

2024 Rule of Law Report - targeted stakeholder consultation

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

The annual Rule of Law Report lies at the centre of the Annual Rule of Law Cycle, which acts as a preventive tool, deepening multilateral dialogue and joint awareness of rule of law issues. So far, four editions of the Rule of Law Report have been published in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023.

The Commission would like to invite stakeholders to provide contributions to the 2024 Rule of Law Report. This survey provides information on the type of information and topics that will be covered in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, in order to allow stakeholders to provide input. More targeted input may be requested at a later stage of preparation of the 2024 Rule of Law Report, including in the context of country visits, or bilateral contacts.

The 2024 Rule of Law Report will continue to deepen the assessment under the existing four pillars, and will also follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations to Member States, that were issued as part of the 2023 Rule of Law Report. The contribution to be provided should include **(1) information on measures taken to implement the recommendations addressed to the Member State in the 2023 Rule of Law report, as well as developments with regard to the points raised in the respective country chapter and (2) any other significant developments since January 2023^[1] falling under the ‘type of information’ outlined in section II.**

The input should consist of a short summary, if possible in English, covering the areas referred to below. Legislation or other documents may be referenced with a link. Contributions should focus on significant developments since the last Rule of Law Report both as regards the legal framework and its implementation in practice.

[1] Unless the information was already submitted in the input for the previous Rule of Law Reports.

Type of information

The topics are structured according to four pillars: I. Justice system; II. Anti-corruption framework; III. Media pluralism; and IV. Other institutional issues related to checks and balances. The replies could include aspects set out below under each pillar. This can include challenges, current work streams, positive developments and best practices:

A) Legislative developments

- Newly adopted legislation
- Legislative drafts currently discussed in Parliament
- Legislative plans envisaged by the Government

B) Policy developments

- Implementation of legislation
- Evaluations, impact assessment, surveys
- White papers/strategies/actions plans/consultation processes
- Follow-up to reports/recommendations of Council of Europe bodies or other international organisations
- Important administrative measures
- Generalised practices

C) Developments related to the judiciary / independent authorities

- Important case law by national courts
- Important decision/opinions from independent bodies/authorities
- State of play on terms, nominations and expired mandates for high-level positions (e.g. Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Council for the Judiciary, heads of independent authorities included in the scope of the questionnaire[2])

D) Any other relevant developments

- Respondents are free to add any further information, which they deem relevant; however, this should be short and to the point.

Please also indicate whether the developments reported are linked to the implementation of reforms and investments under the RRP, where applicable.

If there are no changes, it is sufficient to indicate this and the information covered in the contributions for the previous Rule of Law Reports should not be repeated.

[2] Such as: media regulatory authorities and bodies, national human rights institutions, equality bodies, ombudsman institutions, supreme audit institutions and, where they exist, transparency authorities.

About you

* I am giving my contribution as

- ☐ Academic/research institution
- ☐ Business association
- ☒ Civil society organisation/NGO

- ☐ International organisation
- ☐ Judicial association or network
- ☐ Media organisation or association
- ☐ Public authority or network of public authorities
- ☐ Other

* Organisation name

250 character(s) maximum

ActiveWatch

Main Areas of Work

- ☐ Justice System
- ☐ Anti-corruption
- ☒ Media Pluralism
- ☐ Other

Please insert an URL towards your organisation's main online presence or describe your organisation briefly:

500 character(s) maximum

<https://activewatch.ro/>

Transparency register number

Check if your organisation is in the transparency register. It's a voluntary database for organisations seeking to influence EU decision-making

* Country of origin

Please add the country of origin of your organisation

- ☐ Afghanistan
- ☐ Albania
- ☐ Algeria
- ☐ Andorra
- ☐ Angola
- ☐ Antigua and Barbuda
- ☐ Argentina
- ☐ Armenia
- ☐ Australia
- ☐ Austria
- ☐ Azerbaijan
- ☐ Bahamas
- ☐ Bahrain
- ☐ Bangladesh
- ☐ Barbados

- ☐ Belarus
- ☐ Belgium
- ☐ Belize
- ☐ Benin
- ☐ Bhutan
- ☐ Bolivia
- ☐ Bosnia and Herzegovina
- ☐ Botswana
- ☐ Brazil
- ☐ Brunei Darussalam
- ☐ Bulgaria
- ☐ Burkina Faso
- ☐ Burundi
- ☐ Cabo Verde
- ☐ Cambodia
- ☐ Cameroon
- ☐ Canada
- ☐ Central African Republic
- ☐ Chad
- ☐ Chile
- ☐ China
- ☐ Colombia
- ☐ Comoros
- ☐ Congo
- ☐ Costa Rica
- ☐ Côte D'Ivoire
- ☐ Croatia
- ☐ Cuba
- ☐ Cyprus
- ☐ Czechia
- ☐ Democratic Republic of the Congo
- ☐ Denmark
- ☐ Djibouti
- ☐ Dominica
- ☐ Dominican Republic
- ☐ Ecuador
- ☐ Egypt
- ☐ El Salvador
- ☐ Equatorial Guinea
- ☐ Eritrea
- ☐ Estonia
- ☐ Eswatini
- ☐ Ethiopia
- ☐ Fiji
- ☐ Finland
- ☐ France
- ☐ Gabon

- ☐ Gambia
- ☐ Georgia
- ☐ Germany
- ☐ Ghana
- ☐ Greece
- ☐ Grenada
- ☐ Guatemala
- ☐ Guinea
- ☐ Guinea Bissau
- ☐ Guyana
- ☐ Haiti
- ☐ Honduras
- ☐ Hungary
- ☐ Iceland
- ☐ India
- ☐ Indonesia
- ☐ Iran
- ☐ Iraq
- ☐ Ireland
- ☐ Israel
- ☐ Italy
- ☐ Jamaica
- ☐ Japan
- ☐ Jordan
- ☐ Kazakhstan
- ☐ Kenya
- ☐ Kiribati
- ☐ Kuwait
- ☐ Kyrgyzstan
- ☐ Laos
- ☐ Latvia
- ☐ Lebanon
- ☐ Lesotho
- ☐ Liberia
- ☐ Libya
- ☐ Liechtenstein
- ☐ Lithuania
- ☐ Luxembourg
- ☐ Madagascar
- ☐ Malawi
- ☐ Malaysia
- ☐ Maldives
- ☐ Mali
- ☐ Malta
- ☐ Marshall Islands
- ☐ Mauritania
- ☐ Mauritius

- ☐ Mexico
- ☐ Micronesia
- ☐ Monaco
- ☐ Mongolia
- ☐ Montenegro
- ☐ Morocco
- ☐ Mozambique
- ☐ Myanmar
- ☐ Namibia
- ☐ Nauru
- ☐ Nepal
- ☐ Netherlands
- ☐ New Zealand
- ☐ Nicaragua
- ☐ Niger
- ☐ Nigeria
- ☐ North Korea
- ☐ North Macedonia
- ☐ Norway
- ☐ Oman
- ☐ Pakistan
- ☐ Palau
- ☐ Panama
- ☐ Papua New Guinea
- ☐ Paraguay
- ☐ Peru
- ☐ Philippines
- ☐ Poland
- ☐ Portugal
- ☐ Qatar
- ☐ Republic of Moldova
- ☒ Romania
- ☐ Russian Federation
- ☐ Rwanda
- ☐ Saint Kitts and Nevis
- ☐ Saint Lucia
- ☐ Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- ☐ Samoa
- ☐ San Marino
- ☐ Sao Tome and Principe
- ☐ Saudi Arabia
- ☐ Senegal
- ☐ Serbia
- ☐ Seychelles
- ☐ Sierra Leone
- ☐ Singapore
- ☐ Slovakia

- ☐ Slovenia
- ☐ Solomon Islands
- ☐ Somalia
- ☐ South Africa
- ☐ South Korea
- ☐ South Sudan
- ☐ Spain
- ☐ Sri Lanka
- ☐ Sudan
- ☐ Suriname
- ☐ Sweden
- ☐ Switzerland
- ☐ Syrian Arab Republic
- ☐ Tajikistan
- ☐ Tanzania
- ☐ Thailand
- ☐ Timor-Leste
- ☐ Togo
- ☐ Tonga
- ☐ Trinidad and Tobago
- ☐ Tunisia
- ☐ Turkey
- ☐ Turkmenistan
- ☐ Tuvalu
- ☐ Uganda
- ☐ Ukraine
- ☐ United Arab Emirates
- ☐ United Kingdom
- ☐ United States of America
- ☐ Uruguay
- ☐ Uzbekistan
- ☐ Vanuatu
- ☐ Venezuela
- ☐ Viet Nam
- ☐ Yemen
- ☐ Zambia
- ☐ Zimbabwe

First name

Surname

Email Address of the organisation (this information will not be published)

* Publication of your contribution and privacy settings

You can choose whether you wish for your contribution to be published and whether you wish your details to be made public or to remain anonymous.

- ☐ Anonymous - Only your type of respondent, country of origin and contribution will be published. Organisation name, URL, transparency register number, first name and surname given above will not be published. **To maintain anonymity, please refrain from mentioning the name of your organisation and any details from which your organisation can be identified in the rest of your contribution.**
- ☒ Public - Your personal details (name, organisation name, transparency register number, country of origin) will be published with your contribution).
- ☐ No publication - Your contribution will not be published. Elements of your contribution may be referred to anonymously in documents produced by the Commission based on this consultation.

☒ I agree with the personal data protection provisions.

[Specific privacy statement targeted stakeholder consultation 2024 rule of law report.pdf](#)

Questions on horizontal developments

In this section, you are invited to provide information on general horizontal developments or trends, both positive and negative, covering all or several Member States. In particular, you could mention issues that are common to several Member States, as well as best practices identified in one Member State that could be replicated. Moreover, you could refer to your activities in the area of the four pillars and sub-topics (an overview of all sub-topics can be found below), and, if you represent a Network of national organisations, to the support you might have provided to one of your national members.

Overview topics for contribution

[List of topics 2024 RoL Report.pdf](#)

Please provide any relevant information on horizontal developments here

5000 character(s) maximum

Questions for contribution

The following four pillars (I.-IV.) are sub-divided into topics (A., B., etc.) and sub-topics (1., 2., 3., etc.). For each of the topics and sub-topics, you are invited to provide (1) information on measures taken to implement the recommendations addressed to the Member State in the 2023 Rule of Law report, as well as developments with regard to the points raised in the respective country chapter of the 2023 Rule of Law Report and (2) any other significant developments since January 2023[3]. Please always include a link to and reference relevant legislation/documents (in the national language and/or where available, in English). Significant developments can include challenges, positive developments and best practices, covering both

legislative developments or implementation and practices.

If there are developments you consider relevant under each of the four pillars that are not mentioned in the sub-topics, please add them under the section "other - please specify". Only significant developments should be covered.

Information provided in reply to the first question under each pillar, related to the follow-up to the recommendations, does not need to be repeated in subsequent parts of the questionnaire, but can be cross-referenced in the subsequent questions, where relevant. All other questions are not limited to the recommendations, but as in previous years, cover the entire scope of the Report.

[3] Unless already covered in the input for the previous Rule of Law Reports.

Member State covered in contribution [only one choice possible]

If you wish to submit information concerning several Member States, please fill in the questionnaire separately for each Member State. There is no limit to the number of contributions submitted by a single participant.

- ☐ Austria
- ☐ Belgium
- ☐ Bulgaria
- ☐ Croatia
- ☐ Cyprus
- ☐ Czechia
- ☐ Denmark
- ☐ Estonia
- ☐ Finland
- ☐ France
- ☐ Germany
- ☐ Greece
- ☐ Hungary
- ☐ Ireland
- ☐ Italy
- ☐ Latvia
- ☐ Lithuania
- ☐ Luxembourg
- ☐ Malta
- ☐ Netherlands
- ☐ Poland
- ☐ Portugal
- ☒ Romania
- ☐ Slovak Republic
- ☐ Slovenia
- ☐ Spain
- ☐ Sweden

I. Justice System

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2023 Report regarding the justice system (if applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

A. Independence

Appointment and selection of judges, prosecutors and court presidents (incl. judicial review)

(The reference to 'judges' concerns judges at all level and types of courts as well as judges at constitutional courts)

5000 character(s) maximum

Irremovability of judges, including transfers, (incl. as part of judicial map reform), dismissal and retirement regime of judges, court presidents and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)

5000 character(s) maximum

Promotion of judges and prosecutors (incl. judicial review)

5000 character(s) maximum

Allocation of cases in courts

5000 character(s) maximum

Independence (including composition and nomination and dismissal of its members), and powers of the body tasked with safeguarding the independence of the judiciary (e.g. Council for the Judiciary)

5000 character(s) maximum

Accountability of judges and prosecutors, including disciplinary regime and bodies and ethical rules, judicial immunity and criminal/civil (where applicable) liability of judges (incl. judicial review)

5000 character(s) maximum

Remuneration/bonuses/rewards for judges and prosecutors, including observed changes (significant and targeted increase or decrease over the past year), transparency on the system and access to the information

5000 character(s) maximum

Independence/autonomy of the prosecution service

5000 character(s) maximum

Independence of the Bar (chamber/association of lawyers) and of lawyers

5000 character(s) maximum

Significant developments capable of affecting the perception that the general public has of the independence of the judiciary

5000 character(s) maximum

B. Quality of justice

(Under this topic, you are not required to give statistical information but should provide input on the type of information outlined under section 2)

Accessibility of courts (e.g. court/legal fees, legal aid, language)

5000 character(s) maximum

Resources of the judiciary (human/financial/material)

(Material resources refer e.g. to court buildings and other facilities. Financial resources include salaries of staff in courts and prosecution offices.)

5000 character(s) maximum

Training of justice professionals (including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court staff, clerks/trainees)

5000 character(s) maximum

Digitalisation (e.g. use of digital technology, particularly electronic communication tools, within the justice system and with court users, procedural rules, access to judgments online)

5000 character(s) maximum

Use of assessment tools and standards (e.g. ICT systems for case management, court statistics and their transparency, monitoring, evaluation, surveys among court users or legal professionals)

5000 character(s) maximum

Geographical distribution and number of courts/jurisdictions (“judicial map”) and their specialization, in particular specific courts or chambers within courts to deal with fraud and corruption cases

5000 character(s) maximum

C. Efficiency of the justice system

(Under this topic, you are not required to give statistical information but should provide input on the type of information outlined under section 2)

Length of proceedings

5000 character(s) maximum

Other - please specify

5000 character(s) maximum

II. Anti-Corruption Framework

Where previous specific reports, published in the framework of the review under the UN Convention against Corruption, of GRECO, and of the OECD address the issues below, please make a reference to the points you wish to bring to the Commission’s attention in these documents, indicating any relevant updates, changes or measures introduced that have occurred since these documents were published.

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2023 Report regarding the anti-corruption framework (if applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

A. The institutional framework capacity to fight against corruption (prevention and investigation / prosecution)

List any changes as regards relevant authorities (e.g. national agencies, bodies) in charge of prevention detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption and the resources allocated to each of these

authorities (the human, financial, legal, and technical resources as relevant), including the cooperation among domestic and with foreign authorities. Indicate any relevant measure taken to effectively and timely cooperate with OLAF and EPPO (where applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

Safeguards for the functional independence of the authorities tasked with the prevention and detection of corruption

5000 character(s) maximum

Information on the implementation of measures foreseen in the strategic anti-corruption framework (if applicable). If available, please provide relevant objectives and indicators

5000 character(s) maximum

B. Prevention

Measures to enhance integrity in the public sector and their application (including as regards incompatibility rules, revolving doors, codes of conduct, ethics training)

5000 character(s) maximum

General transparency of public decision-making (including rules on lobbying and their enforcement, asset disclosure rules and enforcement, gifts policy, transparency of political party financing)

5000 character(s) maximum

Rules and measures to prevent and address conflicts of interest in the public sector. Please specify the features and scope of their application (e.g. categories of officials concerned, types of checks and corrective measures depending on the category of officials concerned)

5000 character(s) maximum

If available to you, for the three preceding questions, you are also invited to provide figures on their application, such as number of detected breaches/irregularities of the various rules in place and the follow-up given (investigations, sanctions, etc.).

Measures in place to ensure whistleblower protection and encourage reporting of corruption, including the number of reports received and the follow-up given

5000 character(s) maximum

Sectors with high-risks of corruption in your Member State:

- Measures taken/envisaged for monitoring and preventing corruption and conflict of interest in public procurement
- List other sectors with high risks of corruption and the relevant measures taken/envisaged for monitoring and preventing corruption and conflict of interest in these sectors (e.g. healthcare, citizen /residence investor schemes, urban planning, risk or cases of corruption linked to the disbursement of EU funds, other), and, where applicable, list measures to prevent and address corruption committed by organised crime groups (e.g. to infiltrate the public sector)

5000 character(s) maximum

Any other relevant measures to prevent corruption in public and private sector

5000 character(s) maximum

C. Repressive measures

Criminalisation, including the level of sanctions available by law, of corruption and related offences, including foreign bribery

5000 character(s) maximum

Data on the number of investigations, prosecutions, final judgments and application of sanctions for corruption offences (differentiated by corruption offence if possible) including for legal persons and high level and complex corruption cases) and their transparency, including as regards to the implementation of EU funds

5000 character(s) maximum

Potential obstacles to investigation and prosecution as well as to the effectiveness of criminal sanctions of high-level and complex corruption cases (e.g. political immunity regulation, procedural rules, statute of limitations, cross-border cooperation, pardoning)

5000 character(s) maximum

Information on effectiveness of non-criminal measures and of sanctions (e.g. recovery measures and administrative sanctions) on both public and private offenders

5000 character(s) maximum

Other - please specify

5000 character(s) maximum

III. Media pluralism and media freedom

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2023 Report regarding media pluralism and media freedom (if applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

No progress has been made.

A. Media authorities and bodies

(Cf. Article 30 of Directive 2018/1808)

Measures adopted to ensure the independence, enforcement powers and adequacy of resources (financial, human and technical) of media regulatory authorities and bodies

5000 character(s) maximum

A new legal initiative was introduced in November 2023 with the declared intention to clarify outdated provisions and regulatory inconsistencies.

The budget for 2024 was approved in December 2023 and it is almost identical with the one for 2023, despite 2024 being a year with 5 rounds of elections.

Conditions and procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the head / members of the collegiate body of media regulatory authorities and bodies

5000 character(s) maximum

No progress has been made, the legal framework has not been changed, there is no political will to produce change, although the ruling coalition formed by the two major political parties has the necessary majority.

Existence and functions of media councils or other self-regulatory bodies

5000 character(s) maximum

Such bodies are basically non-existent or ludicrous attempts by compromised journalists/media owners to gain credibility and occupy the empty space of media self-regulation. Such an initiative emerged in May 2023, when the convicted former media owner and journalist, Sorin Roșca Stănescu, together with former politician, political consultant, journalist and media owner, Cosmin Gușă, convicted media owner Maricel Păcurariu and other influencers (many of them outspoken pro-Russian voices) formed the Press Club. A week after the official launch of the organisation several media outlets (including some highly controversial)

have publicly distanced themselves from the Press Club, claiming that they were never part of this endeavour. (<https://www.presshub.ro/clubul-de-presa-incepe-cu-un-scandal-antena-3-rtv-b1-tv-evz-si-capital-neaga-ca-s-ar-fi-inscris-in-organizatia-lui-gusa-si-stanescu-271367/>)

B. Safeguards against government or political interference and transparency and concentration of media ownership

Measures taken to ensure the fair and transparent allocation of state advertising (including any rules regulating the matter)

5000 character(s) maximum

No progress has been made. There are instances where state advertising is suspected of being allocated to favourable media. Such funds are, in fact, used for masked political advertising. This state advertising is published in many instances as editorial content, unmarked as paid content. There is no coordination between the political stakeholders to attune the electoral legislation and the fiscal regulations. The Romanian Court of Auditors' reports are retroactive and have no deterrent effect for the public institutions that use public funds for potential electoral benefits. Several journalistic investigations substantiate such situations, but the overall phenomena remains insufficiently exposed.

(Examples of state advertising in the national media: <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/robert-negoita-daniel-baluta-reclama-la-tv-inainte-de-alegeri/32674698.html> ; <https://www.g4media.ro/exclusive-sector-3-city-hall-awards-e6-million-media-contract-without-tender-subordinate-company-distributes-funds-to-various-media-outlets-uncovering-the-beneficiaries-of-robert-negoita.html> ; <https://www.g4media.ro/cu-cine-din-presa-a-cheltuit-primaria-sector-3-pesto-3-milioane-de-lei-in-3-luni-pentru-propaganda-surse-robert-negoita-luat-in-calcul-de-psd-drept-posibil-candidat-la-primaria-capitalei.html> ; <https://www.g4media.ro/exclusiv-cum-se-vinde-presa-stiri-fara-marcaj-publicitar-despre-realizarile-primarului-robert-negoita-ofertele-mai-multor-redactii-catre-primaria-sectorului-3-dan-marinescu-redactor-se.html>

Examples of state advertising in the local media - info published in 2023 and 2022:

<https://romania.europalibera.org/a/au-dat-bani-pe-petrecheri-masini-si-presa-si-nu-mai-au-bani-de-salarii-si-utilitati-primari-ajutor-guvern/32452004.html> ; <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/reclama-nicolae-ciuca-bani-judeteni-vizita-in-maramures/32141507.html> ; <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/primarii-dau-bani-publici-ca-sa-fie-chemati-la-radio-4403461/amp> ; <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/vicarul-eparhial-din-dambovita-are-site-care-primeste-bani-de-la-consiliul-judetean-si-primarii-4327847> ; <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/consiliul-judetean-dambovita-a-dat-presei-din-judet-200-000-de-lei-unul-dintre-site-urile-de-stiri-a-facut-si-dezinfectie-pentru-cj-4070452>)

Safeguards against state / political interference, in particular:

- safeguards to ensure editorial independence of media (private and public)
- specific safeguards for the independence of heads of management and members of the governing boards of public service media (e.g. related to appointment, dismissal), safeguards for their operational independence (e.g. related to reporting obligations and the allocation of resources) and safeguards for plurality of information and opinions

- information on specific legal provisions and procedures applying to media service providers, including as regards granting/renewal/termination of licenses, company operation, capital entry requirements, concentration and corporate governance

5000 character(s) maximum

No positive steps have been taken in this direction.

There is no manifestation of any political will to ensure the autonomy of public media. There is little public debate on these issues and no political debate at all. The oversight of public media is a simple formality, with little concern for the editorial and financial performance of the management. This indifference is reflected in the low audience of public television, which is ridiculous in report to its resources. However, the situation is completely different in regards to public radio, which holds a remarkable position in the audience rankings.

Editorial independence and media pluralism are deeply affected by the opaque financing of the private media by political parties. As proved by journalistic reports, the two parties forming the government coalition use various methods for pouring money in the media and guaranteeing favourable or harmless coverage. The political parties' money are directed to the beneficiary media mainly through intermediary companies, so that the tracking of the funds becomes more difficult. Such contracts are sometimes signed with the web-sites of the audiovisual media, to avoid the infringement of the audiovisual law. As revealed by journalistic reports, such contracts consist in buying media coverage that is presented as editorial content, and not marked as political advertising. Also, masked contracts (contracts for invented services) have been used. At the same time, there are reasonable suspicions that the two government coalition parties invested their funds in smearing campaigns against opponents, using fake news in their communication campaigns. There is no political will from the ruling coalition for any transparency, with constant refusals to respond to access to information requests, with a draft bill amending the Law on party financing being blocked in the Parliament, and with keeping the Permanent Electoral Authority highly politicised, and, therefore, unwilling, in its turn, to make these spendings transparent to the public. (For links and details, please see the report "Political parties, money and the media - a toxic relationship" - https://activewatch.ro/documents/259/freeex_digest_4_eng.pdf)

Transparency of media ownership and public availability of media ownership information, including on direct, indirect and beneficial owners, as well as any rules regulating the matter

5000 character(s) maximum

No public database with such information exists, except for the audiovisual media ownership data made available in a .pdf file by the National Council of Audiovisual (after a few years period when this data was kept secret as it was considered to infringe data protection legislation). Access to the National Company Registry data is not free, is difficult, costly, and therefore data about on-line media owners, including direct, indirect and beneficial owners, is not easily accessible.

C. Framework for journalists' protection, transparency and access to documents

Rules and practices guaranteeing journalists' independence and safety, including as regards protection of journalistic sources and communications, referring also, if applicable, to follow-up given to alerts lodged with the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists

5000 character(s) maximum

Although the legal framework offers protection, there are widespread editorial pressures coming from the owners, who often prioritise their financial or political interests over free and fair reporting. Even renowned,

multinational media groups like Ringier fail to live up to their own standards of editorial independence, as the situations in two of their major Romanian media outlets revealed in 2023.

(<https://ipi.media/romania-ipi-stands-by-libertatea-as-layoffs-deepen-concerns-over-pressure-on-editorial-independence/> ; <https://activewatch.ro/articole/o-zi-neagra-pentru-libertatea-presei-din-romania/> ; <https://activewatch.ro/articole/managementul-ringier-incalca-independenta-editoriala-a-gsp-si-libertatea/>)

Law enforcement capacity, including during protests and demonstrations, to ensure journalists' safety and to investigate attacks on journalists

5000 character(s) maximum

The justice failed to identify and prosecute the perpetrators of threats and of a large-scale smearing campaign against journalist Emilia Șercan, who exposed widespread academic plagiarism among politicians and top officials. Her prosecutor files were dismissed in investigations marred by worrying failures in pursuing justice and by unacceptable breaches of procedures. Emilia Șercan's case stands as the most significant failure of ensuring safety for journalists in Romania. It stands as an emblematic case where the Romanian judiciary sacrifices its credibility and independence to serve the interests of political actors and force institutions of the state.

(<https://ipi.media/romania-dismay-at-abrupt-closure-of-investigation-into-smear-campaign-against-journalist/> ; <https://activewatch.ro/articole/cazul-emilia-sercan-justitia-romana-legalizeaza-kompromatul-romania-este-un-stat-clasat/> ; <https://www.mfrr.eu/media-freedom-groups-demand-renewed-investigation-into-crimes-against-romanian-journalist-emilia-sercan/>)

Access to information and public documents by public at large and journalists (incl. transparency authorities where they exist, procedures, costs/fees, timeframes, administrative/judicial review of decisions, execution of decisions by public authorities, possible obstacles related to the classification of information)

5000 character(s) maximum

Access to public interest information remains deficitary both for journalists as well as for NGOs and citizens in general. (some illustrative examples below)

(Data about the costs of the presidential flights kept secret: <https://recorder.ro/deasupra-tuturor-cat-costa-zborurile-pe-care-presedintele-le-tine-secrete/> ; <https://www.g4media.ro/video-video-cum-raspunde-iohannis-cand-este-intrebat-despre-petitia-prin-care-40-de-mii-de-cetateni-ii-cer-sa-desecretizeze-costurile-cu-deplasarile-sale.html> ; <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/ramane-cum-a-stabilit-instruit-de-klaus-iohannis-biroul-de-presa-al-presedintiei-vorbeste-despre-costul-turneul-african-e-secret-4745549>

Data about court decisions and prosecutors' files on sexual crimes kept secret: <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/ong-uri-si-universitari-cer-csm-sa-publice-anonimizat-hotararile-judecatoaresti-definitive-privind-infractiunile-sexuale-4710741> ; <https://www.libertatea.ro/opinii/in-2022-o-data-la-doua-zile-un-judecator-a-fost-de-acord-ca-procurorii-sa-renunte-la-o-urmarire-penala-pentru-act-sexual-cu-un-minor-4564608>

Other instances of denial to access to information:

- at the Social Services - <https://www.libertatea.ro/opinii/fostul-loc-de-munca-al-surorii-gabrielei-firea-acuza-ziaristii-de-presiuni-exagerari-si-afectarea-activitatii-pentru-ca-au-asteptat-6-ore-la-4605008>

- by the Ministry of Justice - <https://www.g4media.ro/ministerul-justitiei-a-pierdut-un-proces-in-instanta-pentru-secretizarea-avizului-pe-legile-educatiei-deca-iohannis-stefan-palarie-usr-in-aviz-ministerul-justitiei-desfiinta-inclusiv-admiterea-pa.html>

- by the Financial Supervisory Authority - <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/asf-obligata-de-instanta-sa-faca-publice-salariile-si-bonusurile-sefilor-in-2022-presedintele-nicu-marcu-castiga-16-000-de-euro-pe-luna-4657087>)

Lawsuits (incl. SLAPPs - strategic lawsuits against public participation) and convictions against journalists (incl. defamation cases) and measures taken to safeguard against manifestly unfounded and abusive lawsuits

5000 character(s) maximum

SLAPP cases are still initiated by powerful actors against journalists and other civil society actors in order to intimidate, disengage, self-censor or even to dismantle organisations fighting for common good. Even if won in the court of justice, such lawsuits put journalists, media organisations or NGOs at strain. The costs of court cases are high, lawyers specialised in media issues are scarce, and therefore journalists, media outlets or NGOs remain vulnerable in case of such lawsuits. According to some investigative journalists, such lawsuits also have the aim of pushing in court the revealing of journalistic sources, and there exist actual instances of accidental or deliberate revealing of sources in the defence procedures, as well as cases where judges lack any basic knowledge on the right to the protection of journalistic sources.

(<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/cum-a-castigat-one-properties-dizolvarea-asociatiilor-civice-care-i-au-contestat-proiectele-imobiliare-judecatorii-recunosc-importanta-ong-urilor-dar-sa-plateasca-cand-pierd-4755153&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1705335062788402&usg=AOvVaw1RCsql6svnjijmtFxFxFeKJa> ; https://activewatch.ro/documents/260/freeex_digest_5.pdf)

Other - please specify

5000 character(s) maximum

IV. Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

Please provide information on measures taken to follow-up on the recommendations received in the 2023 Report regarding the system of checks and balances (if applicable)

5000 character(s) maximum

A. The process for preparing and enacting laws

Framework, policy and use of impact assessments and evidence based policy-making, stakeholders'[1] /public consultations (including consultation of judiciary and other relevant stakeholders on judicial reforms), and transparency and quality of the legislative process both in the preparatory and the parliamentary phase

[1] This includes also the consultation of social partners

5000 character(s) maximum

Rules and use of fast-track procedures and emergency procedures (for example, the percentage of decisions adopted through emergency/urgent procedure compared to the total number of adopted decisions)

5000 character(s) maximum

Rules and application of states of emergency (or analogous regimes), including judicial review and parliamentary oversight

5000 character(s) maximum

Regime for constitutional review of laws

5000 character(s) maximum

B. Independent authorities

Independence, resources, capacity and powers of national human rights institutions ('NHRIs'), of ombudsman institutions if different from NHRIs, of equality bodies if different from NHRIs and of supreme audit institutions

(Cf. the website of the European Court of Auditors: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/SupremeAuditInstitutions.aspx#>)

5000 character(s) maximum

Statistics/reports concerning the follow-up of recommendations by National Human Rights Institutions, ombudsman institutions, equality bodies and supreme audit institutions in the past two years

5000 character(s) maximum

C. Accessibility and judicial review of administrative decisions

Transparency of administrative decisions and sanctions (incl. their publication and rules on collection of related data)

5000 character(s) maximum

Judicial review of administrative decisions:

- short description of the general regime (in particular competent court, scope, suspensive effect, interim measures, and any applicable specific rules or derogations from the general regime of judicial review)

5000 character(s) maximum

Rules and practices related to the application by all courts, including constitutional jurisdictions, of the preliminary ruling procedure (Art. 267 TFEU)

5000 character(s) maximum

Follow-up by the public administration and State institutions to final (national/supranational, including the European Court of Human Rights) court decisions, as well as available remedies in case of non-implementation

5000 character(s) maximum

D. The enabling framework for civil society

Measures regarding the framework for civil society organisations and human rights defenders (e.g. legal framework and its application in practice incl. registration and dissolution rules)

5000 character(s) maximum

Rules and practices having an impact on the effective operation and safety of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. This includes measures for protection from attacks – verbal, physical or on-line –, intimidation, legal threats incl. SLAPPs, negative narratives or smear campaigns, measures capable of affecting the public perception of civil society organisations, etc. It also includes measures to monitor threats or attacks and dedicated support services

5000 character(s) maximum

Organisation of financial support for civil society organisations and human rights defenders (e.g. framework to ensure access to funding, and for financial viability, taxation/incentive/donation systems, measures to ensure a fair distribution of funding)

5000 character(s) maximum

Rules and practices on the participation of civil society organisations and human rights defenders to the decision-making process (e.g. measures related to dialogue between authorities and civil society, participation of civil society in policy development and decision-making, consultation, dialogues, etc.)

5000 character(s) maximum

E. Initiatives to foster a rule of law culture

Measures to foster a rule of law culture (e.g. debates in national parliaments on the rule of law, public information campaigns on rule of law issues, contributions from civil society, education initiatives etc.)

5000 character(s) maximum

Other - please specify

5000 character(s) maximum

Contact

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