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Accompanying the document

2026 Rule of Law Report

The rule of law situation in the European Union

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ABSTRACT

In Cyprus, the ongoing reform of the Law Office, which plans to establish the Office of the Public Prosecutor General and the introduction of an effective review of decisions not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings, remains pending before Parliament. A distinct branch of administrative justice was established. Measures to reinforce trust in the judiciary have been taken, including new guidelines on recusal of judges. The Supreme Constitutional Judicial Council held that probationary appointments of judges rely on a long-standing practice. The digital transformation of the justice system remains limited with key projects progressing slowly, while efforts to strengthen the alternative dispute resolution framework continue. Challenges regarding judicial recruitments and infrastructure persist. While the clearance of backlog cases is progressing, and new procedural rules aim to enhance efficiency, the duration of judicial proceedings and the delays in making the Commercial Court operational continue to raise serious concerns, including among the business community. The establishment of an Independent Court Service, that seeks to streamline court administration and alleviate the burden on the judiciary, faces persistent delays.

The Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC) has been strengthened with the adoption of new legislation on recruitments. Efforts continue to investigate high-level corruption with further new convictions, new police structures are being created and there are calls for specific trainings for judges and prosecutors. The new legislation on asset declarations for elected and appointed officials started to apply. As regards post-employment, a new law has enhanced restrictions while initiatives are underway to expand the categories of persons subject to oversight. The monitoring of the law on lobbying is being strengthened. Integrity rules were strengthened and a comprehensive strategy for the integrity of persons entrusted with top executive functions is in preparation. Plans to revise the law on political party financing aim to address previously identified shortcomings. Measures continue to be deployed to tackle risks in public procurement.

Measures are being taken to ensure the adequacy of the resources of Cyprus's regulator for audiovisual media services. Reforms to improve the legal framework relating to transparency of media ownership are at an advanced stage. Reforms are also underway to improve transparency in the field of state advertising and to strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media. The Office of the Information Commissioner continues to raise awareness on the law regulating public access to information, while further measures are needed to improve it. The overall situation as regards the safety of journalists remains stable, however they continue to experience precarious working conditions.

Substantial steps have been taken to enhance public participation in decision-making. Businesses continue to see challenges in the quality of law-making and the need to streamline legislation. The Audit Office gained financial autonomy and safeguards were introduced to the appointment procedure for the Auditor General and the Deputy Auditor General to enhance their independence. The Audit Office is seeking ways to improve access to information necessary for the performance of its tasks. Reforms to improve the framework for Civil Society Organisations are advancing. Parliament's regular stakeholder discussions foster public debate on the rule of law.

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 relevant commitments made under the Recovery and Resilience Plan, and the country-specific recommendation under the European Semester on the efficiency of the justice system, the Commission concludes the following:

- Limited further progress has been made on the reform of the Law Office and on establishing an effective review of decisions not to prosecute or discontinue proceedings. Since relevant draft legislation remains pending before Parliament, it is recommended to Cyprus *to finalise the ongoing reform of the Law Office and the establishment of the Office of the Public Prosecutor General and to establish an effective review of decisions not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings, including for victimless offences, taking into account European standards on independence and autonomy of the prosecution.*
- The duration of court proceedings remains a serious concern and the establishment of an independent Court Service to streamline court administration faces delays. It is recommended to Cyprus *to take forward plans to establish an independent Court Service with a view to improving the efficiency of justice.*
- Significant progress has been made on the legislative reform to strengthen the Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC) and to ensure it has the human and technical resources to effectively perform its task, as new legislation was adopted on recruitments. To ensure a fully effective IAAC, further measures remain necessary. To address this, it is recommended to Cyprus *to enhance the operational effectiveness of the IAAC.*

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

- Some progress has been made to (i) ensure fair and transparent distribution of advertising expenditure by the state and state-owned companies and (ii) to strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media, as draft legislation has been tabled. Given that the topics of these two recommendations 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.
- Significant progress has been made in introducing safeguards in the appointment procedure for the Auditor General and the Deputy Auditor General to enhance their independence, with establishing a fixed, non-renewable eight-year term and stricter qualification criteria for their appointment. Monitoring of further developments in this area will continue in the Rule of Law Report.

I. JUSTICE SYSTEM¹

Independence

The level of perceived judicial independence in Cyprus is now low among both the general public and companies. Overall, 39% of the general population and 34% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2026². Among the general public, this figure has decreased in comparison with 2025 (42%) and significantly decreased in comparison with 2022 (50%). The perceived judicial independence among companies has significantly decreased in comparison with 2025 (44%), as well as in comparison with 2022 (45%).

There has been limited further progress on the recommendation regarding the reform of the Law Office and the establishment of the Office of the Public Prosecutor General³. The draft laws providing for the separation of the dual role of the Attorney General and the establishment of the Office of the General Public Prosecutor are pending before Parliament since July 2025. A first discussion took place in September 2025 before the Legal Affairs Committee, where the Attorney General raised reservations of constitutional nature as regards the envisaged reform⁴. Members of Parliament also appeared divided. The only element of the reform that so far received general support and has a clear timeline for implementation is the proposal for a fixed eight-year mandate for the Attorney General and his/her Deputy⁵. Parliament went into recess in late April 2026 in view of the parliamentary elections of May 2026 and the debate on the bills was suspended. There has thus been limited further progress on the implementation of this specific element of the recommendation made in previous years.

Initial discussions were held on the draft reform introducing a review of decisions not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings⁶. In December 2025, the Council of Ministers approved a bill to introduce internal and judicial oversight of key prosecutorial decisions by the General Public Prosecutor⁷. Under the proposal, decisions not to prosecute would first undergo internal review within the Prosecutor’s Office; if dissatisfied, the injured party could then apply for judicial review by the Supreme Court. Decisions to discontinue proceedings pending before an Assize Court would be directly reviewable by the Supreme Court. The definition of an injured party is broad – covering both natural and legal persons that suffered harm from the non-prosecuted offense – while the draft does not specify whether specific

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, 2025 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 The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to “further advance with the ongoing reform of the Law Office and the establishment of the Office of the Public Prosecutor General”. Some progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2024 and 2025.

⁴ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 3-5. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, pp. 3-4.

⁵ This part of the reform is planned to enter into force in December 2027, provided it is adopted by Parliament, Country visit Cyprus, Ministry of Justice.

⁶ The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to “establish an effective review of decisions not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings, taking into account European standards on independence and autonomy of the prosecution”. Limited progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and some progress in 2024.

⁷ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, pp. 3-6. The bill was discussed extensively among the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General and the Supreme Court.

institutions, such as the Independent Authority against Corruption or the Audit Office, could also qualify as injured parties⁸, when reporting potential cases of corruption. In January 2026, Parliament’s Legal Affairs Committee held an initial discussion on the bill, alongside with an alternative proposal tabled by an individual Member of Parliament⁹. The Attorney General reiterated his reservations, while the Supreme Court cited concerns over increased caseloads. Discussions remain on hold, also due to the parliamentary elections. There has been limited progress on the implementation of this specific element of the recommendation made in previous years.

A distinct branch of administrative justice was established. Since July 2025, the administrative branch consists of the Administrative Court, the Administrative Court of International Protection, the newly established Administrative Court of Appeal¹⁰, and the Supreme Constitutional Court. A second judicial council, the Supreme Constitutional Judicial Council, is established to decide on careers and disciplinary issues for administrative judges¹¹. Its decisions are subject to judicial review by the Supreme Judicial Council¹². The composition of the Supreme Constitutional Judicial Council mirrors the existing composition of the Supreme Judicial Council¹³. It is composed of the President and the eight judges of the Supreme Constitutional Court and four non-judicial members¹⁴. Non-judicial members participate without voting rights in appointment and promotion procedures and do not participate in disciplinary or transfer proceedings. However, a recent ruling of the Supreme Constitutional Council questioned the role of the non-judicial members in the judicial councils, stating that they are invited to participate only at the discretion of judicial members¹⁵.

Measures to reinforce trust in the judiciary have been taken, including new guidelines on recusal of judges. According to the rules introduced by the Supreme Constitutional Court in November 2025, and which build on the pre-existing framework¹⁶, judges shall not sit in cases involving close family or professional connections with lawyers representing one of the

⁸ Venice Commission (2010), para. 45 and (2018), para. 67; Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers (2000), para. 34.

⁹ This proposal presupposes maintaining the Attorney General’s dual role and establishes a Special Committee, composed of a retired judge, two senior prosecutors and a senior expert on law and human rights, that would issue non-binding recommendations to the Attorney General.

¹⁰ The administrative court of appeal is currently composed of three judges, all transferred from the Court of Appeal (now dealing only with civil and criminal matters). The latter retained its number of judges of 16. The total number of judges serving at the administrative court of appeal can be expanded to six judges. Judicial Service (2026), written input, p. 1. For the 2023 reform of the court system, 2023 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 3.

¹¹ It issued the necessary regulations for its functioning, including on disciplinary matters, Judicial Service (2026), pp. 2 and 4. Its decisions are subject to judicial review by the Supreme Judicial Council.

¹² The judicial review is confined to the legality of the decision and the sufficiency of its reasoning and does not extend to the merits. Cypriot Government (2026c).

¹³ Following the reform, the Supreme Judicial Council retains its competences over judges of civil and criminal courts. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 5.

¹⁴ The non-judicial members are the Attorney General, the President of the Bar association and two experienced lawyers. 2023 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵ Supreme Constitutional Council (2026), Decision 2/2025. The Cyprus Bar Association expressed concerns, arguing that the institutional presence of non-judicial members is essential for transparency and legitimacy in appointments and promotions, and announcing the Bar’s intention to advocate for a legislative amendment to formally secure that participation. CBA (2026b).

¹⁶ Including rules and principles on impartiality, recusal, personal relationships and contact with the legal profession, which applied to all judges before the separation of the administrative jurisdiction. Cypriot Government (2026c).

parties. These rules seek to address both conflicts of interest and a possible perception of bias, bringing the framework further in line with European standards on judicial independence and impartiality¹⁷. The Supreme Constitutional Court also launched official social media accounts to improve public communication and understanding of the work of the Court¹⁸.

The Supreme Constitutional Council held that probationary appointments of judges rely on a long-standing practice. In Cyprus, judges serve a mandatory two-year probationary period before becoming permanent, during which their performance is reviewed. In June 2025, the Supreme Council of the Judicature denied permanent status to a judge under probation, who then appealed, arguing that there is no clear legal framework in Cyprus governing how judges on probation can be dismissed or have their probation confirmed¹⁹. In January 2026, the Supreme Constitutional Council confirmed by majority the initial decision, considering that the practice of probationary appointment of judges relies on a long-standing tradition²⁰.

Quality

The digital transformation of the justice system remains limited and key projects are progressing slowly. The existing i-justice system operates effectively but remains primarily focused on electronic filing and document exchange and is utilised only by selected courts. The first phase of its upgrade, slated for completion in June 2026, is on schedule²¹. However, a fully integrated electronic case management system is not expected until 2030²². No other major reforms are currently planned to improve the effective use of digital technologies in courts²³. Despite efforts by the Judicial Service, paper-based procedures are still widespread, and judicial statistics continue to be gathered manually²⁴. Key projects aimed at enhancing digitalisation have faced implementation challenges, and some projects had to be abandoned or deferred²⁵. The Cyprus Bar Association advocates for broader, systematic adoption of

¹⁷ Supreme Constitutional Court (2025b). Judicial Service (2026), written input, p. 4.

¹⁸ Judicial Service (2026), written input, p. 6.

¹⁹ According to European standards, where recruitment of judges is made for a probationary period, the decision on whether to confirm or renew such an appointment should be based on objective criteria pre-established by law or by the competent authorities. Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers (2010), paras 44-51; Also, refusal to confirm the judge in office should be made according to objective criteria and with the same procedural safeguards as apply where a judge is to be removed from office, Venice Commission (2007). Figure 55, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

²⁰ According to Decision 2/2025 of the Supreme Constitutional Council, the absence of an explicit legal provision does not render probationary judicial appointments unconstitutional, because they are grounded in a consistent practice that has been followed over time and accepted by the relevant institutions. The three minority judges, including the President of the Court, raised concerns as to the lack of explicit legislative or regulatory basis in Cypriot law. The minority's view was that the issue met the criteria for a preliminary reference to the Court of Justice. However, the majority considered it unnecessary to make a reference.

²¹ The phased implementation of the upgrade began in September 2025 and covers all court jurisdictions, including the Supreme Court and the Supreme Constitutional Court. Cyprus Government (2026c).

²² Country visit Cyprus, CBA and Judicial Service. European Semester 2026, Cyprus, pp. 11 and 64.

²³ In December 2025, an AI-based Digital Assistant was introduced on the websites of the Supreme Court, the Supreme Constitutional Court and the government portal, providing information on public services and processes. Judicial Service (2026), written input, p. 8; Cypriot Government (2026c).

²⁴ Figures 40-47, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

²⁵ These include the introduction of digital audio recording in court proceedings to replace stenography and the e-justice case management system. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 6.

technology, including remote hearings and digital recordings of court proceedings, as a means to enhance efficiency and reduce delays²⁶.

Efforts to strengthen the alternative dispute resolution framework continue. A draft law prepared in 2024 to modernise arbitration is still under legal review by the Law Office and is expected to be submitted to Parliament in September 2026²⁷. The draft laws promoting mediation in civil disputes equally remain pending before Parliament²⁸ and have prompted extensive stakeholder discussions, particularly on the threshold for compulsory mediation, with the Bar Association favouring a reduction of the proposed EUR 5 000 limit, while business representatives remain unconvinced²⁹. Despite these differences, there is broad support among stakeholders for promoting alternative dispute resolution.

Challenges regarding judicial recruitments and infrastructure persist. Previously reported difficulties in recruiting judges and support staff persist. While efforts have been made to address longstanding vacancies, filling judicial positions remains a complex task³⁰. According to judges, there are difficulties to attract suitably qualified lawyers to join the judiciary, and, as a result, vacant positions are often left open for a long period until appropriate applicants are found. According to the Bar Association, the absence of specialisation makes it harder to find qualified lawyers for judicial positions. The recruitment of qualified support staff, such as assistants and administrative personnel, also presents difficulties³¹. The request of the Law Office for additional legal and support staff given its increased workload, its planned reform and the growing complexity of cases, has been approved by the Ministry of Finance, while plans for the new building in Nicosia are also progressing³². Plans for new court buildings in Nicosia, where facilities currently do not fully meet modern operational needs, have not yet materialised³³.

Efficiency

The clearance of backlog cases is progressing, while the duration of judicial proceedings remains a serious concern. Disposition times for litigious civil and commercial cases in first and second instance courts continue to rank among the highest in the EU, averaging 682 and 1 426 days, respectively, in 2024. For administrative cases, at first instance, disposition times doubled from 380 days in 2023 to 788 days in 2024, while at second instance, they fell sharply to a more manageable 489 days in 2024 (down from 5,429 days in 2023). In 2024, the clearance rate for civil and commercial cases at first instance courts reached 154%, the highest in the EU, while for administrative cases it dropped to 78% (110% in 2023)³⁴.

²⁶ Oxygen (2026), input, p. 9.

²⁷ Cypriot Government (2026 and 2026c), written input, p. 15.

²⁸ 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 5.

²⁹ Country visit Cyprus, CBA, Business associations and Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

³⁰ 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 6. For 15 vacancies for first instance judges, only four were recruited. For the Admiralty Court, two judges were needed but only one suitable candidate was identified, thus the position had to be advertised again and a new selection procedure was launched. Country visit, Cyprus, Supreme Constitutional and Supreme Courts.

³¹ EAJ (2026), written input, p. 24.

³² Cypriot Government (2026), annex, p. 8 and (2026c). The Law Office has been allocated 33 additional legal posts and 30 posts for legal secretaries.

³³ This mainly concerns the first instance courts in Nicosia, the Court of Appeal and the Court of International Protection, Country visit, Supreme Constitutional and Supreme Courts, Association of judges and CBA. See also, 2023 and 2025 Rule of Law Reports, Cyprus, pp. 8-9 and 6 respectively.

³⁴ Figures 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

Addressing backlog cases remains a key priority for the judiciary³⁵. Although reductions have been achieved, a substantial number of backlog cases persist, particularly before the Administrative Court of First Instance³⁶. There has been a marked decrease in new incoming cases, which all justice stakeholders attribute—at least in part—to the prolonged duration of proceedings, acting as a deterrent for individuals and businesses considering litigation³⁷. For judges, the reduction in caseloads is an opportunity to further tackle the backlog.

New procedural rules aim to enhance efficiency. In January 2026, new procedural rules, establishing clear time limits for issuing judgments in administrative cases, came into force³⁸. To ensure compliance, unjustified or persistent delays in meeting these deadlines may now trigger disciplinary proceedings. These measures build on earlier reforms, notably the new Rules on Civil Procedure, in force since September 2023³⁹. Judges report that in civil cases the new rules have improved case management, by reducing unnecessary adjournments⁴⁰. A bill allowing direct appeals against court warrants and replacing prerogative review by the Supreme Court – aimed to accelerate proceedings and alleviate the Supreme Court’s caseload - remains pending before Parliament. While backed by the Supreme Court, the Cyprus Bar Association has raised objections, arguing that replacing the current limited prerogative review by the Supreme Court with a full appeal mechanism could delay investigations and increase procedural complexity⁴¹.

The prolonged delay in making the Commercial Court operational continues to raise serious concerns among the business community. Although the legislation establishing the Court was adopted in 2022⁴², key implementation steps remain outstanding, most notably the recruitment of judges⁴³. This delay undermines the core objective of the reform, namely the faster resolution of commercial disputes⁴⁴. Business representatives warn that delayed adjudication renders claims obsolete, increases companies’ operational costs, and erodes overall confidence in the judicial system⁴⁵.

The establishment of an Independent Court Service, that seeks to streamline court administration and alleviate the burden on the judiciary, faces persistent delays. A study concluded in January 2023 outlined recommendations for the service’s structure, procedures, and staffing needs, with implementation expected within three years⁴⁶. However, implementation remains pending, and no concrete timeline has been established. A second report, prepared in July 2024 and agreed in October 2025 by the Supreme Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, sets out another proposal for restructuring the Judicial Service. The proposed reform

³⁵ EAJ (2026), written input, p. 38.

³⁶ Country visit Cyprus, Supreme Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Association of judges.

³⁷ Country visit Cyprus, Supreme Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Association of judges, CBA.

³⁸ Final judgments in administrative cases are to be delivered within six months and interim decisions within two months, subject to reasoned extensions and monitoring. Supreme Constitutional Court (2025c). Judicial Service (2026), written input, p. 8.

³⁹ 2022, 2023 Rule of Law Reports, Cyprus, pp. 6-7 and 11 respectively.

⁴⁰ Country visit Cyprus, Association of judges; EAJ (2026), written input, p. 37.

⁴¹ Cypriot government (2026), written input, p. 14. Parliament (2026), pp. 3-4.

⁴² 2023 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, pp. 11-12.

⁴³ A new procedure for the appointment of the two Admiralty Court judges is currently under way, after the previous procedure did not result in the appointment of any judges. Country visit Cyprus, Supreme Court; Cypriot Government (2026c).

⁴⁴ European Semester 2026, Cyprus, pp. 11 and 64.

⁴⁵ Country visit Cyprus, Business associations.

⁴⁶ 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 6.

centres on a clear separation between judicial and administrative functions, with the aim of relieving judges of non-judicial duties that currently hinder their core work. A key element of the proposal involves redefining the role of court registrars⁴⁷. This could lead to faster case processing and a court administration entrusted to specialised non-judicial personnel. However, neither the final model nor the precise mode of implementation have been decided to date. The Bar Association continues to identify the establishment of an Independent Court Service as a priority for the proper functioning of the courts, underscoring the urgency of moving to concrete action⁴⁸.

Efforts to remove legal obstacles in enforcing court judgments have not advanced. The bill on enforcement of judgments remains pending before Parliament⁴⁹. Delays and difficulties in enforcing final judgments are an additional challenge for the efficiency of justice⁵⁰. The Bar association referred to previously reported difficulties to emphasise that, even after enduring lengthy and costly litigation, successful litigants frequently encounter obstacles to enforce judgments⁵¹. A proposal by the Government to regulate the administration's failure to comply with judgments by administrative courts has not progressed yet⁵². According to a survey, 35% of judges do not agree with the statement that judgments going against the interests of the Government are usually executed⁵³.

II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

The perception among experts, citizens and business executives is that the level of corruption in the public sector remains relatively high. In the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Cyprus scores 55/100 and ranks 17th in the European Union and 49th globally⁵⁴. This perception has been relatively stable over the past five years⁵⁵. The 2026 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 95% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 71%) and 67% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 98% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 65%) and 46% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 37%). Furthermore, 19% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 38%), while 14% of companies believe that

⁴⁷ Registrars would be fully exempted from administrative duties and instead specialise in case preparation, handling procedural matters like filing and scheduling to streamline case management.

⁴⁸ Judicial Service (2026), written input, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 17. See also, 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 7.

⁵⁰ European Semester 2026, Cyprus, pp. 11 and 64.

⁵¹ For lawyers, difficulties arise from a combination of legislative restrictions, including limited access to debtors' bank accounts, constraints on the seizure of movable property, and complex procedures for the sale of immovable property, CBA (2026), written input, p. 5. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 8.

⁵² Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 25. Whereas the Constitution provides that the Administrative Court, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Constitutional Court are empowered to impose sanctions on any person not complying with a judgment, this power remains unregulated in law. Figure 49, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard. 2025 Rule of Law Reports, Cyprus, p. 8.

⁵³ ENCJ (2025), Survey, Figure 7.

⁵⁴ 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).

⁵⁵ In 2021 the score was 53, while in 2025, the score is 55. The score significantly increases/decreases when it changes more than five points; improves/deteriorates (changes between 4-5 points); is relatively stable (changes from 1-3 points) in the last five years.

people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 31%)⁵⁶.

Significant progress was made on the recommendation to strengthen the Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC) through new legislation on recruitments⁵⁷. The IAAC's staff continued to increase over the past year from 18 to 22⁵⁸, while the complaints received and the number of tasks related to the lobbying register and the Anti-Corruption Action Plan are rising⁵⁹. In October 2025, the Parliament adopted a law⁶⁰ that enables permanent staff appointed under public service laws to be assigned to IAAC. The law also affords the IAAC greater involvement in the process of appointment of its own permanent staff. Specifically, it has the authority to evaluate candidates and recommend a shortlist for final selection by the Civil Service Commission. Further administrative steps are required so that the IAAC can recruit permanent staff⁶¹. Once completed, this reform is expected to reinforce the IAAC's stability and operational independence. Furthermore, in March 2026, Parliament enacted two laws under which the IAAC is now required to formally notify the Tax Commissioner whenever it identifies the involvement of a public official or civil servant in a suspected corruption offence⁶². Civil society acknowledges that the new legislation adopted in October 2025 resolved prior concerns regarding IAAC's institutional stability⁶³. In June 2026, after concluding its investigation on a high-level investigation, involving political persons and public officials⁶⁴, the IAAC issued a statement regarding selective elements of its findings, which has fuelled calls to strengthen the IAAC's mandate and effectiveness⁶⁵. Civil society highlights that the IAAC's effectiveness and independence remain constrained as it lacks prosecution powers⁶⁶ and must refer cases to the Attorney General, whose decisions not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings are not subject to review under the current legal framework⁶⁷. Following the statement by the IAAC, three law proposals were tabled to further reform the Authority and strengthen its investigative powers⁶⁸. In view of the adopted

⁵⁶ Data from Special Eurobarometer 573 (2026) and Flash Eurobarometer 582 (2026).

⁵⁷ The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to "Advance with the legislative reforms to strengthen the Independent Authority against Corruption and continue efforts to ensure it has the human and technical resources to effectively perform its tasks". Significant progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and some progress in 2024.

⁵⁸ Cypriot Government and IAAC (2026), written inputs, pp. 6 and 1-2. This number includes the 4 Members of the Authority and the Commissioner for Transparency. The seventeen (17) members of the staff include an economic affairs officer, six legal officers, three administrative officers, five secretarial officers and two ushers. For 2026, the IAAC has a budget of 1.99€ million, IAAC (2026a), written input p. 1.

⁵⁹ Cypriot Government and IAAC (2026), written inputs, pp.20 and 8. Up to 2025, the total number of complaints received reached 584. To date, 321 complaints have been thoroughly examined and subsequently closed or terminated. Country visit Cyprus, IAAC.

⁶⁰ Law 196(I)/2025.

⁶¹ Cypriot Government and IAAC (2026), written inputs, pp.8, and 4-5 respectively. Country visit Cyprus, IAAC. The organisational chart is approved. Once the Schemes of Service are finalised and ratified by Parliament, the IAAC could launch recruitment under the new legal framework.

⁶² Law 65(I)/2026 and Law 66(I)/2026.

⁶³ Oxygen for democracy (2026), written input, p.40. See also above, Pillar I.

⁶⁴ The entire report has been transmitted to the Attorney General and tax authorities, press release, IAAC, 16 June 2026 and press release, Law Office, 17 June 2026.

⁶⁵ Cyprus Mail (2026) and Politis (2026)

⁶⁶ Two bills tabled by MPs proposing to grant the IAAC powers to initiate private criminal prosecutions (2022) and transforming it into a public law entity (2025) are pending and have not been discussed.

⁶⁷ Oxygen for democracy (2026), written input, pp.21-22 and 40. See also above, Pillar I.

⁶⁸ the two legal proposals are complementary and provide that the Authority would be able to choose between two institutional avenues: to draw up a report and submit it, together with the information in its possession, to the Attorney General of the Republic, in accordance with the existing procedure; or to appoint a criminal investigator, so that the criminal investigation may begin immediately. Under the third proposal, the IAAC

legislation, there has therefore been significant progress on the implementation of the recommendations made in previous reports.

The Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC) is progressing on the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan. As part of its Action Plan, a project to develop sectoral anti-corruption strategies is in its initial stage⁶⁹. The Action Plan includes a national funding program which is aiding public and private entities to create effective Anti-Bribery Management Systems⁷⁰. In addition, the IAAC continued to implement its Awareness, Education and Prevention Strategy⁷¹. This included the IAAC's participation in specialised training programs on the newly revised Guide of Conduct and Ethics of Civil Servants⁷². In order to enhance transparency and data security and reinforce public trust, the IAAC is planning to launch an electronic platform to digitalise the submission and management of corruption complaints⁷³. Civil society advocates for more comprehensive public reporting on progress in the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan using concrete indicators⁷⁴.

Efforts continue to investigate high-level corruption, with further new convictions. The Anti-Corruption Taskforce, that operates under the Attorney General's remit, continued to supervise the investigation and prosecution of corruption offences, including high-level cases. In 2025, four persons were convicted for corruption related offences in separate cases⁷⁵. The Police investigated 13 corruption cases, including high-level corruption cases⁷⁶. Up to 2025, the IAAC completed 15 major investigation reports of which six were transmitted to the Attorney General for further investigation and other competent authorities for further action⁷⁷. The IAAC is currently dealing with six ongoing corruption investigations conducted by appointed independent inspection officers⁷⁸. During 2025, the Police initiated six sport

would also have the additional possibility to proceed with the appointment of independent criminal investigators. These would be appointed from a list drawn up by the Cyprus Bar Association and approved by the Attorney General.

⁶⁹ Cypriot Government and IAAC (2026), written inputs, pp.21 and 11; and IAAC (2026a), written input, p.3. Approximately 300 officers from the public sector have been designated to serve as the primary focal points with the IAAC. In addition, the IAAC has established a centralised electronic registry to streamline communication, coordination and the future implementation of sectoral strategies.

⁷⁰ Cypriot Government (2026), annex, p. 19. The programme addresses foreign bribery risks, including third-party due diligence, internal controls, whistleblowing mechanisms, and risk assessments for cross-border activities.

⁷¹ Civil society highlighted that the strategy should be more detailed with specific objectives which can be evaluated and measurable and based on research, with more available funds, Foundation Fimonoi (2026), written input, p. 2.

⁷² Cypriot Government and IAAC (2026), written inputs, pp.21 and 10.

⁷³ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 22.

⁷⁴ Oxygen for democracy (2026), written input, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁵ Cypriot Government (2026), annex, pp.20-21. These include two cases that were initiated in 2022, one case that was initiated in 2021 and one case that was initiated in 2020.

⁷⁶ Three of these investigations were initially handled by the IAAC. Cypriot Government (2026), annex, pp.20-21. Last year, there were five convictions and 13 investigations, 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 9. According to two press releases of the Law Office of 12 and 13 January 2026, there are ongoing investigations in relation to a video posted on the social media platform "X" on 8 January 2026. The Police is examining both the issue of hybrid activity against the Republic of Cyprus and the content of the video in terms of possible criminal offences.

⁷⁷ Cypriot Government (2026c). The data concern the period going from the establishment of the IAAC up to 2025.

⁷⁸ Cypriot Government and IAAC (2026), written inputs, pp.20 and 8. Last year, the IAAC transmitted to the Attorney General one major suspected investigation and was dealing with eight corruption investigations, 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 9.

corruption-related cases⁷⁹. The four cases for corruption linked to the now abolished Citizenship Investor Programme (CIP)⁸⁰ are still ongoing⁸¹. The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) investigated one corruption case in 2025⁸². Civil society considers that policymaking in the area of corruption enforcement is not sufficiently informed by transparent and systematic statistical data⁸³. The Police Internal Affairs Service (PIAS) continued to actively investigate allegations of police misconduct. In 2025, it examined 23 reports of possible police involvement in acts of corruption (compared to 22 in 2024). Of these, three cases have led to criminal prosecution and are pending before the court, while 7 cases are pending investigation⁸⁴.

New police structures relevant for the fight against corruption are being created and there are calls for specific trainings for judges and prosecutors. In December 2025, the establishment of the Directorate for Combating Organised Crime (DCOC) was announced⁸⁵, which is expected to play an important role in the fight against corruption⁸⁶. The staff of the Financial Crime Sub-Directorate of the Cyprus Police increased by two members over 2025 and four members who were seconded are expected to return to the service at the end of June 2026⁸⁷. Civil society has voiced its concerns about delays in investigative and court proceedings, as well as a perceived lack of timely and dissuasive outcomes in the handling of high-level cases, and advocates for greater specialisation and resources⁸⁸. Stakeholders have called for more targeted training for judges and prosecutors in the field of corruption⁸⁹.

New legislation on asset declarations for elected and appointed officials started to apply and, as regards post-employment, a new law has enhanced restrictions while initiatives are underway to expand the categories of persons subject to oversight. For the President, ministers and parliamentarians, the application of the new legislative framework⁹⁰ will be assessed for the first time following the parliamentary elections of May 2026, once the newly elected Members of the House of Representatives have assumed office⁹¹. For appointed

⁷⁹ Two cases were brought before the Court. One case is under investigation and three cases were forwarded to the Attorneys General for instructions. Cypriot Government (2026), annex, pp. 20-21.

⁸⁰ In December 2025, the Civil Registry (Amendment) (No 2) Law of 2025 entered into force revoking the legal basis of the investor citizenship scheme while providing for the continued application of relevant monitoring and control provisions in relation to applications that had been submitted under the investor citizenship scheme up to 30 October 2020. As the legal basis of the investor citizenship scheme has been revoked, the Commission closed its infringement procedure regarding the Cypriot investor citizenship scheme on 11 March 2026.

⁸¹ Including a criminal case in relation to two former Ministers. Cypriot Government (2026), annex, pp. 20-21.

⁸² EPPO (2026), Annual Report 2025, p. 19.

⁸³ Oxygen for democracy (2026), written input, p.31. Certain parts of the public sector do not publish an annual report, including the Ministry of Justice & Public Order or the Law Office, CRoLEV (2026), annex, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 23.

⁸⁵ Philenews (2025).

⁸⁶ Cypriot Government (2026a), p. 4.

⁸⁷ The Financial Crime Sub-Directorate of the Cyprus Police currently comprises 32 members (27 specialised investigators and 5 forensic accountants), of whom 4 are seconded until June 2026. Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 23 and Cypriot Government (2026c).

⁸⁸ Oxygen for Democracy (2026), written input pp. 7 and 31-32.

⁸⁹ Country visit Cyprus, Association of judges.

⁹⁰ Law of 2024 (N. 112(I)/2024). See 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 11.

⁹¹ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 24.

officials (including politically exposed persons)⁹², approximately 150 have completed the process of electronically submitting asset declarations through the digital platform. In addition, approximately 30 officials or politically exposed persons have submitted statements of assets and liabilities, which are publicly disclosed⁹³. GRECO identified some shortcomings in the new legislation as regards regular reporting and sanctions for non-submission or late submission⁹⁴. The Minister of Justice and Public Order has requested the assistance of the Law Commissioner for preparing a bill to address these shortcomings⁹⁵. As regards post-employment, in June 2024, the Presidency instructed the Law Commissioner to prepare a bill, under which the categories of persons subject to oversight will be further expanded, as recommended by GRECO⁹⁶. In March 2026, the bill underwent public consultation and in May 2026, it was submitted to the Legal Service of the Republic for legal vetting. Moreover, in April 2026, a law to enhance restrictions on former state officials, judges and certain public sector employees after they leave office was adopted⁹⁷. Previously, they had to obtain authorisation before taking private sector employments within two years of their departure. The new law expands this restriction to include roles as company advisers or secretaries. In addition, former officials are now required to declare any acquisition of shares within two years of their departure.

The monitoring of the law on lobbying is being strengthened. In 2025, the registrations of lobbyists continued to increase. The IAAC has continued to carry out intensive training, guidance and awareness raising activities on the implementation of the law and aims to continue these efforts in 2026⁹⁸. An audit of biannual reports that lobbyists are required to submit⁹⁹ revealed minor discrepancies between the real-time filings made by the officials and the six months summaries submitted by the lobbyist¹⁰⁰. The IAAC concluded that the errors detected stemmed largely from a lack of familiarity with the new reporting requirements and decided to not impose penalties or sanctions¹⁰¹. Instead, it sent a formal request for corrections and clarifications. The lobbyists and business stakeholders welcome the rules on lobbying and the work carried out by the IAAC¹⁰². At the same time, lobbyists and civil society representatives have raised concerns on the uneven application of the lobbying law¹⁰³.

⁹² Law 137(I) of 2024 covers certain officials and certain politically exposed persons, including the Attorney General, Auditor General, Chief of Police and their Deputies. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 11.

⁹³ Cypriot Government (2026b), written input, pp.1-2. Since the entry into force of the new Law, no sanctions have been imposed.

⁹⁴ GRECO (2025), paras 56-66 and 67-75. The Minister of Justice and Public Order requested the assistance of the Law Commissioner in preparing a bill to address these shortcomings. Cypriot Government (2026c).

⁹⁵ Cypriot Government (2026c), written input.

⁹⁶ Cypriot Government (2026a), written input, p.1. GRECO (2025), paras 52-55 and Cypriot Government (2026c).

⁹⁷ Law 108(I) of 2026. The law came into force in April 2026.

⁹⁸ The IAAC is responsible for implementing and enforcing the lobbying law and maintaining the publicly available lobbying register. Lobbyists include both individuals and entities such as trade unions, NGOs and political party organisations. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 12. Cypriot Government and IAAC (2026), written inputs, pp.19-20 and 6-8.

⁹⁹ While officials are required to submit a co-signed report to the IAAC after every contact with lobbyists within two months, lobbyists are required to submit a report biannually consolidating and detailing their contacts with officials, Art. 13, 17, 22, and 24 of Law 20(I)/2022 and Circular No. 005 of 28 February 2025.

¹⁰⁰ The third audit concerned the period March 2025-Sept 2025, IAAC (2026) and (2026a), pp. 7 and 1.

¹⁰¹ Sanctions can be imposed on both lobbyists and public officials for failure to comply with their obligations. Such sanctions can include a maximum imprisonment of six months and a maximum financial penalty of EUR 5 000. Art. 22 and 24 of Law 20(I)/2022 and Circular No. 005 of 28 February 2025.

¹⁰² LPAP (2026), written input, p. 1 and country visit, Cyprus, Chamber of Commerce and OEB.

¹⁰³ LPAP and Foundation Fimonoi (2026), written inputs, pp. 1-2 and p. 2, respectively.

The digitalisation of the lobbying registry, which is scheduled for 2027, should enhance the transparency on lobbying while reducing the administrative burden for the IAAC¹⁰⁴. In March 2026, the Parliament amended the lobbying law to exempt organisations representing persons with disabilities, patients and chronically ill individuals from registration requirements¹⁰⁵.

Integrity rules were strengthened and a comprehensive strategy for the integrity of persons entrusted with top executive functions is in preparation. The IAAC is planning to launch an independent study that will focus on the risk areas and measures to ensure the integrity of Persons with Top Executive Functions and their Commissioned Private Technical Advisers¹⁰⁶. Upon its completion, the study will be discussed with the relevant authorities who will decide on the follow up¹⁰⁷. During 2025, there were intensive training efforts on the new Guide of Conduct and Ethics for Civil Servants, adopted in March 2025¹⁰⁸. In May 2026, Guidelines were issued for the better Implementation of the Code of Conduct for the Advisors of the Government Members¹⁰⁹. The Cyprus Police Academy continued to deliver its educational activities on integrity and corruption that are incorporated into its annual academic programme¹¹⁰.

Awareness raising efforts on whistleblowing continued. Relevant information guides were distributed to trade unions to ensure employees were fully informed about their rights, including the protection available to whistleblowers. Additionally, targeted seminars are organised — both through private training providers and associations — to further raise awareness. As in the previous year, the Police received 80 complaints through its external reporting website in 2025. Of these, 79 reports were assessed as falling outside the scope of the whistleblower protection legislation, while one report is currently being examined¹¹¹.

Plans to revise the law on political party financing aim to address previously identified shortcomings. In its latest reports, which assessed compliance by the seven Parliamentary political parties with the Law on Political Parties, the Audit Office identified several shortcomings, including the acceptance of contributions above legal limits and mismatches between the amounts recorded in the special contribution registers and those declared in the annual financial statements¹¹². It also highlighted that the legislation does not specify whether and under what conditions associations, foundations, cooperatives or trusts may make contributions to political parties. To address the shortcomings and other gaps identified by the

¹⁰⁴ Cypriot Government and IAAC (2026) written inputs pp.7, and 3-4 respectively.

¹⁰⁵ Law N.42(I)2026.

¹⁰⁶ Cypriot Government (2026), written input and (2026a) written input, pp.21, and pp.8-9; IAAC (2026), written input, p.11. This initiative responds to GRECO recommendations in the 5th Evaluation round. The IAAC has prepared the tender specifications.

¹⁰⁷ IAAC (2026), written input, p.11 and country visit Cyprus, IAAC. It will also define audit measures and a compliance methodology. For the study, the following persons are considered as PTEFs and CPTAs “The President, Ministers and State Secretaries, Secretary of the Council of Ministers, Commissioners, Government and Assistant Representatives, Director of the President’s Office, Director of the President’s Press Office, Advisors to the President and CPTAs hired at the discretion of the central government to provide advice”. Action 6 of the IAAC Anti-Corruption Plan.

¹⁰⁸ See 2025, Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 12.

¹⁰⁹ Cypriot Government (2026c).

¹¹⁰ Cypriot Government (2026a), written input, p. 5.

¹¹¹ Cypriot Government (2026), annex and (2026a) written input, pp. 16 and 2 respectively.

¹¹² Audit Office (2025), Consolidated Report of 17 October 2025 of Compliance Audit Findings of Parliamentary Political parties for the years 2016 to 2021. The Financial Statements of the parties are audited on the basis of the Political Parties Law, by independent private auditors.

Audit Office, the Registrar of Political Parties intends to initiate procedures for a comprehensive amendment of the Political Parties Law after the parliamentary elections¹¹³. In addition, according to a legal opinion issued by the Attorney General's office in January 2026, there have been some difficulties and uncertainties surrounding the procedures for the recovery or redistribution of certain state funds allocated in 2018 and 2021 to political parties¹¹⁴.

Measures continue to be deployed to tackle risks in public procurement. Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU show that 29% of companies in Cyprus (EU average 30%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender or a public procurement contract in practice in the last three years¹¹⁵. 43% of companies perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review body (Tender Review Authority) as very or fairly good (47% in 2025)¹¹⁶. The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in Cyprus reports 26% of single bids for 2025 (EU average 27%). Corruption perception affects the attraction of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and the attractiveness of the country as a business hub, especially for SMEs. The Police and civil society continue to highlight public procurement as particularly prone to corruption¹¹⁷. The Government pursues its efforts to improve traceability, accountability and transparency, in particular with the digitalisation of procurement. The Public Procurement Directorate is carrying out a comprehensive reform aimed at the professionalisation of public procurement and 45 procurement officers have completed an extensive training programme¹¹⁸. A new e-procurement platform became operational in February 2026. The system provides end-to-end visibility and supports audit authorities in their work, while significantly strengthening transparency and accountability¹¹⁹. The IAAC intends to review the National Code of Ethics for Public Procurement¹²⁰. In 2025, the Treasury of the Republic of Cyprus did not identify cases of conflicts of interest¹²¹.

¹¹³ Audit office (2026), written input. A legislative proposal from 2022, seeking to amend the law on financing political parties by restricting certain contributions from both legal and natural persons, is still pending in Parliament.

¹¹⁴ Cyprus Mail (2026).

¹¹⁵ Flash Eurobarometer 582 on Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU (2026). This is 1 percentage point below the EU average.

¹¹⁶ The Tenders Review Authority examines appeals against acts or decisions by the contracting authorities (i.e., the State, local authorities, public law bodies or associations of such authorities or public organizations) that violate any provision of the law before or after signing a contract of supplies, services or projects. Figure 59, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹¹⁷ Country visit Cyprus, Police. Foundation Fimonoï and Oxygen for democracy (2026), written inputs, p. 4 and 28, respectively.

¹¹⁸ Cypriot Government (2026), annex, p. 18.

¹¹⁹ Among its enhanced functionalities, the system will provide stakeholders with comprehensive information covering the full lifecycle of public procurement procedures — from project initiation to contract completion and final acceptance.

¹²⁰ IAAC Anti-Corruption Plan, Action 8. The National Code of Ethics for Public Procurement sets out the principles and values to be observed by officials and holders of public offices participating in public procurement procedures in the public or wider public sector. The relevant Code was published in November 2009 and is currently in force. The IAAC will verify whether it includes relevant principles as set out in the relevant Laws (such as transparency, accountability, impartiality, objectivity, confidentiality and in particular non-conflict of interest) with guidance and examples.

¹²¹ Three cases of potential (but not actual) conflicts of interest were identified and recommendations were made to the relevant Contracting Authorities to help them strengthen their conflict-of-interest management frameworks, Cypriot Government (2026a), written input, pp. 7-8.

III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM

Measures are being taken to ensure the adequacy of the resources of the regulator for audiovisual media services, renamed the Radio, Television and Digital Services Authority (RTDSA). There are plans to increase the regulator's number of permanent staff in response to its new competences, and a state grant of EUR 200 000 has been included in the regulator's 2026 annual budget to cover initial staffing and technical resource needs¹²². The 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor maintains its medium-low risk analysis for the independence of the media regulator¹²³.

Reforms to improve the legal framework relating to transparency of media ownership are at an advanced stage. The previous Report noted that digital and print media remain unregulated as regards transparency of media ownership¹²⁴, and stakeholders report that comprehensive ownership information of audiovisual media services is also not made accessible to the public¹²⁵. Stakeholders also raise concerns about high levels of media ownership by family members of political actors and individuals with business interests in other sectors, which could undermine the editorial independence of the media¹²⁶. In view of these factors, the Media Pluralism Monitor continues to rank this area as very-high risk¹²⁷. In January 2026, the Government submitted to Parliament a draft law with a view to alignment with the European Media Freedom Act ('the draft law for the implementation of the EMFA'¹²⁸). Under this draft law, the RTDSA will be mandated to develop and maintain a database containing comprehensive information on media ownership, including beneficial owners¹²⁹. It will also be empowered to approve market concentrations involving media service providers¹³⁰.

Work to adopt legislation to ensure fair and transparent distribution of advertising expenditure by the state and state-owned companies continues¹³¹. Currently there is no specific legislation regulating state advertising across the board. Stakeholders report that this state of affairs undermines the public's trust in the independence of private media¹³². Furthermore, some stakeholders have raised concerns about non-transparent funding directly from the Presidency and Ministries¹³³. The draft law for the implementation of the EMFA, which is pending before Parliament, addresses the allocation of funds to media companies for promotional campaigns, which falls under the responsibility of the Government's Press and

¹²² Country visit Cyprus, RTDSA; Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 10. RTDSA was designated Digital Services Coordinator in February 2024.

¹²³ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, p. 20.

¹²⁴ Country visit Cyprus, civil society; 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 14.

¹²⁵ CIReN (2026a).

¹²⁶ CIReN (2026b); Country visit Cyprus, UCJ, IMME, Media Ethics Committee, CIReN. According to a survey conducted by the Cyprus Journalists' Union, 69% of citizens believe that the electorate is being manipulated, of which 86% attribute responsibility mainly to political parties, 82% to the Government and 74% to media owners. Cyprus Journalists' Union (2025b), pp. 26-27.

¹²⁷ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, p. 24.

¹²⁸ The draft law remains pending in Parliament.. Country visit Cyprus, RTDSA.

¹²⁹ Cypriot Government (2026), annex, p. 23.

¹³⁰ Cypriot Government (2026), annex, p. 23.

¹³¹ The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended Cyprus to adopt legislation to ensure fair and transparent distribution of advertising expenditure by the state and state-owned companies. Limited progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and no progress in 2024.

¹³² Country visit Cyprus, UCJ, IMME, Media Ethics Committee, CIReN, civil society; 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, p. 36.

¹³³ Country visit Cyprus, civil society.

Information Office (PIO). The draft also stipulates that funds will be allocated according to the procedures, guidelines, and criteria published on the PIO's official website, they will be distributed to a wide variety of media outlets, and the media regulator (RTDSA) will be empowered to monitor and report on expenditures¹³⁴. The Media Pluralism Monitor has increased its risk level for this area to medium-high risk¹³⁵. Given the ongoing work on legislative reforms, there has been some progress on the recommendations made in the previous years.

Legislative work to strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media is ongoing¹³⁶. The authorities have confirmed that the draft law for the implementation of the EMFA will put in place safeguards for the appointment and dismissal procedures of the management and board members of the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC)¹³⁷. Once this law has been adopted, work on amendments to the Law on the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation will continue with a view to modernise and align the legal framework governing the CyBC¹³⁸. The CyBC has confirmed that this law will ensure a clear separation of the roles of the Board of Directors and the General Management and remove provisions concerning the mandatory presentation of political parties and figures¹³⁹. In the meantime, stakeholders raise concerns about political interference in the CyBC, whose governing board is elected by the Council of Ministers following a public call of interest and after having notified the House of Parliament of the suggested board members¹⁴⁰. In view of these concerns, the Media Pluralism Monitor continues to rank this area as medium-high risk¹⁴¹. Given the ongoing work on legislative reforms, there has been some progress on the recommendations made in the previous reports.

The Office of the Information Commissioner continues to raise awareness on the law regulating public access to information, while further measures are needed to improve it. The Office of the Information Commissioner, which operates with limited resources, continues its awareness raising efforts with a campaign planned for the first quarter of 2026¹⁴². An independent study commissioned by the Government identified gaps in the scope of the law on public access to information¹⁴³, including the definition of the term public authority and the lack of independent review of the Commissioner's decisions¹⁴⁴. The Commissioner considers that the legal framework applies clearly to any ministry, department,

¹³⁴ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, pp. 9-10.

¹³⁵ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, p. 36.

¹³⁶ The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended Cyprus to strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media. Limited progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025 and some progress in 2024 and 2023.

¹³⁷ Country visit Cyprus, Ministry of Interior.

¹³⁸ Country visit Cyprus, Ministry of Interior; CyBC (2026), written input.

¹³⁹ CyBC (2026), written input.

¹⁴⁰ Country visit Cyprus, civil society; 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, p. 37.

¹⁴¹ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, p. 37.

¹⁴² Country visit Cyprus, Office of the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner, who also serves as the Data Protection Commissioner, is only supported by one staff member. See also, 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 15.

¹⁴³ Law 184 (I)/2017 on the Right of Access to Public Sector Information.

¹⁴⁴ Prof. Stéphanie Laulhé Shaelou and Dr. Klearchos Kyriakides (2024), pp. 62-67. GRECO had recommended that (i) *access to information be subject to an independent and thorough analysis, (...); and (ii) in light of the findings of this analysis, additional measures be taken to improve public access to information and a culture of openness within the public authorities, where necessary*. GRECO (2023), para 263(vi).

office, service, or authority of the public sector, including the Presidency, the National Guard, and the Police, while her decisions are ultimately subject to judicial review by the Administrative Court¹⁴⁵. The Government is now considering further measures, as also urged by GRECO¹⁴⁶, including the amendment of Law 184(I)/2017 and the organisation of training seminars for public officials¹⁴⁷. Stakeholders note that inconsistencies remain in the application of the Law and that there is a need for standardised training for public officials on access to information and more effective enforcement of compliance¹⁴⁸. In view of this, the Media Pluralism Monitor maintains its risk analysis for this area as medium-high¹⁴⁹.

The overall situation as regards the safety of journalists remains stable, however they continue to experience precarious working conditions. Parliament adopted an anti-SLAPP law in March 2026, which entered into force in May 2026¹⁵⁰. This law applies to both domestic and cross-border cases and requires the plaintiffs to prove the legal basis of their claim. Stakeholders have reported SLAPP cases against journalists, with lengthy legal proceedings and backlogs in court cases being regarded as eroding trust in how the justice system can handle SLAPP and as encouraging self-censorship¹⁵¹. The Council of Europe Safety of Journalists Platform recorded one new alert for an attack on physical safety and integrity since the publication of the 2025 Rule of Law Report¹⁵². In the same period, two new alerts were registered by the Media Freedom Rapid Response Mechanism, consisting of denied access to information and physical assault¹⁵³. Stakeholders report that high workload, low salaries, and a lack of resources continue to negatively impact the working conditions of journalists and the quality of journalism¹⁵⁴. According to a survey conducted by the UCJ in July-August 2025, journalists consider understaffing and sustainability of media SMEs as the most serious problems facing the profession. In the same survey, 69% of journalists stated that they have been pressured about the content of their work at least a few times¹⁵⁵. In view of these factors, the Media Pluralism Monitor has increased its risk level for this area to medium-low¹⁵⁶.

IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES

Substantial steps have been taken to enhance public participation in decision-making. In April 2026, Parliament adopted the Citizens' Legislative Initiative, empowering citizens to propose policies through a formal mechanism for direct public involvement in policymaking¹⁵⁷. A systematic approach to electronic consultations is now in place, supported

¹⁴⁵ Country visit Cyprus, Office of the Information Commissioner.

¹⁴⁶ GRECO (2025), paras 39-43.

¹⁴⁷ The Minister of Justice and Public Order requested the assistance of the Law Commissioner in preparing a bill to address issues relating to Law 184(I)/2017. Cypriot Government (2026c).

¹⁴⁸ Country visit Cyprus, UCJ, IMME, Media Ethics Committee, CIReN.

¹⁴⁹ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ The Protection of Persons Taking Public Participation Actions from Manifestly Unfounded Lawsuits or Abusive Judicial Proceedings Law of 2026.

¹⁵¹ Country visit Cyprus, UCJ, IMME, Media Ethics Committee, CIReN.

¹⁵² Council of Europe, Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists (2026). The state has not replied to the alert.

¹⁵³ European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Media Freedom Rapid Response – Cyprus. One of these alerts overlaps with the alert published on the Council of Europe Safety of Journalists Platform.

¹⁵⁴ Country visit Cyprus, UCJ, IMME, Media Ethics Committee, CIReN.

¹⁵⁵ Union of Cyprus Journalists (2025a), pp. 11 and 25.

¹⁵⁶ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, p. 18.

¹⁵⁷ Citizens need to gather at least 5,000 signatures. The submission of proposals and the collection of signatures will take place through an electronic platform, with oversight by an interministerial committee.

by training for officials and media campaigns to raise awareness¹⁵⁸. Usage data demonstrates a steady increase in platform use¹⁵⁹. However, the authorities' responses to consultation comments are not published in a systematic and timely manner¹⁶⁰, which is perceived by civil society as a lack of transparency and acknowledgement of their input¹⁶¹. The bill to make public consultation compulsory by law remains pending in Parliament¹⁶². Parliament modified its rules of procedure to allow the live-streaming of committee sessions, subject to certain conditions and the nature of the matter under discussion, fulfilling a long-standing request from civil society and ensuring greater transparency in parliamentary work¹⁶³. Initiatives by civil society, such as Nomosplatform, provide structured and accessible information on parliamentary activity¹⁶⁴.

Businesses continue to see challenges in the quality of law-making and the need to streamline legislation. In Cyprus, OECD indicators on regulatory governance and policy remain below the EU average¹⁶⁵. There is no systematic use of ex post evaluation of primary and subordinate legislation to verify if rules achieve their objectives in practice. While the Law Commissioner carries out simplification and revision of legislation, this is done on an ad hoc basis¹⁶⁶. Civil society considers that the Law Commissioner could assume a more prominent role in this area, including by carrying out ex post evaluations in a more systematic manner¹⁶⁷. Strengthening ex post evaluation would help reduce unnecessary administrative burden and facilitate regulatory simplification, which remains an important demand from businesses. In Cyprus, 35% of the surveyed companies perceive the frequent changes in legislation or concerns about the quality of the law-making process as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection (32% in 2025)¹⁶⁸. The establishment of a platform which aims to digitalise legislative procedures and provide public access to consolidated versions of legislation is set to be completed by the end of 2026, enhancing transparency and accessibility¹⁶⁹.

Less than half of companies surveyed in Cyprus 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 significantly increased in comparison with 2025 (27%). The main reasons among companies for their lack of confidence are difficulty in obtaining fair compensation to protect property (55%) and concerns about quality, efficiency

¹⁵⁸ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, pp. 24-25. See also, GRECO (2025), para 46.

¹⁵⁹ Consultations rose from 112 in 2024 to 249 in 2025; the number of participating services increased from 77 to 101, stakeholder comments from 792 to 2.341, and registered external users from 472 to 1.122. High-profile topics, such as tax reform, have seen a notable increase in public feedback.

¹⁶⁰ European Semester 2026, Cyprus, pp. 60-61. In accordance with the Consultation Guide and the relevant Ministerial Decision, responses to consultation comments must be published through the e-consultation platform within two weeks after the end of the consultation period, Cypriot Government (2026c).

¹⁶¹ Country visit, Cyprus, Civil Society.

¹⁶² 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 16.

¹⁶³ Regulation 42 (4) of Parliamentary Regulations; Country visit, Cyprus, Civil society.

¹⁶⁴ NomosPlatform is an independent, non-profit legislative observatory which enables citizens to directly track Cypriot parliamentary proceedings in real time. Oxygen for democracy (2026), written input, p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Remaining key gaps include risk assessment and early consideration of how policymakers will measure the progress of a regulation post-implementation. OECD (2025), Better Regulation across the European Union 2025, p. 138. See also, 2023 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 21.

¹⁶⁶ European Semester 2026, Cyprus, pp. 60-61.

¹⁶⁷ Country visit, Cyprus, Civil society.

¹⁶⁸ Figure 53, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹⁶⁹ Initially included in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, it is now financed with national funds. Cypriot Government (2026), pp. 25-26. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 17.

or independence of justice (49%)¹⁷⁰. As regards authorities relevant for economic operators, 46% of companies perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority, the Commission for the Protection of Competition, as very or fairly good, a figure which has slightly decreased in comparison to 2025 (49%)¹⁷¹. The Supreme Constitutional Court has jurisdiction in several business-related cases, including in cases related to public procurement, 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 appeals¹⁷².

There has been significant progress on the recommendation to introduce safeguards in the appointment procedure to enhance the independence of the Auditor General and the Deputy Auditor General¹⁷³. In November 2025, Parliament approved important changes to the Audit Office, including a constitutional amendment. The reform introduces a fixed, non-renewable eight-year term for the Auditor General and his/her Deputy and imposes stricter qualification criteria for their appointment¹⁷⁴. However, the appointment procedure itself remains solely under the President of the Republic, with no involvement from other bodies even in an advisory capacity¹⁷⁵. The Audit Office also gained financial autonomy through a more direct relationship with Parliament, fulfilling a long-standing demand of the Office¹⁷⁶. The proposed bill aiming to establish a three-member audit council, appointed by the President to oversee or advise on the Auditor General's work¹⁷⁷, remained pending before the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs, Justice and Public Order, following strong opposition from many political parties and the Auditor General, who argued that such a council could compromise the Office's independence and potentially control or delay the release of audit reports¹⁷⁸. The reform in its final form has been welcomed by the Audit Office and by civil society as a positive step towards strengthening the Office's independence¹⁷⁹. There has thus been significant progress on the implementation of the recommendation made in the previous year.

The Audit Office is seeking ways to improve access to information necessary for the performance of its task. The Audit Office has made progress in overcoming previously reported challenges regarding access to information¹⁸⁰, mainly as a result of enhanced

¹⁷⁰ Figures 52 and 53, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹⁷¹ Figure 60, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹⁷² 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.

¹⁷³ The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to ensure that the ongoing reform of the Audit Office introduces safeguards in the appointment procedure to enhance the independence of the Auditor General and the Deputy Auditor General.

¹⁷⁴ Law 186(I) 2025. Professional qualifications, including professional expertise in auditing, economics, accounting, or a closely related field and high standards of moral integrity, independence, and impartiality.

¹⁷⁵ 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 18; Figure 63, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹⁷⁶ The Audit Office's annual budget will now be submitted directly to Parliament for approval, separate from the state budget, though the expenditure ceiling will still be set by the Ministry of Finance.

¹⁷⁷ The Government initially proposed to transform the Audit Office into a collegiate body, but the proposal was revised following the legal opinion expressed by the Law Office as to its non-compliance with constitutional provisions. The Auditor General is not against the transition to a collegial model, provided this would be in line with the Constitution and international practices. Cypriot Government (2026), written input, pp. 11-12.

¹⁷⁸ Nomosplatform (2025).

¹⁷⁹ Country visit, Cyprus, Audit Office and Civil Society.

¹⁸⁰ See, 2024 and 2025 Rule of Law Reports, Cyprus, pp. 13-14 and 18 respectively.

cooperation with the Law Office. Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly where public bodies delay, only partially disclose, or entirely refuse to disclose information, sometimes questioning the Audit Office's audit mandate¹⁸¹. To address audit gaps, the Auditor General considers that future legislation establishing new public bodies or services should explicitly include provisions defining and safeguarding the Audit Office's powers to obtain the necessary information¹⁸². In the case of the Central Bank of Cyprus, the Audit Office submitted proposals to the draft bill amending the Law on the functions of the Central Bank of Cyprus. The suggested amendments explicitly clarify the audit rights of the Audit Office¹⁸³.

On 1 January 2026, Cyprus had 14 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, an increase of 6 compared to the previous year¹⁸⁴. At that time, Cyprus' rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 46% (compared to 58% in 2025; 54% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 2 years and 6 months (compared to 3 years and 6 months in 2025)¹⁸⁵. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for 7 years, concerns the degrading treatment of the applicant due to the poor conditions of his detention at Nicosia Central Prisons¹⁸⁶. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2025 there were 4 cases in total awaiting confirmation of payments (compared to 2 in 2024)¹⁸⁷. On 17 June 2026, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had increased to 15¹⁸⁸.

Reforms to improve the framework for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are advancing. Civic space in Cyprus continues to be rated as 'narrowed' by Civicus¹⁸⁹. The revision of the Law on Associations and Foundations, which aims to reduce administrative burden and improve the guidance for its application is underway, incorporating feedback from prior consultations of civil society¹⁹⁰. The updated draft legislation will undergo further discussions with CSOs and public consultation before finalisation¹⁹¹. Meanwhile, authorities are promoting awareness of the electronic CSO registry (NGO platform), and district offices are making efforts to streamline administrative procedures. These developments have been well received, though certain CSOs still opt for the company legal form, citing bureaucratic hurdles¹⁹². In October 2025, the Supreme Constitutional Court overturned the deregistration of a CSO dating from 2020, affirming that the state must respect and protect the role of CSOs, particularly those advocating for vulnerable groups¹⁹³. A 2025 law on public assemblies was criticised for imposing restrictive notification procedures and organiser liability, limiting the right to freedom of assembly, and was substantially amended in March

¹⁸¹ See also, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard, Figures 63 and 64.

¹⁸² Country visit, Audit Office.

¹⁸³ Cypriot Government (2026c).

¹⁸⁴ For an explanation of the supervision process, see the [website](#) of the Council of Europe.

¹⁸⁵ 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, p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ Judgment of the ECtHR, 21318/12, *Danilczuk v. Cyprus*, pending implementation since 2018.

¹⁸⁷ Council of Europe (2026), p. 162.

¹⁸⁸ Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).

¹⁸⁹ The score is 75/100. Rating by Civicus are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

¹⁹⁰ See also, 2025 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 19.

¹⁹¹ Cypriot Government (2026), written input, p. 26.

¹⁹² Country visit, Civil Society; FRA (2026), written input, pp. 3-4.

¹⁹³ Supreme Constitutional Court (2025a); KISA (2025); 2023 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 23; FRA (2026), written input, p. 11.

2026¹⁹⁴. The revised legislation clarifies that organisers are protected from being held liable for the conduct of the participants, protects spontaneous assemblies, and limits police powers to dissolve demonstrations to a measure of last resort; a shift widely welcomed by stakeholders¹⁹⁵. The Ombudsperson launched a public awareness campaign against hate speech and disinformation, in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on Human Rights and other civil society representatives¹⁹⁶.

Parliament's regular stakeholder discussions foster public debate on the rule of law. In September 2025, the House Standing Committee on Institutions, Merit and the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman) of the Parliament held its annual debate on the findings of the Rule of Law Report, which is by now an established practice. The debate brought together institutional actors, legal professionals and representatives of civil society and attracted significant media attention. Stakeholders broadly welcome the event as a valuable contribution to raising public awareness of rule of law issues and as a starting point for constructive and inclusive dialogue¹⁹⁷.

¹⁹⁴ Law 151(I)/2025 was widely criticised as undermining constitutional rights and enabling disproportionate police powers. In September 2025, OSCE expressed concerns and made recommendations; OSCE (2025); FRA (2026), written input, pp. 5-6.

¹⁹⁵ Law 16(I)/2026. Country visit Cyprus, Civil society; Oxygen for democracy (2026), written input, p. 36.

¹⁹⁶ The Ombudsperson (Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights) is the national human rights institution, accredited with 'A' status by the UN Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. The campaign aimed to raise awareness about journalistic safety and the protection of freedom of expression and to support a safe and independent environment for journalists and the media, strengthening public access to reliable information. Cypriot Government (2026), annex, pp. 23-24.

¹⁹⁷ Cypriot Government (2026), annex, pp. 33-34; Country visit Cyprus, Civil society, Law Office, CBA; Oxygen for democracy (2026), written input, p. 52.

Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order*

* The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2026 Rule of Law Report can be found at https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2026-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en.

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Annex II: Country visit to Cyprus

The Commission services held meetings in Nicosia in January 2026 with:

- Association of Judges
- Association of Lobbyists and Public Affairs Professionals (LPAP)
- Audit Office
- Centre for the Rule of Law and European Values (CroLev)
- Civil Society Advocates
- Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights
- Commissioner for Citizens
- Commissioner for Information
- Committee of Media Ethics
- Cyprus Bar Association
- Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB)
- Cyprus Investigative Reporting Network (CIReN)
- Department of Judicial Reform, Supreme Court
- Fimonoï Foundation
- Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC)
- Institute for Mass Media (IMME)
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice and Public Order
- NGO Support Centre
- Office of the Attorney General
- OPEK
- Oxygen for Democracy
- Police
- Press and Information Office
- Radio-Television Authority
- Special Adviser on Ethics
- Supreme Constitutional Court
- Supreme Court
- Treasury of the Republic of Cyprus
- Union of Cyprus Journalists (ESK)

* 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