

# Commission's 2026 Rule of Law Report



Anna Pingen

## News

On 17 July 2026, the European [Commission published its 2026 Rule of Law Report](#). This is the seventh edition of the annual report since the mechanism was launched in 2020. It assesses developments in all EU Member States and, as in the previous edition, in the four candidate countries: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

The Rule of Law Report is designed as a preventive and dialogue-based instrument, but it is also increasingly linked to other EU tools. According to the Commission, 47% of the recommendations issued in the 2025 Rule of Law Report have been fully or partially implemented. The 2026 edition therefore continues the practice of assessing progress on previous recommendations and issuing new country-specific recommendations for Member States.

The latest Rule of Law Report (published in the form of a [Commission Communication](#)) is accompanied by several [additional documents](#), such as [country chapter abstracts and recommendations](#), country chapters on each individual state, factsheets, etc.

A notable feature of this year's report is the stronger connection between rule-of-law monitoring and EU budgetary governance. The Commission underlines that the Rule of Law Report will play an important role in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028–2034. In particular, the proposed National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) are expected to address rule-of-law challenges identified in EU policy instruments, including the Rule of Law Report. The Commission also stresses, however, that there will be no automatic link between the report's recommendations and the approval of these plans or the assessment of compliance with horizontal rule-of-law and fundamental rights conditions.

The report again follows the four established pillars:

### Justice Systems

The Commission notes progress on justice systems in a number of Member States, including reforms concerning councils for the judiciary, judicial appointments, prosecution services, disciplinary procedures, resources, and digitalisation. Concerns remain in several areas, including the functioning of councils for the judiciary, the autonomy of prosecution services, the use of disciplinary procedures, delays in digitalisation, and the length of judicial proceedings.

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With regard to anti-corruption, the report places particular emphasis on the entry into force of the Anti-Corruption Directive on 31 May 2026 (→ [eucrim news of 11 August 2026](#)) and the need for Member States to strengthen both preventive and repressive frameworks. The Commission points to ongoing reforms of anti-corruption strategies, specialised institutions, criminal procedure, lobbying rules, rules on “revolving doors”, asset declarations, whistleblower protection, political party financing, and public procurement. The report identifies persistent difficulties, in particular as regards high-level corruption cases, practical enforcement, and corruption risks in high-risk sectors.

## Media Freedom and Pluralism

In the area of media freedom and pluralism, the report reflects the new legal context created by the European Media Freedom Act and the anti-SLAPP Directive (→ [eucrim 1/2024, 37](#)). It notes that national reforms are underway to strengthen media regulators, improve the transparency of media ownership, regulate state advertising, safeguard public service media, protect access to information, and improve the safety of journalists. The report records continuing concerns about media ownership concentration, political and economic pressure on media, the financial vulnerability of the sector, abusive litigation, and threats against journalists.

## Institutional Checks and Balances

The report covers developments relating to constitutional reforms, legislative procedures, constitutional and supreme courts, national human rights institutions, ombudspersons and other independent authorities, the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and national courts, civic space, and the use of intrusive surveillance software. While the Commission identifies positive developments in several Member States, it also highlights recurring concerns regarding fast-track legislation, insufficient stakeholder consultation, obstacles affecting civil society organisations, and weaknesses in the implementation of court judgments.

Beyond the national assessments, the Commission links the 2026 report to broader EU action. It refers to the implementation of the European Media Freedom Act, the anti-SLAPP Directive, the EU Strategy for Civil Society, the Anti-Corruption Directive, the Digital Justice@2030 strategy, the European Democracy Shield, and the EU’s external rule-of-law policy. The report thus confirms the growing function of rule-of-law monitoring as a cross-cutting reference point for EU policy, funding, enlargement, and enforcement.

The report is part of the Commission’s annual rule-of-law cycle. Refer to reporting on previous Rule of Law Reports in *eucrim*: 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](#)); the fourth on 5 July 2023 (→ [eucrim 2/2023, 110–111](#)); the fifth on 24 July 2024 (→ [eucrim 2/2024, 82–83](#)); and the sixth on 8 July 2025 (→ [eucrim 2/2025, 107–108](#)).

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