

**Review of the EU
Rule of Law Report 2025,
with a Focus on the Country Report
on North Macedonia**

Review of the EU Rule of Law Report 2025, with a Focus on the Country Report on North Macedonia

Publisher:
European Policy Institute - Skopje

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October 2025,
Skopje



This Analysis was prepared under the Project “Building Bridges for a Common Future: Rule of Law in View of EU accession”, funded by the European Union. The sole responsibility for the content of this Analysis lies with the authors and may in no way be considered to represent the views and opinions of the European Union.

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List of abbreviations

AAVMS—Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services

CoE—Council of Europe

CSO—Civil Society Organisations

EC—European Commission

EU—European Union

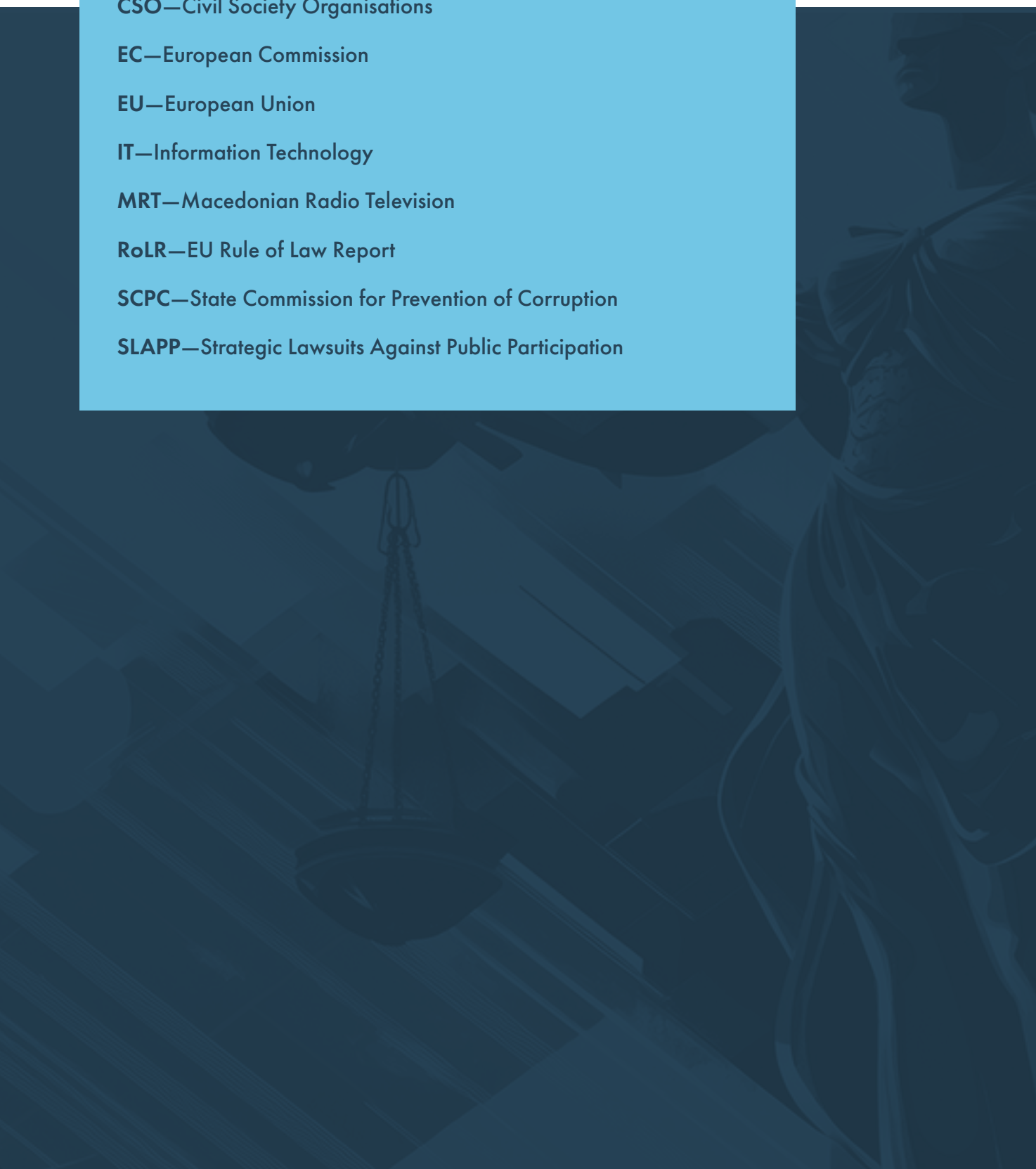
IT—Information Technology

MRT—Macedonian Radio Television

RoLR—EU Rule of Law Report

SCPC—State Commission for Prevention of Corruption

SLAPP—Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation



Introduction

The Rule of Law Report (RoLR) is a crucial instrument of the European Union (EU), serving both as a diagnostic tool and a preventive mechanism to monitor the state of the rule of law across Member States. By assessing key areas, including the justice system, anti-corruption measures, media pluralism, and institutional checks and balances, the Report provides a comprehensive overview of the strengths and challenges within the rule of law area.¹

The starting point is that the rule of law is the basis on which the EU firmly stands, whereas in today's world, "the international rules-based order, the respect for fundamental rights, and democratic systems are under increased pressure".²

A key element of this instrument is dialogue—both as a method of work and as a means of promoting a culture of open dialogue.

This year's Rule of Law Report is the fifth such report for EU Member States and the second, in which the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia are included, with the possibility of including other candidate states "when they are ready".³

The importance of this Report for the candidate states increases with the strengthening of the Cluster "Fundamentals", covering the rule of law and acting as a catalyst for the accession process.

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- 1 For more details, see European Policy Institute 2025, Annual Insight in EU Rule of Law 2024, Skopje, January. <https://epi.org.mk/post/30968?lang=en>
 - 2 European Commission 2025, 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, Strasbourg, 8 July 2025, COM(2025) 900 final, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/0f7b852b-6b8a-4e21-8579-69db5386c6a2_en?filename=1_1_63910_communication_rol_en.pdf, p 1.
 - 3 Ibid., p 2.

New Dimensions

The content and methodology of this year's Report are enriched with the Single Market dimension. Key aspects of the rule of law that impact the Single Market and the business environment have been identified and included as a basis for assessing the state of affairs in the relevant parts of the reports.⁴ This is also important for candidate countries, considering the possibilities for accelerated and gradual integration into the EU Single Market.

The second emphasised dimension of the Report for 2025 is in light of the preparations for the new multiannual budget of the Union (Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034). New safeguards in future EU instruments are being considered to ensure compliance and build a closer link between the recommendations in the Rule of Law Report and financial support under the EU budget⁵, in addition to the already incorporated rule of law conditionality in the implementation of EU funds. Moreover, a review of the EU anti-fraud architecture is planned.

The RoLR is to be complemented by new initiatives, such as the European Democracy Shield and the first EU Strategy on Civil Society.

Trends

The Report presents a diverse picture of the state of the rule of law in various countries. In parallel with confirming “a positive trajectory in many member states”⁶, the Report also points out that “systemic challenges in some countries remain”⁷, while the EU is facing “increasing political polarisation, pressure on democratic institutions, challenges on our economies and growing external threats.”⁸

Still, the level of implementation of the recommendations compared to last year's report has decreased. While Member States fully or partially implemented 68% of the recommendations from the Report in 2023, in 2024, only 57% of the recommendations were fully or partially implemented.

4 These aspects are, e.g.: handling commercial cases; mechanisms to enforce the mechanisms to enforce judicial decisions; measures to prevent corruption in public procurement; transparent funding for media; and the stable regulatory environment necessary for business to operate in predictable conditions; the effective functioning and independence of regulatory authorities, and the judicial review of administrative decisions. The Report also factors in data on perceptions by businesses regarding the effectiveness of investment protection by law and the courts, and the independence of public procurement review bodies and of national competition authorities.

5 European Commission 2025, 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, Strasbourg, 8 July 2025, COM(2025) 900 final, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/0f7b852b-6b8a-4e21-8579-69db5386c6a2_en?filename=1_1_63910_communication_ror_en.pdf, p 4.

6 European Commission 2025, IP 25 1742. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1742

7 European Commission 2025, Remarks by Commissioner McGrath, Strasbourg, 8 July 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pl/speech_25_1776

8 European Commission 2025, Remarks by Vice-President Virkkunen, Strasbourg, 8 July 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pl/speech_25_1776

Review of the Country Report for North Macedonia

Methodology

We have analysed the content of the findings in each of the pillars, topics, and sections of the Report⁹, as classified in the EC Methodology for the preparation of the Annual RoLR.¹⁰ We have compared our findings with those of the RoLR 2024, as well as with the country's last annual report. Considering the distinct structure of the RoLR and the Annual Report (which is organised according to criteria, sub-criteria, areas, etc.), we have identified the same subject matters in both reports. We have taken into account the complementarity of the two reports, as well as their differences. The RoLR analyses the state of affairs in this area in more detail but does not include recommendations, as these are included in the Annual Country Report.

The analysis of the texts is based on a qualitative methodology. We have specifically identified findings that mark progress compared to previous reports, as well as those indicating repeated problems and new issues that have arisen.

We also analysed the connection with the steps outlined in the Reform Agenda, focusing on those expected to be implemented by the end of 2026.

Based on the analysis, we have drawn key conclusions and recommendations.

Judiciary under Increased Pressure

In addition to the already expressed “serious concerns” about the independence of the judiciary due to “external influences” and “interference” in the 2024 Report and the 2024 RoLR, this year's RoLR specifies this criticism. It now directly points to other branches of government as a source of interference and pressure, illustrating the claim with Government announcements to dissolve the Judicial and Public Prosecutors’ Councils, interpellation motions against members of the Judicial Council elected by Parliament, the dismissal procedure launched against the Chief Prosecutor, the resignation of the President of the Judicial Council, citing undue political pressure as a reason, as well as public smear campaigns against judges and prosecutors, including by senior officials of the executive and politicians.¹¹

9 European Commission 2025, Commission Staff Working Document: 2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the Rule of Law Situation in North Macedonia (SWD(2025) 930 final, Strasbourg, 8 July 2025). https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/ede31053-efc6-4dd0-89ed-c9224f7eeb70_en?filename=2025%20Rule%20of%20Law%20Report%20-%20Country%20Chapter%20North-Macedonia.pdf

10 European Commission 2025, Document 72742fd9-3ce0-4d23-9086-58f885f84cdd. https://commission.europa.eu/document/72742fd9-3ce0-4d23-9086-58f885f84cdd_en

11 European Commission 2025, Commission Staff Working Document: 2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the Rule of Law Situation in North Macedonia (SWD(2025) 930 final, Strasbourg, 8 July 2025), pp 2–3. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/ede31053-efc6-4dd0-89ed-c9224f7eeb70_en?filename=2025%20Rule%20of%20Law%20Report%20-%20Country%20Chapter%20North-Macedonia.pdf

The perception of the judiciary's independence, both among the general public and companies, is viewed as very low. However, unlike the most frequently publicly quoted percentages, the RoLR points to 28% trust ("fairly or very good") by the general public and 26% by companies¹² which, although it seems paradoxical, is still better than the results of the previous survey in 2024 (25% and 20%).¹³

The Report identifies a deficit in financial and human resources, as well as deficiencies in monitoring and coordination, as key factors contributing to the insufficient implementation of the Justice System Development Strategy (42.9% implementation rate in 2024).

Progress has been noted across the judiciary in enhancing transparency, with particular recognition of the efforts of the Supreme Court, as well as the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors. However, it is noted that the new rules of procedure adopted by the Judicial Council in 2024, regarding explanations for the selection/ non-selection of judges, are still inconsistently implemented, while the relevant decisions of the Council of Public Prosecutors are assessed as less transparent.

The Report also notes the ongoing legislative drafting processes for the laws governing the Judicial Council and the Public Prosecutors' Council, as well as the Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office, all of which have been submitted to the Venice Commission for its opinion.¹⁴ These laws form part of the Reform Agenda, under which the Law on the Judicial Council is to be adopted by June 2025 and the other two by the end of this year.¹⁵

Limited financial and human resources also continue to affect the **quality** of the judiciary.

The finding that the budget for courts and public prosecutors' offices is not allocated in compliance with the Law has been reiterated, as well as the fact that salaries remain frozen. While not explicitly mentioned in this Report, additional laws were expected to be adopted by June 2025, including those on the salaries of judges and prosecutors, as well as the law governing the service of judicial and prosecutorial offices. Additionally, it is noted that the still-needed approvals from the Ministry of Finance for internal allocations do not allow them budgetary autonomy.

While it is recognised that the appointment of judges and public prosecutors at the beginning of 2025 has helped to alleviate the situation, concerns remain regarding the number of judges, especially the number of public prosecutors, as well as other human resources necessary for the judiciary. Consequently, the assessment that the strategies for human resources in courts and the public prosecutors' office are not being implemented is not surprising. The fact that no new generation of trainees has been recruited for the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors is an additional concern. This state of affairs also puts at risk the achievement of one of the targets of the Reform Agenda—that vacant positions for judges and prosecutors should be filled regularly based on the projections set for December 2026.

Although recognising the efforts towards digitalisation and the functioning of the automatic case management system, the Report concludes that the main challenges of outdated infrastructure, insufficient IT support, and inconsistent application of digital tools remain.

12 European Commission 2025, Eurobarometer 2025. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3412>

13 European Commission 2024, Eurobarometer 2024. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3193>

14 Venice Commission 2025, Opinion on the Law on the Judicial Council, June 2025; Opinion on the Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Public Prosecutor's Council, October 2025 (received after publication of the RoLR).

15 It is likely that the delayed adoption of this law would result in delays in two subsequent targets of the Reform Agenda: New members of the Judicial Council (replacing those whose mandates have expired) elected in line with amended law by December 2025; the same deadline applies to the step "Judges and prosecutors subject to disciplinary proceedings have all the guarantees of a fair trial."

A matter of particular concern is the persistent decline in judicial efficiency, which was once a significant achievement of judicial reform in previous decades. Apart from first-instance administrative, civil, and commercial cases, the presented data indicate a worsening of efficiency across all other types of cases and instances.

Fight against corruption: without 'robust' track record

Despite the perception of high-level corruption, the Corruption Perceptions Index has shown improvement in recent years.¹⁶

Overall, the findings in all aspects of this part of the report are largely consistent with those in the previous RoLR.

The implementation of the Strategy for the Prevention of Corruption remains low, although it has shown a slight improvement in 2024 compared to 2023.¹⁷ The EC cites the assessment of the SCPC, which considers the low implementation to reflect a general lack of political commitment and ownership among state institutions. The analysis of the reasons for the non-implementation of the Strategy serves as a basis for designing a new Strategy for the period 2026–2030.

The finding that the **State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption** focuses on prevention and institutional cooperation, and is less active in detecting and reporting alleged instances of corruption, is repeated in this year's Report.

The SCPC's insufficient ability to verify **asset declarations** is noted, and the number of systematic asset verifications declined from 2023 to 2024.

The implementation of the new Law on **Lobbying** has begun; however, according to the EC, the number of registered lobbyists (3) and lobbied entities (32) remains small.

It is noted that whistleblower protection remains weak, while the newly prepared law has not been implemented following the parliamentary elections.

The lack of effective oversight of **political party financing** is again noted, which, according to the Report, is hindered by an inadequate legal framework and a shortage of resources and expertise within the SCPC.

Health and public procurement are identified as areas with a high risk of corruption. The Report also notes the SCPC's criticism of the Amendments to the Law on Public Procurement adopted in January 2025. The issue of political influence on public sector employment is a recurring theme.

The Report recognises "recent efforts in investigating and prosecuting corruption", but notes that there is still no 'robust' track record of high-profile corruption cases, as they often face delays or result in minimal sentences, and investigations rarely lead to final convictions. The lack of public prosecutors and resources for combating corruption is emphasised. Related steps in the Reform Agenda include ensuring

¹⁶ The Report cites the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index for 2024, where the index for North Macedonia is 40/100 and it is ranked 88th globally, compared to 35/100 in 2020. However, the 2024 index is lower than that for 2023 (42/100).

¹⁷ According to the cited reports of the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC), 55% of the planned activities in 2023 were not implemented, compared to 50% in 2024; in 2023 13% were implemented, compared to 18% in 2024.

that the Public Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime and Corruption is fully and adequately staffed, notably with specialised prosecutors, financial experts, and digital forensic analysts, by December 2025, as well as having fully operational investigative centres by June 2026. In addition, by this deadline, an increase in the number of investigations, confirmed indictments, and convictions should be demonstrated in cases of corruption, including those involving high-level officials; seizures and final confiscations in cases of organised crime are also expected.

Although cautious in tone, the EC this year expresses concern over potential political influence on efforts to address corruption, as well as selective approach in investigating and prosecuting corruption, “with some cases potentially driven by political considerations, rather than a comprehensive approach to addressing corruption across all parties”.¹⁸

This Report also highlights the negative effects of the 2023 amendments to the Criminal Code, while recognising the efforts of the courts and the Public Prosecutor's Office to prosecute cases of high corruption under the new conditions, as well as partially improved capacity. Furthermore, the EC notes that, in February 2025, the Constitutional Court gave the Assembly a six-month deadline to correct the disputed provisions of the Criminal Code before the Court. Work is underway to amend the Criminal Code, which, according to the Reform Agenda, is expected to be adopted by December 2025. However, given that the law is not yet in parliamentary procedure, the risks of delay, as well as potential legal gaps, remain high. According to the Reform Agenda, a new Criminal Code and a new Law on Criminal Procedure are to be adopted by the end of December 2025. However, there is a high risk of delay or of adoption through a non-inclusive process, without adequate discussion.

Media

The findings on the financial independence and professionalism of the **Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAVMS)** are positive. However, criticism refers not only to the delay in the appointment, but also to the professionalism of the newly elected members of the AAVMS Council¹⁹, as well as to the lack of institutional autonomy. The Report acknowledges the efforts of the Media Ethics Council, for which sustainable funding must be secured. It is noted that this Council received one-third fewer complaints about hate speech in 2024 compared to 2023.

The Report also contains criticism of the failure to appoint members to the **MRT Programme Council** since 2018, as the Council's members were not informed of this update, despite being elected in May 2025. Progress has been noted in terms of funding, given the budgetary funds provided for MRT.

Criticism is repeated on the lack of **transparency of media ownership** and the medium-to-high risk of **media concentration**.²⁰

The Report refers to stakeholders' views that the reintroduction of **state advertising** could lead to the misuse of state funds and create market disruption, as well as to media outlets dependant on the authorities for funding, that could undermine their editorial independence and quality of content.

18 European Commission 2025, Commission Staff Working Document: 2025 Rule of Law Report—Country Chapter on the Rule of Law Situation in North Macedonia (SWD(2025) 930 final, Strasbourg, 8 July 2025), pp 1 and 12. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/ede31053-efc6-4dd0-89ed-c9224f7eeb70_en?filename=2025%20Rule%20of%20Law%20Report%20-%20Country%20Chapter%20North-Macedonia.pdf

19 The members of the Council were appointed immediately before the publication of the Report.

20 The RoL Report often refers to the assessments of the Media Pluralism Monitor (2025).

Although the legal framework has been improved, including the capacity to monitor and detect cases of **attacks on journalists**, challenges in implementation are highlighted, particularly in cases of online harassment, and gender-based violence against female journalists, as well as smear campaigns, particularly against investigative journalists. A specific legal framework, as well as awareness of SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) is lacking. The criticism of the inadequate working conditions for journalists, particularly those with short-term and contractual engagements is repeated.

The country has made progress with the ratification of the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on **Access to Public Information**. However, the implementation of the legal framework in practice continues to face challenges such as delays by some authorities and the invocation of personal data protection as an excuse.

Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

The Report concludes that the new Rules of Procedure of **Parliament**, adopted in 2023, have had a positive effect on its operational efficiency, but that the long-term impact remains to be seen. Unlike last year's RoLR and the Annual Report, the 2025 RoLR does not mention "political polarisation". Repeated remarks refer to parliamentary appointments made disregarding the merit principle, as well as to the delay in appointments.

Criticism of the shortcomings in the process of **inclusive, evidence-based policy-making** is repeated. Although the coordination between the Government and parliament in the legislative procedure is assessed as effective, shortcomings are noted in planning, regulatory impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation, as well as in the consultative process.

In line with the emphasised **connection of the rule of law with the Single Market and the business climate**, this Report also contains data on the business sector's perception of confidence in the protection of investments. Thirty-seven per cent of companies partially or fully consider that investments are protected by law and by the courts. The same percentage—37%—consider the level of independence of the public procurement review body (State Commission for Appeals in Public Procurement) to be very or fairly good, while 31% consider the level of independence of the national competition authority (Commission for Protection of Competition) to be very or fairly good.²¹

The assessment of the strengthened **role of the Constitutional Court** regarding the monitoring and enforcement of its decisions is positive, following the amendment to its Rules of Procedure.

The implementation rate of **leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights** has decreased compared with last year (65% compared to 71%). Still, it remains above the EU average (45.7% of unimplemented leading judgments on average in the EU, compared with 35% in North Macedonia). In addition, the implementation time has decreased, as has the number of cases for which compensation has not been paid.

21 European Commission 2025, Flash Eurobarometer 555 survey (2025). Data are drawn from this source. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3412>

The repeated criticism of the approach towards **independent bodies** is a matter of concern. The Ombudsperson's Office and the Commission for Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination lack financial and human resources. The long-awaited amendments to the Law on the Ombudsperson, which were intended to pave the way for improving its accreditation status in accordance with the Paris Principles, have not been adopted.

The findings on the **framework for action in civil society** are generally positive, given that in 2024 the work of the Council for cooperation between the Government and civil society was re-launched, the Government adopted a decision to allocate funds to civil society organisations (CSOs), and the Strategy for cooperation with and development of civil society for the period 2025–2029 has been prepared.²²

Nevertheless, the Report recalls report of some CSOs on an increasing adverse environment.

22 Government of North Macedonia 2025, Decision adopted on the date of publication of the European Commission Rule of Law Report (8 July 2025).

Conclusions and recommendations

The Report notes progress in several areas. However, the negative trends in key rule of law issues are a matter of concern. In this respect, the Report is alarming as regards the pressures on the judiciary and the threat to its independence, particularly from the executive branch. Another source of concern are the recurring issues/continued failure to address certain problems identified in this analysis. If these negative trends continue, they have the potential to undermine the credibility of North Macedonia's record of preparedness for accession negotiations, based on the successful implementation of reforms in the Cluster Fundamentals—Rule of Law.

The continuous lack of financial and human resources significantly contributes to the deterioration of the quality and efficiency of the judiciary, as well as the fight against corruption, and challenges the functioning of independent bodies. Administrative dependence on approvals from the Ministry of Finance also contributes to these conditions.

Therefore, the following is recommended:

- A constructive process of dialogue should be initiated between the branches of government to improve the situation in the judiciary, with the participation of civil society. The executive branch should refrain from further pressure and interference on the judiciary, and judicial stakeholders should take a proactive approach.
- To implement the strategies on human resources in the judiciary.
- To intensify the process of digitalisation of the judiciary, with an emphasis on consistency and applicability of solutions in practice, as well as to address the lack of IT resources.
- To adopt the planned laws/amendments, strategies and action plans from the Reform Agenda whose deadline has expired or which should be adopted by the end of this year, through an inclusive process, to prevent further delays in implementation, for which it is necessary to provide adequate resources—including the Law on the Judicial Council, the Law on the Council of Public Prosecutors, the Law on Public Prosecution, the Criminal Code, the Law on Criminal Procedure, the laws on the salaries of judges and public prosecutors, the Action Plan for Preventing Corruption in the Judiciary, and others.
- Considering the limited budgetary funds, to focus on improving the quality and efficiency of the planning process and in the use of financial and human resources in the rule-of-law area.
- To prepare and adopt a new strategy for the prevention and fight against corruption in a timely manner, through an inclusive process, including all branches of government and civil society, and based on existing analyses.
- To adopt a more proactive approach by the SCPC to potential corruption cases and to implement measures to effectively verify asset declarations.

- To ensure that the Government takes measures to increase the responsiveness of the administration (including access to public information and follow-up on the recommendations of independent bodies, etc.).
- To increase the institutional autonomy of the public broadcasting service and to continue the modernisation process.
- To reassess state advertising in the media and examine the possibility of establishing a Media Pluralism Fund, which would support the development of projects and content serving the public interest, fostering a more diverse, high-quality and independent media landscape.
- To ensure that the Government prioritises the improvement of the process of policy-making (including preventing excessive law amendments in this area, leading to legal uncertainty).
- To provide financial and human resources for the independent bodies—the Ombudsperson’s Office and the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination.
- To adopt the amendments to the Law on the Ombudsperson, necessary for the improvement of its accreditation status in accordance with the Paris Principles.
- To ensure that Parliament, when appointing to bodies in the rule-of-law area, respects the merit principle and ensures transparency in the process.
- To ensure that the Government takes into account the findings on the impact of the situation on the rule of law in the country on its integration in the EU Single Market, and prepares appropriate measures.
- To establish efficient, rational, and functional systems for coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the strategies for development of the judiciary and the fight against corruption, as well as other strategies in the rule-of-law area, without duplicating functions and processes.
- To ensure that the Government establishes a system of consultations and monitoring for the Rule of Law Report, taking into account the EC Methodology for its preparation.
- To recommend that the European Commission (EC) deepen the analysis of the causes of the state of affairs, apart from singling out the lack of financial and human resources.

Annex: Overview of progress, recurring issues, and new findings/issues

Pillar	Progress	Recurring issues	New findings/issues
Justice system	– Transparency in the work of the judiciary; – Progress in the implementation by the Judicial Council of the recommendations of the 2023 Peer Review Mission; explanation of decisions on the selection of judges (although inconsistent); – Implementation of the Strategy for the Judiciary (although insufficient); – Appointment of new judges and public prosecutors; – Efforts for digitalization and functioning of the automatic case management system.	– Interference and pressure on the judiciary; – Lack of financial and human resources; ○ No financial resources are allocated in accordance with the Law on the Judicial Budget ○ The strategies on human resources in the judiciary are not implemented – Outdated infrastructure, insufficient IT support and inconsistent use of digital tools; – Continuous trend of decreased efficiency of the judiciary.	– Explicit mention of other branches of government, especially the executive, as a source of pressure and interference; – Delay in the new generations in the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.
Anti-corruption framework	– Efforts in investigating and prosecuting high-level corruption cases; – Partially improved capacities.	– Very low implementation rate of the Strategy for Prevention of Corruption; – Low activity of the SCPC in detecting and reporting alleged instances of corruption; – Lack of public prosecutors and resources in general for the fight against corruption; – Low number of registered lobbyists and lobbying organisations; – Insufficient protection of whistleblowers; new Law on Protection of Whistleblowers not put into procedure; – Lack of effective oversight of political party financing; – Repeated areas with high risk of corruption: public procurement, public sector employment; – A robust track record of high-level corruption cases not established; – Negative effects of the Amendments to the Criminal Code from 2023.	– Lack of political commitment and ownership by state institutions; – Reduced ability of the SCPC to verify asset declarations; – Potential political influence and selective approach in corruption investigations and prosecutions; – Further high risk of delays and legal gaps due to the non-adoption of the new Criminal Code, i.e. its amendments; – Healthcare also identified as an area of high risk of corruption (albeit “petty”).

Pillar	Progress	Recurring issues	New findings/issues
Media	– Positive findings on the financial independence and professionalism of the AAVMS; – Activities of the Media Ethics Council acknowledged; – Number of complaints related to hate speech in 2024 by a third lower than in 2023; – Progress in financing MRT; – Improved legal framework and capacities for monitoring and detecting cases of attacks on journalists; – CoE Convention on Access to Official Documents ratified.	– Insufficient transparency of media ownership and medium-high risk of media concentration; – Delay in the appointment of members of the AAVMS Council; – Appointment of members of the MRT Program Council delayed since 2018; absence of institutional autonomy; – Lack of specific legal framework and awareness of SLAPP; – Inadequate working conditions for journalists; – Implementation in practice of the right to access public information.	– Disregarding the merit principle when appointing new members of the AAVMS Council; – Need for sustainable funding for the Media Ethics Council; – Warning that state advertising could lead to misuse of state funds and market disruption, but also media dependence on state funds that could undermine editorial independence; – Online harassment and gender-based violence against female journalists; smear campaigns against investigative journalists.
Institutional control and balances	– No finding of “political polarization”; – Positive effect of the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament from 2023 on its operational efficiency; – Effective coordination between the Government and the Parliament in the legislative procedure; – Strengthened role of the Constitutional Court in monitoring and enforcement of its decisions, following the amendments to its Rules of Procedure; – Rate of implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights above the EU average; – The work of the Council for cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society re-launched, a decision made to allocate funds to CSOs and a Strategy for cooperation with and development of civil society 2025–2029 prepared.	– Delays in Parliamentary appointments; – Shortcomings in the process of inclusive, evidence-based policy-making; – Lack of financial and human resources of the Ombudsperson’s Office and of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination; – The unamended Law on the Ombudsperson which delays the promotion of its accreditation status according to the Paris Principles.	– Parliamentary appointments disregarding the merit principle; – New findings due to the introduction of the Single Market dimension: level of trust in the efficiency of investment protection (37% of companies).

