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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Accompanying the document

2026 Rule of Law Report

The rule of law situation in the European Union

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ABSTRACT

Latvia is taking further steps to strengthen the independence of the justice system through plans to introduce safeguards to protect the appointment procedure for judges of the Supreme Court from undue influence. In addition, the Government proposed amendments to the Law on Judicial Powers to increase the role of the Judicial Council regarding the administration of courts. The Judicial Academy started operating and conducting trainings for judges and prosecutors. Resources were redirected to the development of a court support staff system. Access to legal aid in proceedings before the Constitutional Court was expanded. The jurisdiction of the Economic Court is under revision, while courts generally continue to perform efficiently.

The Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan 2026-2027 was adopted. Investigation and prosecution of corruption cases continue to be effective, and the overall number of corruption cases remains stable. While there have been efforts to improve the implementation of conflicts of interest rules, the post-employment framework has not been strengthened yet. The electronic system for asset declarations with an automatic checking tool continues to work effectively. Steps have been taken towards adopting ethical rules for Cabinet Members and the tasks of the Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee in the Parliament have been expanded. While a voluntary list of interest representatives has been established, only limited steps in the implementation of the legislation on lobbying have been taken. The competences of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau in risk analysis have been strengthened, while the Bureau continues reviewing declarations on parties' finances efficiently and was designated as the new contact point for whistleblowing. Public procurement remains a high-risk area, despite efforts to strengthen mitigation measures and to provide safeguards.

The audiovisual media regulator continues to operate independently, with additional staff strengthening its monitoring capacity. The merger of public television and radio into Latvian Public Media has been completed. Amendments to the law on the Press and Other Mass Media were adopted to introduce mandatory registration of media service providers and disclosure of beneficial ownership information, including data on state advertising. The legal framework guaranteeing access to information remains stable. The professional environment for journalists remains overall safe, although online safety has reportedly deteriorated. An Action Plan on the safety of journalists has been approved, including the transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive.

The Parliament is discussing amendments to the Ombudsperson nomination process aimed at expanding the right to nominate candidates to include the Latvian President alongside the existing nominating authority of Parliament. Considerations are also ongoing regarding possible amendments to the Law on the Constitutional Court, including measures to further safeguard the independence of judges of the Constitutional Court. The civic space remains open, while civil society organisations report an increase in negative narratives and funding challenges.

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, the Commission concludes the following:

- Some progress has been made to ensure adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges, as a draft law allowing challenges to parliamentary decisions rejecting a candidate was published and submitted to Parliament for consideration. Since the reform remains to be adopted, it is recommended to Latvia to *take forward the legislative process to ensure adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments.*
- Limited progress has been made to ensure the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, as a temporary voluntary list of interest representatives was set-up. Since the establishment of the dedicated Register for Interest Representation has been delayed and the publicly available information remains limited, it is recommended to Latvia to *ensure the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, including as regards the special interim lobby register.*

I. JUSTICE SYSTEM¹

Independence

The level of perceived judicial independence in Latvia continues to be average among both the general public and companies. Overall, 50% of the general population and 52% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2026². The perceived judicial independence among the general public has significantly increased in comparison with 2025 (42%) and has slightly decreased in comparison with 2022 (53%). The perceived judicial independence among companies has significantly increased in comparison with 2025 (41%), as well as in comparison with 2022 (27%).

Some progress has been made on the recommendation to ensure adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges³. In January 2026, the Judicial Council concluded that all political decisions by the Parliament in judicial appointment procedures⁴ fall within the scope of constitutional review under the Constitutional Court Law. In the Judicial Council’s view, the Judicial Council holds the right to request the Constitutional Court to assess the legality of such acts against higher-ranking norms⁵. Taking note of the Judicial Council’s conclusion on this, the Government has prepared amendments to the Law on Judicial Power to formalise this right, by explicitly permitting challenges against parliamentary decisions⁶. The draft amendments were published in May 2026 and submitted to the Parliament for consideration⁷. In this light, some progress has been made on the recommendation.

Amendments are being prepared to increase the Judicial Council’s role in the administration of courts. The draft amendment to the Law on Judicial Powers include provisions to transfer the management of the Court Administration from the Ministry of Justice to the Judicial Council⁸ in matters relating to the organisation of court work, the career of judges and the budgeting of the district and regional courts⁹. The amendments would grant additional responsibilities to the Judicial Council, including the appointment and dismissal of district and regional court presidents, as well as transfers of judges. The aim of this reform is to strengthen the self-determination of the courts¹⁰ and to reinforce judicial independence by reducing influence of the executive over key judicial functions¹¹.

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

² Figures 48 and 50, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard and Figures 51 and 53, 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard. The level of perceived judicial independence is categorised as follows: very low (below 30% of respondents perceive judicial independence as fairly good and very good); low (between 30-39%), average (between 40-59%), high (between 60-75%), very high (above 75%).

³ The 2024 and 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended Latvia to ‘take measures to ensure adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the existing appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments.’ No progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2024 and 2025.

⁴ Including those without a separate formal decision, such as a written act.

⁵ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 1 and Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

⁶ Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

⁷ Public portal of draft legislation Latvia (2026a).

⁸ Country visit Latvia, Supreme Court, and Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (2026), written input, p. 159. Public portal of draft legislation Latvia (2026a).

⁹ Public portal of draft legislation Latvia (2026a).

¹⁰ Public portal of draft legislation Latvia (2026a).

¹¹ Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (2026), written input, p. 159.

Quality

Compulsory specialisation was introduced for the recruitment of judges, with the new Judicial Academy expected to also improve availability of judges across different areas of expertise. The 2024 State Audit Office performance audit on human resources in Courts noted the lack of candidates to fill vacancies in the judiciary¹². While vacant judges' positions remain, the Judicial Council considers that the main pressing issue is not, as previously, the overall number of judges, but rather the shortage of judges with certain specialisations, for example in criminal cases¹³. In January 2025, the Judicial Academy¹⁴ commenced planning, organising and conducting trainings addressed to judges and prosecutors as well as other staff in the administration of justice¹⁵. The Judicial Academy cooperates closely with the judiciary¹⁶ and it is seen to play an important role in ensuring availability of judges with different specialisations, as well as making the judiciary more attractive in the long term¹⁷. The Judicial Academy also plans to provide training for applicants for the position of judge and prosecutor for a fee¹⁸.

Resources were reallocated to strengthen court support staff. The judicial assistants continue to experience high turnover, with low salaries relative to the level of required qualifications as well as more attractive opportunities in the private sector seen as the probable explanations¹⁹. In 2025, the Judicial Council decided to redirect part of the funding allocated for unfilled judicial posts to the development of the court support staff system, including to address the high turnover of judicial assistants, designated as one of its priorities for the year²⁰. In addition, the proposed amendments to the Law on Judicial Powers include redefining the requirements for court employees, including introducing a new court lawyer position across the judiciary to support judges in legal work²¹, allowing to raise the salary category for judicial assistants²². In parallel, a review of the service pension regulation for

¹² 2024 Rule of Law Report, Latvia, p. 4. State Audit Office (2024).

¹³ European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (2026), p. 29. Country visit Latvia, Supreme Court and Judicial Council. Most candidates who apply to become judges are specialised in the civil area and not in the criminal area. Since September 2025, judicial recruitment requires candidates to choose an initial field of law (e.g., criminal, civil, or administrative) in which they wish to specialise, acting as a quality filter and reducing the risk of candidates entering without expertise in the chosen field. Country visit Latvia, Court Administration.

¹⁴ Establishing the Judicial Academy was one of the reforms under Latvia's Recovery and Resilience Plan and it has been supported by the Commission's Technical Support Instrument. The aim of the Judicial Academy is to develop the skills and competences necessary for professional performance and personal development throughout the judicial career.

¹⁵ Country visit Latvia, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Judicial Council, Association of Judges, Council of Sworn Advocates and the Office of the Ombudsperson. Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

¹⁶ Country visit Latvia, Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Council of Sworn Advocates, the Office of the Ombudsperson.

¹⁷ Country visit Latvia, Supreme Court and Judicial Council.

¹⁸ Country visit Latvia, Court Administration, Supreme Court and Judicial Council. Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

¹⁹ Country visit Latvia, Court Administration, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and Judicial Council.

²⁰ European Network of Councils for the Judiciary, written input p. 29. Country visit Latvia, Supreme Court and Judicial Council.

²¹ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 12. Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Justice. Court lawyer would correspond to a senior assistant judge with legal qualifications. Working Party on Specialisation of Judges (2024). Public portal of draft legislation Latvia (2026a).

²² Country visit Latvia, Supreme Court and Judicial Council. Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (2026), written input, p. 164.

judges and prosecutors is underway as part of a wider reform across public services²³, including a transitional provision for an evaluation of how the new pension regime might affect judges' careers²⁴. The Latvian Association of Judges and the Judicial Council pointed to the rushed legislative process²⁵. At the same time, efforts for further digitalisation of the justice system continued²⁶. The level of digitalisation of the justice system remains high, with digital technology broadly available in court proceedings²⁷.

Access to legal aid in Constitutional Court proceedings was expanded and a maximum payable fee to start litigation was introduced. In April 2026, amendments to the State Ensured Legal Aid Law were adopted, expanding access to state-ensured legal aid in the proceedings of the Constitutional Court, by making it available at the stage of preparing an application, without requiring the applicant to first submit an application to the Constitutional Court without the benefit of legal aid²⁸. Stakeholders see this as an important improvement for accessibility to the Constitutional Court²⁹. In April 2025, a cap was introduced in the Civil Procedure Law setting a maximum payable fee to start litigation in State court³⁰ which is perceived as functioning well in practice³¹. At the same time, the current levels of litigation costs and maximum compensation awards may limit access to justice for smaller companies, as successful claims might not fully cover incurred losses or deliver proportionate recovery³².

Efficiency

The jurisdiction of the Economic Court is being revised, refining it in criminal cases while extending it in commercial cases. The proposed amendments would refine the jurisdiction of the Economic Court to allow it to focus on matters which fall within its main area of competence, such as criminal offences of organised crime, corruption and financial crimes. In parallel, its jurisdiction would be expanded in commercial cases³³. These changes are aimed at enhancing the specialised nature of the Economic Court³⁴. Business representatives welcomed the specialisation and quality of the judgments of the Economic Court, while considering it fundamental that the extension of competences comes with recruitment of additional judges³⁵. To contribute to handling complex economic cases, the Riga Regional Court has been determined as the single regional court for the appeals from the

²³ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 5.

²⁴ The President of Latvia suggested adding a transitional provision, underlining the importance of judges' independence and financial security. Latvian Public Media (2026a).

²⁵ European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (2026), p. 61. Country visit Latvia, Judicial Council and Latvian Association of Judges.

²⁶ The E-case portal was developed further to continue the digitalisation of litigation processes and investigations, for instance by adding a new calendar function to view case information on scheduled court hearings, introducing an e-form to submit complaints against procedural decisions, as well as setting up an online service for calculating state compensation. Latvian Government (2026), written input, pp. 7-8.

²⁷ Figures 44 and 45, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

²⁸ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 5.

²⁹ Country visit Latvia, Constitutional Court and Latvian Association of Judges.

³⁰ European Association of Judges (2026).

³¹ Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia.

³² Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia.

³³ For instance, the jurisdiction would be expanded to claims for acquisition of shares or stocks of a capital company or termination of its activities, claims of merchants for the payment of insurance compensation, and claims arising from financial instruments. Latvian Government (2026), written input, pp. 10-11, and Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input. Country visit Latvia, Court Administration and Economic Court.

³⁴ Country visit Latvia, Supreme Court and Judicial Council.

³⁵ Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia and Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Economic Court³⁶. However, business representatives raise procedural concerns, noting that the appeals instance lacks the same level of specialised economic and commercial expertise and risks to undermine the objective of specialisation of the Economic Court³⁷.

II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

The perception among experts, citizens and business executives is that the level of corruption in the public sector is relatively low. In the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Latvia scores 60/100 and ranks 13th in the European Union and 37th globally³⁸. This perception is relatively stable over the past five years³⁹. The 2026 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 79% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 71%) and 25% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 64% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 65%) and 17% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 37%). Furthermore, 29% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 38%), while 21% of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 31%)⁴⁰.

The Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan 2026-2027 was adopted, and the competences of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau have been strengthened. The Action Plan 2023-2025 has concluded and the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) is preparing an evaluation report, which is expected to be submitted in June 2026⁴¹. The next Action Plan 2026-2027⁴² was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in April 2026⁴³. It sets out four objectives focused on transparency, institutional sustainability and integrity, minimising corruption risks in public procurement, and ensuring the effective repression of corruption, alongside 19 activities⁴⁴. The 2026 amendments to the Law on KNAB establish strategic and tactical corruption risk analysis as a core function of the Bureau⁴⁵. KNAB's corruption risk analysis information system is planned to be interconnected with other national registers, further enhancing information exchange and strengthening national capacity for corruption prevention and combating⁴⁶. In parallel, the State Audit Office is conducting an independent evaluation of KNAB's performance to ensure its future effectiveness⁴⁷, an action which civil society organisations have been calling for⁴⁸.

³⁶ Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

³⁷ Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia and Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

³⁸ 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).

³⁹ In 2021, the score was 59, while, in 2025, the score is 60. The score significantly increases/decreases when it changes more than five points; improves/deteriorates (changes between 4-5 points) and is relatively stable (changes from 1-3 points) in the last five years.

⁴⁰ Data from Special Eurobarometer 573 (2026) and Flash Eurobarometer 582 (2026).

⁴¹ Latvian Government (2026), written input p. 15; Public portal of draft legislation Latvia (2026b).

⁴² Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan 2026-2027. The new plan has been developed by a working group of 41 institutions, including six non-governmental organisations, Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

⁴³ Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan 2026-2027.

⁴⁴ Latvian Government (2026), written input p. 15.

⁴⁵ KNAB (2026a).

⁴⁶ Parliament (2026), written input.

⁴⁷ Country visit Latvia, State Audit Office.

⁴⁸ Country visit Latvia, Providus.

Investigation and prosecution of corruption cases remain effective overall, and the number of corruption cases remains stable. KNAB, as well as the Internal Security Bureau and the State Border Guard, continue to efficiently investigate and refer corruption offences for prosecution⁴⁹. As regards high-level cases, around ten cases are ongoing before the Economic Court, while no judgments were issued in 2025⁵⁰. The fight against corruption remains one of the priorities of the Office of the Public Prosecutor⁵¹. The Corruption Prevention Coordination unit at the Office of the Prosecutor General was integrated in the Pre-Trial Criminal Proceedings and Litigation Unit of the Criminal Justice Department of the Office of the Prosecutor General, and the position of the Chief Prosecutor was liquidated⁵². While some challenges persist on the investigation of high-level corruption cases, such as long duration and absence of witnesses, authorities reported positive developments regarding cooperation with foreign jurisdictions⁵³. As regards the EPPO, cooperation with KNAB and the Office of the Prosecutor General is effective. KNAB cooperated with the EPPO in six cases in 2025⁵⁴. A dedicated support unit for the European Delegated Prosecutors was set-up in the Office of the Prosecutor General in 2025⁵⁵.

While there have been some efforts to improve the implementation of conflicts of interest rules, the post-employment framework has not been strengthened yet. As regards implementation, in 2025, the KNAB examined a total number of 828 declarations regarding potential conflicts of interest. In 110 cases, the public officials were fined (for an overall amount of EUR 17 630)⁵⁶. The authorities are considering new rules on conflicts of interest based on a more risk-based approach⁵⁷. In preparation, the State Chancellery, the KNAB and the Ministry of Welfare finalised a report on ‘cooling-off periods for work in the public sector’⁵⁸. In parallel, an amendment to the Law on Prevention of Conflicts of Interest in Activities of Public Officials was adopted in Parliament, aiming to allow a reduction of the ‘cooling off’ period from two years to one year in individual cases to ensure proportionality⁵⁹.

⁴⁹ Latvian Government (2026), written input pp. 20 ff.; the State border guard transferred seven cases for prosecution, noting a gradual reduction of corruption cases in the area of their competence. The Internal Security Bureau initiated a total of 52 criminal investigations; KNAB transmitted a total of 45 proceedings against 53 natural persons and one legal person to the prosecution service. KNAB (2025), p. 4.

⁵⁰ Country visit Latvia, Economic Court. In 2024, at least 10 high-level cases were ongoing and at least 2 were finalised.

⁵¹ Country visit Latvia, Office of the Prosecutor General. A total of 24 prosecutors focus on anti-corruption at local, regional and national level.

⁵² Latvian Government (2026), written input, pp. 14-15. Country visit Latvia, Office of the Prosecutor General.

⁵³ A recent Supreme Court judgment facilitates the admissibility of evidence received via Interpol channels and close cooperation has been established with the most relevant neighbouring countries; a remaining challenge for cooperation is the geopolitical situation. Country visit Latvia, the Office of the Prosecutor General. Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

⁵⁴ Country visit Latvia, KNAB.

⁵⁵ The unit consists of the head of unit, a senior assistant prosecutor, two lawyer-consultants, a translator and a senior transaction operations analyst. Country visit Latvia, the Office of the Prosecutor.

⁵⁶ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 17.

⁵⁷ A risk-based approach in anti-corruption involves identifying, assessing and prioritising corruption risks based on their impact and likelihood. It allows organisation to use their resources efficiently, focusing on high-risk areas and avoiding unnecessary expenditure on low-risk activities, Country visit Latvia, State Chancellery.

⁵⁸ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 15.

⁵⁹ Law on Prevention of Conflicts of Interest in Activities of Public Officials. Country visit Latvia, State Chancellery. Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

The electronic system for asset declarations with an automatic tool checking the declarations continues to work effectively. The reduction in staff following a re-organisation of the State Revenue Service (SRS) in 2024 had no negative impact on its operation, following the introduction of an automatic risk assessment system for public officials' declarations and the implementation of an automated solution that compares the information provided in these declarations⁶⁰. As a result, out of the total of the 61 778 declarations submitted by public officials, only 9,75% required manual intervention. Decisions regarding administrative violations were made in 505 cases⁶¹.

Ethical rules for Cabinet Members in the Government have been prepared and the tasks of the Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee in the Parliament were expanded. The State Chancellery has prepared a code of ethics for Cabinet Members, which the latter are currently reviewing⁶². The Parliament extended the tasks to the mandate of the Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee, which now includes preparing and publishing recommendations, explanations and other documents⁶³. In 2025, the Committee actively monitored compliance with the Code of Ethics for Members of the Parliament reviewed several complaints and issued one written warning for violation of the Code of Ethics⁶⁴.

While a voluntary list of interest representatives has been established, there has been limited progress on the recommendation to ensure the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying⁶⁵. Latvia amended the Law on Transparency of Interest Representation in June 2025⁶⁶. The amendment delayed the establishment of the Register of Interest Representation and the System for Declaring Interest Representation, initially foreseen by 2025, until September 2028⁶⁷. Based on the same amendment, a voluntary list of interest representatives available to the public has been set-up in the Enterprise Register of the Republic of Latvia, and additional information about interest representation activities has been published on the websites of the respective public institutions since September 2025⁶⁸. While these publications have slightly improved the implementation of the legislation on lobbying, the information publicly available remains limited⁶⁹. As a result, limited progress has been made to ensure the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying.

KNAB continues reviewing declarations on political parties' finances efficiently. Latvia has a solid legislative framework to ensure transparency of political party financing, which is also efficiently implemented. KNAB examined the election revenue and expenditure declarations submitted by political organisations running in the 2024 European Parliament elections, and it held ten political parties administratively liable for various violations and issued a warning or imposed a total fine of EUR 6 800⁷⁰. In addition, KNAB verified the declarations of 45 parties for local elections and held 22 of them liable for violations in

⁶⁰ Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

⁶¹ Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

⁶² Country visit Latvia, State Chancellery.

⁶³ Parliament (2026), written input.

⁶⁴ Parliament (2026), written input.

⁶⁵ The 2025 Rule of Law report recommended Latvia to 'ensure the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, including as regards the special interim lobby register.'

⁶⁶ Law on Transparency in Interest Representation.

⁶⁷ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Latvian Government (2026), written input p. 1; Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input. As of 5 February 2026, 23 interest representatives have been included in the voluntary list - 4 natural persons and 19 legal persons (of which 7 limited liability companies and 12 associations).

⁶⁹ Country visit Latvia, Delna, Providus and Civic Alliance Latvia.

⁷⁰ KNAB (2025a).

2025⁷¹. KNAB also audits and publishes annual reports of political parties. For 2025, it published the reports of 63 parties, along with related updates, and completed 69 audits of these reports. KNAB also continued its work on the development of an electronic data entry system that would enable the automated transmission of annual returns and election revenue and expenditure declaration, as well as the automatic calculation of funding limits applicable to donors and members⁷².

KNAB was designated as the new contact point for whistleblowing. The Whistleblower Law was amended, transferring the contact point for whistleblowers from the State Chancellery to KNAB⁷³. The contact point became operational in March 2026. The amendment also provides for further protection of whistleblowers, although it does not guarantee anonymity. KNAB has received 80 submissions as whistleblower reports, and 2021 other submissions in 2025⁷⁴. Additionally, the amendment stipulates that the Bureau will handle the whistleblower reports where the competent authority is not clearly identifiable, as well as provide further training for designated contact persons and those responsible for whistleblowing procedures⁷⁵. In addition, the Government developed an e-learning course for public administration and organised an international conference on whistleblowing in 2025⁷⁶.

Public procurement remains a high-risk area for corruption, although the Government has made efforts to strengthen mitigation measures and to provide safeguards. Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU show that 28% of companies in Latvia (EU average 30%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender in practice in the last three years⁷⁷. 49% of businesses perceive the level of independence of the Procurement Monitoring Bureau as very or fairly good when it is reviewing public procurement cases⁷⁸. The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in Latvia reports 24% of single bids for 2025 (27% EU average). Public procurement continues to be identified as a high-risk area for corruption⁷⁹. The authorities have undertaken various measures to mitigate these risks, ranging from the adoption of dedicated plans⁸⁰, trainings and public awareness, to incentives for public officials⁸¹ and hackathons⁸². In addition, public procurement procedures in the field of construction, wastewater, waste, cleaning and environmental services as well as architecture, construction and engineering services are subject to additional monitoring as they have been identified as

⁷¹ KNAB (2025b).

⁷² KNAB (2026c), p. 27.

⁷³ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 18.

⁷⁴ KNAB (2026c), p. 4.

⁷⁵ KNAB (2026c), p. 11.

⁷⁶ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 18.

⁷⁷ Flash Eurobarometer 582 on Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU (2026). This is 2 percentage points below the EU average.

⁷⁸ Figure 59, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

⁷⁹ For example, the EPPO investigated alleged corruption in a case relating to high-level IT procurement fraud, leading to the detention of 20 suspects. EPPO (2026). The investigation led to questions on potential impact on upcoming elections, and the President of the Republic called for manual vote counting in the 2026 parliamentary elections. Latvian Public Media (2026b).

⁸⁰ The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs has adopted a dedicated plan with mitigation measures, Order No. 2/2026 "On Approval of the Anti-Corruption Measures Plan of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs for 2026-2028". Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 15.

⁸¹ Such measures seem to have proven successful in reducing cases of bribery or attempted bribery in relation to border checks. Country visit Latvia, State Border Guard.

⁸² KNAB organized two anti-corruption data hackathons on reducing corruption risks in public procurement using AI solutions. Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

risk areas⁸³. While the centralisation of some procurement related activities at the Ministry of Interior seems to have a positive effect⁸⁴, challenges due to limited competition and agreements among bidders seem to persist especially at the local level⁸⁵. In this regard, stakeholders have pointed out the lack of criminal sanctions for cartels of bidders⁸⁶. Additional concerns have been raised by foreign investors about an ongoing reform of the public procurement system, which seems to reduce the level of openness and transparency of competitions⁸⁷. Other high-risk sectors, which have been identified as particularly challenging, are immigration and health services⁸⁸.

III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM

The regulator for audiovisual media services, the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP), continues to operate independently and remains effective. NEPLP is composed of five members elected by Parliament for a term of five years. The Electronic Mass Media Law sets the conditions for appointment and dismissal of the members to preserve independence and accountability. In 2025, the NEPLP received additional staff to enhance its monitoring capacity⁸⁹. The functioning of the new Advisory Council to the NEPLP in its first year has proven to be effective and productive, with quarterly meetings that consistently provide support to the Council's initiatives and decision-making processes⁹⁰. The 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) continues to consider a very low risk (10%) for the independence and effectiveness of the media authorities⁹¹. According to the MPM 2026, self-regulation continues to be considered partly effective, while the regulatory framework does not provide specific legal or self-regulatory safeguards for journalists in situations such as ownership changes, and journalists' participation in professional organisations remains relatively low⁹².

The merger of the public television and radio into Latvian Public Media (LSM) was completed, with no perceived effects on independence and media pluralism. 2025 was the first year of functioning of LSM. New editor-in-chief was appointed from an open contest and approved by the Public Electronic Mass Media Council (SEPLP). Given the expiration of the SEPLP's first term in August 2025, the changes in its membership, as well as the October 2026 elections and the upcoming new composition of the Parliament, it was decided to continue developing the new LSM financing model within a broader reform process. Under this process, the Council will submit a reform package to the Parliament by the end of 2027, that includes changing LSM's legal status from a state enterprise to a derived public entity⁹³. The use of Russian language was discontinued in public linear broadcasting on 1 January 2026⁹⁴. As a result, LSM has developed a new strategy on minorities and it continues to produce Russian-language news for its online channels, as well as news in Ukrainian and English. LSM has opened a new studio in Daugavpils to maintain contact with the Russian-

⁸³ Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

⁸⁴ Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Interior.

⁸⁵ Country visit Latvia, Chamber of Commerce and Foreign Investors Council in Latvia.

⁸⁶ Country visit Latvia, Chamber of Commerce and Foreign Investors Council in Latvia.

⁸⁷ Baltijas Balss Latvia (2026).

⁸⁸ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 19.

⁸⁹ Country visit Latvia, NEPLP.

⁹⁰ Country visit Latvia, NEPLP.

⁹¹ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Latvia, p. 12.

⁹² 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Latvia, p. 27.

⁹³ Country visit Latvia, SEPLP.

⁹⁴ Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Culture.

speaking minority and ensure the region receives high-quality news coverage⁹⁵. LSM plans to integrate minority related- topics directly into the main public media offer, instead of isolating them into separate channels or segments⁹⁶.

Amendments to the Press Law introduced transparency rules. Amendments to the law on the Press and Other Mass Media were adopted by the Parliament in June 2026⁹⁷, introducing mandatory registration of media service providers and disclosure of beneficial ownership information, with a view to alignment with the European Media Freedom Act⁹⁸. They also provide access to information about funding allocated for State advertising by public institutions and other public entities through the Mass Media Register⁹⁹. The risk level for transparency of media ownership increased from medium to medium-high (56%) in the 2026 MPM¹⁰⁰.

Access to public information remains stable. While the legal framework guaranteeing the right of access to information in the Freedom of Information Law is considered effective¹⁰¹, Latvian Association of Journalists report that public authorities sometimes deny access on the grounds of national security, which is difficult to challenge¹⁰². Although the MPM 2026 again refers to some issues about public institutions being slow and overly bureaucratic in responding to information requests, and to recent examples of institutions requiring electronically signed documents when journalists submit questions on current issues, it considers the protection of the right to information a very low-risk area (16%)¹⁰³.

The professional environment for journalists continues to be overall safe, although online safety has reportedly deteriorated. Since the publication of 2025 Rule of Law Report there were no cases of physical violence reported¹⁰⁴. A further deterioration in the online environment, especially for female journalists, was, however, observed¹⁰⁵. According to stakeholders, there has not yet been a SLAPP case¹⁰⁶. In November 2025, the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers approved the Safety of Journalists and Other Media Professionals Action Plan developed by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with various State institutions and media organisations¹⁰⁷. The plan included the transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive and the transposing Law entered into force on 7 May 2026, covering both domestic and cross-border cases. Since the publication of the 2025 Rule of Law Report, the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists¹⁰⁸ and the Mapping Media Freedom platform¹⁰⁹ did not publish new alerts about

⁹⁵ Country visit Latvia, LSM.

⁹⁶ Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Culture.

⁹⁷ Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

⁹⁸ Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Culture.

⁹⁹ Country visit Latvia, Ministry of Culture.

¹⁰⁰ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Latvia, p. 22.

¹⁰¹ Country visit Latvia, LSM.

¹⁰² Country visit Latvia, Latvian Association of Journalists.

¹⁰³ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Latvia, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ Country visit Latvia, Latvian Association of Journalists.

¹⁰⁵ Country visit Latvia, Latvian Association of Broadcasting Organisations and Ombudsperson.

¹⁰⁶ Country visit Latvia, Latvian Association of Journalists and Ombudsperson.

¹⁰⁷ Latvian Government (2026) written input, p. 30.

¹⁰⁸ Council of Europe Safety of Journalist Platform (2026).

¹⁰⁹ Mapping Media Freedom (2026).

Latvia. The 2026 MPM indicator for journalistic profession, standards, and protection remains stable at medium-low risk (50%)¹¹⁰.

IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES

Amendments to the Ombudsperson nomination process are being discussed in the Parliament. The amendments would expand the right to nominate candidates for the Ombudsperson, providing that in addition to members of the Parliament (not less than 10), also the President of the Republic could nominate candidates for the position. This follows recommendations to make the selection and appointment more participatory and transparent¹¹¹. The Parliament would continue to elect the Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson, which is the National Human Rights Institution, was re-accredited with A-Status in October 2025¹¹². Due to general austerity measures, the Ombudsperson revised its budget and reduced planned expenses for research, training and travel. It also assumed an additional mandate as the national contact point for Artificial Intelligence with no additional funds allocated for this task for 2026¹¹³.

Amendments to the Law on the Constitutional Court are being considered. The aim of the amendments is to strengthen the independence of judges of the Constitutional Court by ensuring the possibility that their decisions cannot result in negative repercussions after their mandate ends¹¹⁴. The draft amendments to the Constitutional Court Law would introduce a “guarantee of return” allowing prosecutors appointed as members of the Constitutional Court to return to an equivalent position within the Prosecutor’s Office and retain eligibility for a prosecutor’s service pension¹¹⁵. Amendments were also adopted to improve the regulation of the institution of a judge’s separate opinion¹¹⁶. This allows judges who disagree with a decision to terminate the proceedings or its reasoning to submit a separate opinion at their discretion, while retaining the existing right of judges to submit separate opinions regarding judgements on merits¹¹⁷.

Less than half of companies surveyed in Latvia express confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection. 43% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts, a figure that has increased in comparison with 2025 (37%)¹¹⁸. The main reasons listed by companies for their lack of confidence are the frequent changes in legislation and concerns about quality of the law-making process (29%)¹¹⁹. As regards authorities relevant for economic operators, 42% perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (Competition Council) as very or fairly good, a figure which

¹¹⁰ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Latvia, p. 12.

¹¹¹ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 36. This amendment follows a 2020 recommendation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions Sub-Committee on Accreditation, recommending further improvements to make the selection and appointment more participatory and transparent, including to maximise the number of potential candidates from a wide range of societal groups and educational qualifications.

¹¹² Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (2025), p. 26.

¹¹³ Country visit Latvia, Office of the Ombudsperson.

¹¹⁴ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Latvian Government (2026), written input, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Country visit Latvia, Constitutional Court. Latvian Government (2026a), additional written input.

¹¹⁸ Figure 52, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹¹⁹ Figure 53, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard. 24% of the surveyed investors perceive concerns about the quality of the law-making process and concerns about quality, efficiency or independence of justice as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection.

has increased in comparison with 2025 (37%)¹²⁰. The Supreme Court has jurisdiction in several business-related cases, including in cases related to public procurement, public concessions, public contracts and economic regulation. A number of judicial mechanisms to improve efficiency are available in these cases, including the possibility to apply interim measures, joint examination of similar cases and the consolidation of multiple appeals¹²¹. Foreign investors expressed concerns that public procurement practices and large-scale contract awards may adversely affect the business environment and investment climate, highlighting a concentration of contracts among a limited number of recipients¹²². Amendments to the Public Procurement law are being discussed to centralise procurement, which would be welcomed by foreign investors¹²³, while further improvements on transparency are still considered necessary¹²⁴.

On 1 January 2026, Latvia had 7 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, a decrease of 2 compared to the previous year¹²⁵. At that time, Latvia's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 81% (compared to 79% in 2025; 19% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 1 year and 6 months (compared to 1 year and 3 months in 2025)¹²⁶. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for more than 3 years, concerns, among other issues, the domestic court's failure to take account of a trade-union element in a labor dispute of the applicant¹²⁷. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2025 there was 1 case in total awaiting confirmation of payments (compared to 2 in 2024)¹²⁸. By 17 June 2026, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had increased to 8¹²⁹.

Civic space remains open and cooperation with the Government continues to be positive, while civil society organisations report an increase in negative narratives and funding challenges. Civic space in Latvia continues to be rated as 'open' by Civicus¹³⁰. The implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Non-Governmental Organisations and the Cabinet of Ministers has begun with the establishment of the Memorandum Council as the central platform for civic dialogue¹³¹. While cooperation with the Government continues to be positive, civil society organisations reported an increase in

¹²⁰ Figure 60, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹²¹ 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.

¹²² Foreign investors also reported challenges with short submission deadlines, lack of transparency of the procurement process, and the exclusive use of Latvian language in procurement documentation. Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia and Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

¹²³ Country visit Latvia, Foreign Investors Council in Latvia.

¹²⁴ Country visit Latvia, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

¹²⁵ For an explanation of the supervision process, see the [website](#) of the Council of Europe.

¹²⁶ 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. 6.

¹²⁷ Judgment of the ECtHR, 59402/14, *Straume v. Latvia*, pending implementation since 2022.

¹²⁸ Council of Europe (2026), p. 163.

¹²⁹ Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).

¹³⁰ Latvia's score is 86/100. Ratings by Civicus are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

¹³¹ The Council for the Implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Non-Governmental Organisations and the Cabinet of Ministers (Memorandum Council). Country visit Latvia, Civic Alliance Latvia.

negative narratives on their role, including from political actors¹³², prompting the civil society to suggest putting in place an early warning system to document and report concerns before they escalate¹³³. At the same time, civil society organisations face growing funding pressure¹³⁴, compounded by uncertainty surrounding key domestic and international funding mechanisms¹³⁵ and continued challenges in participation in discussions on public funding¹³⁶.

¹³² Country visit Latvia, Civic Alliance Latvia, Providus. This included the public debate surrounding Latvia's potential withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, which triggered widespread civil society engagement through protests and petitioning, leading the President to return the draft law to Parliament for reconsideration. Fundamental Rights Agency (2026), p. 206-209.

¹³³ Country visit Latvia, Civic Alliance Latvia.

¹³⁴ Country visit Latvia, Civic Alliance Latvia and Providus.

¹³⁵ Country visit Latvia, Transparency International Latvia.

¹³⁶ Country visit Latvia, Civic Alliance Latvia and Providus.

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 Latvia

The Commission services held virtual meetings in February 2026 with:

- Bar Association (Council of Sworn Advocates)
- Civic Alliance Latvia
- Constitutional Court
- Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB)
- Council of Sworn Advocates
- Court Administration
- Delna – Transparency International Latvia
- Economic Court
- Foreign Investors' Council in Latvia (FICIL)
- Internal Security Bureau
- Judicial Council
- Latvian Association of Broadcasting Organisations
- Latvian Association of Journalists
- Latvian Association of Judges
- Latvian Association of Press Publishers
- Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Latvian Public Media
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice
- National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP)
- Ombudsperson's Office
- Prosecutor General's Office
- Providus
- Public Electronic Mass Media Council (SEPLP)
- State Audit Office
- State Border Guard
- State Chancellery
- State Revenue Service
- Supreme Court

* 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