

MEPs Debate Links between Rule of Law Report and EU Funding

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News

On occasion of the [presentation](#) of the 2025 Rule of Law Report (→ [eucrim 2/2025, 107-108](#)) on 23 September 2025, MEPs from the LIBE Committee and the EU Commissioner for Justice *Michael McGrath* discussed ways to strengthen the conditionality in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF). MEPs raised broader structural concerns and demanded stronger links between the recommendations in the Commission's rule of law report and funding under the MFF for the period 2028-2034.

McGrath emphasised the Commission commitment to protecting the EU budget even more strongly than before against rule of law violations, referring to the proposal for "an integrated annual cycle on the rule of law" mentioned in Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen's 2025 State of the Union Address*. He also stressed that the rule-of-law process has already contributed to legislative reforms in many EU Member States, including in areas such as judicial independence, anti-corruption prevention and enforcement, and the strengthening of independent oversight bodies.

LIBE Members also referred to the following trends, which echoed several of the broader themes already identified in the 2025 report:

- Uneven progress in strengthening judicial councils, appointment safeguards, and prosecutorial independence;
- Lagging preventive measures on lobbying, conflicts of interest, and high-level corruption cases;
- Mixed results in media freedom, where alignment with the European Media Freedom Act coexisted with persistent concerns over regulator independence, ownership transparency, and state advertising practices;
- Governance weaknesses in legislative processes;
- Pressure on civil society space;
- Ongoing concerns relating to the use of spyware in several Member States and enlargement countries.

The exchange ultimately highlighted both the value of the Rule of Law Report as a tool for reform and dialogue, and the divergent political views on its weight, follow-up, and potential future linkages to EU funding.

In its annual, non-binding Rule of Law Report, the European Commission summarises developments in the areas of judicial systems, anti-corruption frameworks, media pluralism and institutional issues relating to the separation of powers, after consulting with various stakeholders and institutions. For the first time, the 2025

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report, presented on 8 July 2025, pays particular attention to the link between the rule of law and a functioning, competitive internal market.

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