

Commission's 2024 Rule of Law Report

Anna Pingen

News

On 24 July 2024, the Commission published its [5th Rule of Law Report](#). The Rule of Law Report includes 27 country chapters and examines developments – both positive and negative – across all EU Member States in four key areas for the rule of law:

- The justice system;
- The anti-corruption framework;
- Media pluralism and freedom;
- Other institutional issues related to checks and balances.

The first Rule of Law Report was presented on 30 September 2020 (→ [eucrim 3/2020, 158–159](#)); the second report on 20 July 2021 (→ [eucrim 3/2021, 134–135](#)); the third on 13 July 2022 (→ [eucrim 3/2022, 166–167](#)); and the fourth on 5 July 2023 (→ [eucrim 2/2023, 110–111](#)).

Key highlights from the 5th Rule of Law Report include:

Justice System: Many Member States made strides in enhancing judicial independence and efficiency. The report notes that the majority of the 2023 recommendations had been partially or fully implemented. However, challenges remain in some states, particularly regarding the appointment and dismissal of judges, access to courts and legal aid, and ensuring adequate resources for judicial systems.

Anti-Corruption Efforts: The report acknowledges improvements in the institutional frameworks to combat corruption. Almost all Member States have national anti-corruption strategies in place, although with varying comprehensiveness. For instance, Croatia improved its institutional capacity to combat corruption by increasing resources for law enforcement agencies and enhancing the transparency of public procurement processes. The report also commends Lithuania and Latvia for their efforts in implementing stricter conflict-of-interest rules and reinforcing asset declaration obligations for public officials. Despite these positive developments, the report raises concerns about the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures in countries like Slovakia and Malta. In Slovakia, the proposed legislative amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code and the Criminal Code may have potentially weakened the country's ability to detect and prosecute corruption, particularly in cases involving high-level officials. Malta has also faced ongoing scrutiny over the lack of progress in addressing corruption at the highest levels of government, with public trust in anti-corruption efforts remaining low.

Media Freedom and Pluralism: The report underscores the vital role of media freedom and pluralism in upholding the rule of law and democratic values across the EU. It highlights positive developments in several Member States, including France and Germany, where new measures were introduced to protect journalists

AUTHOR

Anna Pingen 

Researcher
Max Planck Institute for the
Study of Crime, Security and
Law

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from violence and intimidation. The European Media Freedom Act, set to be fully applicable by August 2025, is expected to further strengthen the legal framework for safeguarding media freedom and ensuring a pluralistic media environment across the Union. However, the report also identifies ongoing concerns in countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia, where the independence and financial stability of public service media remains under threat. In Hungary, the government's control over media outlets continues to undermine press freedom, with state advertising disproportionately favoring pro-government media. Similarly, in Poland, the concentration of media ownership and political influence over public broadcasters has raised alarms about the erosion of media pluralism. The report also points to challenges in Slovenia, where recent government actions have sparked concerns about media independence and the transparency of media ownership.

Institutional Checks and Balances: The 2024 Rule of Law Report highlights the importance of robust institutional checks and balances in maintaining the rule of law across the EU. Many Member States have made progress in strengthening the role of independent institutions, such as ombudspersons and national human rights bodies. In countries like Denmark and Sweden, the report notes positive steps in enhancing the autonomy and resources of these institutions, ensuring that they could effectively oversee government actions and protect citizens' rights. However, challenges remain in several Member States, including Poland, Hungary, and Greece. In Poland, the excessive use of accelerated legislative procedures has raised concerns about the quality of law-making and the marginalization of stakeholder consultations. Hungary continues to face criticism for restricting the operations of civil society organisations, particularly those advocating for human rights and transparency. The report also highlights the shrinking space for civil society in Greece, where legal restrictions and financial constraints hamper the work of NGOs and human rights defenders.

In this year's edition, for the first time, the report includes chapters on four enlargement countries – Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia – reflecting their progress in the EU accession process. The inclusion of these countries aims to support their reform efforts and ensure that they met EU standards before accession.

In its conclusion, the Commission encourages Member States and enlargement countries to continue addressing the identified challenges and to implement the recommendations provided in the report. The Commission also invites the European Parliament, national parliaments, civil society, and other stakeholders to engage in dialogue on the rule of law, both at the national and European levels. The report's findings will continue to inform the EU's broader efforts to promote and protect the rule of law, including through mechanisms like the Conditionality Regulation and the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

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