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2026 Rule of Law Report
Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Slovakia

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2026 Rule of Law Report
The rule of law situation in the European Union

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ABSTRACT

Slovakia has continued engaging in an intensive dialogue with the Commission to resolve the issues identified in previous reports, including in the context of the Recovery and Resilience Plan revision. Amendments to the judges' laws introduced changes to the system of evaluation of judges and temporary assignment of judges to a higher court, broadening the discretionary power of the Judicial Council and court presidents over judges' careers. The adopted amendments to the disciplinary proceedings for judges, prosecutors, bailiffs and notaries are subject to constitutional review. A draft amendment of the Constitution and the Judicial Council Act limiting the reasons for the dismissal of members of the Judicial Council is in the legislative process. The Government obtained an opinion of the Venice Commission on draft amendments to ensure sufficient safeguards when subjecting judges to criminal liability for their decisions. A proposal abolishing the abuse of law offence was submitted to the legislative process. The legal framework concerning the power of the Prosecutor General to annul final decisions of lower-ranking prosecutors remained unchanged. Data collection on the effects of the 2023 judicial map reform is ongoing. Efforts to increase the level of digitalisation of the justice system continue, while the justice system still faces some challenges as regards its efficiency, notably in administrative cases.

Concerns over the anti-corruption framework persist, as the capacity to detect, investigate and prosecute high-level corruption has further deteriorated. The criminal law and institutional reforms of 2024 still raise specific anti-corruption concerns and previously identified risks continue to materialise, with the numbers of corruption cases detected and prosecuted showing a sharp decline. No new cases of high-level corruption were detected in 2025. Amendments to the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code risk to further undermine the anti-corruption framework. Political commitments to introduce legislative initiatives on lobbying or asset declarations are still to be translated into concrete proposals.

While the adopted amendments to the Act on Media Services have expanded the competences of the national media regulator, concerns have been raised about the impact of some pending amendments on the regulator's independence. Public service media remains an area of concern. A Constitutional Court ruling has quashed restrictive amendments to the Freedom of Information Act. Limited measures have been adopted to enhance the safety of journalists, while cases of intimidation and harassment remain common.

The lawmaking process continues to raise concerns, in particular regarding insufficient public consultation and stakeholder involvement, including frequent use of fast-track procedures, even for high-impact legislation. Certain amendments to the Constitution adopted in September 2025 are raising concerns related to the principle of primacy of EU law. While amendments to the NGO law which were deemed to create additional administrative burden on civil society organisations were declared unconstitutional, the civil society environment continues to face pressure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, based on the recommendations in the 2025 Rule of Law Report, considering other developments that took place in the period of reference and in addition to recalling the rule of law-related infringement procedure referred to in the country chapter, relevant commitments made under the Recovery and Resilience Plan and the country-specific recommendation under the European Semester on the judicial system, including its independence, and the effectiveness of the anti-corruption framework, the Commission concludes the following:

- Some progress was made on measures to ensure sufficient guarantees of independence as regards the dismissal of Judicial Council's members, as draft amendments were prepared to address the issue of their premature dismissal. As the legislative process is ongoing, it is recommended to Slovakia to *advance with reforms to ensure sufficient guarantees of independence for the Judicial Council, including as regards the dismissal of its members, taking into account European standards on independence of Judicial Councils.*
- Significant progress was made on ensuring that sufficient safeguards are in place and observed when subjecting judges to criminal liability for "abuse of law" in their judicial decisions, as the government requested a Venice Commission opinion on this matter. Following this Opinion and approved changes to the Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan, the Ministry of Justice proposed a draft law abolishing this offence. In view of the adjustments made to Slovakia's Recovery and Resilience Plan, it is recommended to Slovakia to *take the necessary steps to repeal the crime of "abuse of law"*.
- No progress was made on effectively investigating and prosecuting high-level corruption to establish a robust track record, as concerns over the anti-corruption framework persist and the capacity to detect, investigate and prosecute high-level corruption has further deteriorated. Given a significant decline in the number of charges, indictments and convictions in corruption cases and the Prosecutor General's continued practice to annul final police and prosecutor decisions, it is recommended to Slovakia to *establish a robust track record in corruption offenses, in particular in high-level cases, including by preventing any undue interference and restricting the use of the Prosecutor-General's powers to annul final investigatory and prosecutorial decisions.*
- Limited progress was made on regulating lobbying activities, as initial steps were taken in preparing a draft law and some further progress was made to reform conflicts of interest rules as a non-binding code of conduct for persons with top executive functions and a code of conduct for members of parliament were adopted. However, no progress was made to strengthen the asset declaration system. It is therefore recommended to Slovakia to *introduce proposals to regulate lobbying, strengthen the asset declaration and verification system, and continue ongoing efforts to reform conflicts of interest rules.*
- Limited progress was made on advancing with establishing legislative and other safeguards to improve the journalists' physical safety and working environment, including the reform of the defamation law. Therefore, it is recommended to Slovakia to *advance with the process to establish legislative and other safeguards to improve the physical safety and working environment of journalists, including the reform of the defamation law, taking into account the European standards on the protection of journalists.*
- No progress has been made to ensure effective public consultation and stakeholders' involvement in the law-making process, which continues to raise concerns. Therefore, it is recommended to Slovakia to *ensure an inclusive and transparent legislative process, including by ensuring effective public consultation and stakeholder involvement in the law-making process and by addressing the frequent use of the fast-track procedure.*

As regards the other 2025 recommendations, the Commission concludes that:

- No progress has been made on strengthening the rules and mechanisms to restore and further safeguard the independent governance and editorial independence of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media. Given that the topics of this recommendation are covered by provisions of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), while the Rule of Law Report will continue to monitor significant developments and report on their impact, further follow-up will be ensured as part of the Commission's support to Member States and enforcement of the EMFA.

I. JUSTICE SYSTEM[1]

Independence

Although increases have been registered, the level of perceived judicial independence in Slovakia continues to be low among both the general public and companies. Overall, 35% of the general population and 38% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be 'fairly or very good' in 2026[2]. The perceived judicial independence among the general public has however slightly increased in comparison with 2025 (32%), and has significantly increased in comparison with 2022 (25%). The perceived level of independence among companies has increased in comparison with 2025 (34%) and has significantly increased in comparison with 2022 (30%).

Amendments to the judges' laws introduced changes to the system of temporary assignment of judges to a higher court, broadening the discretionary power of the Judicial Council and court presidents over judges' careers. The amendments to the judges' laws, initiatives with the objective of increasing efficiency, were adopted in September 2025[3], extending the possibility of temporarily assigning visiting judges to higher courts on the request of the president of the higher court and following the decision of the Judicial Council[4]. Allowing visiting judges to higher courts is generally welcomed by stakeholders as a useful tool to address backlogs[5]. The amendments extended the time limit of the assignment[6], and introduced new grounds for an assignment to a higher court, notably for deepening or improving the qualification of a judge[7]. Sufficient criteria are needed for preventing the risk of allowing arbitrary decisions by the Judicial Council, providing enhanced career opportunities to certain judges and not to others[8].

The amendments to the judges' laws also re-introduced bonuses for judges and amended the rules for evaluation. As regards the changes to the system of evaluation of judges, several stakeholders raised concerns over abolishing regular evaluations every five years, with an evaluation to be made only after the first five years of office of a judge, or if a judge applies for a position at a higher court[9]. Also, there is no judicial remedy against

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1 An overview of the institutional framework for all four pillars can be found here.
2 Figures 48 and 50, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard and Figures 51 and 53, 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard. The level of perceived judicial independence is categorised as follows: very low (below 30% of respondents perceive judicial independence as fairly good and very good); low (between 30-39%), average (between 40-59%), high (between 60-75%), very high (above 75%).
3 Act No. 270/2025 Coll., amending Act No. 385/2000 Coll. on judges and lay judges and on amendments to certain acts, as amended, and amending certain acts. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 4 et seq.
4 Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 6. See also Section 12 of Act No 385/2000 Coll.
5 Country visit Slovakia, Via Iuris, Association of Judges, Slovak Bar Association.
6 The time limit was expanded from one to two years within a three year period.
7 In these instances, the judge is deemed to be exercising the judicial function of a judge on the higher court.
8 Court of Justice in joint cases C-748/19 and C-754/19, para 79 "In order to avoid arbitrariness and the risk of manipulation, the decision relating to the secondment of a judge and the decision terminating that secondment, in particular where a secondment to a higher court is involved, must be taken on the basis of criteria known in advance and must contain an appropriate statement of reasons." This risk is exacerbated by the lack of sufficient safeguards to ensure the independence of the Judicial Council. Venice Commission (CDL-AD(2026)010), para 37-40. Secondments are being done on a temporary basis and in exceptional circumstances. Venice Commission opinion (CDL-AD(2017)018), paras. 86 and 87. Liberties (2026) written input, p. 10. See also Via Iuris (2026) written input, p. 9.
9 Country visit Slovakia, Supreme Administrative Court, Via Iuris, Judges for Open Judiciary. According to European standards, the evaluation of judges is an essential element of an accountable judiciary, and the

decisions of the evaluation committee, composed of three judges from various districts elected by the Judicial Council for five-year terms[10]. The amendments to the judges' laws also reintroduced bonuses for judges who reached the age of either 50 or 60. The mere fulfilment of the age criterion makes a judge eligible, however, whether the bonus will be awarded is to be decided by the court's president. In the absence of further conditions on the basis of which the court presidents would decide to award bonuses to judges, this introduces a level of discretion[11]. According to European standards, the remuneration of judges should rely on objective and transparent criteria and bonuses which include an element of discretion should be avoided[12]. Stakeholders voiced concerns over the broadening discretionary powers over judges' careers, including against the background of a framework where safeguards for the independence of the Judicial Council remain insufficient[13].

The adopted amendments to the disciplinary proceedings for judges, prosecutors, bailiffs and notaries are subject to constitutional review. Following the amendments to the judges' laws, disciplinary proceedings against judges, prosecutors, notaries and bailiffs were revised and came into force on 1 February 2026. The amendments introduce a second instance review by establishing an appellate disciplinary senate, which is generally welcomed by stakeholders as an additional level of judicial review[14]. The members of the disciplinary senates must have 10 years' service in a legal profession. The Judicial Council selected the judges and laypersons from which members of the first and second instance panels are chosen[15]. The Judicial Council now also has the power to initiate disciplinary proceedings against judges, as well as the right to appeal disciplinary decisions to the second instance. Several judicial stakeholders and civil society organisations have expressed concerns over the Judicial Council's expanded role and the reduced number of judges of the Supreme

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process should, in principle, encompass all judges periodically, including those performing managerial tasks. Any exemptions from this process are recommended to be objectively justified. CEPEJ (2024), p. 9.

10 Section 27e para 7 of Act No 385/2000 Coll., as amended. Via Iuris (2026) written input, p. 9. The possibility of judicial review of evaluation decisions is important, as the decisions on evaluation may affect "civil rights". CCJE (2014), para 41. Before the amendments of September 2025, an evaluation was conducted every five years and the criteria were stipulated in a clear manner. The amendments of September 2025 changed the overall framework of evaluation of judges, widening the discretion regarding evaluation decisions, rendering the lack of judicial review of these decisions a matter of concern.

11 During the legislative process, Association of Judges suggested removing the discretion when awarding bonuses, which was not reflected in the final law. Country visit Slovakia, Association of Judges.

12 Venice Commission (2010), para 46. Section 79 of Act No 385/2000 Coll., as amended. In the case of a district court president, the awarding of the bonus will be decided by the court president of a regional court, in case of regional court president by the Minister of Justice , and in the case of Supreme Court and Supreme Administrative Court it is the Judicial Council, following a motion made by deputy Presidents of the respective courts.

13 Liberties (2026) written input, p. 10. See also Via Iuris (2026) written input, p. 9. Country visit Slovakia, Slovak Bar Association.

14 Country visit Slovakia, Judicial Council, Association of Judges, and Specialised Criminal Court.

15 Two of the three members of the first instance disciplinary panel, which are one judge (who may not be a judge of the Supreme Administrative Court), and one lay judge are chosen from the respective databases. Three of the five members of the second instance panel are chosen, which are two judges (who may not be judges of the Supreme Administrative Court) and a lay judge are chosen from the respective databases. As a result of the amendments, the judges of the Supreme Administrative Court preside in first instance (one position) and hold two positions in second instance, and the amended eligibility rules limit eligible judges of that court to 12 out of 25.

Administrative Court in disciplinary panels[16]. The amendments were challenged before the Constitutional Court[17].

There has been some progress on the recommendation as regards the dismissal of members of the Judicial Council[18]. Between November 2023 and July 2024, all non-judicial members of the Judicial Council had been dismissed before completing their respective terms[19] and the Judicial Council considers the current possibility to dismiss any of its members without reasons as problematic[20]. The Judicial Council plays a key role as regards judges' careers and accountability, notably in the processes of selection, appointment, evaluation, vetting procedure, disciplinary proceedings, and decisions regarding judges' criminal liability for the crime of 'abuse of law'. Its role in some of these areas has been further reinforced through legislative amendments adopted in September 2025, in particular as regards disciplinary proceedings of judges, prosecutors, bailiffs and notaries[21]. According to the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU, judicial councils involved in the process of judicial appointments need to hold sufficient guarantees of independence in order to render the judicial appointment process more objective[22]. A wide discretion for political authorities to dismiss the members of the Judicial Council, who were appointed by these authorities, creates a potential risk of pressure on those members, liable to impact on their independence[23]. The Venice Commission has also underlined the importance of ensuring adequate safeguards for the independence of the Judicial Council, including merit-based appointments of its members and guarantees of their security of tenure[24]. In May 2026, the government proposed draft amendments to the Constitution and the Judicial Council Act with a view to limiting the grounds for dismissal of members of the Judicial Council, and

16 Country visit Slovakia, the Supreme Administrative Court, Slovak Bar Association, Judges for Open Judiciary, Via Iuris.

17 The Constitutional Court accepted the motion by decision PL. US 7/2026 in full. It did not suspend the effects of the law.

18 The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended Slovakia to 'introduce measures to ensure sufficient guarantees of independence as regards the dismissal of members of the Judicial Council, notably those not elected by judges, taking into account European standards on independence of Judicial Councils.' No progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025, 2024 and 2023.

19 The Council is composed of 18 Members. Eight members are judges elected by their peers and one judge elected by the judges of the Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court among their peers. The Government, the Parliament and the President of the Republic each choose three members as well. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 6. Via Iuris (2026) written input, p. 10.

20 Country visit Slovakia, Judicial Council.

21 Act No. 270/2025 Coll. amending Act No. 385/2000 Coll. on judges and lay judges and on amendments to certain acts, as amended, and amending certain acts. Some parts of the Act became effective as from 1 November 2025, obligations of the Judicial Council as regards databases for the disciplinary senates became effective as from 1 January 2026 and the new system of disciplinary senates became effective as from 1 February 2026. Slovak Government (2026) written input, p. 6.

22 As regards the process for appointing members of the judiciary, the Court of Justice held that, for a Council of the Judiciary to contribute to rendering that process more objective, it is necessary that such a body itself be sufficiently independent of the legislature, the executive and the authority to which it is required to submit an opinion on the assessment of candidates for a judicial post (see for example judgment of the Court of Justice in joined cases C-585/18, C-624/18 and C-625/18, AK, para 137.

23 Venice Commission (CDL-AD(2026)010), para 39 „[…] a constitutional provision allowing for the premature removal of members of the Council Judicial without specific grounds undermines its independence and renders it susceptible to external influence. See also GRECO (2025a) Ad hoc Report on the Slovak Republic (Rule 34), para 143. A wide discretion to dismiss the members of the Judicial Council creates a potential risk of taking decisions with a form of prior compliance. Court of Justice in joint cases C-313/23, C-316/23 and C-332/23, para 87 et seq.

24 Venice Commission (CDL-AD(2026)010).

submitted these for public consultation[25]. While elements of the draft amendments in their current form could be part of the solution, further steps are needed to improve the current system as regards the independence of the Judicial Council, taking into account European standards. In view of the foregoing, and considering the submission of a legislative proposal, there has been some progress on the implementation of this recommendation.

There has been significant progress on the recommendation to ensure that sufficient safeguards are in place when subjecting judges to criminal liability for their decisions, as the government proposed a draft law abolishing the abuse of law offence[26]. Under the Criminal Code, judges may be prosecuted for an arbitrary decision causing damage to or bestowing a favour on another person[27]. Upon the concerned judge's request, the Judicial Council can dissent with the prosecution of the judge for this criminal offence by a vote of at least ten of its members. In 2025, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Council, no criminal proceedings were initiated[28]. In addition to creating administrative burden including by vexatious complaints, the lack of clarity and sufficient safeguards leaves the provision prone to misuse, producing a chilling effect on judges' independent decision-making[29]. In October 2025, the Government requested an opinion of the Venice Commission on draft legislative amendments to the criminal offence of abuse of law which aim to specify and broaden the scope of the criminal offence[30] and subject any criminal proceedings against judges to the prior consent of the Judicial Council[31]. In its opinion of March 2026, the Venice Commission recommended repealing the crime of abuse of law of the Criminal Code, deeming it unnecessary and prone to abuse. According to the opinion, in the event the authorities were to decide to retain this provision, the draft amendments should be revised[32]. Following the Venice Commission Opinion as well as

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[25] Draft law No. LP/2026/224 as regards the Constitution and draft law No. LP/2026/225 as regards the Judicial Council Act.

[26] The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Slovakia to 'ensure that sufficient safeguards are in place and duly observed when subjecting judges to criminal liability for the crime of "abuse of law" as regards their judicial decisions'. Limited progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and no progress in 2024 and 2023.

[27] Section 326a(1) of the Criminal Code stipulates as follows: "(1) Whoever, as a judge, lay judge, or arbitrator of an arbitral tribunal, in the course of decision-making, arbitrarily applies the law and thereby causes harm to another person or gives someone an undue advantage, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of one to five years."

[28] Country visit Slovakia (2026) Ministry of Justice, Judicial Council. Since no criminal proceedings were initiated, no decision not to prosecute was taken by the Judicial Council.

[29] 2024 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, pp. 7, 8. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 7.

[30] Draft Article 326a of the Criminal Code stipulates as follows: „*A judge, associate judge or arbitrator who, with the intention to harm or favour another, arbitrarily makes a decision in manifest contravention of the law, without any basis in law or consciously ignoring the wording of the legal provisions, their purpose or established case law, and the arbitrariness of such a decision has been pronounced in a final decision of a superior court or the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic shall be punished by imprisonment for one to five years.*"

[31] Venice Commission (2010), pp. 5 et seq. This means that before indicting a judge for any criminal offence, public prosecutors must first obtain from the Judicial Council a reasoned decision granting its consent to the prosecution.

[32] The Venice Commission has pointed out that the criminal offence should not encompass situations in which a judge departs from settled case law; the requirement that the element of arbitrariness be confirmed by a final decision of a court of higher instance should be eliminated; the criminal offence should be limited to the act of unlawfully conferring an advantage or disadvantage on a person. Furthermore, the requirement of prior consent of the Judicial Council should be limited to criminal proceedings relating specifically to the exercise of the judicial functions of the judge concerned and the Judicial Council should be required to adopt the relevant prior consent decisions within short time limits (Venice Commission (2010), p. 15). See also GRECO, 100th Plenary, Ad hoc Report on the Slovak Republic (Rule 34), 28 August 2025.

approved changes to the Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan regarding this provision, the Ministry of Justice proposed a draft law abolishing the abuse of law offence. Regardless of whether the crime of abuse of law would be abolished in the Criminal Code, it remains of utmost importance that whenever judges are held criminally liable for their decision-making, sufficient safeguards be in place and duly observed to avoid any risk of potential abuse[33]. Considering that a draft law was proposed, taking into account the opinion of the Venice Commission and the legislative process is ongoing, significant progress was made on this recommendation.

Statements of politicians targeting judges and their decisions raise concerns as regards judicial independence. Judicial stakeholders reported that individual judges, including at higher instance courts, have been subject to public statements by politicians and Government representatives with accusations of political bias and calls for their removal[34]. Judicial associations, civil society organisations and the Supreme Court have highlighted the chilling effect of such statements, which risk affecting their independent decision-making[35]. In some instances, the Judicial Council has condemned such statements as undermining judicial independence[36].

The legal framework concerning the power of the Prosecutor General to annul final decisions of lower-ranking prosecutors remained unchanged. No legislative steps have been taken to revise the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, which give the Prosecutor General the power to annul final decisions of lower-ranking prosecutors or the police[37]. In 2025, out of 656 motions registered at the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Prosecutor General granted annulments in 110 cases. In 18 cases, the Prosecutor General annulled decisions bringing criminal charges. In a further 22 cases, he annulled decisions to discontinue criminal proceedings due to the shortened limitation periods introduced by the 2024 Criminal Code reform, resulting in the continuation of proceedings concerning offences affecting the financial interests of the European Union[38]. The Government and Prosecutor General emphasised the benefits of this power to correct procedural unlawfulness; on the other hand, the Council of Prosecutors, while acknowledging the importance of this power, warned that using it against decisions bringing criminal charges causes delays and may even prevent cases from ultimately reaching the courts[39]. The new Serious Crime Unit[40], comprising 11 prosecutors, 8 of whom are former Special Prosecutors' Office (SPO) prosecutors, continues to provide methodological oversight for cases before the Special

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33 Venice Commission (2010), para 13 et seq.

34 Country visit Slovakia, Supreme Court, Judges for Open Judiciary, Via Iuris and Investigative Centre Jan Kuciak. Association of Judges (2026), written input, p. 9. Liberties (2026), written input, p. 11 et seq.

35 Association of Judges (2026) written input, p. 9, Supreme Court (2026), Country visit Slovakia, Judges for Open Judiciary, Via Iuris, Transparency International Slovakia.

36 For instance, Judicial Council (2025) decision No. 258/2025; No. 259/2025; No. 49/2025; No. 166/2025; No. 93/2025; No. 331/2025.; No. 214/2025. There were also statements made by the President of the Judicial Council, or the individual members of the Judicial Council. In this respect, an analysis by Via Iuris concluded that the Judicial Council applies inconsistent standards when assessing attacks, not aligning its practice with the established standards, such as those of the European Court of Human Rights. Via Iuris (2026), written input, p. 11.

37 Section 363 et seq. of the Criminal Procedure Code. Office of the Prosecutor General (2026), written input, p. 8. See also 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 8.

38 Office of the Prosecutor General (2026a), additional written input from Slovakia for the 2026 Rule of Law Report, factual comments to the draft chapter.

39 Country visit Slovakia, Council of Prosecutors.

40 This was established by law within the Office of the Prosecutor General following the 2024 dissolution of the Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO).

Criminal Court. This unit, however, lacks the autonomy of its predecessor[41], and the decisions on which cases are allocated to it continue on an *ad hoc* basis without objective criteria[42]. The Council of Prosecutors noted lasting consequences of the SPO's dissolution, including the loss of expertise and institutional memory, fragmentation of the serious crime agenda across unprepared regional offices[43].

Quality

Data collection on the effects of the 2023 judicial map reform is ongoing. Many stakeholders value the positive effects of the judicial map reform, such as a higher degree of specialisation and the creation of administrative courts[44]. They also point to the challenges concerning the accessibility of some courts[45] and the length of proceedings in the administrative courts[46]. To partially address the issue of open vacancies in the administrative courts, the Government is considering amendments that would facilitate the mobility of judges from the Supreme Court to the Supreme Administrative Court[47]. The amendments to judges' laws adopted in September 2025 also introduced changes to the composition of the senates at district courts, to ensure the functioning of small courts[48]. As regards the evaluation of the reform, stakeholders pointed to the lack of data, both in the context of the preparation of the reform[49] and following its implementation[50]. The Ministry of Justice is currently gathering data on the effects of the judicial map reform for year 2025[51].

Efforts to increase the level of digitalisation of the justice system continue. The level of digitalisation of the justice system is generally high, particularly regarding electronic communication tools in courts and the prosecution service and regarding digital solutions to initiate and follow court cases[52], while it could be improved notably in criminal cases[53]. As part of Slovakia's commitments under the Recovery and Resilience Plan, the Digital Insolvency Register has been put in place since October 2025[54] and a digital information system providing judges with relevant professional material for their decision-making is in operation since December 2025[55]. A new Act on the Business Register was adopted, expanding linking options with other registers, with the aim to reduce administrative burden[56]. Work on the electronic investigation file has been delayed and the launching of the

[41] Notably, the former SPO was headed by a Special Prosecutor, who was appointed by Parliament. Moreover, the Prosecutor General had no power to issue instructions in ongoing cases in the remit of the SPO prosecutors.
[42] Country visit Slovakia, Office of the Prosecutor General. For a comparative overvieow of systems of case allocation in prosecution services, see Figure 57, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.
[43] Country visit Slovakia, Council of Prosecutors.
[44] Country visit Slovakia, Slovak Bar Association, Supreme Administrative Court and Via Iuris.
[45] Country visit Slovakia, Judicial Council, Via Iuris, and Supreme Court.
[46] Country visit Slovakia, Supreme Court and Via Iuris. Association of Judges (2026), written input, p. 11.
[47] Country visit Slovakia, Ministry of Justice.
[48] ibidem.
[49] Country visit Slovakia, Association of Judges.
[50] Country visit Slovakia, Supreme Court, and Supreme Administrative Court.
[51] Country visit Slovakia, Ministry of Justice.
[52] Figures 42, 43, 44, 46 and 47, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.
[53] Figure 45, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.
[54] Act No. 240/2025 Coll. amending Act No. 7/2005 Coll. on Bankruptcy and Restructuring and on Amendments to Certain Acts, as amended, and on Amendments to Certain Acts. Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 20.
[55] ibidem.
[56] Slovak Government (2026a).

pilot electronic investigation file has been postponed. In criminal cases, the interconnection of information systems of the police and the prosecution service is underway[57].

Efficiency

The justice system continues to face some challenges as regards its efficiency, notably in administrative cases, while further improvements have been made. The time taken to reach a decision in civil and commercial cases at first instance courts further decreased (from 173 days in 2023 to 151 days in 2024). The estimated time to resolve administrative cases at first instance courts decreased from 1 040 days in 2023 to 860 days in 2024, but remains among the longest in the EU. Additionally, the clearance rate for administrative cases increased from 74% in 2023 to 93% in 2024, indicating that courts were able to resolve a larger share of incoming cases than the previous year. Before the first instance criminal courts, in a narrower category of bribery cases, the average length in 2024 was 366 days[58]. Stakeholders considered the lack of specialisation and high workload at courts among the causes for lengthy proceedings[59].

II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

The perception among experts, citizens and business executives is that the level of corruption in the public sector remains high. In the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Slovakia scores 48/100 and ranks 23rd in the European Union and 61st globally[60]. This perception has deteriorated over the past five years. The 2026 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 78% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 71%) and 32% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 88% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 65%) and 61% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 37%). Furthermore, 31% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 38%), while 10% of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 31%)[61].

The National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2026-2029 and related Action Plan have been adopted[62]. The Strategy was adopted on 21 January 2026, following a public consultation carried out in accordance with standard legislative procedure and within the standard consultation period. It builds upon the National Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2019–2023, under which tasks are carried out at the level of individual ministries, and is accompanied by an Action Plan that will assess progress across 15 ministries. According to the Government, the main objective of the strategy is to build trustworthy, transparent, and resilient public institutions. The strategy comprises four pillars, namely building and strengthening capacities, education and communication, corruption risk management and data collection and monitoring. The Government Office issued a methodological recommendation on

57 Office of the Prosecutor General (2026), written input, p. 22.
58 Figure 21, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.
59 Slovak Chamber of Commerce (2026), written input, p. 1 Country visit Slovakia, Rule of Law Initiative.
60 The level of perceived corruption is categorised as follows: low (above 79); relatively low (between 79-60), relatively high (between 59-50), high (below 50).
61 Data from Special Eurobarometer 573 (2026) and Flash Eurobarometer 582 (2026).
62 Government Resolution 31/2026.

corruption risk management, which aims to serve as a link between anti-corruption laws and institutional practice[63].

Previously identified risks in relation to the criminal law and institutional reforms of 2024 continue to materialise. While statistics provided by both the government[64] and the Office of the Prosecutor General[65] indicate that from 2024 to 2025 the number of detected and solved corruption crimes has slightly increased, these numbers remain at a lower level compared to the situation prior to the reforms of 2024. According to data published by the Office of the Prosecutor General, over a period of three years, the number of charges[66] and indictments filed[67], as well as the number of persons convicted[68] in corruption cases has decreased significantly. Some stakeholders consider this decrease to be a direct consequence of the reforms adopted in 2024, notably the criminal law amendments and the abolishment of the National Crime Agency (NAKA)[69] and the Special Prosecutors' Office (SPO). They argue that the current lack of expertise and specialisation, in particular among investigators and operatives of the Regional Directorates of the Police, negatively impacts the effective detection and investigation of corruption cases[70]. In this respect, the dissolution of the Special Prosecutor's Office undermined the benefits stemming from the accumulated professional expertise and professional relationships with competent law enforcement agencies that SPO prosecutors had built over 20 years[71]. Some remedial measures are being taken to address these gaps, including an assessment of the current specialisation and training in detection and investigation of corruption criminal offences, training organised by the Office for the Fight Against Organised Crime (UBOK)[72], an Order of the President of the Police Force introducing the formal specialisation of investigators and operatives at the Regional Directorates of the Police in the field of corruption criminal offences, and instructions issued by the Prosecutor General on the specialisation of prosecutors in corruption criminal offences[73]. While the number of detected crimes affecting the financial interests of the EU slightly increased[74], two cases transmitted by OLAF for judicial follow-up to UBOK and the prosecutor's office have recently been dismissed due to the expiry of the statute of limitation. Although the mandate of the current European Prosecutor from Slovakia will expire at the end of July 2026, Slovakia has not yet nominated the three candidates from among which the next European Prosecutor will be chosen.

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63 Government Office of the Slovak Republic (2025).

64 Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 30.

65 Slovak Government (2026), written input, Annex Corruption Cases Statistics.

66 2022: 168, 2025: 42 (-75%); Slovak Government (2025), written input, p. 66.

67 2022: 83, 2025: 26 (-69%), ibidem.

68 2022: 118, 2025: 38 (-68%), ibidem.

69 Office of the Prosecutor General, Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 66. The Ministry of Justice considers the drop in case numbers a result of an improvement of the qualitative aspect of evidence. Slovak Government (2025), written input, p. 69. The Ministry considers the fluctuation in the number of detected corruption crimes a short-term deviation within the natural variability of statistical data. Slovak Government (2025), written input, p. 29.

70 GRECO noted in this context the "notably low number of reports and investigations" registered as of March 2024 and throughout 2025" and considers that training alone is no longer sufficient and should be complemented by the development of a plan for the specialisation of police officers, including analysts and operatives. GRECO (2025a) para. 129. The Prosecutor General strongly criticised the state of the institutional framework and the fight against corruption. Country visit Slovakia, Prosecutor General.

71 GRECO (2025a), paragraph 109.

72 Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 50.

73 Instruction by the Prosecutor General No. 17/2025. See also GRECO (2025a), para. 121, recommending to "develop a formal plan for specialisation and continued professional development of prosecutors, in order to ensure compliance with anti-corruption standards".

74 2022: 37, 2025: 42 (+14%), Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 68.

There has been no progress on the recommendation on effectively investigating and prosecuting high-level corruption with a view to establishing a robust track record[75]. In 2025, the Prosecutor General continued to use his powers to annul final police and prosecutor decisions deemed to be illegal[76]. No amendments to the legal framework are currently planned in this regard[77]. In parallel, these powers were also used to ensure the continuance or resumption of criminal prosecutions in cases affecting the financial interests of the EU[78]. In 2025, the police did not detect any new cases of high-level corruption[79]. The Office of the Prosecutor General and stakeholders consider that, in addition to the impact of institutional changes, the significantly shortened statute of limitations for corruption criminal offences under the 2024 criminal law reform may hinder the investigation of complicated corruption cases[80]. Amendments[81] have been introduced to the Criminal Procedure Code regarding the institute of cooperating witnesses, which provide the possibility to accused persons that significantly cooperate with authorities to benefit from specific legal benefits. These amendments, which are currently suspended for the duration of constitutional review, might further weaken the effectiveness of high-level corruption investigations and restrict the range of admissible evidence[82]. Despite the ongoing review by the Constitutional Court, the Government has proposed further amendments concerning cooperating witnesses. Although the Government's announced intentions are to strengthen legal certainty, accountability, and public confidence while preserving the effectiveness of cooperation with law enforcement authorities, the amendments do not appear to address the previously identified concerns[83]. Against this background, there has been no progress on the recommendation made in the previous years.

Amendments to the whistleblower protection legislation were eventually repealed after concerns were expressed at national and European level. In 2023[84] and 2025[85], the Government introduced amendments to the whistleblower law which aimed at changing both the protection framework, including for persons that had been granted protection under the law then in force, and the institutional setup. Following concerns expressed at national and European level, one amendment was withdrawn before its adoption whereas the other was

75 The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Slovakia to 'Ensure the effective and independent investigations and prosecutions of high-level corruption cases to establish a robust track record, including by preventing any undue interference and restricting the use of the Prosecutor-General's powers to annul final investigatory and prosecutorial decisions'. No progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025, 2024 and 2023.

76 The use of these powers, which may delay or impede investigatory and prosecutorial efforts, continues to raise concerns among stakeholders. Country visit to Slovakia, Transparency International,Zastavme Korupciu, and Council of Prosecutors.

77 Country visit to Slovakia, Ministry of Justice.

78 In 22 cases, decisions of supervising prosecutors to discontinue criminal prosecution due to the statute of limitations were annulled in view of a link to the financial interests of the EU, Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 9.

79 The Ministry of Justice considers that the lack of newly detected cases cannot be considered a failure on the part of law enforcement authorities, as it may also be the result of an absence of this type of criminal activity, Office of the Prosecutor General Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 28.

80 Office of the Prosecutor General, Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 69. Ca. 3 000 criminal proceedings were halted and stopped due to the amendments. Country visit Slovakia, Stop Corruption Foundation.

81 Amendment No. 416/2025 Coll.

82 Office of the Prosecutor General, Slovak Government (2026), written input, p. 70. While a constitutional review is ongoing, further amendments have been proposed by the Government.

83 Legislative process LP/2026/124.

84 Office for the Protection of Whistleblowers (2023).

85 Act No. 376/2025 Coll.

repealed before it entered into force, after the European Commission had initiated an infringement procedure for breaches of the Whistleblower Directive and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which has subsequently been closed[86]. Despite the fact that these amendments did not take legal effect, the stakeholders consider that these developments risk to undermine the trust in the stability of the legal framework and the institutions competent to provide whistleblower protection, creating a deterrent to report breaches of law and thereby undermining the detection of crime[87].

There has been limited progress on the recommendation to regulate lobbying activities[88]. Lobbying in Slovakia remains unregulated. In its Programme Statement of 2023, the Government committed to propose legislation to regulate the contacts of public officials with persons representing the interests of individuals or organisations to strengthen transparency in the decision-making process[89]. Initial steps in preparing the draft law have been taken, e.g. with the publication of the basic principles of the envisaged legislation[90]. However, no legislative proposal has been adopted for legislative deliberations[91]. Against this background, there has been limited progress on the recommendation made in the previous years.

There has been some further progress on the recommendation to reform Slovakia's conflicts of interest rules[92]. In August 2025, a Code of Conduct for Persons with top executive functions was adopted[93]. The code is based on a set of general principles, including the promotion of public interest, a sense of service, honesty and integrity, and objectivity[94]. However, the Code is non-binding[95] and does not contain provisions regulating contacts with third parties. The Prime Minister and the government act as the final interpreters of its application, defining the principles and the meaning of key concepts. In January 2026, a code of conduct for Members of Parliament was adopted[96], with rules ranging from requiring respectful behaviour in parliamentary debate to a prohibition on concluding agreements to use a parliamentary mandate to further the private interests of another person[97]. Altogether, conflicts of interest rules remain fragmented with some aspects being regulated in sectoral

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86 INFR(2026)2012. Following the repeal of the contested amendment by the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the resulting reestablishment of the legal status quo ante, the infringement procedure has been closed on 8 July 2026.

87 Country visit Slovakia, Office for the Protection of Whistleblowers, Transparency International and Stop Corruption Foundation.

88 The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Slovakia to "introduce proposals to regulate lobbying […]." No progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025, 2024 and 2023.

89 Slovak Government (2023).

90 Slovak Government (2025). According to these basic principles, the future legislation should contain definitions of lobbyists and lobbying activities, the rights and obligations of lobbyists, establish the procedures for registering lobbyists as well as sanctions for non-compliance with these rules.

91 No legislative proposal in this regard is included in the draft legislative plan of the Slovak government for 2026, LP/2025/643.

92 The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Slovakia to "continue ongoing efforts to reform conflicts of interest rules." Some progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and no progress in 2024.

93 Government Resolution 415/2025.

94 In addition, the code builds on the principle of a higher standard of care, the principle of responsibility for one's actions and decision-making, the principle of transparency, the principle of decency and inclusion and the principle of leadership.

95 The code does not provide for sanctions nor liability.

96 Act No. 34/2026 amending Act No. 350/1996 of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the Rules of Procedure of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

97 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, pp. 13-14.

acts, ethical codes and guidelines for judges, prosecutors and members of the tax and customs authority[98]. Against this background, there has been some further progress on the recommendation made in the previous years.

There was no progress on the recommendation to strengthen Slovakia's asset declaration system[99]. The Government committed to introduce uniform rules for submitting asset declarations by public sector officials, with special emphasis on the digitalisation of asset declarations, in its Government Programme Statement of 2023[100]. The Government reiterates budgetary constraints that prevent progress in this regard[101]. The system of asset declarations for members of Parliament, judges, prosecutors, public officials, and civil servants remains decentralised and fragmented[102]. Draft legislation that could further limit public access to asset declarations, reducing transparency and monitoring opportunities, is in parliamentary procedure[103]. Therefore, there has been no progress on the related recommendation[104].

Preparations for amendments to the political party finance law have advanced. A draft amendment to the Political Parties Act was submitted to public consultation in mid-2025[105]. It would increase the threshold for political parties to obtain financial support from the state budget from three to five percent of votes received in elections (with five percent being the electoral threshold). The organisation of expert roundtables is envisaged before a legislative proposal will be submitted to the National Council[106]. As regards campaign finance, stakeholders continue to flag the lack of effective control, enforcement and oversight, as well as incidents of circumvention of the transparency obligation in party campaign finance with non-transparent campaign funding channelled through party-affiliated companies[107].

Legislative amendments to prevent corruption in agriculture are still under examination in Parliament[108]. Overall, agriculture continues to rank among Slovakia's

[98] See, for public officials, Constitutional Act no. 357/2004; for civil servants, Act no. 55/2017; for the police, Act no. 73/1998; for judges, see Act no. 385/2000. Detailed recommendations, including on expanding the definition of conflicts of interest and the scope of incompatibilities also in UNCAC (2023), p. 10. An update of the Code of Ethics for Civil Servants and the Code of Ethics for Police Officers is proposed in the draft Action Plan for 2026–2029.

[99] The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Slovakia to "strengthen the asset declaration and verification system [...].“ No progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and 2024.

[100] Slovak Government (2023).

[101] Country visit Slovakia, Government Office for the Prevention of Corruption.

[102] There are eight different norms or legislations for different categories of obliged persons, all requiring different information and disclosure levels. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia p. 14, reported since 2021.

[103] Legislative amendments to the Cadastral Act, restricting access to cadastre real estate ownership information by mandatory authentication obligations, are also progressing and have been submitted to the Slovak National Council on 7 January 2026, Ministry of Agriculture (2026), written input, p. 1. The Government explains the necessity of these restrictions with security concerns, 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 14.

[104] Similarly, GRECO (2025b), para. 64, urging authorities to make tangible progress in strengthening the system of asset declarations.

[105] Legislative process LP/2025/344.

[106] Country visit Slovakia, Ministry of Interior.

[107] Country visit Slovakia, Transparency International and Zastavme Korupciu.

[108] Amendments to the Act on Land Modifications, Arrangement of Land Ownership, Land Offices, Land Fund and Land Communities; the Act on the lease of agricultural land, agricultural enterprise and forest land; to Government Regulation on the conditions of lease, sale, exchange, and acquisition of real estate by the Land Fund.

high-risk corruption and fraud areas[109]. Several new investigations were opened in 2025[110]. The practice of publishing lease contracts signed by the Land Fund has increased transparency, allowing to monitor free and leased land. This progress is limited by the inoperability of the systems to geolocate leased parcels and to link lease contracts with the cadastre.

Public procurement rules provide for high thresholds for publication requirements, negatively impacting transparency and competition, while corruption continues to present a high risk for businesses. The Flash Eurobarometer on Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU shows that 40% of companies in Slovakia (EU average 30%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a contract in practice in the last three years[111]. Only 31% of companies perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review body (the Public Procurement Office) as very or fairly good[112]. The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in Slovakia reports 25% of single bids for 2026 (EU average 27%). Stakeholders indicate procurement in the infrastructure, construction, IT and health sectors as high-risk areas for corruption in Slovakia[113]. Some business representatives are dissatisfied with what they perceive as a lack of action by public authorities to improve the anti-corruption framework despite negative trends in key indicators, as well as a lack of predictability with a view to the frequent use of fast-track legislative procedures[114]. Amendments to the Public Procurement Act and the related law on emergency measures for strategic investments continue to face criticism, raising concerns about effective safeguards against corruption and favouritism that risk impacting a fair and competitive market [115]. Contracts for advisory services procured by public authorities are awarded to a small number of firms, enabling them to undercut competition in commercial tenders[116]. While the Public Procurement Office recommends to also publish tenders below the thresholds that were increased by the amendments, in practice a considerable share of tenders is not subject to a legal obligation to do so [117].

III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM

The competences of the media regulator have been expanded. With a view to alignment with the European Media Freedom Act, amendments to the Act on Media Services and the Publications Act have expanded the competences of the media regulator, the Council for Media Services, to include the monitoring of the public broadcaster's compliance with the rules securing its independence as well as the monitoring of the allocation of public funds for

[109] In 2024, the EU Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) concluded extensive casework on agricultural payments. Since 2019, OLAF issued financial and administrative recommendations to correct EU budget fraud and irregularities and to highlight weaknesses in the administration, monitoring and control of the relevant funds.
[110] EPPO (2025).
[111] Flash Eurobarometer 557 on Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU (2025).
[112] Figure 59, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.
[113] Country visit Slovakia, Government and Transparency International. See also 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 16.
[114] Country visit Slovakia, Rule of Law Initiative, National Union Employers and American Chamber of Commerce.
[115] Country visit Slovakia, Via Iuris and Stop Corruption Foundation. In some cases, the threshold is in practice eight times higher than previously, which is considered as impacting transparency, Country visit Slovakia, Rule of Law Initiative, National Union Employers and American Chamber of Commerce.
[116] Country visit Slovakia, Rule of Law Initiative, National Union Employers and American Chamber of Commerce.
[117] Country visit Slovakia, Public Procurement Office.

state advertising[118]. The amendment has, furthermore, introduced specific rules on transparency in the allocation of state advertising and has adapted the obligations of providers of audience measurement systems[119]. Neither the register relating to state advertising allocations, nor the unified register relating to media ownership transparency of all media are currently functional or publicly available, though work is ongoing in relation to both registers[120]. In 2025, the Council on Media Services registered the Association for the Protection of Journalistic Ethics (AONE) in the list of self-regulatory bodies[121]. On 7 November 2025, a draft bill was tabled in Parliament which, if adopted, would introduce several structural changes to the national media regulatory authority which would become the ‘National Media Authority’. The bill proposes establishing a one-person decision-making body, concentrating all such powers in the hands of the President of the authority, and establishing broadly formulated rules for the dismissal of the President. A collegiate Council would decide on appeals against decisions of the regulator, acting as a second instance body. Stakeholders have indicated that as they stand, the draft provisions risk imperilling the independence of the regulator[122]. In January 2026, the Director of the regulator was controversially dismissed[123]. Based on these developments, the Media Pluralism Monitor 2026 has raised the risk level on the independence of the regulator from very low to medium low risk[124].

The concerns relating to the autonomy of public service media have not been addressed[125]. Several stakeholders continued to express concerns as regards the Act on Slovak Television and Radio (STVR)[126], which entered into force in July 2024 and dissolved the previous entity (RTVS). They highlight its implications for the independence of the public service broadcaster, in particular in terms of the appointment and dismissal procedures involved as well as the funding system put in place[127]. The issue has been the subject of a specific ‘systemic alert’ on the Council of Europe’s Platform to promote the protection of journalism to which the Slovak government has replied[128]. Forty-six Members of Parliament have lodged proceedings before the Constitutional Court challenging various provisions of the Act on STVR for alleged conflict with the Constitution, the European Media Freedom Act, the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and a preliminary ruling request is ongoing on this matter before the European Court of

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118 Law of 10 September 2025 amending the Act on Media Services and the Publications Act, Coll. 256/2025.
119 The Council for Media Services was designated Digital Services Coordinator in July 2024.
120 Country visit Slovakia, Ministry of Culture. While awaiting the completion of this work, information on the ownership structures of media service providers and their ultimate beneficial owners is publicly available via separate registries.
121 Optional Protocol to the Code of Ethics for Journalists on the Protection of Human Dignity, Humanity and Minors and the Second Optional Protocol to the Code of Ethics for Journalists on Public Access to Information, Diversity of Information, Plurality of Opinions, Objectivity and Impartiality.
122 Slovak Print and Digital Media Association (2026), written input, International Press Institute (2026), written input, and Reporters Without Borders (2026), written input.
123 European Board for Media Services (2025).
124 Media Pluralism Monitor (2026), pp. 17-18.
125 The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Slovakia to “[s]trengthen the rules and mechanisms to restore and further safeguard the independent governance and editorial independence of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media.” No progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and 2024.
126 Act No. 157/2024 Coll.
127 International Press Institute (2026), written input, Reporters Without Borders (2026), written input, and Country visit Slovakia, Ján Kuciak Centre.
128 Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists (2026).

Justice[129]. The Media Pluralism Monitor 2026 concludes that the current governance structure, funding system, staff dismissals and recruitment, as well as issues concerning the impartiality and balance of news content, all contribute to a very high risk score for this area[130]. Consequently, against this background, no progress has been made on the recommendation.

The Constitutional Court has quashed restrictive amendments to the Freedom of Information Act. The amendments, which had come into force in March 2025, provided that fees may be charged for certain access to information requests, namely in the case of 'exceptionally extensive searches for information'. Following a legal challenge before the Constitutional Court lodged by the Public Defender of Rights and a group of MPs, the Court first suspended the application of said provisions and, in a ruling in November 2025, quashed as unconstitutional the above-mentioned amendments[131]. Several stakeholders reported deterioration in terms of access to documents on the part of government ministries with various cases of late replies and unsubstantiated refusals[132]. The Media Pluralism Monitor concludes that these factors coupled with unsolved, long-standing structural issues which persist - namely slow judicial review of access to information disputes and the absence of a specialised independent body capable of providing faster oversight – amount to a deterioration in the risk level, now considered medium-high[133].

There has been limited progress on establishing safeguards to improve the safety of journalists[134]. The Platform for the Promotion of Press Freedom and the Protection of Journalists was established by the Government in 2023 to bring together representatives from ministries, the police, other public institutions, journalists, media owner associations and self-regulatory bodies. Following a temporary interruption caused by personnel changes and the inability to reach a quorum[135], the Platform resumed its activities at the end of 2025, with a first meeting convened in 2026 In 2025, a methodology for police procedures to protect journalists at high-risk mass events was drafted by the presidium of the police force and is ongoing further consultation with stakeholders via the Platform. Parliament adopted the law transposing the Anti-SLAPP Directive as regards cross-border cases in the beginning of June. In 2025, three SLAPP cases were reported[136]. Since July 2025, the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists published six new alerts, three of which relate to governance, funding or dismissals at public broadcaster STVR, two of which relate to physical attacks on journalists and one to concerns in relation to the independence of the national media regulator[137]. The 2025 Mapping Media Freedom monitoring report flags 19 new alerts which include nine cases of verbal insults or

[129] File No. PL. ÚS 10/2024. On 11 February 2026, the Constitutional Court referred questions to the Court of Justice relating to this matter.
[130] Media Pluralism Monitor (2026), pp. 32-33.
[131] Ruling 350/2025 Coll. of 5 December 2025.
[132] Country visit Slovakia, Slovak Print and Digital Media Association, Transparency International Slovakia, Let's Stop Corruption Foundation and Investigative Centre of Jan Kuciak.
[133] Media Pluralism Monitor (2026), pp. 15-16.
[134] The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Slovakia to "[a]dvance with the process to establish legislative and other safeguards to improve the physical safety and working environment of journalists, including the reform of defamation law, taking into account the European standards on the protection of journalists." No progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025, and some progress in 2024.
[135] Country visit Slovakia, Investigative Centre of Jan Kuciak.
[136] Investigative Centre of Ján Kuciak (2026), written input, p. 6.
[137] Council of Europe, Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists (2026). The Government has replied to three of these alerts.

denigration of journalists by politicians, the cases relating to STVR, the national media regulator and physical attacks mentioned above as well as paid political adverts used to smear journalists[138]. Stakeholders have reported numerous cases of harassment, verbal and legal threats and physical attacks directed against journalists in 2025 and 2026[139]. Referring to this increase, which appears to be more prevalent in the case of female journalists, the fact that legal action against perpetrators remains rare and challenging working conditions overall, the Media Pluralism Monitor 2026 concludes that this remains an area presenting medium-low risk[140]. Overall, there has been limited progress on the recommendation in relation to improving the safety of journalists and their working environment.

IV. Other Institutional Issues related to Checks and Balances

There has been no progress on the recommendation to ensure effective public consultation and stakeholder involvement in the law-making process, including by avoiding the frequent use of the fast-track procedure[141]. In 2025, 34% of laws were adopted through fast-track procedures or on the basis of parliamentary proposals, which provide more limited opportunities for public consultation and impact assessment[142]. Stakeholders continue to report that the possibilities for meaningful consultation before draft laws are submitted to Parliament remain limited, and also noted lack of transparency and possibilities for consultation in cases of substantial changes made later in the legislative process[143]. This includes additions of amendments insufficiently related to the substance of the legislative proposal (so-called 'legislative riders'). Such practices were applied also in cases of important pieces of legislation[144] and stakeholders indicated that they were not consulted even if the draft law directly concerned them[145]. European standards stipulate that the legislative process needs to be transparent, inclusive and democratic[146]. The Rules of Procedure of the Parliament were amended on 26 January 2026, shortening the time allocated for the parliamentary debate. Overall, there has been no progress on the recommendation.

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138 European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (2026).

139 The statistics of the Jan Kuciak Investigative Centre can be found here. Jan Kuciak Investigative Centre (2026), additional written input.

140 Media Pluralism Monitor (2026), pp. 16-17.

141 The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended Slovakia to "[e]nsure effective public consultation and stakeholder involvement in the law-making process, including by addressing the frequent use of the fast-track procedure." No progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and 2024.

142 According to the data provided by the Administration of the Parliament, out of 108 legislative acts, 22 were adopted in a fast-track procedure and 15 were adopted based on a proposal of a member of Parliament. The share continues to be considerable (it was 44% in 2024: 58 laws out of 131). 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 18.

143 Country visit Slovakia, Public Defender, Rule of Law Initiative, Platform for Democracy. Slovak Centre for Human Rights/ENNHRI (2026), written input, p. 12. Stakeholders also pointed out that draft laws are not always publicly accessible enough in advance when debated in Parliament. According to the Government Plenipotentiary for the Civil Society Development, Slovakia has well-established mechanisms for public and civil society participation in drafting government-proposed laws, including mandatory public consultation via SlovLex and the possibility of collective comments that must be addressed, but parliamentary-initiated legislation is not subject to equivalent public consultation, and shortened legislative procedures can limit the time or scope for meaningful input.

144 Constitutional amendments concerning some issues in the area of family law, gender, and the relationship between national and international law, whistleblower protection laws, amendments to the Criminal code concerning inter alia the cooperation of the accused person, consolidation package, Act on banks.

145 NGO laws, whistleblower protection law.

146 Venice Commission (2025), Rule of Law Checklist, section 6, para. 34.

Amendments to the Constitution were adopted, raising concerns related to the principle of primacy of EU law. On 26 September 2025, Slovakia adopted amendments to its Constitution, supplementing its Article 7 with additional provisions which allow Slovak authorities, including courts, to assess whether and to what extent EU law may apply in Slovakia, including rulings of the Court of Justice[147]. The European Commission had raised its concerns about the envisaged amendments on several occasions and urged Slovakia to reconsider their adoption[148]. The Venice Commission also issued an opinion advising against adoption of the amendments to Article 7 of the Constitution[149]. On 21 November 2025, the Commission opened an infringement procedure by sending a letter of formal notice to Slovakia for breaching fundamental principles of EU law, particularly the principles of primacy, autonomy, effectiveness and uniform application of EU law. The Commission considers that the amendments to Article 7 of the Slovak Constitution, which entered into force on 1 November 2025, raise concerns as regards the compliance of Slovakia with these principles[150]. Stakeholders expressed concern that the amendments could pose a serious risk to the protection of human rights[151] and also pointed to the irregularities of the legislative process leading to the as the draft amendments to the Constitution submitted to the National Council differed significantly from the draft circulated initially for inter-ministerial consultation[152]. Also the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the Slovak Government to reconsider the adoption of the constitutional amendments[153].

Less than half of companies surveyed in Slovakia express confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection. 35% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts, a figure which has slightly declined in comparison with 2025 (36%)[154]. The main reason among companies for their lack of confidence is the unpredictable, non-transparent administrative conduct (34%)[155]. As regards authorities relevant for economic operators, 38% of companies perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (The Antimonopoly Office) as very or fairly good, a figure which has slightly declined in comparison with 2025 (40%)[156]. The Supreme Administrative Court has jurisdiction in several business-related cases, including in cases related to public

[147] The amendments complemented Article 7 of the Constitution with new paragraphs 6 and 7, which stipulate that *"(6) the Slovak Republic retains its sovereignty, in particular in matters of national identity, consisting in particular of fundamental cultural and ethical issues relating to the protection of life and human dignity, private and family life, marriage, parenthood and family, public morality, personal status, culture and language, as well as decision-making on related matters in the fields of health, science, education, personal status and inheritance," and (7)"nothing in this Constitution and the Constitutional Laws shall be interpreted as an approval of the Slovak Republic for the transfer of the exercise of part of its rights in matters constituting national identity."*

[148] See also 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 19.

[149] Venice Commission (2025), Urgent Opinion on the Draft Amendments to the Constitution (CDL-AD(2025)040).

[150] 2025 Rule of Law Report, Slovakia, p. 19. .

[151] Slovak Centre for Human Rights / ENNHRI (2026), written input, p. 15; Via Iuris (2026), written input, p. 26.

[152] The draft amendments to the Constitution submitted to the National Council differed significantly from the draft circulated initially for inter-ministerial consultation, and stakeholders also raised concerns about insufficient involvement of civil society and broader public. Venice Commission (2025), para. 18; Via Iuris (2026), written input, p. 25.

[153] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations (2025).

[154] Figure 52, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

[155] Figure 53, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard. 29% and 25% of the surveyed investors respectively perceive the frequent changes in legislation or concerns about the quality of the law-making process and concerns about quality, efficiency or independence of justice as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection.

[156] Figure 60, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

procurement, public concessions, public contracts and economic regulation. A number of judicial mechanisms to improve efficiency are available in these cases, including the possibility to apply interim measures, joint examination of similar cases and the consolidation of multiple appeals[157].

On 1 January 2026, Slovakia had 34 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, an increase of 3 compared to the previous year[158]. At that time, Slovakia's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 30% (compared to 41% in 2025; 70% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 4 years and 3 months (compared to 3 years and 9 months in 2025)[159]. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for more than 13 years, concerns the excessive length of civil proceedings[160]. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2025 there were 14 cases in total awaiting confirmation of payments (compared to 4 in 2024)[161]. On 17 June 2026, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had increased to 32[162].

Amendments to the NGO law which introduced new reporting and information disclosure obligations were declared unconstitutional, yet the civil society environment continues to face pressure. Civic space in Slovakia continues to be rated as 'narrowed' by Civicus[163]. The law amending several acts related to the functioning of NGOs was adopted on 16 April 2025, despite calls against its adoption by various international actors, including the Venice Commission[164]. The law introduced new reporting and information disclosure obligations for civil society organisations. NGOs reported that due to these obligations they faced substantially increased administrative burden[165]. On 17 December 2025, the Constitutional Court declared the law unconstitutional due to its non-compliance with the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights[166]. Following this, on 18 February 2026, the Government adopted a decision calling on state authorities to intensify controls of NGOs using existing legal mechanisms, focusing on compliance with public funding rules, labor law, occupational safety, public procurement, and data protection[167]. In parallel, several extensive audits were carried out on selected NGOs in autumn 2025. While stakeholders reported that the audits did not confirm any significant deficiencies[168], they also indicated that these audits created additional burden and pressure on the civil society

[157] Figures 66 and 67, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard. The data presented reflects exclusively the mechanisms in place at the level of the highest administrative jurisdictions; the same or other mechanisms may be in place at lower instance administrative courts.
[158] For an explanation of the supervision process, see the website of the Council of Europe.
[159] All figures calculated by the European Implementation Network (EIN) and based on the number of cases that are considered pending at the annual cut-off date of 1 January 2026. EIN (2026), written input, pp. 8-9.
[160] Judgment of the ECtHR, 44482/09, *Maxian and Maxianova v. Slovakia*, pending implementation since 2012.
[161] Council of Europe (2026), p. 163.
[162] Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).
[163] Slovakia's score is 67/100. Ratings by Civicus are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.
[164] Venice Commission (2025a); other international actors include (the European Commission in the 2025 Rule of Law Report), the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Expert Council on NGO Law of the Council of Europe.
[165] Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, additional written input . NGOs report that some NGOs have to shut down because of the administrative burden and that many lost their donors. Country visit Slovakia, Via Iuris, Chamber of NGOs, Platform for Democracy, and Slovak National Centre for Human Rights.
[166] Decision of the Slovak Constitutional Court of 17 December 2025, Pl. ÚS 11/2025.
[167] Government (2026) decision of 18 February 2026, UV-4631/2026, p. 5.
[168] Out of 26 audited entities, irregularities were found in cases of 3 NGOs, representing altogether 0,5% of the total financial amount subject to auditing.

sector[169]. Public debate continues to be polarised and stakeholders reported on the negative effects of the continuous labelling of NGOs by politicians as “political”[170]. The civil society sector has also been facing further funding cuts[171]. In May 2026, statements of political representatives have sparked a wave of violent threats against the Public Defender of Rights, impacting the functioning of the Public Defender's office[172]. The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights[173],, has continued working to promote and deepen rule of law culture via multiple initiatives and actions and pointed to lack of adequate follow-up to its recommendations[174].

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[169] Country visit Slovakia, Platform for Democracy. The audited entities comprised selected NGOs and several business stakeholders. According to the Government, irregularities were identified in approximately 12% audited entities, a proportion that the Government considers relatively high.

[170] Slovak National Centre for Human Rights - ENNHRI (2026), written input, p. 6; Country visit Slovakia, Chamber of NGOs, Via Iuris; Amnesty International (2026), p. 22-25.

[171] Country visit Slovakia, Slovak National Centre for Human Rights and Platform for Democracy. The Government notes that public funding has decreased also in other sectors, due to general fiscal consolidation efforts.

[172] Human Rights Coalition (2026), Public Defender of Rights (2026).

[173] Mandated as National Human Rights Institution and equality body accredited with B-status according to the Principles relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions (The Paris Principles).

[174] ENNHRI (2026), written input, p. 3.

Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order*

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Annex II: Country visit to Slovakia

The Commission services held virtual meetings in February 2026 with:

- American Chamber of Commerce
- Association for the Protection of Journalistic Ethics in the Slovak Republic
- Association of Judges
- Association of Television Broadcasters of Slovakia
- Chamber of Non-Governmental Organisations
- Constitutional Court of Slovakia
- Council of Prosecutors
- Dutch Chamber of Commerce
- Government Office – Corruption Prevention Section
- Investigative Centre of Jan Kuciak
- Judges For Open Judiciary
- Judicial Council
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice
- National Centre for Human Rights
- National Union of Employers
- Office for the Protection of Whistleblowers
- The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Civil Society Development
- Parliament administration (replies received in writing)
- Platform for Democracy
- Praesidium of Slovak Police Force
- Office of the Prosecutor General Public Defender of Rights
- Office of the Regional Prosecutor
- Rule of Law Initiative
- Serious Organised Crime Unit (UBOK)
- Slovak Bar Association
- Slovak Chamber of Commerce (replies received in writing)
- Slovak Council for Broadcasting
- Slovak Land Fund (replies received in writing)
- Slovak National Centre for Human Rights
- Slovak Public Procurement Office
- Slovak Syndicate of Journalists
- Slovak Television and Radio (STVR) (replies received in writing)
- Specialised Criminal Court
- Supreme Administrative Court
- Supreme Audit Office
- Supreme Court
- Transparency International Slovakia
- Via Iuris
- Zastavme Korupciu (Let’s Stop Corruption Foundation)

* The Commission also met the following organisations in a number of horizontal meetings:

- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Civil Society Europe
- End FGM EU
- European Civic Forum
- European Partnership for Democracy
- Human Rights Watch
- ILGA-Europe
- International Federation for Human Rights
- Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association
- Transparency International EU