia hereby submits the following report on the implementation status of the recommendations of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse:

Concerning recommendations: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31, 46, 47, 49, 52, 53, 55, 58, and 61, the Republic of Serbia underscores the following:

- All forms of conduct specified and further defined in these recommendations are sanctioned under the criminal legislation of the Republic of Serbia, primarily the Criminal Code („Official Gazette of the RS“, nos. 85/05, 88/05 – corr., 107/05 – corr., 72/09, 111/09, 121/12, 104/13, 108/14, 9/16, 35/19 and 94/24) (hereinafter: CC), which prescribes special protection for the category of children through stricter penalties by providing for qualified forms of certain criminal offences when committed against a child.

- The Law on Special Measures for the Prevention of Criminal Offences against Sexual Freedom involving Juvenile Persons („Official Gazette of the RS“, No. 32/13), applicable to perpetrators who have committed the following criminal offences against minors incriminated by the CC:
 - Rape (Article 178, paragraphs 3 and 4 CC),
 - Sexual Intercourse with a Helpless Person (Article 179, paragraphs 2 and 3 CC),
 - Sexual Intercourse with a Child (Article 180 CC),
 - Sexual Intercourse by Abuse of Position (Article 181 CC),
 - Prohibited Sexual Acts (Article 182 CC),
 - Procuring and Enabling Sexual Intercourse (Article 183 CC),
 - Procuring in the Commission of Prostitution (Article 184 CC),
 - Displaying, Obtaining and Possessing Pornographic Material and Exploiting a Juvenile for Pornography (Article 185 CC),
 - Inducing a Juvenile to Attend Sexual Acts (Article 185a CC),
 - Exploitation of Computer Network or Communication by other Technical Means for the Commission of Criminal Offences against Sexual Freedom involving a Juvenile Person (Article 185b CC);
- In addition, this Law prescribes specific conditions pertaining to the perpetrator of a criminal offence against juvenile persons (Article 3), namely:
 - Prohibition of sentence reduction and parole, and non-applicability of statute of limitations to criminal prosecution and execution of sentence (Article 5),
 - Legal consequences of conviction (Article 6),
 - Special measures (Article 7),
 - Mandatory reporting to the competent police authority and the Administration for the Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions (Article 8),
 - Prohibition on visiting places where juvenile persons gather (Article 9),
 - Mandatory attendance of professional counselling services and institutions (Article 10),
 - Mandatory notification of change of residence, stay, or workplace (Article 11),
 - Mandatory notification of travel abroad (Article 12).

Furthermore, the special protection of the child's interests during criminal proceedings, from the moment of filing a criminal complaint until the rendering of final judgments, is ensured by procedural laws, primarily the Criminal Procedure Code („Official Gazette of the RS“, nos. 72/11, 101/11, 121/12, 32/13, 45/13, 55/14, 35/19, 27/21 – CC Decision and 62/21 – CC Decesion), as well as the Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juvenile Persons („Official Gazette of the RS“, No. 85/05), and the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence („Official Gazette of the RS“, nos. 94/16 and 10/23 – other law). Their procedural provisions enable full, comprehensive, and special protection of children's interests, ensured through special rules for examining children in the capacity of injured witnesses, as well as rules of an imperative nature, which entail obligations of the procedural authorities and all other participants in the proceedings and the manner of conducting actions, aimed at fully securing the best protection of the child's interests.

During 2017, a Network of Support Services for Victims and Witnesses was established in all Higher Public Prosecutor's Offices in the Republic of Serbia, the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, the Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime, and the Prosecutor's Office for War Crimes. Public prosecutors can assist the victim at the stage of filing a criminal complaint by

providing information on the course of the criminal proceedings and their rights, as well as by referring them to specific institutions for the purpose of providing assistance and support to the victim to persevere throughout the criminal proceedings. Also, public prosecutors, in accordance with the powers vested in them by the Criminal Procedure Code, may grant the status of particularly sensitive witness to witnesses, i.e., victims of criminal acts; when the victims are minors, this form of protection is particularly emphasized, and the provisions of the Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juvenile Persons are applied. Representatives of the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office actively participated in the adoption of strategic documents pertaining to witness protection in criminal proceedings.

In addition to the foregoing, we highlight the significance of the public prosecutor's authority in accordance with the Family Law („Official Gazette of the RS“, nos. 18/05, 72/11 – other law and 6/15) (hereinafter: FL), under which the public prosecutor, in addition to the statutory powers under the Criminal Procedure Code, has significant authority and a range of possibilities to provide protection to victims of violence. Namely, besides the authority in the sphere of criminal law protection, the public prosecutor also possesses certain powers in the sphere of civil law protection against violence. The Family Law prescribes special powers for the public prosecutor, who may file a lawsuit for the protection of children's rights (Article 263 FL), a lawsuit for the deprivation or restoration of parental rights (Article 264 FL), a lawsuit for the annulment of adoption (Article 275 FL), as well as a lawsuit for determining measures for protection against domestic violence or extending measures for protection against domestic violence (Article 284 FL)

The Law on Public Prosecutor's Office („Official Gazette of the RS“, No. 10/23) emphasizes the protection of human rights; thus, Article 12 of this Law stipulates that the holder of a public prosecutor's office is obliged to perform the public prosecutor's function independently, professionally, conscientiously, impartially, fairly and without undue delay, respecting the presumption of innocence and the rights of participants in the proceedings, taking due care of the protection of human rights, and in particular the rights of the injured party and the prevention of discrimination on any grounds.

Concerning recommendations No. 11, 27 and 31 of the Lanzarote Committee, which pertain to the requirements addressed to specifically selected signatory states and, within that framework, to the Republic of Serbia – it is noted that the indicated forms of conduct and procedural assumptions are implemented and applied by public prosecutors, at all stages, and in accordance with the aforementioned laws.

As regards recommendation No. 17 – On 18 February 2022, the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Mandatory Instruction on Procedures towards Injured Parties when providing information and assessing the risk of vulnerability and the need for protection and support measures. The accompanying documents to the Instruction are: a questionnaire for assessing the risk of vulnerability and the needs of the injured party, an informational brochure on the rights of an adult person injured by a criminal offence, and an informational brochure on the rights of a juvenile person injured by a criminal offence. In accordance with the Instruction, the individual risk assessment for a juvenile is conducted with their prior consent and the consent of their parents or other legal representative. The provision of information and the offering of support and assistance to a juvenile are carried out obligatorily in the presence of a parent or other legal representative, except in cases where these persons are prevented from attending, in which case the presence of a representative of the guardianship authority (social welfare centre) shall be ensured instead.

Furthermore, the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence introduced a new approach to police work in terms of prevention and police response prior to the commission of a criminal offence or misdemeanour, as well as the protection of victims, enabling victims to remain in their environment while imposing restrictions on the violent family member through the issuance of urgent measures (i.e., the police have the authority to temporarily prohibit the perpetrator of violence from approaching and contacting the victim and to temporarily remove the perpetrator from the residence). The aforementioned Law enhanced the coordinated cooperation of state authorities and institutions by establishing the Coordination and Cooperation Group, composed of representatives of basic public prosecutor's offices, police directorates and social welfare centres from the area for which the Group is formed, where cases of violence that have not been concluded in court proceedings are considered. In connection with the foregoing, the Instruction on Procedures in Cases of Domestic Violence was also adopted, which mandates and regulates the manner of conduct for police officers in preventing domestic violence and providing protection and support to victims of domestic violence.

With regard to recommendation No. 22, in 2021 the Government of the Republic of Serbia established the National Platform for the Prevention of Violence, which includes children, under the name "I Protect You" (Čuvam te). The Platform comprises four components relating to:

1. Information (what constitutes violence, types of violence, recognition and procedures in accordance with the laws and special protocols of the competent ministries);
2. Education (free online training for pupils, employees and parents);
3. Current News (informal articles on topics related to violence); and
4. Citizen Contacts (a software system for electronic reporting of violence that can be used free of charge by children, citizens, and competent state authorities and institutions).

Furthermore, it is emphasized that, on the initiative of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the UNICEF Office in Belgrade, the National Coalition for Ending Child Marriage was established in 2019, with the aim of contributing to the elimination of child marriage by removing institutional and societal obstacles to the implementation of the law, as well as promoting examples of good practice. Since 2022, the Coalition has been publishing a "Newsletter" promoting activities and plans in the area of preventing child, early and forced marriages. The Coalition includes competent state authorities and institutions working in the field of prevention and elimination of child marriage. Within the framework of the Coalition's meetings and expert gatherings, through promotional and educational activities and by highlighting the harmful practices of entering into early child marriages, support is provided for normative and systemic changes related to ending child marriage. In addition, the results of the competent authorities are monitored and analysed with regard to the suppression of the criminal offences of forced marriage, cohabitation with a minor, and trafficking in human beings where the injured parties are minors.

In connection with Recommendation No. 28, we hereby inform that the following activities in the form of professional training for police officers have been implemented:

1. Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juvenile Persons (attended by 650 police officers);
2. Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Protection of Juvenile Persons in the Pre-Investigation and Criminal Proceedings (attended by 273 police officers);
3. Interrogation in the Pre-Investigation Proceedings (attended by 111 police officers).

Recommendation No. 58: The multisectoral Working Group for the drafting of the Law in the field of combating trafficking in human beings has prepared the Draft Law on the Prevention and

Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings and the Protection of Victims, which has undergone a public consultation process and received a positive opinion from the European Commission. The procedure of gathering opinions on the said Draft Law is currently underway, with the aim of submitting it to the Government and the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia for adoption. The objective of enacting the Law on the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings and the Protection of Victims is to comprehensively regulate the field of combating trafficking in human beings. Within the Draft Law, Chapter VI prescribes provisions relating to the protection of children, namely: identification, assistance, support and protection, and repatriation of children, with respect for the principle of the best interests of the child.

Finally, regarding matters under Recommendation No. 60, it should be emphasized that the aforementioned Draft Law on the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings and the Protection of Victims stipulates that, with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of the fight against trafficking in human beings, i.e., avoiding secondary victimization, detecting, identifying, providing assistance to and protecting victims of trafficking in human beings – professional training shall be provided for persons within the competent authorities who come into contact with presumed victims of trafficking in human beings and victims of trafficking in human beings.

At the session of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, held on 20 March 2024, the Program for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2024-2029 was adopted, along with the accompanying Action Plan for the period 2024-2026.

During 2024 and 2025, the Ministry of Interior implemented training sessions for experts in the field of combating trafficking in human beings, which equally pertain to child trafficking and trafficking in adults, on the following topics:

- Digital investigations at basic and advanced levels, for representatives of the police and the public prosecutor's office (approximately 64 participants);
- Identification of potential victims of trafficking in human beings among the migrant population (24 officers of the Border Police and the Asylum Office);
- Procedures concerning juvenile persons on the topic "Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juvenile Persons in Pre-Investigation and Criminal Proceedings" (20 police officers during 2024);
- Methods of implementing urgent measures for tracing missing juvenile persons (54 police officers);

Following the upgrading of the "Find Me" (Pronadi me) platform, an additional 137 police officers from all police directorates have been trained.

Furthermore, two Courses on the Detection, Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings were implemented for 30 police officers who perform or will perform duties related to the detection, prevention and suppression of trafficking in human beings.

10.3 Information exchange

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- On the process of establishing the system for receiving, protecting and exchanging passenger information (advance passenger information (API) and passenger name record (PNR) in accordance with the EU API/PNR framework, notably Directive 2004/82/EC, Directive (EU) 2016/681, Regulation (EU) 2025/12 and Regulation (EU) 2025/13), in your

written answer, you mentioned a technical assistance project and a new IPA project planned in 2027, which will realistically start in 2028. Would you inform on any concrete steps do you plan to take in 2026? (CH 24 IBM 13)

Ministry of Interior

During 2026, activities will be focused on strategic and operational preparations for the establishment of the API/PNR system, in line with the European Union legal framework.

In the course of 2026, through participation in activities envisaged under the EU Technical Assistance Project in the fields of Integrated Border Management, visa policy and Schengen, the preparation of a Roadmap for the establishment of the API/PNR system is planned. This Roadmap will serve as a comprehensive document encompassing the following elements:

Legal analysis of the national legislation aimed at aligning the national legal framework with the EU API/PNR framework, including the identification of necessary amendments and supplements, as well as the preparation of draft normative acts to ensure harmonisation with the relevant EU instruments.

Proposal of an institutional model for the API/PNR system, through an analysis of possible organisational models for API/PNR system implementation suitable for the Republic of Serbia, the definition of competencies, staffing and technical requirements for the effective implementation of the proposed model, as well as the planning of training activities and inter-sectorial coordination.

Technical preparations, including an initial assessment of the national IT infrastructure (system architecture, interoperability, security standards) required for system implementation, as well as the preparation of technical specifications that will serve as a basis for future public procurement of the system, cost estimation, implementation timelines and phased deployment.

Coordination with relevant stakeholders, involving the intensification of cooperation with air carriers, airport operators, competent personal data protection authorities and other relevant institutions, in order to ensure full compliance with data protection standards and operational requirements.

13.2. Asylum, including accommodation capacities

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- Would you please inform on the state budget allocated for migration management, namely for reception and protection services in 2026? (CH 24 IBM 4)

Commissariat for Refugees and Migration

Given the fact that over a million migrants have passed through the Republic of Serbia in the past 10 years and that we remain consistent with a humane approach with a clear commitment to providing decent accommodation and reception as well as support to all migrants present on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, in accordance with the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, provides material reception conditions that include accommodation, food, clothing and financial resources for personal needs for the care of migrants and asylum seekers (Article 50 of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection). In addition to the aforementioned competencies, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration is also responsible for the integration of persons granted asylum as well as for the implementation of the assisted voluntary return program. Within the framework of the Budget Law for 2026, the Republic of Serbia, through the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, has allocated a total of: 261,849,130.84 dinars (2,182,076.09 euros) for reception and protection purposes.

- Could you please inform on the implementation of the provision of the law on Asylum and Temporary Protection regarding information and free legal aid to asylum seekers, including legal counselling for asylum seekers at Belgrade, Nis and Kragujevac airports. Would you please clarify how the state supports (also financially) the implementation of this provision? (CH 24 IBM 9)

Ministry of Interior

The Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, among other things, stipulates that a foreigner who has expressed the intention to seek asylum in the Republic of Serbia, as well as an asylum seeker, has the right to be informed about his or her rights and obligations throughout the entire asylum procedure.

In this regard, a foreigner who has expressed the intention to submit a request for asylum in the Republic of Serbia, both within the territory and at the border crossing, is informed by police officers about his or her rights and obligations in connection with the initiation of the asylum procedure.

The same law also stipulates that representatives of associations providing legal assistance to asylum seekers and persons granted the right to asylum shall be provided with effective access to border crossings or transit areas, in accordance with the regulations governing the protection of the state border.

At the largest border crossings, police stations, detention centers for foreigners, as well as asylum centers and open reception centers, there are notices about organizations providing legal assistance and support to asylum seekers, which they can contact at any time.

In cooperation with UNHCR, an information brochure for asylum seekers was produced and translated into the most widely spoken languages of the countries from which persons who express their intention to apply for asylum come. The brochure was published on the website

of this ministry in December 2022. Information brochures are also available at the airports in Belgrade, Niš, and Kraljevo. In the first quarter of 2025, information posters with QR codes and available information on access to the asylum procedure for potential asylum seekers were distributed again.

To adequately implement the law, i.e., to provide timely information to persons who may need international protection, the capacities of police officers who first come into contact with potential asylum seekers, as well as their knowledge regarding the treatment of this category of persons, are being improved through continuous training, both basic and specialized, regarding the protection of human rights.

- Could you please inform us about the plans to establish an intra-Ministerial body to address current implementation issues of the Law on Asylum, as reported during the technical exchanges on interim benchmarks? If such a body is planned to be established, could you please provide more detailed timeline for this? (CH 24 IBM 9)

Ministry of Interior

The establishment of the intra-Ministerial Working Group is currently underway, aimed at drafting a new Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection. This new law will be largely aligned with the latest amendments to the European Union's regulatory framework related to asylum, specifically the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

We expect the formation of the Working Group to occur in the first half of 2026. In line with the Roadmap for Cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA), we will reach out to the EUAA for support in drafting an analysis of the existing legislative framework, which will inform the creation of the new Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection.

Regarding timelines, we believe the analysis should be completed in the first half of the year, and work on drafting the new law should commence in the second half. This will be based on the analysis results and the European Commission's reports on the implementation and enforcement of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, with an emphasis on the best practices and legal solutions observed in European Union Member States.

A meeting with representatives of the EUAA is scheduled for March 4, 2026, during which these topics will be presented for discussion.

13.5. Implementation of Strategy and Action plan for Integrated Border Management and Schengen Action Plan

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- What financial resources has the Ministry set aside to implement the Integrated Border Management and Schengen Action Plan? Could you please provide an update on the implementation of the roadmap to EUROSUR, particularly with regard to the establishment of

the National Coordination Centre (NCC). Additionally, could you please inform about the plans and timelines? (CH 24 IBM 13 and 14)

Ministry of Interior

The Serbian Ministry of Interior remains committed to ensuring adequate and sustainable financial resources for the implementation of the Integrated Border Management Strategy and Action Plan, as well as the Action Plan for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the Schengen Area. Financial planning and execution are continuously aligned with the dynamics of the accession process, identified national priorities, and the recommendations of the European Commission within Negotiation Chapter 24 – Justice, Freedom and Security.

In this regard, during 2024, a total amount of RSD 709,200,000.00 (EUR 6,040,885.8) was spent for these purposes, while in 2025 expenditures amounted to RSD 108,225,716.60 (EUR 921,854.4). The majority of these funds were allocated to the procurement of equipment and material and technical assets aimed at enhancing the operational capacities of the Border Police.

As a distinct segment, professional training and continuous professional development of police officers of the Border Police Directorate represent one of the key pillars for strengthening integrated border management. Accordingly, in 2024 and 2025, dedicated financial resources were planned and spent for the implementation of basic police training, specialist training courses and professional development programmes for police officers, in line with the requirements of the Schengen acquis and the priorities under Chapter 24 – Justice, Freedom and Security.

For the implementation of professional development activities for police officers of the Border Police Directorate in 2024, financial resources amounting to RSD 57,834,000 (EUR 492,700.1) were allocated, while for 2025 this amount totalled RSD 38,580,300 (EUR 328,662.6). The indicated amounts represent the total funds envisaged for overall professional development in the respective years.

For the implementation of specialist training courses for police officers of the Border Police Directorate, financial resources amounting to RSD 3,458,000 (EUR 29,454.8) were allocated in 2024, while for 2025 the allocated amount was RSD 5,425,000 (EUR 46,422.4). These funds were planned for the implementation of the Specialist Training for Border Police Officers, the Specialist Training for Border Police Officers from employment, the Training of Trainers in the field of border control, and the Risk Analysis Course within the Integrated Border Management system.

Furthermore, at the Basic Police Training Centre in Sremska Kamenica, during the reporting period 2024–2025, a total of 499 trainees completed basic police training for the position of border police officer. The total costs of training for 499 trainees, in accordance with the applicable Decisions on the structure and level of actual training costs for basic police training for the position of border police officer, amounted to RSD 398,928,733.62 (EUR 3,398,030.09).

Through the procurement and upgrading of ICT equipment, telecommunications systems, technical protection systems and specialised information solutions, the Ministry of Interior ensures continuous technical support to the business processes within the remit of the Police Directorate, which includes the Border Police Directorate. This directly enhances the efficiency of border control and state border surveillance.

These procurements and investments, including the development and upgrading of integrated information systems, video surveillance systems and communication platforms, contribute to strengthening the operational capacities of the Border Police Directorate and its readiness to apply Schengen standards in the field of external border management, as well as the EU acquis in the area of integrated border management.

In this context, significant financial resources have been planned for the expansion of the eLTE system and video surveillance systems in the Republic of Serbia, namely: RSD 250,000,000 in 2026, RSD 250,000,000 in 2027 and RSD 250,000,000 in 2028 (EUR 6,388,415.67 over a three-year period).

In addition, for the procurement of IT and other specialised equipment for the needs of the organisational units of the Ministry of Interior, financial resources amounting to RSD 50,000,000 have been planned for 2026, RSD 500,000,000 for 2027 and RSD 300,000,000 for 2028 (EUR 7,240,204.42 over a three-year period).

With regard to the upgrading and modernisation of the TETRA system, funds amounting to RSD 145,000,000 have been planned for 2026, RSD 300,000,000 for 2027 and RSD 350,000,000 for 2028 (EUR 5,660,136.28 over a three-year period).

With the aim of fulfilling the obligations arising from the European Union acquis in the field of Integrated Border Management, the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia is carrying out organisational and functional alignment of the Border Police Directorate in order to establish the National Coordination Centre (NCC) and to create the necessary conditions for the Republic of Serbia's connection to the EUROSUR network. These activities are aimed at the gradual establishment of a comprehensive National Situational Picture at the borders, as a future integral component of the European Situational Picture, in accordance with the requirements of the EUROSUR Regulation.

Within the framework of European Union support, in particular through IPA III regional programmes and bilateral technical assistance measures, the Ministry of Interior actively participates in projects encompassing the development of the institutional framework, the definition of the functions of the National Coordination Centre, the strengthening of inter-agency cooperation, as well as the professional training of human resources. Special emphasis is placed on capacity-building through training in the EUROSUR system, risk analysis, situational awareness and operational duty functions, as well as on enhancing the language competencies of staff designated to work within the NCC.

In parallel with institutional and human resource strengthening, measures are being undertaken to fulfil the technical prerequisites for connection to EUROSUR, including the planning and provision of appropriate ICT equipment, workstations and software solutions, while ensuring their full interoperability with the existing infrastructure of the Ministry. Although certain activities in the area of technical equipment procurement are subject to EU-level public procurement procedures, the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia continues, in cooperation with the European Commission and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, to plan the necessary resources for the full operational functionality of EUROSUR and the NCC.

Additional value to the process is provided by the continuous exchange of experience and good practices with EU Member States and countries of the region, which contributes to a better understanding of organisational models, operational procedures and standards applied within the EUROSUR system. The acquired experience serves as a basis for the further development of the national model of the National Coordination Centre and its gradual alignment with future amendments to the EU regulatory framework.

The Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia remains committed to the continued implementation of planned activities in the forthcoming period, while ensuring continuity of operations and sustained engagement of trained personnel, in order to secure the full functionality of the National Coordination Centre and achieve the readiness of the Republic of Serbia for integration into the EUROSUR system in line with the dynamics of the accession process.

In accordance with the activities stemming from the Action Plans for Integrated Border Management and for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the Schengen Area, a phased implementation of activities is planned for the forthcoming period. These activities include the adoption of an internal act on organisation and systematisation for the establishment of the National Coordination Centre within the Border Police Directorate, the identification and procurement of the necessary technical equipment and its integration into the existing ICT infrastructure, as well as the implementation of a training plan for police officers assigned to work in the NCC.

Furthermore, the process of establishing and fully operationalising the EUROSUR system represents a complex and multi-layered process, encompassing normative and organisational alignment, the development and integration of technical and ICT infrastructure, as well as systematic professional training of human resources, accompanied by continuous coordination with the relevant European Union institutions.

13.6. Implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy at the borders

Additional questions (to be answered in writing):

- In your written input, you provided information on control activities, the number of criminal charges filed, and disciplinary proceedings initiated. Could you please also clarify the exact number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions (if applicable)?

