# 2026 Rule of Law report

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On 17 July 2026, the European Commission published its seventh annual report on the rule of law. The report examines developments in every EU country as well as in four enlargement countries: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The report assesses positive and negative developments in four key areas, one of which relates to media pluralism and freedom. It is accompanied by country chapters and a set of recommendations targeted at each country.

With regard to the independence of media regulators, the Commission recalls that both the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) require regulators to be independent from the government, impartial, transparent and accountable, with adequate resources, clear procedures for appointment and dismissal and effective appeal mechanisms. Overall, the tasks, competences and resources of national media regulators have been or are being expanded, to comply with the EMFA and the Digital Services Act (DSA). Reforms are still ongoing in Spain, Luxembourg, Poland and Czechia but recent amendments in Slovakia have raised important concerns regarding the independence of the regulator.

The Commission also emphasised the importance of transparent media ownership, enabling users to make informed judgements about the information they consume. It notably drew attention to preliminary media ownership databases in France, Malta and Slovenia, and reported on ongoing reforms in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania, Spain and Portugal. In contrast, it also drew attention to the challenges faced by Czechia. Of the enlargement countries covered in the report, Montenegro is said to have improved in this area, whereas there are concerns about Serbia.

With regard to safeguarding transparent and fair advertising, the Commission first recalled that both the EMFA and the Political Advertising Regulation address this issue. New legislation on this topic has been adopted in Croatia, Slovakia, Greece, Malta, Latvia and Slovenia in the past year and negotiations are ongoing in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain, Czechia and Portugal. However, Hungary and Romania have both been singled out for failing to address the issue and for certain ongoing practices.

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The independent functioning of public service media is another key issue addressed in the Rule of Law report. The Commission emphasised that reforms have been adopted to introduce new appointment models or modernise the structure of public service broadcasters. Reforms are also ongoing in many EU countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Estonia, France, Poland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Cyprus). However, the Commission has expressed concerns regarding the situation in Slovakia, Czechia, Lithuania, Albania and Serbia.

Finally, the safety and protection of journalists is another issue addressed by the Rule of Law report. The Commission recognises that several countries have actively introduced measures through dedicated action plans, training programmes, guidelines and legislative reforms. However, reforms to improve the protection of journalists are still pending in Malta and Slovakia. Since last year's report, the Commission's recommendations on the protection of journalists against legal threats and abusive court proceedings against public participation have stimulated the adoption or the preparation of national legislation in several countries. However, the Commission has expressed some concern regarding the situation in Albania, Montenegro and Serbia.

The Commission's concluding remarks highlight a broadly positive trajectory, with significant improvements and important reforms completed or underway in all four areas monitored, even if the picture remains uneven across member states and policy areas, with some challenges persisting.

### *2026 Rule of Law Report - Communication and country chapters*

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