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## **COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

### **2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Cyprus**

#### *Accompanying the document*

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the  
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

#### **2025 Rule of Law Report The rule of law situation in the European Union**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Cyprus, the reform of the Law Office is advancing, with the goal of providing a clearer distinction between the advisory and the prosecutorial functions of the Attorney General. With the reform, the Attorney General maintains its role as legal adviser of the state and head of the Law Office, while the powers relating to the prosecution are transferred to the new institution of General Public Prosecutor. The Attorney General has requested the opinion of the Supreme Court in relation to the review of its decisions not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings. The recently introduced judicial review of the decisions of the Supreme Council of the Judicature reinforces transparency and accountability. Efforts to promote the use of alternative dispute resolution, including the modernisation of arbitration law, are supported by businesses. The level of digitalisation remains low and there is not a fully functional integrated electronic case management system. Challenges regarding resources and infrastructure continue to affect the work of first instance judges. The length of proceedings and backlogs remain a serious concern, in particular for civil and commercial cases, despite some improvements. Businesses consider the operationalisation of the Commercial and Admiralty Courts to be necessary to avoid delays in the administration of justice.

The resources of the Independent Authority against Corruption are being increased and there are ongoing discussions in Parliament to strengthen the functional independence of this authority. A lot of work is being put into investigating high-level corruption cases and more investigations have been initiated. Important efforts are being made to step up capabilities through recruitment and training to address corruption. New legislation on asset declarations for both elected and appointed officials have entered into force. Compliance with and enforcement of the law on lobbying is improving. Implementation of integrity rules was strengthened through the appointment of a Special Ethics Adviser and a revision of the Code of Conduct for Civil Servants. Efforts are being made to improve the efficiency, transparency and accountability in public procurement.

The Cyprus Radio and Television Authority operates in an independent manner. The legal framework relating to transparency of media ownership has not been improved. The lack of legislation and transparency in the field of state advertising, as well as the need to enhance the independent governance of public service media still need to be addressed. The situation as regards safety of journalists has improved; however, they continue to experience precarious working conditions.

The effective and timely consultation of stakeholders has significantly improved, including with the systematic use of the e-consultation platform. Businesses and investors see delays in the law-making process and in adopting implementing acts as challenges. The Government put forward plans to reform the Audit Office, while questions remain around the appointment procedure of the Auditor General and his Deputy. Challenges regarding administrative requirements for Civil Society Organisations persist, while efforts to revise the legal framework are still ongoing.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, concerning the recommendations in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus has made:

- Some further progress on taking forward plans to adopt legislation aiming to provide a clearer distinction between the advisory and the prosecutorial functions of the Attorney General and limited progress on taking measures to establish an effective review of its decisions not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings, taking into account European standards on independence and autonomy of the prosecution.
- Significant progress on continuing the efforts to ensure that the Independent Authority against Corruption has the human and technical resources to effectively perform its competences.
- Significant progress on ensuring the effective implementation of rules on asset disclosure for elected officials to establish regular and comprehensive filing, combined with effective, regular and full verifications.
- Limited progress on adopting legislation to ensure fair and transparent distribution of advertising expenditure by the state and state-owned companies.
- Limited progress on further advancing with the process aimed at strengthening the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media.
- Significant progress on ensuring the effective and timely consultation of stakeholders in the legislative process and address shortcomings.

On this basis, and considering other developments that took place in the period of reference, in addition to recalling the relevant commitments made under the Recovery and Resilience Plan, it is 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 and 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.
- 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.
- Adopt legislation to ensure fair and transparent distribution of advertising expenditure by the state and state-owned companies.
- Strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media.
- 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.

## **I. JUSTICE SYSTEM<sup>1</sup>**

### **Independence**

**The level of perceived judicial independence in Cyprus continues to be average among both the general public and companies.** Overall, 42% of the general population and 44% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2025<sup>2</sup>. Among the general public, this figure has decreased in comparison with 2024 (49%), as well as in comparison with 2021 (48%). The perceived judicial independence among companies has decreased in comparison with 2024 (47%) and has slightly decreased in comparison with 2021 (45%).

**There has been some further progress on the recommendation to provide a clearer distinction between the advisory and the prosecutorial functions of the Attorney General.**<sup>3</sup> Following the completion of a comparative study in May 2024<sup>4</sup>, the Ministry of Justice prepared a package of legislative proposals aiming to separate the dual role of the Attorney General and submitted them to the Law Office for legal vetting in November 2024 and April 2025<sup>5</sup>. According to the proposal, the Attorney General will maintain its role as legal adviser of the state and head of the Law Office, while the powers relating to the prosecution will be transferred to the new institution of General Public Prosecutor. The proposal also foresees an eight-year, non-renewable tenure for both officials and their deputies, who are appointed by the President of the Republic<sup>6</sup>. In June 2025, the Law Office completed the vetting following extensive redrafting of the bills taking into account a number of aspects of the reform<sup>7</sup>. The Council of Ministers approved the bills on 2 July 2025, and they will now be submitted to Parliament. In parallel, the Government has been planning the administrative separation of the Law Office and the establishment of the new institution. In presenting the Governance Agenda for 2025, the President of the Republic referred to the implementation of the reform of the Law Office and explained that this was important to restore citizens’ trust in the institutions<sup>8</sup>. Stakeholders welcome the reform<sup>9</sup>. Thus, there has

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<sup>1</sup> An overview of the institutional framework for all four pillars can be found [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Figures 51 and 53, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard and Figures 49 and 51, 2023 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%).

<sup>3</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to take forward plans to adopt legislation aiming to provide a clearer distinction between the advisory and the prosecutorial functions of the Attorney General.

<sup>4</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> The initial package included two main bills (one amending the Constitution and one proposing a new law) and twenty-five bills revising existing legislation that is impacted by the creation of the Office of the General Public Prosecutor. Additional bills were submitted in April 2025 to complete the list of existing legislation that needs to be revised in view of the planned reform.

<sup>6</sup> The Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General are currently appointed under the same conditions as the judges of the Supreme Court; their term of office is until they reach their 68<sup>th</sup> year of age.

<sup>7</sup> The Law Office had previously referred to the constitutionality of the proposed reform and the status of the prosecutors and legal officers to be eventually transferred to the Office of the General Public Prosecutor; Cypriot Government (2025a). In the context of the legal vetting, the Attorney General also reviewed the opinions of a committee of experts and two former Supreme Court judges on the constitutionality of the reform. Law Office (2025), written input, AG pp. 2-4.

<sup>8</sup> Cypriot Government, Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2025), written inputs, pp. 3-4, and 1 respectively.

been some further progress on the implementation of this specific element of the recommendation made in previous years.

**There has been limited progress on the recommendation to establish an effective review of the decisions of the Attorney General not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings<sup>10</sup>.** The proposal, which was submitted by the Government to the Law Office for legal vetting in November 2024, foresees that the decisions of the General Public Prosecutor should be based on predefined criteria, the application of which may be subject to review by the Supreme Court. The Attorney General considered the proposed provisions incomplete and expressed reservations as to the introduction of a judicial review<sup>11</sup>. He therefore requested the opinion of the Supreme Court, which expressed its views on 17 June 2025<sup>12</sup>. The matter is now under examination by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. In parallel, the Law Office suspended plans to establish an internal procedure of review, waiting for the outcome of the planned reform<sup>13</sup>. On different occasions, both the Supreme Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court reiterated the established case-law that under the existing constitutional framework, decisions of the Attorney General to discontinue criminal proceedings are not subject to any control<sup>14</sup>. Civil society considers the review of the decisions of the Attorney General the most important aspect of the reform<sup>15</sup>. Thus, there has been limited progress on the implementation of this specific element of the recommendation made in previous years.

**The recently introduced judicial review of the decisions of the Supreme Council of the Judicature reinforces transparency and accountability.** In September 2024, the Supreme Constitutional Court exercised, for the first time, the powers conferred on it by the last judicial reform<sup>16</sup>, and ruled on two requests for review submitted by unsuccessful candidates against decisions of the Supreme Council of Judicature on judicial appointments. In the first case, the Supreme Constitutional Court upheld the appealed decision, whereas in the second case, the Court set aside the decision and concluded that the appointment process had to be reopened<sup>17</sup>. The judgments were welcomed by stakeholders as enhancing transparency and public trust<sup>18</sup>.

**Plans to establish a distinct branch of administrative justice with a separate Judicial Council aim to rationalise the structure of the court system and improve its functioning.**

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<sup>9</sup> The Cyprus Bar Association considers that reforms should be encouraged but with full respect of constitutional norms, Cyprus Bar Association (2025), written input, pp. 8-9; Country visit Cyprus, Oxygen for democracy, OPEK and CiREN.

<sup>10</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to “take measures to establish an effective review of the decisions of the Attorney General not to prosecute or to discontinue proceedings, taking into account European standards on independence and autonomy of the prosecution”.

<sup>11</sup> The Attorney General considers that judicial review would further burden the heavy workload of the courts, and that a hierarchical review would be more appropriate. Law Office (2025), written input, pp. 2-4; Cyprus Forum (2024); Legal Matters (2025), Interview with the Attorney General, Part B, 16 January (2025).

<sup>12</sup> Law Office (2025), additional written contribution, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> On preliminary comments regarding the internal review, 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, pp. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup> Supreme Constitutional Court (Plenary), Request 1/2024, 18 September 2024, p.188; Supreme Court, Civil Appeal 240/2016, 13 January 2025, pp 3-6.

<sup>15</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Oxygen for democracy, OPEK, CiREN and CroLEV.

<sup>16</sup> The introduction of judicial review against the decisions taken by the Supreme Council of the Judicature was welcomed as a positive development by both the European Commission and the Venice Commission. 2023 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 5; CDL-AD(2021)043, para. 56.

<sup>17</sup> Cypriot Government (2025), written input, pp. 9-10.

<sup>18</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Supreme Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Association of judges and Cyprus Bar Association; Oxygen for democracy (2025), written input, p. 8.

Under the current regime, the decisions regarding careers and disciplinary issues for judges dealing with administrative cases at first and second instance are taken by the Supreme Court acting as the Supreme Council of the Judicature<sup>19</sup>. However, this structure does not follow the substantive jurisdiction of these courts, as the Supreme Constitutional Court is competent for administrative cases. Following a proposal by the President of the Supreme Constitutional Court, the Government put forward plans to establish (i) a new Administrative Court of Appeal, consisting of up to six judges; and (ii) a second Judicial Council responsible for the appointment, promotion, transfer and discipline of administrative court judges. The composition and functioning of the new Judicial Council would mirror the existing provisions for the Supreme Council for the Judicature: it will be composed of all the nine judges of the Supreme Constitutional Court and four non-judicial members. Its decisions will be subject to judicial review by the Supreme Court<sup>20</sup>. Judges and lawyers consider that this reform will enhance the governance and accountability of administrative justice as well as the quality of case-law<sup>21</sup>.

## Quality

**Efforts to promote the use of alternative dispute resolution, including the modernisation of arbitration law, are supported by businesses.** Considering the current framework not to be fit for purpose, in August 2024, the Government put forward draft legislation aiming to unify and modernise the arbitration institution. This is part of a plan to establish Cyprus as an International Centre for Mediation and Arbitration and to restore its reputation as a reliable investment destination. The Government also submitted to Parliament draft bills aiming to make mediation in civil disputes more effective. The bills unify the existing mediators' registers, introduce mandatory training for mediators as well as a compulsory preliminary mediation session for claims less than EUR 5 000<sup>22</sup>. The Bar Association made suggestions to further amend the rules on compulsory mediation to ensure access to justice and avoid unnecessary costs for litigants<sup>23</sup>. The promotion of alternative procedures for resolving disputes is seen as a positive development<sup>24</sup>. Business representatives and lawyers strongly support efforts to promote alternative dispute resolution. Both, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Bar Association offer mediation services and agree that promotion and trainings are necessary to achieve a swift change in culture<sup>25</sup>.

**The level of digitalisation remains low and there is not a fully functional integrated electronic case management system.** The Supreme Court adopted new procedural regulations on electronic justice, which provide a unified legal framework for the

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<sup>19</sup> The non-judicial members of the Supreme Council of the Judicature do not participate in disciplinary and transfer proceedings, while they have no voting rights for issues regarding promotions of judges.

<sup>20</sup> Cypriot Government, Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2025), written inputs, pp. 18 and 2 respectively.

<sup>21</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Supreme Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Association of judges and Cyprus Bar Association. The Bar Association also underlined the need to implement this structural change in a manner compatible with constitutional constraints.

<sup>22</sup> Cypriot government and Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2025), written inputs, pp. 17-18 and p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> The Bar Association suggested that if mediation fails and the case ends before a court, it should be exempted from the mandatory pre-action protocol introduced by the new Civil Procedure.

<sup>24</sup> Judgment of the CJEU, case C-75/16, *Menini and Rampanelli v Banco Popolare Società Cooperativa*, para 51; European Commission (2016), *Report on the application of Directive 2008/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on certain aspects of mediation in civil and commercial matters*.

<sup>25</sup> Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Cyprus Bar Association (2025), written inputs, pp. 4 and 6-7 respectively.

digitalisation of justice<sup>26</sup>. However, criminal proceedings and proceedings before the highest courts lack digital solutions<sup>27</sup>. The failure to implement the e-justice case management system has resulted in delays and setbacks in digital transformation: The decision to upgrade the existing i-justice system is a positive development, but its implementation will not be completed before 2028<sup>28</sup>. Progress regarding digital recordings was postponed<sup>29</sup>. The absence of a fully digitalised case management system also exacerbates challenges regarding the collection of statistics<sup>30</sup>, as well as the implementation of a rotation-based system for the legal aid scheme<sup>31</sup>. Reluctance to adopt innovative solutions and technological tools for handling cases impacts first instance courts the most<sup>32</sup>.

**Challenges regarding resources and infrastructure continue to affect the work of first instance judges.** Following the reform of the courts structure, the number of experienced first instance judges moving to higher courts left several vacancies which are difficult to fill. Several stakeholders noted a continued lack of qualified candidates<sup>33</sup>. Lawyers note that under the current system, candidates for judicial positions must have experience in several fields of law, which is difficult to find. The Bar Association considers that flexibility to recruit also more specialised judges, and the permanent separation of civil and criminal courts, would allow judicial vacancies to be filled faster, and cases to be handled more efficiently<sup>34</sup>. Experienced court staff, including registrars, were also transferred from district courts to the Court of Appeal following the reform. As a result, judges need to regularly undertake administrative tasks. Plans to establish an Independent Court Service aiming to improve the overall efficiency of justice and alleviate all court presidents and Supreme Court judges from non-judicial administrative responsibilities are currently underway but are expected to take a lot of time to complete<sup>35</sup>. Judges and lawyers also point to the need to improve court premises, particularly in the district court of Nicosia. The Law Office also faces challenges regarding its buildings<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Supreme Court (2025), written input, pp. 10-13.

<sup>27</sup> See also, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, Figures 42 to 46.

<sup>28</sup> For the i-justice, see also, 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, pp. 7-8. The Supreme Court requested the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy to implement several other digitalisation projects. These projects are supported by the Ministry but delays in implementation stem from contractual and human resources related constraints.

<sup>29</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Department of Judicial Reform.

<sup>30</sup> Judicial statistics are collected manually. Country visit Cyprus, Department of Judicial Reform. Lawyers and civil society complain that statistics are limited and not publicly available. Cyprus Bar Association and Oxygen for democracy (2025), written inputs, p. 4 and pp. 7, 9 and 13 respectively.

<sup>31</sup> The proposed rotation-based system for legal aid (see 2023 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 10) could only be applied for cases regarding requests for international protection, as these cases are handled by a single court and a single registry. Given the lack of an electronic system, it was initially impossible for criminal cases, where different courts were involved. Cypriot government (2025), written input, pp. 20-21. The Government together with the Supreme Court and the Bar is in the process of finding solutions to extend the system to all categories of legal aid and to upgrade it to a fully digitalised system.

<sup>32</sup> Cyprus Bar Association (2025), written input, pp. 3-4; CCBE (2025), written input, pp. 44-46.

<sup>33</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Cyprus Judges Association, Supreme Court, Supreme Constitutional Court.

<sup>34</sup> Cyprus Bar Association (2025), written input, p. 4. On specialization of judges, also ENNHRI (2025), Cyprus, p. 86.

<sup>35</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Department of Reform of the Supreme Court.

<sup>36</sup> Law Office (2025), written input, p. 9.

## Efficiency

**The length of proceedings and backlog remain serious concerns, in particular for civil and commercial cases, despite some improvements.** The disposition time in civil and commercial cases at first instance courts further decreased from 761 days in 2022 (947 in 2021) to 605 in 2023, but it remains among the highest in the EU. For administrative cases, the disposition time dropped at first instance cases from 461 days in 2022 (844 days in 2021) to 380 days in 2023, which constitutes overall a significant improvement. However, at second instance, the disposition time in 2023 for administrative cases reached the alarming level of 5 429 days (more than double the figure of 2 310 days in 2022), which is by far the highest in the EU<sup>37</sup>. The extremely high disposition time is partly explained by the new court structure and the establishment of a Court of Appeal in July 2023, which entailed delays in the handling of appeals<sup>38</sup>. In 2023, the clearance rate for civil, commercial and administrative cases increased to 118% (from 101% in 2022) and is the highest in the EU<sup>39</sup>. The government is taking steps to reduce delays, including proposals to establish a separate Administrative Court of Appeal, with the potential of increasing the number of second instance judges<sup>40</sup>, and establish a third Assize Court in Nicosia<sup>41</sup>. The targets set by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan have been reached and surpassed and the Supreme Court continued to deal efficiently with an important number of backlog cases. However, the backlog at first and second instance remains significant<sup>42</sup>. All stakeholders see preventing new backlogs as being the priority, and one proposal is some judges to work exclusively on backlog cases<sup>43</sup>.

**Businesses consider the operationalisation of the Commercial and Admiralty Courts to be necessary to avoid delays in the administration of justice.** The major reform of the judicial system in 2023 provided for two courts of special jurisdiction aiming to support the decongestion of the heavily burdened district courts and provide for a faster resolution of high value commercial and admiralty disputes by specialised judges<sup>44</sup>. However, neither court is yet operational. While the vacancies for the Admiralty Court were published in September 2024, no appointments for the five judges of the Commercial Court have taken place<sup>45</sup>. According to business representatives, the entry into operations of the Commercial Court should be a priority, as delays in the administration of justice are a major concern for companies and serve as a deterrent to business growth, with SMEs particularly affected<sup>46</sup>. The International Monetary Fund also pointed that the improving the efficiency of the judicial sector in Cyprus is essential to support investment-driven growth<sup>47</sup>. The Bar Association considers that the high number of experienced lawyers dealing with commercial law in Cyprus should facilitate finding suitable candidates for the judicial positions<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, Figure 8.

<sup>38</sup> Country visit, Department of Reform of the Supreme Court.

<sup>39</sup> 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, Figures 5, 8, 9 and 10.

<sup>40</sup> The Supreme Court also proposed to maintain the number of judges at the Court of Appeal at sixteen in addition to the new judges to be appointed at the new Administrative Court of Appeal.

<sup>41</sup> Nicosia faces a heavy caseload. Country visit Cyprus, Supreme Court.

<sup>42</sup> The project requires that specific proportions of backlog cases be cleared within specific timeframes, see 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Cyprus Bar Association (2025), written input, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> 2023 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, pp. 11-12.

<sup>45</sup> Cypriot Government (2025), input, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation; Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

<sup>47</sup> IMF (2025), Cyprus: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2025 Article IV Mission.

<sup>48</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Cyprus Bar Association.



**Efforts are being made by the Government to remove legal obstacles in enforcing court judgments between private parties.** Delays and difficulties in enforcing final judgments, which have been delivered after long lasting proceedings, are an additional challenge for the efficiency of justice. The Bar Association refers to difficulties in seizing funds and personal assets, as well as to the need to entrust enforcement to private professionals<sup>49</sup>. In April 2025, the Government submitted to Parliament a draft bill aiming to address these concerns and improve the legal framework<sup>50</sup>. The Government made a proposal to address previously reported challenges regarding the administration's failure to comply with decisions of administrative courts, but additional legal issues were raised by the Law Office and the Supreme Constitutional Court<sup>51</sup>.

## **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 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Cyprus scores 56/100 and ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in the European Union and 46<sup>th</sup> globally<sup>52</sup>. This perception has been relatively stable over the past five years<sup>53</sup>. The 2025 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 90% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 69%) and 60% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 93% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 63%) and 66% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 35%). Furthermore, 15% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 36%), while 10% of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 33%)<sup>54</sup>.

**Significant progress was made on the recommendation to increase the resources of the Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC) and proposals to reform the IAAC's functional independence are under discussion<sup>55</sup>.** The IAAC's staff increased from 5 over the past year to 18, despite an administrative budget that is 2.5% lower than last year, in line with similar reductions across the public sector, as this does not affect its human resources' budget<sup>56</sup>. The fact that the IAAC has no legal basis to recruit its own (permanent) staff and

<sup>49</sup> Cyprus Bar Association (2025), written input, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Cypriot Government (2025) additional written contribution.

<sup>51</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 27. 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.

<sup>52</sup> 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).

<sup>53</sup> In 2020 the score was 57, while in 2024, the score is 56. 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.

<sup>54</sup> Data from Special Eurobarometer 561 (2025) and Flash Eurobarometer 557 (2025).

<sup>55</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to "continue the efforts to ensure that the Independent Authority against Corruption has the human and technical resources to effectively perform its competences".

<sup>56</sup> IAAC (2025), written input, p. 23. The 18 include the Commissioner for Transparency and 4 Members. Most requests for secondments of public servants were denied by their managers. The IAAC raised its lack of human resources and the need to speed up employment processes with the OECD (Nicosia, 25 November 2024).

relies mainly on short-term public contractual staff creates uncertainty and could undermine the continuity of operations and the confidentiality of investigations. The Law Office is currently legally vetting a bill, to allow the IAAC to hire permanent staff through its own internal rules and procedures, which has the support of the Government. The bill will be submitted to the Ministry by the middle of July 2025<sup>57</sup>. In parallel, a bill was tabled in Parliament to reform the IAAC and to turn it into a public law entity that would ensure its complete independence from state institutions<sup>58</sup>. These proposals, if adopted, would significantly strengthen and improve the IAAC's functional and operational independence. This would help it respond to the increasing number of complaints that it receives and processes<sup>59</sup> and its additional role in monitoring compliance with lobbying regulation. There has therefore been significant progress on the implementation of the recommendation made in the 2024 Rule of Law Report.

**The IAAC is implementing an Awareness, Education and Prevention Strategy.** In 2025, the IAAC started implementing an Anti-Corruption Action Plan for 2025 and 2026. It includes a coherent framework of actions, interventions and projects, aimed at educating citizens about the risks of corruption and strengthening public and private sector and general public oversight and accountability through activities and trainings. The IAAC also intends to help public authorities develop sectoral anti-corruption strategies<sup>60</sup>. In 2024, the IAAC forwarded one major report on suspected corruption to the Attorney General for further investigation. It is currently dealing with eight ongoing corruption investigations (compared to 4 last year). Measures encouraging the private sector to implement international best practices and compliance programmes, including on foreign bribery, will also be taken under the purview of the Ministry of Justice.

**A lot of work is being put into investigating high-level corruption cases and more investigations have been initiated.** 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, and organised training on asset recovery. This expertise has been crucial, resulting in an amount of more than EUR 8 million of frozen assets obtained in domestic cases in 2024, a marked increase compared to the previous years<sup>61</sup>. In 2024, a total of five persons were convicted for corruption offences in four tried cases and the Police investigated 13 corruption cases, including in high-level corruption cases (compared to three convictions and five investigations the previous year). Six new investigations were initiated in 2025. A significant number of mostly low-level corruption cases involving local administration and authorities were also reported. Fourteen cases on sports corruption were initiated or tried in 2024, while an investigation into a high ranking sports official that begun in late 2023 is still ongoing<sup>62</sup>. Many of the 15 prosecutions for

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<sup>57</sup> The bill, prepared by the Office of the Law Commissioner, proposes to amend Law 19(I)2022, that established the IAAC, and the Public Service Law 1/1990.

<sup>58</sup> IAAC, Ministry of Justice and Parliament (2025), written inputs, pp. 23-24, p. 4 and p. 2 respectively.

<sup>59</sup> Between 2022 and 2024, the IAAC received more than 315 complaints (209 reported in July 2024).

<sup>60</sup> Cypriot Government (2025), written input, pp. 25-26, IAAC (2025) press release, and Country visit Cyprus, IAAC.

<sup>61</sup> Law Office (2025), written input, p. 10 and country visit Cyprus, Police.

<sup>62</sup> Of the 13 police investigations, eight were brought before the court, three of which included cases against a city mayor, a president of an NGO, and two high-ranking church officials. Cypriot Government and Law Office (2025), written inputs, pp. 31-32, pp. 11, 12 and 14 respectively and additional written input p.7.

corruption linked to the now suspended Citizenship Investor Programme (CIP)<sup>63</sup>, initiated by the Attorney General, are still ongoing and 26 natural and legal persons are currently being prosecuted<sup>64</sup>. The EPPO investigated one corruption case in 2024, accounting for around 4% of the total number of EPPO cases in Cyprus<sup>65</sup>. Civil society have expressed continued concerns about systemic weaknesses, investigative and prosecutorial delays, and a perceived lack of impartiality in the way high-level cases are dealt with, advocating for more effective checks and balances and the need for more specialisation and resources<sup>66</sup>.

**Important efforts are being made through recruitment and training to step up law enforcement capabilities to address corruption.** In October 2024, the President of the Republic convened a high-level meeting with key authorities to tackle the challenges of corruption and organised crime, speed up investigations, and increase the investigative and forensic accounting capacity of the police, under new leadership since September 2024<sup>67</sup>. The staff of the Financial Crime Sub-Directorate of the Cyprus Police only increased by one over the past year and there are plans to hire additional investigators in 2025, especially forensic accountants, deemed crucial for asset recovery. Additionally, in early 2025, a new District Financial Crime Investigation Office was established in Paphos with five specialised investigators<sup>68</sup>. In 2024, the Police acquired direct access to the Land Registry and the Companies Ultimate Beneficial Owners Registry which should enhance their investigative capacity and efficiency, also when cooperating with other Member States<sup>69</sup>. The Police Internal Affairs Service (PIAS) continued to actively investigate allegations of police misconduct. So far in 2025, it has examined 10 reports of possible police involvement in acts of corruption (compared to 22 in 2024). Of these, three cases involving two members of the

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<sup>63</sup> The scheme's legal framework has not been abolished yet. The infringement procedure launched by the Commission in October 2020 concerning Cyprus' scheme is ongoing. Following the judgment of the Court of Justice in Case C-181/23, finding that the Maltese investor citizenship scheme breaches EU law, the Commission sent a letter to Cyprus asking it what conclusions it has drawn from this judgment for its own scheme.

<sup>64</sup> A 2022 trial, involving the former Speaker of Parliament and a former Member of Parliament, is ongoing. A high-profile criminal case was recently filed before the court that includes two former Ministers and various charges, including corruption and money laundering. In a case filed in June 2021, nine defendants were acquitted but are now facing retrial following a successful appeal by the Attorney General. Another appeal in a similar case is ongoing. An investigation by the IAAC into the Citizenship Investor Programme involving allegations against prominent political figures and former ministers is in a preliminary phase. If evidence of criminal liability is found, the report and its conclusions will be forwarded to the Attorney General. Law Office (2025), written input, pp. 12-14 and additional written input pp. 7-8. See also 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> EPPO (2025), Annual Report 2024, p. 23. In July 2024, EPPO opened an investigation into a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal project, on suspicion of procurement fraud, misappropriation of EU funds and corruption, following a referral from the Audit Office. Country visit, Cyprus, Audit Office.

<sup>66</sup> Country visit, Cyprus, Oxygen for Democracy and CIREN. Oxygen for Democracy (2025), written input pp. 7, 24-25.

<sup>67</sup> The Minister of Justice, the Attorney General, the Chief of Police, the Head of the FIU, and the Tax Commissioner participated in the meeting.

<sup>68</sup> The Financial Crime Sub-Directorate of the Police consists of 30 members (25 specialized investigators and 5 forensic accountants). Competitions for new hires in the Cyprus Police are ongoing (some 200 applicants with another 200 confirmed for the summer). There are now three District Financial Crime Investigation Offices in Nicosia, Limassol and Paphos with nine, seven and five specialised investigators respectively. Cypriot Government and Law Office (2025), written input, p. 26 and pp. 10-11 respectively and additional written input p. 6. Country visit Cyprus, Police and Law Office.

<sup>69</sup> Throughout 2024, financial crime investigators took part in training with their counterparts from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation to improve their expertise and enable information exchange. Country visit Cyprus, Cypriot Police.

police have led to criminal prosecution and are pending trial before the Court, while six cases are pending investigation<sup>70</sup>.

**Significant progress was made on the recommendation on asset declarations with the entry into force of new legislation for both elected and appointed officials<sup>71</sup>.** Two laws establishing standards for regular and detailed asset declarations and audits for both elected and appointed officials (including politically exposed persons or ‘PEPs’) entered into force in November 2024 and March 2025<sup>72</sup>. Both laws oblige officials to declare assets within four months after taking office and four months after leaving office and to periodically submit statements showing any differentiation of assets during their tenure. The submission of asset declarations of parliamentarians and the President and ministers under the new law will be triggered following the 2026 parliamentary elections and 2028 Presidential elections respectively or at any date prior if the position of an elected or appointed official becomes vacant before the end of their tenure<sup>73</sup>. The Special Parliamentary Committee (for the President, Ministers and Parliamentarians) and the three-member Council (for certain officials and PEPs) retained responsibility for the laws’ monitoring and oversight, as under the previous framework<sup>74</sup>. Nevertheless, some stakeholders have concerns that despite the improved legal framework, certain gaps in the new system remain<sup>75</sup>. Meanwhile, on 8 May 2025, the Parliament voted on two proposals amending the PEPs law, approving the extension of the law’s scope to the Chairman and Members of the Tax Tribunal and rejecting the exemption of the Chairman and Members of the Advisory Council from its scope<sup>76</sup>. There were no reported violations of declarations made in 2024. With the enactment of the new laws on asset declaration, significant progress has been made on the recommendation made last year.

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<sup>70</sup> To date, the PIAS has received 51 reports against the police of which 10 were of investigative interest. In 2024, the PIAS received 94 reports, of which 22 were of investigative interest. Two cases involving police members were brought before the Court in 2024. Cypriot Government (2025), written input and additional written input from the Cyprus Police, pp. 31 and 7 respectively.

<sup>71</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to “Ensure the effective implementation of rules on asset disclosure for elected officials to establish regular and comprehensive filing, combined with effective, regular and full verifications”.

<sup>72</sup> Law of 2024 (N. 112(I)/2024) covers the President, Ministers and Members of Parliament. Law of 2024 (N. 137(I)/2024) covers certain officials and certain politically exposed persons, including the Attorney General, Auditor General, Chief of Police and their Deputies. In November 2024, in a referral brought by the President, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General fall within the scope of the PEP law. This procedure delayed the law’s adoption and its entry into force. The enactment of these laws also responds to GRECO recommendations in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Evaluation Rounds. Cypriot Government, Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Law Office and, Parliament (2025), written inputs p. 28, pp. 5-6, p. 16, and pp. 3-6 respectively.

<sup>73</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Parliament Secretariat.

<sup>74</sup> The spouses/partners and dependents of elected and appointed officials are required to submit but not publish asset declarations. The judiciary’s declarations are covered by a separate legal framework issued by the Supreme Constitutional and Supreme Courts and are not published. Civil society considers the judiciary’s exclusion from the scope of the new laws as a gap in transparency. Oxygen for Democracy (2025), written input, p. 20.

<sup>75</sup> In their assessment, a group of certified public accountants noted that, despite its improvements, the new system still has certain gaps e.g., it does not create an independent oversight and audit body with technical expertise and places a big workload on the office of the Tax Commissioner.

<sup>76</sup> According to the Explanatory Note accompanying the proposal, the Chairman and Members of the Tax Tribunal were unintentionally left out of the principal Law while the Chairman and Members of the Advisory Council are not considered to be officials or PEPs within the meaning of the said Law. Parliament and Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2025), written contribution in the context of the country visit to Cyprus.

**Compliance with the law on lobbying is improving and stakeholders have welcomed the increased transparency.** The IAAC is responsible for implementing and enforcing the lobbying law and maintaining the publicly available lobbying register. Interest representatives and public officials must report their meetings and the subjects discussed to the IAAC. Over the past year, registrations of lobbyists increased significantly with 184 entries as of the end of May 2025. During 2024-2025, ninety-five meetings were reported to the IAAC. While lobbyists and officials are required to submit reports of their contacts to the IAAC, these are not public. Sanctions can be imposed on both lobbyists and public officials for failure to comply with their obligations<sup>77</sup>. The IAAC is satisfied with adherence to the rules by both lobbyists and public officials. The IAAC prepared a tender to digitalise the registration and monitoring procedures, which the Department of Information Technology Services is currently reviewing<sup>78</sup>. The private sector and civil society have welcomed the improvements to the lobbying rules, which help provide a level playing field for market players to gain access to public officials, as well as improve transparency in decision-making<sup>79</sup>.

**Implementation of integrity rules was strengthened through the appointment of a Special Ethics Adviser and a revision to the the Code of Conduct for Civil Servants.** In August 2024, the President of the Republic appointed a former Supreme Court Judge as a Special Adviser on Ethics on a *pro bono* basis, and he is expected to play a central role in promoting the principles of good governance for high-level elected and appointed officials. This is part of the government's efforts to strengthen the implementation of the 2023 Code of Ethics applicable to high-level officials. The Special Adviser submitted draft guidelines to the President in February 2025 which are being finalised<sup>80</sup>. The Council of Ministers approved a new Guide of Conduct and Ethics for Civil Servants at the end of March that was circulated to the civil service in April 2025. This incorporates the standards of professional behaviour as well as core integrity principles such as impartiality, objectivity, the avoidance of conflicts of interest and incompatibilities of office, and other corruption prevention measures<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Lobbyists are required to submit a report biannually detailing their contacts with officials, and officials are required to submit a co-signed report to the IAAC after every contact with lobbyists within two months. Failure to comply can include a maximum imprisonment of six months and a maximum financial penalty of EUR 5 000. Art 13, 17, 22, and 24 of Law 20(I)/2022 and Circular No. 005 of 28 February 2025.

<sup>78</sup> Law 20(I)/2022 on 'Transparency in Public Decision-Making Procedures and Related Matters Law' fully entered into force on 1 March 2024 for both public officials and lobbyists. Lobbyists include both individuals and entities such as trade unions, NGOs and political party organisations. Registered lobbyists must adhere to the publicly available 2024 Code of Conduct prepared and overseen by the IAAC. Both public officials and lobbyists are required to inform and report to the IAAC on their meetings and subjects discussed. Cypriot Government (2025), written input, pp. 24-25 and country visit, Cyprus, IAAC.

<sup>79</sup> Country visit, Cyprus, Chamber of Commerce and OEB. Oxygen for Democracy (2025), written input, pp. 15, 18 and 20. It has also been pointed out that the IAAC needs additional resources to monitor compliance effectively.

<sup>80</sup> Country visit, Cyprus, Special Ethics Adviser. The Special Ethics Adviser's office is attached to the Office of the President and supported by administrative staff. This appointment was made in response to the GRECO recommendations, following its 5<sup>th</sup> round evaluation report.

<sup>81</sup> The Guide of Conduct and Ethics for civil servants, that was prepared by the Department of Public Administration and Personnel of the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights and the Law Commissioner replaced the one from 2013. Training programmes for civil servants will be organised by the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration. Cypriot Government (2025), written input pp. 26-27, and Country visit Cyprus, Department of Public Administration and Personnel of the Ministry of Finance.

**Training on how to handle whistleblowing reports continued.** By the end of 2024, the Police received 80 complaints through its external reporting website of which one was assigned to the Criminal Investigation Department. In January 2025, the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration organised and provided training to public sector officers who receive and handle the internal and external whistleblowing channels<sup>82</sup>.

**Efforts are being made to improve efficiency, accountability and transparency in public procurement.** Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU show that 37% of companies in Cyprus (EU average 25%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender or a public procurement contract in practice in the last three years<sup>83</sup>. The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in Cyprus reports 17% of single bids for 2023 (EU average 29%). The Police, the Audit Office, civil society and business stakeholders continue to highlight public procurement as particularly prone to corruption<sup>84</sup>. This creates an uncertain business and investment environment,<sup>85</sup>. Government efforts to improve accountability, transparency, accessibility and efficiency, together with the digitalisation of public services and procurement and the more efficient approval process for small developments should help to improve the business environment<sup>86</sup>. Furthermore, 47% of companies perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review body (Tender Review Authority) as very or fairly good<sup>87</sup>. The IAAC is working on a guide that will identify high risk sectors and support public authorities, including those issuing permits, to develop anti-corruption strategies in finance, healthcare, defence and security, public procurement, construction, and infrastructure. A new e-procurement system should be in place by the end of 2025 to improve transparency and accountability of public tenders, improve data quality, and assist the work of audit authorities<sup>88</sup>. In the past year, the Treasury of the Republic of Cyprus identified four cases of conflicts of interest, three of which were excluded from EU funding programs and two were referred to the IAAC for further investigation<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> Cypriot Government (2025) and Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2025), written inputs, p. 29 and p. 4 respectively. Country visit, Cyprus, Police.

<sup>83</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 557 on Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU (2025). This is 12 percentage points above the EU average.

<sup>84</sup> Challenges highlighted by business include collaboration to set prices or divide the market, tender specifications that favour a specific company, and conflicts of interest. Chamber of Commerce and Industry, written input p. 6. Country visit Cyprus, Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation, and the Police.

<sup>85</sup> CSOs and the media also highlight the negative publicity around the citizenship-by-investment programme and the alleged involvement of high-profile individuals in corruption cases. Country visit, Cyprus, CIREN. OEB and Chamber of Commerce; Oxygen for Democracy and Chamber of Commerce (2025), written inputs, p. 24 and pp. 5-7.

<sup>86</sup> Chamber of Commerce (2025), written input p. 5-7.

<sup>87</sup> The Tenders Review Authority examines recourses 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, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>88</sup> The system will provide all information on public procurement procedures, from the project's inception to its conclusion and final acceptance. Training has been especially targeted towards small contracting authorities. The termination of certain flagship projects seek to send a clear message to the market that it will no longer tolerate a mismatch between what a contractor promises and can deliver. Cypriot Government (2025), written input, p.30.

<sup>89</sup> Cypriot Government (2025) additional written input, p. 9.

### **III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM**

**The Cyprus Radio and Television Authority operates in an independent manner.** Cyprus's regulator for audiovisual media services, the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA), is governed by the Radio and Television Broadcasters Law and is functionally and effectively independent. Pursuant to the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation Law, CRTA is mandated to partially monitor Cyprus's public service broadcaster. The Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) 2025 has increased its risk analysis from low to medium-low risk for the independence of the media regulator pointing out that various new tasks are not regulated by a suitable legal framework<sup>90</sup>. The CRTA publishes its decisions and reports on its website, including an annual activity report, which it submits to the President of the Parliament<sup>91</sup>. MPM 2025 concludes nonetheless that such activity reports appear to include neither the actual regulatory work of the Authority nor its functioning and do not provide details as to its financial situation<sup>92</sup>. The Authority is currently in the process of examining measures to ensure the adequacy of its resources for the purpose of enforcing the Digital Services Act and the European Media Freedom Act<sup>93</sup>.

**The legal framework relating to transparency of media ownership has not been improved.** Digital and print media remain unregulated as regards transparency of media ownership and the relevant legal framework governing audiovisual media is applied in an inconsistent manner. In view of these factors, MPM 2025 considers this to be an area presenting very high-risk<sup>94</sup>. A report published by the Cyprus Investigative Reporting Network (CIReN), based on information in the public domain, looks into the ownership structures of Cyprus' thirteen most prominent media groups<sup>95</sup>. The Cypriot authorities have confirmed plans to develop a database covering all media ownership information, including beneficial owners<sup>96</sup>. In Cyprus, the media regulatory authority has no power of review of media mergers and acquisitions. The Minister responsible may, prior to the decision of the competition authority, declare that a notified concentration is deemed to be of major public interest as regards the effect it may have on the public security, the pluralism of the media or the principles of sound administration<sup>97</sup>. The Cypriot authorities have announced that relevant provisions will be introduced to take into account the criteria laid down in the European Media Freedom Act on media market concentrations<sup>98</sup>.

**There has been limited progress to address the lack of legislation and transparency in the field of state advertising<sup>99</sup>.** The Government implements a set of guidelines – based on various criteria such as audience and readership share – in relation to amounts distributed to media companies for the publication of information campaigns managed by the government's Press and Information Office. The criteria used for the allocation of state advertising are

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<sup>90</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, pp. 17-19.

<sup>91</sup> Cypriot Government (2025a).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Cypriot Government (2025), written input, p. 33.

<sup>94</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, pp. 21-22.

<sup>95</sup> CIReN (2024), *Who Owns the Media?*

<sup>96</sup> Cypriot Government (2025), written input, p. 34.

<sup>97</sup> Article 5 and Articles 36-39 of the Control of Concentration between Undertakings Law 83 (I) of 2014. In such cases, the case is referred to the Council of Ministers which may officially approve or not approve the concentration in question.

<sup>98</sup> Information received from Cyprus in the context of the country visit to Cyprus for the 2024 report.

<sup>99</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to "Adopt legislation to ensure fair and transparent distribution of advertising expenditure by the state and state-owned companies".

published on the Office's website, together with its yearly financial transactions<sup>100</sup>. The MPM continues to rank this area at medium risk, pointing out that there is no legal framework regulating the area<sup>101</sup>. Draft legislation to further regulate the area is in preparation and the aim of the Government is to stipulate that public expenditure for state advertising must be distributed to a wide variety of media outlets, and to designate a monitoring authority to oversee such spending<sup>102</sup>. For these reasons, there has been limited progress on the recommendation made in the 2024 Rule of Law Report.

**There has been limited progress with regard to the independent governance of public service media<sup>103</sup>.** Consultations are still ongoing between the Government, the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation and the CRTA on the modernisation of the Law on the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation. Draft legislation drawn up by the government is currently under examination by CyBC. The bill, that aims at modifying the system of appointment and dismissal of members of CyBC's Board and at establishing stricter eligibility conditions, has been circulated to the relevant authorities<sup>104</sup>. While awaiting further progress on this bill, the Media Pluralism Monitor points out that the CyBC's present governing board was appointed by the Government taking into account the advice of a Consultative Council, which proposed persons for appointment taken from a list of persons who expressed interest in the role. MPM underlines, however, that the establishment of this body does not appear to prevent political interference and rates this as an area presenting medium-high risk<sup>105</sup>. Given that the concerns raised in previous Rule of Law Reports<sup>106</sup> and by MPM persist and the anticipated reform is still ongoing, there has been limited progress with regard to the recommendation to further advance with the process to strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media.

**The Information Commissioner continues to play an active role in terms of raising awareness on the public's right to access information.** An adequate legislative framework is in place and its implementation is efficiently overseen by the Information Commissioner who has organised press conferences and campaigns to raise public awareness about the right to access information<sup>107</sup>. However, the MPM maintains its analysis that the system leaves room for arbitrariness and has increased its risk analysis within the medium risk band, highlighting the contradictory practices adopted by different public authorities<sup>108</sup>. As a response to GRECO recommendations to Cyprus to conduct a thorough analysis of the challenges in the implementation of the law and to take additional measures to improve public access to information and a culture of openness within the public authorities, in February 2025 the Information Commissioner adopted and published a Code of Practice to strengthen the implementation of the right to access information. The Code provides

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<sup>100</sup> Cypriot Government (2025), written input, p. 33.

<sup>101</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, pp. 30-31.

<sup>102</sup> Cypriot Government (2025), written input, p. 33.

<sup>103</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended Cyprus to "Further advance with the process aimed at strengthening the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media".

<sup>104</sup> Information received from Cyprus in the context of the country visit to Cyprus for the 2024 report.

<sup>105</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, pp. 31-32.

<sup>106</sup> 2022 Rule of Law Report, Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Cyprus, pp. 13-14, 2023 Rule of Law Report, Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Cyprus, p. 19 and 2024 Rule of Law Report, Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Cyprus, p. 22.

<sup>107</sup> Law 184(I)/2017. Information and written input received from the Information Commissioner in the context of the country visit to Cyprus for the 2025 report.

<sup>108</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, pp. 15-16.



guidance to public authorities, citizens and journalists on the purpose of the Law, the relevant exceptions therein, applicable deadlines and the fee system<sup>109</sup>. The Information Commissioner confirms trends in previous years that the majority of complaints received by her office – very few of which are lodged by journalists – are resolved following the office’s intervention.

**The situation as regards safety of journalists has improved, however they continue to experience precarious working conditions.** The government has submitted for legal vetting to the Law Office of the Republic a draft bill introducing anti-SLAPP provisions<sup>110</sup>. Although the Media Pluralism Monitor continues to emphasise precarious working conditions, in light of the fact that Cyprus has registered no cases of physical or other attacks on journalists, it has decreased its risk evaluation for this area from medium to low risk<sup>111</sup>. Media professionals and organisations representing journalists continue to emphasise the precarious financial and employment situation impacting the sector with a recent study finding that 61% of journalists in the country experience job insecurity, and one-third feeling pressure or threatened in relation to their work<sup>112</sup>. The Council of Europe’s Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists has published no new alerts since the publication of the 2024 Rule of Law Report, relating to Cyprus<sup>113</sup> while the Media Freedom Rapid Response Mechanism registered one alert in relation to a draft law relating to surveillance<sup>114</sup>.

#### **IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES**

**Significant progress has been made as regards the recommendation on the effective and timely consultation of stakeholders, including with the systematic use of the electronic platform for public consultations**<sup>115</sup>. Draft legislation has been regularly submitted for comments in the electronic platform for public consultations<sup>116</sup>. Reports on concluded public consultations, including feedback on the comments received, are published on the platform together with the amended drafts, thus enhancing transparency. There are discussions on whether to transfer the monitoring of the use of the platform, as well as the implementation of the policy on public consultations, under the authority of the Commissioner for the Citizen<sup>117</sup>. Two draft bills, one aiming to make public consultations compulsory<sup>118</sup> and a second on Citizens’ Legislative Initiative could further improve public participation in decision-making<sup>119</sup>. Additional tools enhancing participatory democracy include the digital platforms

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<sup>109</sup> Information and written input received from the Information Commissioner in the context of the country visit to Cyprus for the 2025 report.

<sup>110</sup> The Protection of Persons Engaging in Public Participation from Manifestly Unfounded Lawsuits or Abusive Judicial Proceedings Law of 2024, implementing Directive 2024/1069/EU.

<sup>111</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor report on Cyprus, pp. 16-17.

<sup>112</sup> Country visit, Cyprus, Union of Cypriot Journalists.

<sup>113</sup> Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists (2024-2025).

<sup>114</sup> European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Media Freedom Rapid Response – Cyprus.

<sup>115</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to Cyprus to “continue efforts to ensure the effective and timely consultation of stakeholders in the legislative process and address shortcomings”.

<sup>116</sup> By February 2025, 114 draft bills and proposals were submitted to public consultation. Country visit Cyprus, Ministry of Finance.

<sup>117</sup> Commissioner for the Citizen (2025), written input.

<sup>118</sup> Public consultations are currently conducted by virtue of a decision of the Council of Ministers, 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, p. 24.

<sup>119</sup> Commissioner for the Citizen (2025), written input.

*Citizen's Voice*, which seeks public opinions on proposed laws and policy, and *ekfraCY*, for engaging with younger citizens. Civil society considers that these developments are positive and promote inclusivity and transparency, while their implementation needs to be monitored. Business representatives and the Bar Association are regularly consulted by the executive and invited to present their views on draft legislation during parliamentary hearings<sup>120</sup>. Building on the overall progress assessed in the previous Reports<sup>121</sup>, there has been significant progress on the implementation of the recommendations made in the previous years.

**Businesses and investors see delays in the law-making process and in adopting implementing acts as challenges.** Clear legal frameworks are particularly important for businesses and investors. Business representatives consider that the law-making process is slow and fails to address urgent needs. Delays in adopting implementing regulations further hinder the timely enforcement of legislation and create regulatory gaps that impact upon economic stability and market confidence<sup>122</sup>. Compliance costs are particularly burdensome due to complex regulations and overregulation, especially for SMEs<sup>123</sup>. In Cyprus, 32% of the surveyed companies perceive the frequent changes in legislation or concerns about quality of law-making process as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection (25% in 2024 and 36% in 2023)<sup>124</sup>. The creation of a legislation preparation platform, the e-legislation platform, faces further delays and is not expected to be completed before the end of 2026<sup>125</sup>. In May 2025, Parliament held preliminary discussions over a draft bill submitted by a Member of Parliament aiming at promoting transparency by publishing official acts and decisions on a digital platform<sup>126</sup>.

**Less than a third of the companies surveyed in Cyprus express high levels of confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection.** 27% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts<sup>127</sup>. The main reasons among companies for their lack of confidence include difficulties to enforce rights in court due to concerns about the quality, efficiency or the independence of justice (49%) and to obtain a fair compensation to protect property (49%)<sup>128</sup>. As regards authorities relevant for economic operators, 49% of companies perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority, the Commission for the Protection of Competition, as very or fairly good<sup>129</sup>.

<sup>120</sup> CroLEV (2024), Findings Report: CRoLEV Focus Groups on Civic Spaces and Responses to Crises in the Republic of Cyprus, pp. 18-25. Country visit Cyprus, Oxygen for democracy, Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation, Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Cyprus Bar Association.

<sup>121</sup> 2024, 2023 Rule of Law Reports, Cyprus, pp. 24-25 and 20-21 respectively.

<sup>122</sup> Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2025), written input, pp. 1-2. Country visit Cyprus, Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation.

<sup>123</sup> EIB Investment Survey 2024 Country Overview: Cyprus, p.18. Overall, 80% of Cypriot firms employ staff to deal with regulatory compliance. The regulatory burden is particularly high for SMEs, given their small size. See also, European Semester 2025, Annex 6.

<sup>124</sup> Figure 55, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>125</sup> Investment C3.412 of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan concerns the digitalisation of the law-making process. It should enable easier drafting, consolidation, management and storing of law and regulations accessible to citizens and businesses. Country visit Cyprus, Ministry of Finance.

<sup>126</sup> Parliament, file no 23.02.062.156-2021.

<sup>127</sup> Figure 54, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard,

<sup>128</sup> Figure 55, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>129</sup> The Commission for the Protection of Competition is an administrative body consisting of a chairman and four members. Its mission is to regulate and protect free competition with the aim to further economic growth and progress, but also to protect competitive forces and consumer welfare. Figure 60, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

**The Government put forward plans to reform the Audit Office, while questions remain around the appointment procedure of the Auditor General and his Deputy.** The Government prepared draft legislation to transform the country's Supreme Audit Institution, the Audit Office<sup>130</sup>, into a collegiate body, the Audit Council, composed of the Auditor General, the Deputy Auditor General, and three other members<sup>131</sup>. The three members would be appointed by the President of the Republic from a list of five candidates established by a special Advisory Council, after considering the views of the Auditor General. The appointment procedure for the Auditor General and his Deputy is not planned to change and would remain within the exclusive remit of the President<sup>132</sup>. International standards on the independence of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) indicate that the head of the SAI needs to be appointed by a process that ensures independence from the Executive<sup>133</sup>. Cyprus is the only Member State where the head of the SAI is appointed directly by the President without any other body being involved in the procedure<sup>134</sup>. GRECO considered that Presidential powers over the direct appointment of the top management of the key oversight bodies risks creating a relationship of interdependence<sup>135</sup>. The current Auditor General expressed the view that a two-stage appointment procedure, which would involve different bodies, would increase public trust<sup>136</sup>. The Auditor General also noted that the reform is an opportunity to enhance the financial independence of the Office, which is not fully guaranteed under the current framework<sup>137</sup>. Regarding unrestricted access to information<sup>138</sup>, the Audit Office has not so far experienced any further challenges or set-backs, mainly as a result of the good working relationship with the Law Office. While this marks an improvement compared to the major challenges reported in previous years<sup>139</sup>, the Audit Office still has limited tools to force auditees to comply with their legal obligations.

**On 1 January 2025, Cyprus had 8 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, a decrease of 2 compared to the previous year<sup>140</sup>.** At that time, Cyprus' rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 58% (compared to 47% in 2024; 42% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 3 years and 6 months

<sup>130</sup> Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) are public oversight institutions which audit the use of public funds. In Cyprus, the Audit Office is an independent state body, headed by the Auditor-General. 2023 Rule of Law Report, pp. 12 and 14.

<sup>131</sup> The reform also concerns the term of office: an eight-year, non-renewable term for the Auditor General and the Deputy (currently appointed until the age of 65) and a three-years, renewable once term for the three other members. Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2025), written input, pp 3-4.

<sup>132</sup> Article 115 (1) of the Constitution of Cyprus. Following the unanimous decision of the Supreme Constitutional Court of 18 September 2024 on the dismissal of the Auditor General for improper conduct, the President of the Republic appointed a new Auditor General on 24 September 2024.

<sup>133</sup> INTOSAI (2019), Mexico Declaration on SAI Independence, Principle 2.

<sup>134</sup> Figure 63, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>135</sup> GRECO (2023), 5<sup>th</sup> Evaluation Round, Evaluation Report Cyprus, paragraph 101.

<sup>136</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Audit Office.

<sup>137</sup> The budget of the Audit Office is part of the state budget, approved by the Minister of Finance and the Council of Ministers, before it is submitted to Parliament. However, Parliament can only decrease the allocated budget. This limitation impacts on the financial independence of the Office, as well as on its resources and capacity to perform its tasks. Cypriot Government (2025), additional input, pp. 5-6. According to the Government, a corresponding proposal put forward by the Audit Office was included in the draft bill.

<sup>138</sup> INTOSAI (2019), Mexico Declaration on SAI Independence, Principle 4.

<sup>139</sup> While non-compliance is a criminal offence, auditees do not risk prosecution when their refusal to give access to information follows the advice of the Attorney General. Cypriot Government (2025), additional written input, pp. 5-6. Country visit Cyprus, Audit Office; 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, pp. 13-14.

<sup>140</sup> For an explanation of the supervision process, see the [website](#) of the Council of Europe.

(compared to 3 years and 4 months in 2024)<sup>141</sup>. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for 6 years, concerns poor conditions of detention at Nicosia Central Prisons<sup>142</sup>. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2024 there were 2 cases in total awaiting confirmation of payments (compared to 0 in 2023)<sup>143</sup>. On 16 June 2025, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had increased to 10<sup>144</sup>.

**Challenges regarding administrative requirements for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) persist, while efforts to revise the legal framework are still ongoing.** Civic space in Cyprus remains narrowed<sup>145</sup>. The lack of uniform application in practice of the regulatory framework and heavy administrative procedures result in additional requirements not provided for by the law, delays, and inconsistent practices by the different district offices, which are a challenge for CSOs<sup>146</sup>. The process of revising the Law on Associations and Foundations, launched in November 2023, has not been concluded yet. According to the Government, the new law would reduce administrative burden and provide clearer guidance for its application<sup>147</sup>. CSOs consider that training, capacity building and continuous dialogue with civil society are also important elements to create a civic culture. The appointment of a new Commissioner for the Citizen, responsible for outreach to civil society, has been regarded as a positive step<sup>148</sup>. The Ombudsperson is also regularly exchanging and working together with civil society representatives in the context of the Human Rights Advisory Committee<sup>149</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> 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 2025. EIN (2025), written input, pp. 2-3.

<sup>142</sup> Judgment of the ECtHR, 21318/12, *Danilczuk v. Cyprus*, pending implementation since 2018.

<sup>143</sup> Council of Europe (2025), p. 156.

<sup>144</sup> Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).

<sup>145</sup> Rating by CIVICUS (2024); ratings are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

<sup>146</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, Cyprus, pp. 28 -29. Civil Society Advocates (2025), *Civil Society Organisations: Evaluation and Monitoring the Implementation of: (i) The legislation on Associations and Foundations (Law 104(I)/2017); (ii) Its implementation Regulations*.

<sup>147</sup> Country visit Cyprus, Ministry of Interior.

<sup>148</sup> OHCHR (2025), written input, pp. 7-10; Country visit Cyprus, NGO Support Centre, Civil Rights Advocates, OPEK, Oxygen for democracy; CroLEV (2024), Findings Report: CRoLEV Focus Groups on Civic Spaces and Responses to Crises in the Republic of Cyprus, pp. 18-25.

<sup>149</sup> Ombudsperson (2025), written input, p. 5; ENNHRI (2025), Cyprus, p. 81.

## Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order\*

\* The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2025 Rule of Law report can be found at [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2025-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2025-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en).

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## **Annex II: Country visit to Cyprus**

The Commission services held virtual meetings in February 2025 with:

- Association of Judges
- 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
- House of Representatives
- Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC)
- Institute for Mass Media (IMME)
- KISA
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice and Public Order
- NGO Support Centre
- Office of the Attorney General
- OPEK
- Oxygen for Democracy
- Police - Internal Affairs Service, Office of Investigation of Financial Crimes and Professional Standards and Inspection Directorate (PSID)
- 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:

- Amnesty International
- Araminta
- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Civil Society Europe

- European Civic Forum
- European Partnership for Democracy
- European Youth Forum
- International Commission of Jurists
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- JEF Europe
- Philea – Philanthropy Europe Association
- Transparency International