



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Strasbourg, 8.7.2025
SWD(2025) 914 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

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

Accompanying the document

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

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

{COM(2025) 900 final} - {SWD(2025) 901 final} - {SWD(2025) 902 final} -
{SWD(2025) 903 final} - {SWD(2025) 904 final} - {SWD(2025) 905 final} -
{SWD(2025) 906 final} - {SWD(2025) 907 final} - {SWD(2025) 908 final} -
{SWD(2025) 909 final} - {SWD(2025) 910 final} - {SWD(2025) 911 final} -
{SWD(2025) 912 final} - {SWD(2025) 913 final} - {SWD(2025) 915 final} -
{SWD(2025) 916 final} - {SWD(2025) 917 final} - {SWD(2025) 918 final} -
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{SWD(2025) 922 final} - {SWD(2025) 923 final} - {SWD(2025) 924 final} -
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{SWD(2025) 928 final} - {SWD(2025) 929 final} - {SWD(2025) 930 final} -
{SWD(2025) 931 final}

ABSTRACT

The justice system in Latvia continues to perform efficiently, with the the overall length of proceedings remaining broadly stable. The need for further safeguards to protect the appointment procedure for judges of the Supreme Court from undue influence, has not been addressed. The new Judicial Academy was established and became operational. Turnover among judicial assistants remains high, and the judiciary is facing difficulties to fill all vacancies for judges. Further efforts are being made to improve workload distribution among judges. The Economic Court continues to handle cases efficiently, despite an overall increase of caseload and a temporary reduction of active judges.

Work has started to prepare the anti-corruption action plans for 2026-2027. Investigations and prosecutions of corruption offences are carried out efficiently, while there are some concerns as regards high-level corruption. The electronic system for asset declarations continues to work effectively, and an automatic declaration checking tool has been developed. The framework to prevent conflicts of interests of public officials is being strengthened. Reflections are ongoing in Parliament as regard updating ethical rules for its Members and the implementation of the existing codes of ethics in the public institutions has been evaluated. Some steps were made regarding legislation on lobbying, such as the setting up of a simplified lobby register on an interim basis. Amendments to the rules on political party financing strengthen the criminal liability rules for illegal financing. The Government plans to amend implementation of the legislation on the protection of whistleblowers following an evaluation of its implementation. Reforms are being undertaken to address challenges related to public procurement, which remains an area at high risk of corruption.

The regulator for audiovisual media services (NEPLP) continues to operate independently. Self-regulation mechanisms are available, but their effective application is limited. The public service media maintains its independence through well-established safeguards. Public service media Latvian Television and Latvian Radio were merged. Amendments to the Press Law will make registration of mass media service providers and beneficial ownership information mandatory. The Freedom of Information Law guarantees the right to access information held by public institutions. The professional environment for journalists continues to be overall safe, but there has been a deterioration in the online environment.

Operating conditions for civil society remain overall open and stable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- No progress on taking measures to ensure adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the existing appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments.
- Some progress on continuing work on the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, including the setting up of a special lobby register

On this basis, and considering other developments that took place in the period of reference, in addition to recalling the relevant commitments made under the Recovery and Resilience Plan, it is recommended to Latvia to:

- Take measures to ensure the adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments.
- Ensure the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, including as regards the special interim lobby register.

I. JUSTICE SYSTEM¹

Independence

The level of perceived judicial independence in Latvia continues to be average among both the general public and companies. Overall, 42% of the general population and 41% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2025². The perceived judicial independence among the general public has slightly decreased in comparison with 2024 (43%) and has significantly decreased in comparison with 2021 (56%). The perceived judicial independence among companies has slightly increased in comparison with 2024 (40%), although it has significantly decreased in comparison with 2021 (53%).

There has been no progress on the recommendation to introduce adequate safeguards in the appointment procedure for judges of the Supreme Court³. In 2022, Parliament had initially rejected a candidate to the post of Supreme Court judge amid a political controversy⁴. Parliament does not have to state reasons for its decision not to appoint a candidate, and there is also no judicial review of its decision⁵. After a second vote in Parliament in October 2023, the candidate was eventually elected and assumed office in January 2024⁶. Even though the case is regarded as isolated, it pointed to a lack of consistency with European standards which recommend that the appointing authority follows in practice the recommendations or opinions of an independent and competent authority drawn in substantial part from the judiciary⁷. No steps have been taken to introduce adequate safeguards in the appointment⁸. Therefore, no progress was made on the 2024 Rule of Law Report recommendation.

Quality

The new Judicial Academy was established and became operational. Prepared over several years also with support of the Commission’s Technical Support Instrument, and a reform under Latvia’s Recovery and Resilience Plan⁹, the Judicial Academy became operational on 1 January 2025. The recruitment process for its director was completed in February 2025, after the Judicial Council had approved the relevant conditions and procedures. The Judicial Academy is designed to serve as a single training centre for judges,

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

² Figures 50 and 52, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard and Figures 49 and 51, 2023 EU Justice Scoreboard. The level of perceived judicial independence is categorised as follows: very low (below 30% of respondents perceive judicial independence as fairly good and very good); low (between 30-39%), average (between 40-59%), high (between 60-75%), very high (above 75%).

³ The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended Latvia to ‘take measures to ensure adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the existing appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments’.

⁴ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, pp. 3-4.

⁵ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, pp. 3-4.

⁶ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, p. 4.

⁷ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, pp. 3-4.

⁸ For example, such legal safeguards could include Parliament’s obligation to state reasons and judicial review of its appointment decision. Country visit Latvia, President of the Supreme Court and President of the Judicial Council.

⁹ Latvia’s Recovery and Resilience Plan contains a reform on the establishment of the Judicial Academy.

court staff, prosecutors, assistant prosecutors and investigators¹⁰. It replaces the previous privately organised Judicial Training Centre. It is under discussion whether the Judicial Academy could also provide training to candidate judges¹¹.

Turnover among judicial assistants remains high, and the judiciary is facing difficulties to fill all vacancies for judges. Salaries for judges, prosecutors and court employees have increased from 2022 onwards¹². These increases were reflected in an overall court budget increased in 2024 by 7.7% compared to 2023¹³. In 2024, the State Audit Office noted that there are not sufficient candidates to fill vacancies in the judiciary¹⁴. The Judicial Council has taken up the issue with universities and is also looking into offering parts of the training for judicial candidates via the newly established Judicial Academy¹⁵. As regards judicial assistants, despite the possibility for long-term employment¹⁶, their positions continue to be filled by judicial candidates on a temporary basis. Low salaries¹⁷ and the perceived lack of career prospects in the judiciary are among the reasons given by stakeholders for not attracting sufficient judicial assistants¹⁸. The Council of Sworn Advocates also pointed to an attractive private sector¹⁹. The State Audit Office also observed that the situation of judicial assistants remained unsatisfactory, leading to very high turnover rates, with up to 41% of assistants leaving each year in Riga²⁰.

Further efforts are being made concerning adequate workload distribution among judges. A report by a Judicial Council working group in November 2024 had recommended a redistribution of the workload for land registry judges. Following this report, the creation of a new position of ‘court lawyers’ within the judiciary, to be possibly assigned with some tasks – in particular of an administrative nature – currently carried out by judges, is being discussed²¹. The Judicial Council working group discarded the idea of creating separate categories of specialised judges. Therefore, the current structure of judges in the courts of general jurisdiction specialising in the course of their career, and being allowed to change it,

¹⁰ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 6. The Judicial Council is in discussions to make the academy responsible also for training of candidate judges, see above. Country visit Latvia, Judicial Council. For details on the appointment of the director of the academy, a short report was published, see Court Administration (2025). In early May 2025, the director of the Judicial Academy informed about the first months of its activities. Judicial Council (2025).

¹¹ Country visit Latvia, Judicial Council and Association of Judges.

¹² For example, in 2024, salaries for judges rose by further 6% and by 13% for prosecutors in regional offices and 12.8% for prosecutors within the Prosecutor General’s Office. See in detail, also on the calculation, 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, pp. 7 and 8.

¹³ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 5. See also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, p. 7.

¹⁴ State Audit Office, Performance Audit on the ‘Availability and Development of Human Resources in the Courts of Latvia’, cited in written input by Latvia, p. 5, English summary available at: https://www.lrvk.gov.lv/en/getrevisionfile/29740-J2RD-kxrwjumAYd1ZQNdSJZjDb6mRsn_.pdf.

¹⁵ Country visit Latvia, President of the Supreme Court and President of the Judicial Council.

¹⁶ Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Council.

¹⁷ Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Justice, State Audit Office, Judicial Council and Council of Sworn Advocates.

¹⁸ Country visit Latvia, Council of Sworn Advocates.

¹⁹ The majority of assistants leave their position in the judiciary for positions in the private sector soon after passing the exam for judges. Country visit Latvia, Council of Sworn Advocates.

²⁰ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 6. Country visit Latvia, Association of Judges.

²¹ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 10, and country visit Latvia, Judicial Council and Association of Lawyers.

is to be maintained²². At the same time, the overall qualification of land registry judges to perform judicial tasks remains a concern, with the Judicial Academy envisaged to provide additional training²³. Parliament also adopted amendments to the Law on Judicial Power which allows judges to consider additional time spent on training, participation in judicial self-governing bodies, or mentoring of new judges in their overall workload. Separately, modifications to the selection procedure by the Judicial Council now also place more emphasis on a criterion of good reputation, and candidates' behavioural skills. In addition, there was an online and social media campaign to highlight possibilities to obtain legal aid, and legal entities were entitled to exemptions from the payment of certain expenses and security deposits by changes in the civil procedure law²⁴.

Efficiency

The justice system continues to perform efficiently. The 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard shows that the length of court proceedings and pending cases continues to be among the lowest in the EU. In 2023, the overall length of proceedings remained stable with a slight decrease²⁵. In 2023, the number of pending administrative cases remained among the lowest in the EU and for civil and commercial cases, the number of pending cases remains low²⁶. The clearance rate for civil, commercial, administrative and other types of cases overall stood at 101%, and in administrative cases further increased to 109%²⁷.

The Economic Court continues to handle cases efficiently, despite an overall increase in caseload and a temporary reduction of active judges. The Economic Court reported a 7% increase in commercial and a 6% increase in criminal cases in 2024. In light of an increase of cases pending for more than two years, the Economic Court requested additional staff.²⁸ The time to resolve cases stood at 6.9 months, against 30 months in the rest of the judiciary. The Economic Court sees this as proof that it functions effectively, and provides added value to the justice system²⁹.

II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

The perception among experts, business executives and citizens is that the level of corruption in the public sector is relatively high. In the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Latvia scores 59/100 and ranks 14th in the European Union and 38th globally³⁰. This perception has been relatively stable over the past five years³¹. The

²² Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 10, information received from the Association of Judges during the 2025 country visit.

²³ Country visit Latvia, Judicial Council.

²⁴ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 5.

²⁵ Figure 4, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, the estimated time needed to resolve civil, commercial, administrative and other cases in 2023 stood at 32 days compared to 34 in 2022.

²⁶ Figures 14 and 15, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

²⁷ Figures 9 and 11, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

²⁸ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 27. 39 cases have been pending for more than two years at the beginning of 2025, against 19 cases at the same time in 2024. Two judges requested a secondment to another position, leading to a temporary reduction of active judges.

²⁹ Country visit Latvia, Economic Court.

³⁰ The level of perceived corruption is categorised as follows: low (above 79); relatively low (between 79-60), relatively high (between 59-50), high (below 50).

2025 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 80% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 69%) and 20% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 66% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 63%) and 25% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 35%). Furthermore, 23% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 36%), while 21% of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 33%)³².

Work has started to prepare the next Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan 2026-2027. Implementation progress of the previous 2023-2025 Action Plan was discussed by an interinstitutional group set up by the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB), with participation of civil society organisations and experts³³. On this basis, the group is developing a 2026-2027 Action Plan for submission to the Cabinet of Ministers by November 2025³⁴. This short-term timeline was favoured to align with the timeline of the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027³⁵. KNAB also plans to draft a long-term anti-corruption policy planning document starting as of 2028, to be developed in 2027 in accordance with the impact assessment of previous plans and a corruption risk assessment³⁶. Civil society organisations regretted such a long-term policy planning document was not already being put in place³⁷. Civil society organisations also advocate for enhanced communication and prevention activities on corruption by KNAB and the Government.

The investigation and prosecution of corruption offences is carried out efficiently, while some concerns were raised as regards high-level corruption. 2024 data shows that corruption offences are investigated and sent for prosecution efficiently by KNAB, as well as the Internal Security Bureau and the State Border Guard³⁸. As regards high-level corruption, at least 10 cases are ongoing³⁹, and at least 2 were finalised in 2024⁴⁰. The authorities highlighted challenges affecting the investigation of high-level corruption cases, including

³¹ In 2020, the score was 57, while, in 2024, the score is 59. The score significantly increases/decreases when it changes more than five points; improves/deteriorates (changes between 4-5 points); is relatively stable (changes from 1-3 points) in the last five years.

³² Data from Special Eurobarometer 561 (2025) and Flash Eurobarometer 557 (2025).

³³ KNAB (2025), Website. KNAB published an interactive illustration, presenting the current state of implementation of the national Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan for 2023-2025. As of 27 March 2025, 43 actions had been implemented, the implementation of 26 actions was in progress, seven actions were not implemented, for five actions implementation deadlines were not reached yet.

³⁴ KNAB (2025a), written input, pp. 6-7.

³⁵ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p.13.

³⁶ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p.13. Latvian Government, additional written exchange following the country-visit. A final decision on the next policy planning period term has not been taken yet. The term will be decided when the new plan will have entered the drafting phase.

³⁷ Country visit Latvia, Transparency International.

³⁸ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p.22-23. KNAB initiated a total of 25 criminal proceedings and sent 19 criminal proceedings for prosecution. In 2024, the Internal Security Bureau sent five criminal cases related to corruption offences to the prosecutor's office to initiate criminal prosecution against officials from the institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Interior. As regards the State Border Guard, in 2024 twelve criminal proceedings were initiated in connection to bribery against twelve private individuals and eight criminal proceedings were sent to the prosecutor's office for bribery of an official.

³⁹ Country visit Latvia, Prosecutor General's Office. Latvian government (KNAB, ISB), written input, pp. 23-24. KNAB (2025a), written input, p. 8. Prosecutor General's Office (2025), written input, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Latvian government (ISB), written input, p. 24.

difficulties with gathering evidence from foreign jurisdictions⁴¹. Senior judges pointed at the low number of high-level cases being investigated⁴². Prosecution services highlight that there was a lack of high-level corruption cases between 2021 and 2024, and that in high-level cases it is difficult to coordinate with the many stakeholders involved, leading to long trials⁴³. As for in the previous year, no EPPO investigation was carried out in 2024 regarding corruption⁴⁴.

The framework on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials is being strengthened. The Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials was further amended in 2024. The amendments⁴⁵ provide that public officials are prohibited from making decisions or undertaking any other administrative act related to a spouse or partner for two years after the termination of the legal relationship. The amendments also introduce new restrictions as regards beneficial ownership in a commercial company by public officials, as well as new incompatibilities and restrictions with the exercise of a public office. In 2024, KNAB initiated and completed a significant number of cases⁴⁶. An assessment is to be conducted at national level on corruption risks and conflict of interests, with participation of stakeholders as regards the methodology⁴⁷. In 2024, the State Chancellery, KNAB and the Ministry of Labour started working on a draft report on a ‘cooling-off period for work in the public sector’, with the aim to review the existing legal framework and practice in Latvia and include experience in other countries⁴⁸.

The electronic system for asset declarations continues to work effectively, and an automatic declaration checking tool has been developed. 89% of registered officials in Latvia in 2024 were required to submit current declarations for 2023⁴⁹. In the context of the verification of asset declarations by the State Revenue Service (SRS), most declarations have been submitted in compliance with the rules⁵⁰. In 2024, 459 infringement procedures were opened from among the 54 783 declarations submitted (0.7%) by officials required to submit a declaration for 2023 and 181 cases of those opened procedures (39%) resulted in an administrative infringement procedure or a fine. Frequently detected infringements concern the misstatement of income, transactions or non-cash savings, as well as failure to submit the declaration within the prescribed time limit. Following the development of an automatic processing tool in 2024⁵¹, the Law on Administrative Liability was amended to allow for the

⁴¹ Country visit Latvia, KNAB.

⁴² Country visit Latvia, Economic Court.

⁴³ Country visit Latvia, Prosecutor General’s Office.

⁴⁴ European Public Prosecutor’s Office (2025), Annual Report 2024, p. 36. See also in 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, p. 13

⁴⁵ Amendments to the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials of 15 February 2024, in force as of 1 July 2024. Amendments to the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials of 12 December 2024, in force as of 11 January 2025.

⁴⁶ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, pp. 16-17. There were 343 completed departmental investigations and 55 ongoing departmental investigations. 199 administrative violations cases were opened, and 134 cases resulted in a fine. 16 cases concluded that circumstances precluded administrative liability. 2 cases were transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department of KNAB for initiating criminal procedures.

⁴⁷ Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council.

⁴⁸ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 14.

⁴⁹ The remaining 11% are covered by exceptions specified by law.

⁵⁰ State Revenue Service (2025), written input, pp. 7-8. In 2024, 54 783 officials were required to file an asset declaration and 63 608 declarations were effectively received.

⁵¹ See already in 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, p. 14. State Revenue Service (2025), *ibidem*.

SRS to adopt a decision to initiate proceedings and impose a penalty based solely on automatic data processing for an administrative offence for non-compliance with the deadline for submission of a declaration by a public official or failure to submit such a declaration⁵². Discussions are ongoing on the need to amend the legal framework to directly provide for sanctions for failure to update the declaration within one month after a non-compliance decision⁵³.

Reflections are ongoing in Parliament as regard updating ethical rules for its members and the implementation of the existing codes of ethics in public institutions has been evaluated. There has been no further development on the setting up of a code of ethics of the Government, defined as an objective already since 2022⁵⁴. Instead, the Government mandated a study concerning implementation of the existing codes of ethics in public institutions. One key recommendation in the study is to explore a harmonised approach on principles to be included in the code of ethics of Latvian institutions⁵⁵. As highlighted in the study, with around 120 public institutions having set up their own code of ethics⁵⁶, there is no common understanding on the principles to be applied and their practical implementation. In 2024, several educational events on ethics were organised, including by the Latvian School of Public Administration and KNAB⁵⁷. As regards Parliament, amendments to the Code of Ethics of members of Parliament are currently under consideration⁵⁸. As part of this procedure, the Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee is assessing whether to propose

⁵² Amendments to Article 164 of the Law on Administrative Liability. The amended legislation, which entered into force on 1 January 2025, stipulates that in relation to an administrative offence for non-compliance with the deadline for filing a declaration of a public official or failure to file such a declaration, the SRS may adopt a decision on initiating administrative offence proceedings and imposing a penalty based solely on automatic data processing. However, in order to use such automated decision-making for declarations of public officials, amendments are required to the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in the Activities of Public Officials, as well as the development and implementation of a technical solution. These changes would be implemented no earlier than 2028/2029.

⁵³ State Revenue Service (2025), written input, p. 6. Law on the prevention of conflicts of interest in the activities of public officials, Chapter 6, §32. The legislation currently provides for administrative liability for public officials failing to submit their declaration within the prescribed time limit (i.e. upon taking up office, annual declaration, at the end of duty and upon leaving office), to comply with the submission procedures or for making false declarations in the declaration. However, administrative liability is not yet provided for in case of failure to update the declaration within one month after a ruling or decision regarding the inclusion of false information in the declaration (as per §25(6) of the Law). If an amendment to the current legal framework is approved, amendments to the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in the Activities of Public Officials would also be required.

⁵⁴ Declaration of envisaged activity of the Cabinet of Ministers, 14 December 2022. Annual report to Parliament on the work carried out and planned by the Cabinet of Ministers, 25 February 2025. Country visit to Latvia, State Chancellery. GRECO (2023), Fifth Evaluation Round, Second compliance report, Latvia, pp. 5-6, Principles and standards of conduct applicable to and enforceable for Cabinet members, political officials and supernumerary advisory employees as well as for various categories of unpaid advisors in central government have not been elaborated.

⁵⁵ Transparency International/Delna, Ex post Evaluation of Public Administration Values and Ethical Requirements, 26.02.2025, p. 20.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁷ Latvian Government (2025a), written input, p. 14. KNAB (2024), p. 15.

⁵⁸ GRECO (2021), Fourth Evaluation round, Addendum to the Second compliance report, Latvia, p. 4, Recommendation for the Parliament to revise and update its code as well as to complement it with practical measures to provide guidance and counselling Parliament (2025), written input, p. 2. Amendments to the Rules of Order of Parliament (reg. No 267/Lp14), which include the Code of Ethics of Members of Parliament, are being considered within the Legal Affairs Committee.

amendments to the Code of Ethics specifically, as a result from research on the application of ethical standards in other parliaments⁵⁹.

Some steps were made regarding legislation on lobbying, such as the setting up of a simplified lobby register on an interim basis⁶⁰. Work on the draft implementing rules and practical implementation for a permanent system is still ongoing to date, with a three-year postponement announced for the start of operation, by 1 September 2028⁶¹, in order to take into account the proposed EU Directive on interest representation on behalf of third countries⁶². Once the system will be fully operational, the draft implementing rules would provide for an extensive scope of information to be reported on and to be publicly available, including the description of the interest representation activity, covering its form, the public decision concerned and the desired outcome. The permanent system will be divided in two parts: a Register of Interest Representation providing for a list of interest representatives and a System for Declaring Interest Representation for reporting activity. From September 2025 until September 2028, a simplified interim system will be operating, providing for a simplified list of interest representatives only but leaving public institutions to choose to what extent to disclose additional information on meetings on their website⁶³. The need to provide for administrative liability and sanctions in case of non-compliance will only be assessed after the full implementation of the permanent register and declaration system⁶⁴. Since preparatory work for the full implementation of the interest representation registers has substantially advanced, some progress was made on the 2024 Rule of Law Report recommendation, but the simplified interim system will need to be strengthened and clearly framed⁶⁵.

Amendments to the rules on political party financing strengthen the criminal liability rules for illegal financing. In 2024, amendments to the Criminal Law were adopted, which reduced the threshold for criminal liability for illegal financing of political parties⁶⁶ from 50 to 10 official minimum monthly wages. According to KNAB, this 50 monthly wages-threshold was too high to allow for individual persons prosecution for illegal financing of political parties⁶⁷. On 1 January 2025, amendments to the Law on Administrative Liability entered into force, extending to three years the limitation period for the initiation of

⁵⁹ Parliament (2025), written input, p. 2.

⁶⁰ The 2024 Rule of Law report recommended Latvia to ‘Continue work on the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, including the setting up of a special lobby register.’

⁶¹ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, p. 15: the start of operation had been expected to be 1 September 2025.

⁶² COM/2023/637 final. Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Justice. Latvian Government (2025f), written input, p. 1.

⁶³ Ministry of Justice (2025), written input, pp. 1-3.

⁶⁴ According to paragraph 4 of the transitional provisions of the Interest Representation Transparency Law, the Cabinet of Ministers shall assess, in its 2025 activity report, the need to provide for administrative liability and sanctions in case of non-compliance.

⁶⁵ For now, the scope of information to be reported in the interim system remains unclear, and no reporting system on interest representation activity or mandatory reporting of meetings with interest representatives on the website of public institutions is provided for in the interim system. This does not sufficiently take into account international transparency standards (including, for example, OECD Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying and Influence: OECD/LEGAL/0379, Recommendation of the Council on Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying and Influence). Country visit Latvia, Transparency International/Delna and Foreign Investors Council in Latvia. Stakeholders also reported the interim system is not sufficient to ensure transparency and risks to undermine the equal treatment of companies.

⁶⁶ Amendments to the Criminal Law of 26 September 2024, entered into force on 22 October 2024.

⁶⁷ Latvian Government (2025), written input, p.21. Country visit Latvia, KNAB. Latvian Public Broadcasting (2024).

administrative proceedings as regards violations to the rules on political party financing. Experts, public authorities and civil society organisations agree that the framework on political parties financing is solid and does not need further amendment⁶⁸. As regards the practical application of the rules, experts and Parliament identified a need to strengthen capacities of KNAB in that area⁶⁹, including through certified auditors.

The Government plans to amend the legislation on the protection of whistleblowers following an evaluation of its implementation. In 2024, the number of whistleblower reports remained relatively stable⁷⁰. As of 2026, the main point of contact for whistleblowers will be transferred to KNAB⁷¹. In practice, under the current institutional framework, over 40 other public administration institutions receive whistleblowing reports, using their own point of contact and procedures. In 2024, an evaluation of the Whistleblowing Law was carried out under the coordination of the State Chancellery and in consultation with other institutions, covering the period from 1 May 2019 until 1 April 2024⁷². The report of the State Chancellery noted certain shortcomings as regards the necessary safeguards for whistleblowers⁷³. Civil society highlighted enhanced shortcomings with ensuring confidentiality and adequate protection of whistleblowers at municipal level, which was identified as an important deterrent factor⁷⁴. As a follow-up to the evaluation report, the Government plans to present amendments to the Whistleblowing Law in 2025⁷⁵.

Reforms are being undertaken to address challenges related to public procurement, which remains an area at high risk of corruption. Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU show that 27% of companies in Latvia (EU average 25%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender or a public procurement contract in practice in the last three years⁷⁶. 35% of businesses perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review body (Procurement Monitoring Bureau) as very or fairly good⁷⁷. The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in Latvia reports 28% of single bids for 2023 (EU average 29%). Restricted competition and prohibited agreements among bidders remain a key challenge in public procurement in Latvia⁷⁸. High

⁶⁸ Country visit Latvia, KNAB and Transparency International/Delna. OECD Public Integrity Indicators, Regulatory framework for transparency in lobbying, conflict-of-interest and political finance.

⁶⁹ Country visit Latvia, Parliament. OECD Public Integrity Indicators, Political Finance Safeguards in Practice – User of oversight and prevention mechanisms for financing of political parties and election campaigns.

⁷⁰ Latvian Government (2025), written input, pp. 17-18. In 2024, KNAB received 60 complaints (compared to 55 in 2022 and 52 in 2023) and 22 of them were subsequently recognised as whistleblowing cases. KNAB Annual Report 2024, pp. 17-18.

⁷¹ Country visit Latvia, KNAB. Latvian Government (2025), written input, p. 17.

⁷² State Chancellery, Information Report 'Implementing the Law on Whistleblowing - ex-post evaluation', 2024.

⁷³ This includes the absence of a competent authority to turn to in case of breaches of the procedure by the whistleblowing contact point in the institutions, insufficient protection of whistleblowers against negative consequences, insufficient preventive safeguards in practice, challenges with ensuring confidentiality, and a lack of training of the whistleblowing contact points within the institutions.

⁷⁴ Country visit Latvia, Transparency International.

⁷⁵ Latvian Government (2025), written input, p. 17.

⁷⁶ Flash Eurobarometer 557 on Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU (2025). This is 2 percentage points above the EU average.

⁷⁷ Figure 59, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

⁷⁸ Latvian Government (2025), written input, p. 24. Ministry of Finance (2025), written input, p. 2. Country visit Latvia, KNAB, Transparency International/Delna, and Foreign Investors Council in Latvia. Public Procurement Bureau, Statistics of administrative offenses for 2024. In 2024, KNAB opened 5 criminal cases regarding public procurement, and, within the Ministry of Finance, 416 complaints were received, and

risks were notably identified in the renewable energy, building and municipal public procurement procedures⁷⁹. The State Audit Office recommended centralising public procurement staff and procedures, thereby allowing enhanced capacities, higher salaries, and less influence or transfer to the private sector risks⁸⁰. As a result, the appropriate changes were already established within the Ministry of the Interior⁸¹. Despite the support of the Prosecutor General's Office, in September 2024, Parliament rejected amendments to the Criminal Code aiming at criminalising prohibited agreements between bidders in public procurement⁸². The amendments to the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials of 12 December 2024⁸³ provide *inter alia* that the position of executive board member in a State-owned company is no longer compatible with the position of head of public entity, deputy thereof or civil servant, a restriction welcomed by investors⁸⁴. Further amendments are pending to the Public Procurement Law and would provide for an electronic check of conflict of interests between the members of the procurement commission and candidates, through the synchronising of data from national registers of natural persons and enterprises and data collected by the State Revenue Service⁸⁵.

III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM

The regulator for audiovisual media services continues to operate independently. The Latvian National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) is the audiovisual regulator, composed of five members⁸⁶ elected by the Parliament for a term of five years. The Electronic Mass Media Law⁸⁷ sets the conditions for the appointment and termination of the mandate of members of the NEPLP or their dismissal by the Parliament. In 2024, the NEPLP gained two more staff members for its monitoring department⁸⁸. Besides monitoring the electronic mass media market, the NEPLP designs the national strategy for the development of the sector, the latest version of which covers the period from 2023 to 2027⁸⁹. It is advised by a Public Advisory Council made up of representatives of organisations working in the fields of media, education, culture, science and human rights. The 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM)

292 decisions were made. The ISB finished investigation in one case of illegally pre-negotiated terms and specification in 2024. The Procurement Monitoring Bureau maintains and updates information about liability for violations of the regulation on a regular basis (available at: <https://www.iub.gov.lv/lv/administrativo-parkapumu-dati>).

⁷⁹ Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia and Transparency International/Delna. KNAB, 2025, Analysis of corruption risks in Latvian municipal building boards – Summary of the Strategic Analysis Report.

⁸⁰ Country visit Latvia, State Audit Office. State Audit Office, Effectiveness of Public Procurement in the Interior, 8 November 2024.

⁸¹ Latvia, 2025, Additional written input. Procedures for conducting joint procurements within the sector and with institutions subordinate to other ministries were established, the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior became the centralized procurement institution, and the list of goods and services to be procured centrally was expanded.

⁸² Via Baltica (2024). Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia.

⁸³ Ibid. The amendments provide for new incompatibilities and restrictions with the exercise of public office.

⁸⁴ Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia.

⁸⁵ Ministry of Finance (2025), written input, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁶ Down from 9 members in its previous configuration, where each member represented a political party.

⁸⁷ Section 56 of Electronic Mass Media Law.

⁸⁸ Information received from the NEPLP in the context of the country visit to Latvia.

⁸⁹ <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/5421/download?attachment>

went down to a very low risk (10%) for the independence and effectiveness of the media authorities⁹⁰.

Self-regulation mechanisms are available, but their effective application is limited. The Latvian Media Ethics Council, which represents 90%⁹¹ of media companies and is supported by the Ministry of Culture, examines complaints on ethical violations committed by the media and provides an opinion in the event of restriction of media freedom or freedom of expression. It can also express opinions on issues related to threats to or influence on the media, the deterioration of the state of the media industry, editorial autonomy or independence⁹². The Latvian Journalists Association, the Latvian Journalists Union and the Advertising Association are also responsible for promoting and defending professional codes of ethics. According to the MPM 2025, self-regulation is considered partly effective, with codes of ethics being often declarative, and with no compliance mechanisms⁹³.

The public service media maintains its independence through well-established safeguards. The Public Electronic Mass Media Council (SEPLP) oversees the public service media, with the aim of ensuring its editorial independence. It has three members approved by the Parliament and operates independently in accordance with the Law on Public Electronic Mass Media and their Management⁹⁴, which provides specific safeguards for its independence⁹⁵. The Public Electronic Mass Media Council is responsible for overseeing the code of ethics for public service media. According to the 2025 MPM, 'independence of public service media' remains stable at low risk (24%)⁹⁶.

Public service media Latvian Television and Latvian Radio were merged. The merger took effect on 1 January 2025, creating a new entity called Latvijas Sabiedriskais medijs (Latvian Public Media). A new board of five members, appointed in November 2024 in accordance with the Law on Public Electronic Mass Media and their Management, will focus on setting up a new administrative and financial joint structure. It will also appoint a new editor in chief, who is to be approved by the SEPLP but should remain fully independent. The Media Policy Guidelines for 2024–2027 aim to ensure the development of public media, aligning its funding levels with European averages, and establish a more predictable and transparent financing model. Latvian Public Media operates outside the advertising market, and it will be funded by the state budget at 0.13% of GDP in 2025 and 2026, under the principle that funding cannot be lower than in the previous year. The level of funding will be re-assessed in light of the application of the European Media Freedom Act⁹⁷. The increase in financial resources will focus on fostering investigative journalism and ensuring the digital transformation process⁹⁸, aiming at reaching a wider audience, including younger citizens and minorities in Latvia. Latvian Public Media has a well-functioning self-regulation system, with

⁹⁰ 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, Latvia, p. 11.

⁹¹ Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Culture.

⁹² Country visit Latvia, NEPLP.

⁹³ 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, Latvia, p. 10.

⁹⁴ Law on Public Electronic Mass Media and their Management, adopted on 19 November 2020.

⁹⁵ Article 12 and Article 13 of the Law on Public Electronic Mass Media and their Management.

⁹⁶ 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, Latvia, p. 24.

⁹⁷ Country visit Latvia, SEPLP.

⁹⁸ Country visit Latvia, PSM.

editorial guidelines, a code of ethics, internal quality management and one ombudsperson⁹⁹, to whom the audience can file complaints.

Amendments to the Press Law will make registration of mass media service providers and beneficial ownership information mandatory. The Law on the Press and Other Mass Media¹⁰⁰ (the Press Law) establishes the obligation for the Register of Enterprise to register mass media in the Mass Media Register it maintains¹⁰¹. Registration is upon application and there is no monitoring or data verification, and thus the register is not complete and up to date¹⁰². In view of the requirements of the EMFA regarding the development of national media ownership databases, the Ministry of Culture is drafting amendments to the Press Law that will make registration of mass media service providers and their services mandatory. Electronic mass media service providers must provide information on their beneficial owners and any changes in such ownership to the NEPLP, which, however, is not responsible for press and online news outlets. The Media Policy Guidelines for 2024–2027 include an action on enhancing information about media ownership. There has been no change as regards media concentration rules, however amendments are necessary on the assessment of media market concentrations. NEPLP does not have a comprehensive view of the market, since it only collects data on electronic media market, and not on the press. The 2025 MPM remains stable at medium-low risk (40%) for transparency of media ownership¹⁰³.

The Freedom of Information Law guarantees the right to access information held by public institutions. Access to information is also guaranteed by the Law on the Press and Other Mass Media, which establishes the right for the press to access information held by the state bodies and public authorities¹⁰⁴. Latvia has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents¹⁰⁵. Although the MPM 2025 refers to some issues about public institutions withholding information in response to requests based on freedom of information legislation, it considers the protection of right to information a low-risk area¹⁰⁶.

The professional environment for journalists continues to be overall safe, but a deterioration in the online environment is observed. Strengthening journalist and media professionals' safety is a priority under the Government's Media Policy Guidelines for 2024–2027. In spring 2024, the Ministry of Culture established a multi-stakeholder working group to develop an action plan on safety for journalists and other media professionals in Latvia and commissioned a study that came up with proposals for improving the situation, including regulatory changes, such as the transposition of the anti-SLAPP Directive¹⁰⁷. In December 2024, LŽA also announced an 'Alarm Button', a system designed for journalists to report any form of violence in a quick and easy way. While journalists in Latvia work mainly in favourable conditions, they report worsening conditions in the online environment¹⁰⁸. This

⁹⁹ Country visit Latvia, PSM; ENNHRI (2025), p. 295-296.

¹⁰⁰ Law of 20 December 1990 on the Press and Other Mass Media.

¹⁰¹ The registered information about mass media also includes details about the owner (founder) and the publisher of the mass medium (both legal entities and natural persons).

¹⁰² NEPLP (2025), written input, p. 15.

¹⁰³ 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, Latvia, p. 17.

¹⁰⁴ Law of 20 December 1990 on the Press and Other Mass Media.

¹⁰⁵ The Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (CETS No. 205), also known as the Tromsø Convention, entered into force on 1 December 2020.

¹⁰⁶ 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, Latvia, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ The Latvian Journalists' Association (LŽA) won a tender for the National Focal Point of the Council of Europe's 'Journalists Matter' Campaign.

¹⁰⁸ Country visit Latvia, Latvian Association of Journalists.

issue particularly affects female journalists¹⁰⁹, as well as journalists working for the public service media¹¹⁰. According to stakeholders, cooperation of online sites with law enforcement authorities to address this issue is not always effective¹¹¹ and some journalists voiced distrust in the mechanism of cooperation established by the 2020 memorandum of cooperation between the police and two journalists' associations¹¹², invoking a lack of effective action by the police¹¹³. In May 2025, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) requested Latvia's news agency LETA and the Baltic Centre for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica to provide explanations regarding published content about the municipal elections of 7 June¹¹⁴. The Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists registered this case as the only new alert since the publication of the 2024 Rule of Law Report, under the category of acts having chilling effects on media freedom¹¹⁵. The same alert was published on the Mapping Media Freedom platform. The 2025 MPM indicator for journalistic profession, standards, and protection remains stable at medium-low risk (44%)¹¹⁶.

IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES

Less than half of the companies surveyed in Latvia express high levels of confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection. 37% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts¹¹⁷. The main reasons among companies for their lack of confidence are the frequent changes in legislation or the concerns about the quality of the law-making process¹¹⁸. 37% perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (Competition Council) as very or fairly good¹¹⁹. Foreign investors perceive some developments as negatively impacting the business environment, such as the handling of large-scale public contracts¹²⁰. Draft amendments to the Competition Law have been consulted with several institutions after the previous Chairman of the Competition Council resigned and appointed the next interim head without clear selection procedure. The amendments would allow the Minister of Economics to appoint an interim Chairperson and Council members until permanent appointments are made. KNAB, FICIL, the State Chancellery, and the Competition Council, have opposed these changes due to concerns over transparency and political influence¹²¹. Decisions issued by authorities are reviewed on the merits by courts of first and appellate instances.

¹⁰⁹ 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, p. 15.

¹¹⁰ Country visit Latvia, Latvian Association of Journalists and the Latvian PSM.

¹¹¹ Civic Alliance Latvia (2025), written input, p. 17; country visit Latvia, Latvian Association of Journalists.

¹¹² Country visit Latvia, Latvian Association of Journalists.

¹¹³ The State Police indicated that before each public event or protest, an assessment of the possible risks of endangering public order and security is taking place, which allows for increased attention to threats to journalists and for taking measures to ensure personal and public safety.

¹¹⁴ KNAB requested precise information about editorial processes, such as the selection criteria for the political parties, interviewees and cities mentioned, the name of the person coordinating the editorial and publication work, or the source of funding for the content. Re:Baltica was also asked about its future publication plans.

¹¹⁵ Council of Europe, Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, Latvia.

¹¹⁶ 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, p.11.

¹¹⁷ Figure 54, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹¹⁸ Figure 55, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹¹⁹ Figure 60, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard. 21% of the surveyed investors perceive the quality, efficiency or independence of justice as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection.

¹²⁰ Country visit Latvia, FICIL.

¹²¹ Competition Council (2025).

On 1 January 2025, Latvia had 9 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, an increase of 1 compared to the previous year¹²². At that time, Latvia's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 79% (compared to 83% in 2024; 21% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 1 years and 3 months (compared to 1 years and 9 months in 2024)¹²³. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for 3 years, concerns the interference with the applicants' right to the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions for being unable to use or access their property since late 2005 because it was arbitrary designated as a water supply protection zone without any compensation or allocation of another plot of land to them¹²⁴. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2024 there were 2 cases in total awaiting confirmation of payments (compared to 0 in 2023)¹²⁵. On 16 June 2025, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had decreased to 8¹²⁶.

Operating conditions for civil society remain overall open and stable. Civic space in Latvia continues to be considered as open¹²⁷. An amendment to the law on associations and foundations makes daily operations easier for civil society organisations, such as by facilitating online meetings¹²⁸. Civil society organisations in Latvia are not fully satisfied with the national rules governing the administration of public funds, including EU structural funds, with concerns about how the public interest is taken into account¹²⁹. In 2024, the Ministry of Finance had planned to subject all associations and foundations without 'public benefit status' to corporate income tax in an effort to combat misuse of these forms of legal persons. This would have affected many civil society organisations, which frequently do not have this status. Following objections by civil society organisations, the plans were not pursued further¹³⁰.

¹²² For an explanation of the supervision process, see the website of the Council of Europe, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/execution/the-supervision-process>.

¹²³ All figures calculated by the European Implementation Network (EIN) and based on the number of cases that are considered pending at the annual cut-off date of 1 January 2025. EIN (2025), written input, pp. 5-6.

¹²⁴ European Court of Human Rights, judgment of 21 September 2021, application no. 73105/12, Berzins and Others v. Latvia, pending implementation since 2021.

¹²⁵ Council of Europe (2025), p. 157.

¹²⁶ Data according to the online database of the European Court of Human Rights (HUDOC).

¹²⁷ Rating given by Civicus, Latvia. Ratings are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

¹²⁸ Civic Alliance Latvia (2025a), written input, p. 16., and Civic Alliance Latvia (2025b), p. 8.

¹²⁹ Civic Alliance Latvia (2025), written input, p. 18.

¹³⁰ Civic Alliance Latvia (2025), written input, p. 18, and country visit Latvia, Civic Alliance Latvia.

Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order*

* The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2024 Rule of Law report can be found at https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2025-rule-of-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en.

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Annex II: Country visit to Latvia

The Commission services held virtual meetings in February 2025 with:

- Association of Journalists
- Association of Judges
- Bar Association (Council of Sworn Advocates)
- Civic Alliance Latvia
- Competition Council
- Constitutional Court
- Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB)
- Court Administration
- Delna – Transparency International Latvia
- Economic Court
- Foreign Investors' Council in Latvia (FICIL)
- Internal Security Bureau
- Judicial Council
- Latvian Public Media (successor to: Latvijas Televīzija (LTV) and Latvijas Radio (LR))
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Economics
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Justice
- National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP)
- Ombudsperson's Office
- Prosecutor General's Office
- Public Electronic Mass Media Council (SEPLP)
- Saeima (Parliament)
- Society Integration Foundation
- State Audit Office
- State Border Guard
- State Chancellery
- State Revenue Service
- Supreme Court

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

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

- Philea – Philanthropy Europe Association.
- Transparency International