

LIBERTIES

RULE OF LAW

REPORT

2026



#roi-report2026

LATVIA



Co-funded by
the European Union

FOREWORD

The Liberties Rule of Law Report 2026 is the seventh annual report on the state of rule of law in the European Union (EU) published by the Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties). Liberties is a non-governmental civil society organisation promoting the civil liberties of everyone in the EU, and it is built on a network of national civil liberties groups from across the EU. Currently, we have member organisations in Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, as well as a contributing partner organisation in Greece.

Liberties, together with its members and partner organisations, carries out advocacy, campaigning and public education activities to explain what the rule of law is, what the EU and national governments are doing to protect or harm it, and gathers public support to press leaders at EU and national level to fully respect, promote and protect our basic rights and values.

Drafted by Liberties and its member and partner organisations, the 2026 report covers the situation during 2025 with the purpose of providing the European Commission with reliable information and analysis from the ground to feed its own rule of law reports, and to provide an independent analysis of the state of the rule of law in the EU in its own right. Liberties' report represents the most in-depth reporting exercise carried out to date by a civil society network to map developments in a wide range of areas connected to the rule of law in the EU.

The 2026 report includes EU-wide trend analysis in the justice system, anti-corruption framework, media freedom, checks and balances, based on 22 country reports that follow a common structure, mirroring and expanding on the priority areas and indicators identified by the European Commission for its annual rule of law monitoring cycle. Nearly 40 organisations contributed to the compilation of these country reports. The 2026 report places particular emphasis on the recommendations made by the European Commission and how, in the assessment of Liberties' members, they have been implemented. Specific gaps were identified alongside new issues that arose in 2025.

[Download the full Liberties Rule of Law Report 2026 here.](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING ORGANISATIONS	4
OVERALL ASSESSMENT: HARD WORKER	5
Assessment of the trajectory	7
JUSTICE SYSTEM	8
General assessment	8
Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations	9
New Issues that Emerged in 2025	9
Implementation of Judgments	12
ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK	15
General assessment	15
Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations	15
Gaps in the Commission's Report	16
New Issues that Emerged in 2025	18
Implications and Recommendations for 2026	20
MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND MEDIA FREEDOM	21
General assessment	21
Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations	21
New Issues that Emerged in 2025	21
Recommendations for 2026	23
CHECKS AND BALANCES	24
General assessment	24
Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations	24
New Issues that Emerged in 2025	24
Implications and Recommendations for 2026	28
CONTACTS	30

LATVIA

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING ORGANISATIONS

Latvian Centre for Human Rights



The Latvian Centre for Human Rights (LCHR) was established in 1993 as an independent non-governmental organisation. Over the past three decades, LCHR worked with integration (minority rights and promotion of tolerance) issues, elimination of discrimination and hate crimes/speech, asylum, migration and fundamental rights issues, as well as human rights observation in closed institutions (prisons, immigration detention facilities).

LCHR conducts human rights monitoring, research and policy analysis, training of different target groups, and provides legal aid to victims of human rights violations, including their representation before domestic and international courts. The LCHR provides expert opinions both locally (to government, parliament, media, educational institutions, courts, and lawyers), as well as internationally. The LCHR is involved in advocacy for change, ranging from raising public awareness to specific policy or legislative change.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: HARD WORKER

According to various global surveys, Latvia scores high or relatively high concerning the rule of law. According to the 2025 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index,¹ Latvia is among the minority of countries to see its rule of law score increase in 2025. It ranks 21st out of 143 countries worldwide.² According to IDEA, Latvia ranks 13th out of 173 countries concerning rule of law category of the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) framework.³ The justice system in Latvia continues to perform efficiently. However, the European Commission's recommendation concerning the need for further safeguards to protect the appointment procedure for judges of the Supreme Court from undue political influence has not been addressed. The new Judicial Academy officially opened its premises in October 2025.

Latvia acceded to Protocol No. 16 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which will allow the Supreme Court (also known as the Senate) and the Constitutional Court to request an advisory opinion from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on significant questions concerning the interpretation or application of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Convention or its Protocols.

The parliament supported public procurement reform in the first reading,⁴ but Transparency International Latvia – Delna has raised concerns about the reform's impact on corruption risks and integrity.⁵ In response to calls to reduce administrative burdens and improve the legal framework, Latvia has postponed the full launch of its interest-representation register to 2028, while allowing interest representatives to voluntarily disclose their information in a publicly accessible register starting in

1 *The 2025 WJP Rule of Law Index*[®] evaluates 143 countries and jurisdictions around the world

2 2025 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index. Latvia, <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2025/Latvia/>; https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/Latvia_2.pdf

3 Global State of Democracy Initiative - Launched by [International IDEA](#), the GSoD Initiative brings together a robust set of products that provides data and analysis about democracy worldwide. Its goal is to contribute to the public debate on democracy and to inform policy interventions aimed at strengthening democratic governance. Latvia, p.243 <https://www.idea.int/>

4 The Saeima gives conceptual support to the public procurement reform (Saeima konceptuāli atbalsta publisko iepirkumu reformu), 2 October <https://www.saeima.lv/lv/aktualitates/saeimas-zinas/35051-saeima-konceptuali-atbalsta-publisko-iepirkumu-reformu>

5 Delna (2025). SUMMARY: Public Procurement Reform in Latvia Signals Reduced Transparency of Public Spending, 7 November, <https://delna.lv/lv/2025/11/07/kopsavilkums-publisko-iepirkumu-reforma-latvija-sola-mazaku-atklatibu-par-publiskajiem-izdevumiem/>

2025. Whistleblower contact points will be transferred to the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) as of 1 January 2026.

Although different measures have been undertaken by the authorities, e.g. adoption of a two-year Anti-Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan 2026–2027 and the elaboration of the legislative framework, the successful implementation of the measures ultimately depends on political will, and without anti-corruption efforts being consistently treated as a top-level priority, they risk remaining largely formal or only partially realised. This concern is echoed by leading anti-corruption experts in NGOs Delna and Providus, who highlight concerns, including also lack of political will in key areas such as public procurement, whistleblowing, and lobbying transparency.

Following the rejection of two civil society candidates to the Public Electronic Mass Media (SEPLP), calls have been made to improve the SEPLP members selection procedure to reduce political influence. Some Latvian MPs and public figures warned that restricting Russian-language content on public media could undermine social cohesion and media pluralism by cutting off fact-checked information and increasing the risk of disinformation among audiences that still depend on Russian-language media.

The government approved the Journalists and Other Media Professionals' Safety Plan for 2025–2027,⁶ which aims to strengthen media freedom in Latvia, protect journalists from violence, threats, and persecution, and support the establishment of a robust legal and institutional framework for their protection. The Administrative Regional Court ruled in favour of Russian independent TV channel TV Rain ('Doždj' - Дождь),⁷ operating in exile, declaring unlawful the 2022 decision of the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) to revoke the broadcaster's licence. Media organisations have repeatedly warned politicians that NEPLP's actions may threaten editorial independence, and the court's findings should now also be taken seriously.

Parliament's move to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention triggered a major public backlash with mass protests, and a presidential veto followed, highlighting both domestic concern and the risk that opting out of a recently ratified human rights treaty could damage Latvia's credibility and reliability as a partner in European and global human rights frameworks.

6 *Cabinet of Ministers, Journalists and Other Media Professionals' Safety Plan for 2025–2027 (Žurnālistu un citu mediju profesionāļu drošības plāns 2025.–2027. gadam), adopted on 11 November 2025, available at <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/364395-zurnalistu-un-citu-mediju-profesionalu-drosibas-plans-20252027gadam>*

7 Tiesas.lv (2025). "In the 'TV Rain' case, the regional court recognizes the NEPLP decision as unlawful ("TV Rain" lietā apgabaltiesa NEPLP lēmumu atzīst par prettiesisku), 16 July, <https://www.tiesas.lv/lv/jaunums/tv-rain-lieta-apgabaltiesa-neplp-lemumu-atzist-par-prettiesisku>

Draft amendments to the Law on Assemblies, Marches and Pickets and Children’s Rights Protection Law were submitted by MPs from an opposition party in September 2025 to seek the prohibition of minors from participating in events that promote LGBTQIA+ ideas and values.

The government approved the draft ‘Law on the Protection of Persons Engaged in Activities in the Public Interest’⁸ and the related amendments to the Civil Procedure Law⁹ to strengthen protection against strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs).

Assessment of the trajectory

Latvian authorities generally take systemic steps to improve the state of the rule of law, as reflected in various global assessments, although gaps remain in legislation and practice, including in the anti-corruption framework. At the same time, parliamentary attempts to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention and to introduce restrictions prohibiting minors from participating in assemblies that promote LGBTQIA+ ideas and values are warning signs that risk undermining these broader efforts and lowering human rights standards.

State of play (versus 2025)

-  Justice system
-  Anti-corruption framework
-  Media Environment and Media Freedom
-  Checks and balances

Legend

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Regression</i> | <i>No progress</i> | <i>Progress</i> |
|  |  |  |

8 Sabiedrības interesēs iesaistīto personu aizsardzības likums, <https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/structuralizer/data/nodes/68ee0795-751f-447a-bbed-8c3bb5881219/preview>

9 Grozījumi Civilprocesa likumā, <https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/structuralizer/data/nodes/a4a63e16-7000-457b-abda-985127846887/preview>

JUSTICE SYSTEM

General assessment

Overall, progress across the judicial system continues, albeit more slowly in some areas, yet the commitment of the relevant authorities is undeniable. On 17 October 2025, the official opening of the Justice Academy's new premises took place; the facility was established using funding from the European Union's Recovery Fund. In 2025, case-processing times improved across all departments (criminal, civil, administrative) of the Supreme Court (the Senate). To increase applications for judicial careers since 1 September 2025, judicial selection is already carried out under a new approach, which allows candidates to apply in a specific initial specialisation – criminal law, civil law, or administrative law. The Supreme Court 2026 priorities focus on assessing the use and impact of judicial guidelines, developing the Supreme Court's new AI search tool, and improving work organisation through an automated deadline-management system for all Senate departments. On 27 January 2026, the government approved amendments to improve the state-funded legal aid system,¹⁰ allowing residents to receive assistance not only during Constitutional Court proceedings but also when preparing a complaint. Latvia's accession to Protocol No. 16, which entered into force on 6 November 2025, allows the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court to request non-binding but authoritative advisory opinions from the ECtHR on important questions concerning the interpretation and application of Convention rights.

10 Ministry of Justice (2026), The availability of state-funded legal aid in Constitutional Court proceedings will be expanded [Paplašinās valsts nodrošinātās juridiskās palīdzības pieejamību Satversmes tiesas procesā], 27.01 <https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/385403-paplasinas-valsts-nodrosinatas-juridiskas-palidzibas-pieejamibu-satversmes-tiesas-procesa-2026>

Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations

Recommendation: Take measures to ensure the adequate safeguards against undue political influence in the appointment procedure for Supreme Court judges, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments (first made in 2023)

According to the Commission's 2024 Report on Latvia,¹¹ which itself refers to input from stakeholders (including information provided by the President of the Supreme Court, the Judicial Council, and the Council of Sworn Advocates during the 2024 country visit), the previous rejection of the candidate was considered an isolated and unusual incident rather than evidence of a systemic problem.

However, neither the Government nor Parliament has so far taken any steps – particularly legislative ones – to introduce safeguards in law to ensure the objectivity of future appointments, such as a requirement to provide reasons for decisions or the possibility of judicial review of appointment decisions.

Commission's 2025 assessment: No progress

LCHR's current assessment: No progress

New Issues that Emerged in 2025

Increase in public trust in court system

Compared to 2024, a public opinion survey 'Attitudes towards the courts and views on judicial processes' published in September 2025 shows that public trust in the Latvian court system is increasing. Among those surveyed, 43% expressed trust in the courts, which is 5% more than in the previous year. Trust is more commonly expressed by women, young people aged 18 to 34, individuals with higher education, ethnic Latvians, public-sector employees, and residents of Vidzeme and Zemgale. By contrast, distrust in the courts is more common among men, respondents aged 45 to 54, and those aged 65 and over. Distrust was also more frequently expressed by people with only basic education, non-citizens of the Republic of Latvia, the unemployed, low-income respondents, and residents of Riga and Latgale. The overall distrust among those surveyed is 44%.

11 European Commission (2024). "2024 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Latvia", SWD(2024) 814 final, p.5 https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/c068f798-9708-46c3-bc18-44dee3a1b5e5_en?filename=33_1_58068_coun_chap_latvia_en.pdf

New Justice Academy facility and training

On 17 October 2025, the official opening of the Justice Academy's new premises took place; the facility was established using funding from the European Union's Recovery Fund.¹² Earlier on 15 April 2025, the government approved amendments that allow tuition fees for judges and prosecutors to be reimbursed.¹³ A priority for the Justice Academy is to strengthen a learning culture as an integral part of a judiciary focused on growth and development. On 22 January 2026, the Justice Academy launched the training cycle 'EU Law Month', providing a platform for the exchange of ideas on European Union law between Latvian legal professionals and legal experts from the Court of Justice of the European Union and the General Court of the European Union.¹⁴

Amendments to improve the state-funded legal aid system

On 27 January 2026, the government approved amendments to improve the state-funded legal aid system,¹⁵ allowing residents to receive assistance not only during Constitutional Court proceedings but also when preparing a complaint. Legal aid at this stage will be available only if the case falls within the Court's jurisdiction, all general remedies have been exhausted, and the applicant can present the facts and justify the alleged constitutional rights violation. The amendments also raise standards for legal aid providers (including advocates and associations) by strengthening reputation requirements and expanding qualification checks, including verification of criminal records, administrative offences, and professional experience. Since 2019, when state-funded legal aid was introduced for Constitutional Court proceedings, it has been granted only nine times over six years, while more than 1,300 applications have been submitted to the Constitutional Court in total. These figures show that the existing framework has not been sufficiently effective in ensuring legal assistance for those who objectively need it.

12 *LVportals* (2025). *Atklāta Tieslietu akadēmija – ieguldījums nākotnes tiesiskumā*, 17.10 <https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/381815-atklata-tieslietu-akademija-ieguldijums-nakotnes-tiesiskuma-2025>

13 LSM.LV (2025). Valsts pilnībā apmaksās tiesnešu un prokuroru mācības Tieslietu akadēmijā, 15.04, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/15.04.2025-valsts-pilniba-apmaksas-tiesnesu-un-prokuroru-macibas-tieslietu-akademija.a595628/>

14 TM.GOV.LV (2026). I. Ziemele: Tieslietu akadēmija – vieta ar augstu potenciālu modernu zināšanu ienesšanai Latvijas juristu saimē, 23.01, <https://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/i-ziemele-tieslietu-akademija-vieta-ar-augstu-potencialu-modernu-zinasanu-ienesanai-latvijas-juristu-saime>

15 Ministry of Justice (2026), The availability of state-funded legal aid in Constitutional Court proceedings will be expanded [Paplašinās valsts nodrošinātās juridiskās palīdzības pieejamību Satversmes tiesas procesā], 27.01 <https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/385403-paplasinas-valsts-nodrosinatas-juridiskas-palidzibas-pieejamibu-satversmes-tiesas-procesa-2026>

Changes to judicial selection and drop in Supreme Court cases

A. Strupiņš, Chair of the Supreme Court, noted in 2025¹⁶ that although Latvia formally lacks 70 judges, around 30 of those positions are likely unnecessary. He argued that Latvia already has a comparatively high number of judges for its population and that maintaining such a large judicial corps is not justified by the current caseload. He suggested reallocating resources from abolished posts to significantly increase judicial assistants' salaries. Strupiņš also highlighted difficulties in attracting young lawyers to judicial careers, with the most acute shortage among criminal law specialists, who seldom apply in judicial selection competitions.¹⁷

Since 1 September 2025, judicial selection is already carried out under a new approach, which allows candidates to apply in a specific initial specialisation – criminal law, civil law, or administrative law. At the same time, if a candidate is approved as a judge of a court of general jurisdiction, they must undergo additional training in the legal field that was not their initial specialisation.¹⁸ At the end of September, the Judicial Council reported that a total of 168 applications were received in the judicial candidate selection competition.¹⁹

In 2025, the Supreme Court (Senate) received 1,862 cases, a 7% drop from the previous year. The number of cases examined fell by 9%, reducing the Senate's case-handling rate from 100% to 98%. Case-processing times improved across all departments: 9 months in Administrative Cases, 4.3 months in Civil Cases, and 4.7 months in Criminal Cases. Long-running cases lasting over three years decreased to 21, some paused due to EU Court of Justice or Constitutional Court proceedings. The Chair of Supreme Court A. Strupiņš also highlighted the high rate of refusals to hear

16 LSM.LV (2025). <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/04.06.2025-strupiss-no-70-tiesnesu-vakancem-varetu-likvidet-30-par-ietauptito-palielinatu-algas-tiesnesu-paligiem.a601728/>

17 Tiesas. LV (2025). Tieslietu padomes priekšsēdētājs Aigars Strupiņš tiekas ar Rīgas apgabaltiesas Kriminālietu tiesas kolēģijas tiesnešiem, 23.01, <https://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/i-ziemele-tieslietu-akademija-vieta-ar-augstu-potencialu-modernu-zinasanu-ienesanai-latvijas-juristu-saime>

18 Blumberga-Švēde S. Jauna pieeja tiesnešu atlasē – kandidātu specializācija konkrētā tiesību jomā . LV portāls, 23.05.2025, at <https://lvportals.lv/tiesas/376482-jauna-pieeja-tiesnesu-atlase-kandidatu-specializacija-konkrete-tiesibu-joma-2025>

19 Economic Court (criminal law specialisation) – 6 applications Economic Court (civil law specialisation) – 7 applications Administrative Regional Court – 7 applications Criminal Division of the General Jurisdiction Regional Court – 12 applications Civil Division of the General Jurisdiction Regional Court – 17 applications District (City) Court (criminal law specialisation) – 22 applications Administrative District Court – 41 applications District (City) Court (civil law specialisation) – 56 applications. In: Judicial Council (2025), 26.09, <https://www.tieslietupadome.lv/lv/jaunums/tiesnesu-atlases-konkursa-sanemti-168-pieteikumi>

cassation cases—65% in Administrative, 85% in Civil, and 73% in Criminal. This may reflect stable case law and better-quality regional court judgments. Most importantly, fewer cases now result in overturned decisions.²⁰

New operational strategy for Supreme Court

In 2025 a new four-year operational strategy for the Supreme Court was approved. Of the tasks set for 2026, three priorities have been highlighted. First, the examination and evaluation of how various guidelines are being used and what results they produce. These include the Judicial Council's guidelines for preparing first- and second-instance judgments, the Senate's internal guidelines for drafting its own judgments, and, in particular, the use of the Supreme Court's guidelines for preparing cassation complaints. The second task is the development of the Supreme Court's artificial-intelligence search tool. A test version is expected by mid-February 2026, with a fully functioning version planned for June. The third task is improving work organisation by creating an automated deadline-management tool for all Senate departments.

Implementation of Judgments

European Court of Human Rights

As of 5 December 2025, there were 101 leading cases transmitted to Latvia, of those 94, or 93%, were closed, while 7% were pending. 148 cases were transmitted for supervision, of those 139, or 94% were closed, while 6% were pending.²¹

On 8-9 October 2025, the Department for the Execution of Judgments carried out a mission to Riga²² to discuss various aspects related to the implementation of the European Court's judgments against Latvia. The delegation exchanged with the authorities on lessons learned from some of the recently closed cases concerning, for example, effective investigations in ill-treatment cases (*Malinovskis v.*

20 Jurista Vārds (2026). Augstākās tiesas plēnumā aizvadītā gada darbu novērtē atzinīgi, 19.01, <https://m.juristavards.lv/zinas/287509-augstakas-tiesas-plenuma-aizvadita-gada-darbu-noverte-atzinigi/>

21 *Department of the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (2025). Latvia* <https://www.coe.int/en/web/execution/latvia>

22 *Council of Europe (2025). Visit to Latvia on the execution of the European Court's judgments, 13 October*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/execution/-/visit-to-latvia-on-the-execution-of-the-european-court-s-judgments?redirect=%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fexecution%2Flatvia>

Latvia²³), or parents' contact rights (E.K. v. Latvia²⁴). They also discussed the status of execution, current obstacles, and future perspectives in cases still pending under the supervision of the Committee of Ministers, notably concerning informal prison hierarchies (D v. Latvia²⁵), ineffective investigation into a homophobic attack (Hanovs v. Latvia²⁶), access to documents in criminal proceedings (Spruds and Others v. Latvia²⁷), retention of assets in criminal proceedings (Krievina v. Latvia²⁸ and Rutule v. Latvia²⁹), and improper examination of a trade union element in a labour dispute (Straume v. Latvia³⁰).

On 6 November 2025, the Law 'On Protocol No. 16 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms' entered into force, by which the Saeima, Latvia's parliament, approved Latvia's accession to the Protocol. With the Protocol's entry into force in Latvia, the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court will have the right to request an advisory opinion from the ECtHR on significant questions concerning the interpretation or application of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Convention or its Protocols.

Although the conclusions set out in the Court's advisory opinions are not legally binding, they provide insight and guidance on how to interpret and apply the rights guaranteed by the Convention and its Protocols in contentious or previously unresolved matters.³¹

The Office of the Representative of Latvia before International Human Rights Institutions prepared an updated report on ECtHR case³² law concerning the length of proceedings in Latvian cases. The

23 <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22004-65851%22%5D%7D>

24 <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22004-63723%22%5D%7D>

25 <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22004-65667%22%5D%7D>

26 <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22004-67045%22%5D%7D>

27 <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22004-67047%22%5D%7D>

28 <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22004-67693%22%5D%7D>

29 <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22004-67037%22%5D%7D>

30 <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=004-61022>

31 *Lvportals.lv* (2025). *Latvia ratifies Protocol No. 16 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Latvija ratificē Eiropas Cilvēka tiesību un pamatbrīvību aizsardzības konvencijas 16. protokolu)*, 26 November, <https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/383254-latvija-ratificē-eiropas-cilveka-tiesibu-un-pamatbrivibu-aizsardzibas-konvencijas-16-protokolu-2025>

32 MFA.GOV.LV (2025). Latvijas pārstāvja starptautiskajās cilvēktiesību institūcijās birojs, EIROPAS CILVĒKTIESĪBU TIESAS NOLĒMUMOS LATVIJAS LIETĀS IZTEIKTĀS ATZIŅAS SAISTĪBĀ AR TIESĪBĀM UZ LIETAS IZSKATĪŠANU SAPRĀTĪGĀ TERMIŅĀ, 19.09, <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/media/3284/download?attachment>

report outlines the Court's general principles for assessing the duration of proceedings and its conclusions in cases involving Latvia.

Between 1997 and 17 September 2025, the ECtHR delivered 410 judgments concerning Latvia, with 100 applicants alleging a breach of the right to a fair trial within a reasonable time, mostly in criminal cases. Since the Criminal Procedure Law entered into force on 1 October 2005, such complaints have decreased, as the ECtHR has recognised Latvia's compensatory remedies as effective. In *Siņicins v. Latvia*, the Court confirmed that an acquitted applicant may seek compensation for excessively long proceedings. In criminal cases, proceedings concluded at three judicial instances within three years are generally considered reasonable. Complex cases may last five years or more, but the conduct of the parties and the applicant's interests remain relevant. Proceedings exceeding ten years create a strong presumption of a violation. In civil cases, the ECtHR has found a violation in all Latvian cases lasting more than six years, except *Guravska and Simons and Others*, where domestic remedies had not been exhausted. In administrative cases, violations have been found in almost all proceedings lasting more than seven years, such as *Klopcovs and Kirjaņenko*. Shorter cases were dismissed for failure to exhaust remedies or as manifestly ill-founded.

ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK -

General assessment

Although different measures have been undertaken by the authorities, e.g. adoption of a two-year Anti-Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan 2026-2027, elaborating legislative framework, the successful implementation of the measures ultimately depends on political will, and without anti-corruption efforts being consistently treated as a top-level priority, they risk remaining largely formal or only partially realised. This concern is echoed by leading anti-corruption experts in NGOs Delna and Providus, who highlight concerns, including also lack of political will in key areas such as public procurement, whistleblowing, and lobbying transparency.

Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations

Recommendation: Ensure the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, including as regards the special interim lobby register (first made in 2024)

Amendments to the Law on the Transparency of Interest Representation,³³ adopted by the parliament on 12 June 2025, provided that, until the entry into force of the interest-representation register and system on 1 September 2028, interest representatives may, from 1 September 2025, voluntarily make information about themselves public by requesting inclusion in the Register of Interest Representatives. Anyone who wishes to be, or identifies themselves as, an interest representative may submit an application to the Register of Enterprises for their data to be included in the Register. The Register of Interest Representatives will be publicly accessible on Latvia's open data portal, 'Data.gov.lv', in open data format, and will be updated at least once a month. The list of interest representatives is for informational purposes only, and the information it contains is not considered register entries or registered data within the meaning of the Law 'On the Register of Enterprises of the Republic of Latvia'.

The postponement was suggested by the Latvian Confederation of Employers, Latvian Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Justice, with key reasons being that the existing legal framework should be improved by reducing the administrative burden on interest representatives, lowering administrative costs, and temporarily postponing the launch of the interest-representation register and the interest-representation declaration system.

33 *Amendments to the Law on the Transparency of Interest Representation (Grozījumi Interešu pārstāvības atklātības likumā)*
<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/361477-grozijumi-interesu-parstavibas-atklatibas-likuma>

The NGOs Delna (Transparency International Latvia) and think-tank Providus anti-corruption expert V.Kalniņš both highlight lack of political will as evident in the area of interest representation. V.Kalniņš, when evaluating the KNAB Anti-Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan, highlights that “this is also reflected in the plan, which contains only a commitment to prepare the necessary regulatory amendments and to take steps towards designating the institution responsible for the Interest Representation Transparency Law. However, the adoption of these amendments ultimately lies in the hands of politicians. It is worth recalling that the law was adopted back in 2022, yet a key element — the so-called lobbyists’ register — is still missing. Moreover, on 12 June this year, the Saeima adopted amendments that did not strengthen the law but significantly weakened it. It is therefore unsurprising that KNAB, aware of the political climate, has been rather modest in the ambitions expressed in the plan.”³⁴

Commission’s 2025 assessment: Some progress

LCHR’s current assessment: Minor progress

Gaps in the Commission’s Report

Criminal liability amendments related to cartels rejected by Parliament

In 2024 the Saeima rejected proposed amendments³⁵ to the Criminal Law, which aimed to establish criminal liability for prohibited agreements, including price-fixing, in public procurement. The Competition Council has long drawn attention to the fact that individuals who organise cartels face no legal consequences, even though their actions hinder competition and lead to inefficient use of public funds. Administrative fines are not enough to deter violations that undermine fair competition. The Office of the Prosecutor General, KNAB, the Competition Council, the Foreign Investors’ Council, and anti-corruption NGOs have all argued that meaningful sanctions are necessary to protect public funds and ensure fair competition.

In early 2026, Prime Minister Evika Siliņa stated that the Saeima must return to addressing the issue of cartels, as previous attempts to criminalise prohibited agreements have not moved forward.³⁶

34 Laganovskis G. Jaunais pretkorupcijas plāns. Ko tas paredz un kā ir vērtējams. LV portāls, 12.09.2025, at <https://lvportals.lv/norises/380351-jaunais-pretkorupcijas-plans-ko-tas-paredz-un-ka-ir-vertejams-2025>

35 The amendments were proposed by an MP

36 LETA (2026). Siliņa: Saeimai jāatgriežas pie karteļu jautājuma risināšanas, 12.01. <https://leta.lv/home/important/5D8AC55E-682B-4679-BB0E-57DAE75B7C24/>

In 2021, the Competition Council (KP), using information gathered by KNAB, uncovered a construction-sector cartel³⁷ whose participants had been involved in at least 70 procurement procedures with a total contract value of €687 million. On 30 July 2021, the KP fined the 10 companies involved in the construction cartel a total of €16,652,927. Eight of them appealed KP's fine to the Administrative Regional Court. The Administrative Regional Court dismissed the construction companies' application to annul the KP's decision. On 6 January 2026, the Senate ruled that the Administrative Regional Court must re-examine the case. The key issue was procedural: the Senate held that evidence obtained through KNAB's operational-investigative measures in a criminal case cannot be used by KP to prove a cartel agreement in an administrative proceeding. Detecting cartels is not among the purposes defined in the Law on Operational Activities, so companies could not reasonably expect such information to be transferred or used against them in this context. As a result, the Administrative Regional Court must reassess whether KP's decision can be legally justified on the basis of other evidence in the case. In turn, the Competition Council,³⁸ while respecting the Senate's ruling, emphasised that the Senate did not assess the actual existence of the prohibited cartel agreement. Nor did it consider that, without the lawfully obtained criminal-case recordings, it would be impossible to prove such a long-running, secret and orally executed infringement. The Senate did not dispute the legality or reliability of these recordings; however, its assessment focused solely on the formal procedure for transferring the evidence. As a result, the ruling leaves unaddressed the essential issue — the practical ability to detect and prove the infringements.

On 20 January 2026, the Saeima's Legal Affairs Committee,³⁹ responding to a decision of the Supreme Court the previous December — which held that conversations intercepted under the Operational Activities Law cannot be used as evidence in the administrative proceedings concerning the construction-sector cartel case — instructed the Ministry of Justice to prepare, within three weeks, proposals for legislative amendments to ensure more effective combatting of cartels.

37 Konkurences padome (2021). Konkurences padome soda 10 būvniecības uzņēmumus par dalību kartelī, 10.08, <https://www.kp.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/konkurences-padome-soda-10-buvniecibas-uznemumus-par-dalibu-karteli>

38 Competition Council (2026). CC: The Supreme Court ruling in the Builders' Cartel case restricts cooperation between law enforcement agencies and their ability to uncover serious competition violations, 08.01., <https://www.kp.gov.lv/en/article/cc-supreme-court-ruling-builders-cartel-case-restricts-cooperation-between-law-enforcement-agencies-and-their-ability-uncover-serious-competition-violations>

39 Saeima.LV (2026). Juridiskā komisija uzdod Tieslietu ministrijai sagatavot grozījumus efektīvākai karteļu apkaršanai, 20.01., <https://www.saeima.lv/aktualitates/saeimas-zinas/35422-juridiska-komisija-uzdod-tieslietu-ministrijai-sagatavot-grozijumus-efektivakai-kartelu-apkarosana>

New Issues that Emerged in 2025

New Anti-Corruption Action Plan unveiled

The Anti-Corruption Prevention and Combating Action Plan for 2026–2027 was submitted by the KNAB for public discussion on 2 September 2025. The Plan provides for 19 measures across four areas of action. The plan sets out four policy results, or desired directions of change, in public administration and society: increased public trust in public institutions; strengthened capacity of the public sector to identify and prevent corruption risks; enhanced integrity and oversight of public procurement; and improved public engagement and institutional capacity in detecting and investigating corruption. Three areas have been highlighted as high-risk for corruption: public procurement; healthcare, where informal payments — so-called ‘gratitude payments’ to medical staff — remain widespread; national defence, where, despite restrictions on publicly available information, an unprecedented increase in funding is expected, reaching up to 5% of GDP. Therefore, the measures planned for the next programming period focus on strengthening oversight of the public procurement system, including the development of artificial intelligence solutions for procurement monitoring, reducing corruption risks in the provision of healthcare services, and implementing corruption-risk management measures in the field of national defence. In Latvia, the losses caused by corruption could amount to between €814 and €2.4 billion per year.

According to Delna, the 2026–2027 Plan is, overall, a well-structured and strategically grounded policy document with a clear objective: to strengthen public administration that is honest, transparent, and aligned with the interests of society. Its successful implementation will depend on several external factors, namely the stability of political priorities, institutional capacity, the availability of funding, and effective coordination. However, the plan’s implementation period is only two years. Yet most of the measures it sets out inherently require long-term implementation and consistent inter-institutional cooperation over several years. The successful implementation of the plan will depend on political will. If anti-corruption efforts are not consistently upheld as a top-level priority, the plan may remain merely formal or be implemented only partially. A leading anti-corruption expert from think-tank Providus has criticised the plan for lacking ambition, narrowing its measures, avoiding genuine political commitments, and reflecting limited political will—particularly in areas like public procurement, whistleblowing, ethics, and lobbying transparency—resulting in a document whose broad goals are unsupported by sufficiently robust actions.⁴⁰

40 Laganovskis G. Jaunais pretkorupcijas plāns. Ko tas paredz un kā ir vērtējams. LV portāls, 12.09.2025, at <https://lvportals.lv/norises/380351-jaunais-pretkorupcijas-plans-ko-tas-paredz-un-ka-ir-vertejams-2025>

Public procurement reform

On 2 October 2025 the parliament conceptually supported public procurement reform in the first reading.⁴¹ The Budget and Finance (Taxation) Committee, which is responsible for advancing the draft law in the Saeima, agreed to set up a working group with representatives from all stakeholders to refine the regulation. Ahead of the second reading, Delna held an expert forum and round-table discussion, raising concerns about the reform's impact on corruption risks and integrity.⁴²

According to Delna, the reform significantly raises below-limit procurement thresholds (up to €5.54 million for construction and €143,000 for supplies and services) and removes the requirement to publish information online, meaning contracts will become visible only after they are signed. It also eliminates reputation checks for procurement commission members and no longer requires disclosure of subcontractors. These changes reduce transparency, increase risks of unfair competition, and remove green procurement requirements, potentially jeopardising EU funding.

Delna recommends not moving forward with the threshold increases or, at minimum, keeping below-limit procurement information publicly accessible. Existing exclusion grounds should remain in force, subcontractor disclosure should be reinstated and expanded, and oversight institutions—including the Competition Council, KNAB, the Court Administration, and the Procurement Monitoring Bureau—should be involved in the reform process.

Amendments to the Whistleblower Law

On 15 December 2025, the parliament adopted amendments to the Whistleblower Law in the second reading.⁴³ Whistleblower contact point will be transferred to the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau as of 1 January 2026, recognising KNAB's stronger practical experience compared with the State Chancellery. Amendments were introduced following several assessments, including the European Commission's review of the transposition of Directive 2019/1937, proposals by Delna. The amendments clarify key definitions (such as 'information about a violation', 'adverse consequences', and

41 The Saeima gives conceptual support to the public procurement reform (Saeima konceptuāli atbalsta publisko iepirkumu reform), 2 October <https://www.saeima.lv/lv/aktualitates/saeimas-zinas/35051-saeima-konceptuali-atbalsta-publisko-iepirkumu-reformu>

42 Delna (2025). SUMMARY: Public Procurement Reform in Latvia Signals Reduced Transparency of Public Spending, 7 November, <https://delna.lv/lv/2025/11/07/kopsavilkums-publisko-iepirkumu-reforma-latvija-sola-mazaku-atklatibu-par-publiskajiem-izdevumiem/>

43 Saeima. Amendments to the Whistleblowing Law (Grozījumi Trauksmes celšanas likumā), No 1051/Lp14, <https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/saeimalivs14.nsf/webSasaiste?OpenView&restricttcategory=1051/Lp14>

‘associated person’) and allow private-law entities with 50–249 employees, as well as small municipal institutions, to establish joint internal whistleblowing systems. Oral reports may now be submitted by phone, other communication channels, or in person within a reasonable time. Additional protections prohibit intimidation, exclusion, causing losses, or blacklisting whistleblowers. The law now also covers disclosures involving state secrets. Individuals will be entitled to compensation for losses, personal harm, and non-pecuniary damage arising from whistleblowing activities.

Implications and Recommendations for 2026

The rejection of amendments that would introduce criminal liability for prohibited agreements in public procurement leaves a significant gap in Latvia’s ability to protect fair competition and public finances. Administrative fines are not enough to deter violations that undermine fair competition.

Suggested recommendation: Latvia should adopt amendments to introduce criminal liability for individuals for prohibited agreements in public procurement

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND MEDIA FREEDOM -

General assessment

There have been growing concerns about media governance and pluralism, following the rejection of two civil society candidates to the Public Electronic Mass Media Council (SEPLP), which has prompted calls to improve the selection procedure to limit political influence. Additional worries have been voiced by MPs and public figures that restricting Russian-language content on public media may weaken social cohesion and media pluralism by depriving certain audiences of fact-checked information and increasing their exposure to disinformation. On the positive side, the government has approved the Journalists and Other Media Professionals' Safety Plan for 2025–2027, aimed at strengthening media freedom and protecting journalists.

Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations

There were no recommendations made in this area.

New Issues that Emerged in 2025

Selection process of new members of the Public Electronic Mass Media Council (SEPLP) criticised for ignoring civil society opinion.

Due to the expiry of the terms of members of the SEPLP - an independent body tasked with representing the public interest in the governance of Latvia's public media - the selection process for new members began in May 2025. SEPLP consists of three members, who are approved by the Parliament. One member is nominated for approval by the President, one by the Parliament, one by the Cooperation Memorandum Council of Non-Governmental Organisations and the Cabinet of Ministers (Memorandum Council).

On 19 June 2025, Saeima approved two candidates - Una Klapkalne and Sanita Upleja-Jegermane - nominated by the Parliament and the President. At the same time, the Parliament refused to approve a candidate nominated by the Memorandum Council - former Latvian Television head Ivars Belte. On 13 November 2025, the Parliament did not approve a second candidate nominated by the Memorandum Council - former head of SEPLP and Latvian Radio Jānis Siksniņš.

These rejections prompted strong criticism from civil society and the Latvian Media Ethics Council, an NGO, which accused the Parliament of ignoring and demeaning civil society. It described

the process as an “imitation of democracy” and called for reforms to reduce political influence over appointments.⁴⁴

The third candidate nominated by the Memorandum Council – researcher Andris Saulitis – was approved by the Parliament on 18 December 2025.

Government approves Journalists and Other Media Professionals’ Safety Plan for 2025-2027

On 11 November 2025, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Journalists and Other Media Professionals’ Safety Plan for 2025–2027,⁴⁵ developed by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with media and journalist organisations and law enforcement institutions. The plan aims to strengthen media freedom in Latvia, protect journalists from violence, threats, and persecution, and support the establishment of a robust legal and institutional framework for their protection. It emphasises the importance of public understanding of journalists’ work and associated risks, involving not only civil society but also police, prosecutors, and courts. The plan’s measures are structured around three key areas: ensuring a safe working environment for journalists and media professionals, raising awareness and providing education on journalist safety, and protecting journalists in specific situations or belonging to vulnerable groups, such as women, minorities, or those reporting from conflict zones or covering protests. It also includes psychological support for journalists under high-stress conditions and incorporates initiatives from NGOs, including Media HUB Riga. The Ministry of Culture will establish a monitoring group to oversee implementation, involving all interested stakeholders. The plan builds on the Anti-SLAPP directive, the ‘Latvian Media Policy Guidelines 2024–2027’, various recommendations and research on journalists’ safety.

In July 2025, the board of Latvian Public Media (LSM) adopted new strategic priorities for 2026–2029 which state that content in foreign languages (including Russian, English and Ukrainian) will be produced and distributed only in the digital environment, and radio linear broadcasting will be exclusively in Latvian from 2026 onwards. This plan directly affected Latvijas Radio 4 (LR4) – the Russian-language channel of the former Latvijas Radio – as part of a broader reorganisation following

44 Latvijas Mediju ētiskas padome, *ATKLĀTA VĒSTULE* par MK Memoranda padomes virzītā SEPLP locekļa izvēli un apstiprināšanu, 2 december 2025, available at <https://www.lmepadome.lv/jaunumi/params/post/5177294/atklata-vestule-par-mk-memoranda-padomes-virzita-seplp-locekla-izveli-un-ap>

45 Cabinet of Ministers, *Journalists and Other Media Professionals’ Safety Plan for 2025–2027 (Žurnālistu un citu mediju profesionāļu drošības plāns 2025.–2027. gadam)*, adopted on 11 November 2025, available at <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/364395-zurnalistu-un-citu-mediju-profesionalu-drosibas-plans-20252027gadam>

the merger of Latvian Radio and Latvian Television into LSM on 1 January 2025. As a result, LR4 ceased its FM broadcast on 31 December 2025. Radio content in Russian will no longer be aired in linear radio form, although some minority-language content, including in Russian, Ukrainian and English, will be available via the LSM.lv digital platform.⁴⁶

Officially these changes are justified by the aim to create a more unified, digitally-focused public media with less editorial separation by language. However, earlier on 28 September 2023 the Parliament approved the updated National Security Concept, which explicitly stated that all publicly funded media content should be in Latvian or a “language belonging to the European cultural space”, effectively ending state-produced Russian-language broadcasts.⁴⁷

Some Latvian MPs and public figures have expressed alarm of the potential negative impact on social cohesion and media pluralism due to limiting content in Russian. For example, removing Russian content entirely could limit access to fact-checked news and fuel disinformation, particularly among communities that still rely on Russian-language media. As an alternative measure which could help to strengthen the media environment, particularly in Eastern Latvia (largely inhabited by Russian-speakers) Latvian Public Media plans to establish a Latgale regional studio, scheduled to open in Daugavpils (second largest city) in early 2026.⁴⁸

Recommendations for 2026

Suggested recommendation: To improve the SEPLP members selection procedure to reduce political influence.

46 LSM.lv (2025), *From preparation to action – Latvian Public Media will implement a new strategy next year* [No sagatavošanās uz rīcību – Latvijas Sabiedriskais medijs nākamgad ieviesīs jaunu stratēģiju], 30 December 2025

47 Cabinet of Ministers, *National Security Concept (Nacionālās drošības koncepcija)*, adopted on 28 September 2023

48 LSM.lv (2025), *From preparation to action – Latvian Public Media will implement a new strategy next year* [No sagatavošanās uz rīcību – Latvijas Sabiedriskais medijs nākamgad ieviesīs jaunu stratēģiju], 30 December 2025

CHECKS AND BALANCES

General assessment

Parliament's move to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention triggered a major public backlash with mass protests, and a presidential veto followed, highlighting both domestic concern and the risk that opting out of a recently ratified human rights treaty could damage Latvia's credibility and reliability as a partner in European and global human rights frameworks. Draft amendments to the Law on Assemblies, Marches and Pickets and Children's Rights Protection Law were submitted by MPs from an opposition party in September 2025 to seek the prohibition of minors from participating in events that promote LGBTQIA+ ideas and values. The proposal raises concerns about compatibility with EU values, as restricting minors from attending events linked to LGBTQIA+ issues may conflict with principles of equality, non-discrimination, freedom of assembly, and the protection of fundamental rights enshrined in the EU Charter. At the same time the government approved the draft 'Law on the Protection of Persons Engaged in Activities in the Public Interest', aimed at strengthening the protection of journalists, researchers, civil society activists against strategic lawsuits.

Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations

There were no recommendations made in this area.

New Issues that Emerged in 2025

Latvian Parliament's Attempt to Withdraw from the Istanbul Convention

On 25 September 2025, the Saeima voted to begin the process of withdrawing Latvia from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). The initiative came from opposition MPs and was supported by the Greens and Farmers Union, despite the party having backed ratification in 2023. On 30 October 2025, the Saeima voted in favour of withdrawal (56–32, with 2 abstentions).⁴⁹ Latvia had ratified the Convention on 30 November 2023, and it entered into force on 1 May 2024.

49 LSM.LV (2025). Latvian parliament votes to exit Istanbul Convention, 30.10, <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/politics/saeima/30.10.2025-latvian-parliament-votes-to-exit-istanbul-convention.a620375/>

The withdrawal process triggered large public protests: around 5,000 people demonstrated in Riga on 29 October 2025, more than 10,000 on 6 November 2025,⁵⁰ and further rallies took place across Latvia and abroad, including by the Latvian diaspora at embassies in Europe and North America. Protests were organised by the NGO resource centre for women ‘Marta’ and a dozen of other NGOs.

A public initiative urging President Edgars Rinkēvičs to return the legislation to Parliament gathered over 68,000 signatures, becoming the most popular of its kind.⁵¹ Three days after the vote, the President refused to sign the legislation and sent it back to the Saeima, noting that ratifying and then denouncing the Convention within one parliamentary term sends a contradictory message and creates an unprecedented situation for Latvia’s human rights commitments.⁵²

Upon reconsideration, the Saeima postponed further action until after the 2026 parliamentary elections. If completed, Latvia would become the first EU member state to withdraw from the Convention. Analysts note that several political groups, including populist and radical right-wing actors, as well as the party Stability, appear to be using the issue to mobilise their supporters ahead of the elections,⁵³ reflecting broader trends observed in other democracies.

A delegation of the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence⁵⁴ (GREVIO) carried out its baseline evaluation visit to Latvia from 3 to 7 November 2025.⁵⁵

50 Euronews (2025). Thousands protest against Latvia’s potential withdrawal from Istanbul Convention, 06.11, <https://www.euronews.com/2025/11/06/thousands-protest-against-latvias-potential-withdrawal-from-istanbul-convention>

51 Manabalss.LV (2025). Lūgums prezidentam neparakstīt likumu par izstāšanos no Stambulas konvencijas, <https://manabalss.lv/i/3788>

52 President. Lv (2025). The President has asked the Saeima to reconsider the law “On Withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence” [Valsts prezidents lūdz Saeimai likuma “Par izstāšanos no Eiropas Padomes Konvencijas par vardarbības pret sievietēm un vardarbības ģimenē novēršanu un apkarošanu” otrreizēju caurlūkošanu], 3 November, <https://www.president.lv/lv/jaunums/valsts-prezidents-ludz-saeimai-likuma-par-izstasanos-no-eiropas-padomes-konvencijas-par-vardarbibas-pret-sievietem-un-vardarbibas-gimene-noveršanu-un-apkarosanu-otrreizēju-caurlukosanu>

53 Parliamentary elections in Latvia are due on 3 October 2026

54 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio>

55 GREVIO carries out its baseline evaluation visit to Latvia, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/-/grevio-carries-out-its-baseline-evaluation-visit-to-latvia>

On 15 December 2025 the Venice Commission issued an opinion “On the draft law on the withdrawal from the Council Of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)”.⁵⁶ The request for this opinion came after Latvia’s Minister of Justice sought an assessment of the legal consequences of a potential withdrawal. In its opinion, the Commission warns that withdrawing from international human rights treaties, including the Istanbul Convention, generally weakens human rights protections. Any withdrawal must follow proper legal procedures, be well-justified, and respect democratic principles and the rule of law. Political or ideological motives alone are not sufficient grounds.

It stresses that decisions should be transparent, inclusive, and involve groups affected by the convention. The Council of Europe’s human rights system relies on layered international oversight, and GREVIO is the only independent body monitoring compliance on preventing violence against women and domestic violence. National laws cannot replace the value of international monitoring. The commission rejects the argument that an EU directive could substitute for the Istanbul Convention and recommends that Latvia remain a party to it.

Human rights defender sentenced to 200 hours of community service

In August 2025, the Latgale District Court delivered its verdict, finding human rights defender Ieva Raubiško from the NGO I Want to Help Refugees (Gribu palīdzēt bēgļiem) guilty on a reduced charge of abetting illegal border crossing rather than organising it. She was sentenced to 200 hours of community service.⁵⁷ The prosecutor had sought a sentence of one and a half years’ imprisonment.⁵⁸ Raubiško announced her intention to appeal the decision, maintaining that her actions were motivated solely by humanitarian concerns and by the need to ensure compliance with the ECtHR’s interim measures.

56 Venice Commission (2025). Latvia. Opinion on the draft law “On the withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence”CDL-AD(2025)053, 15 December, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/cdl-ad-2025-053-e>

57 Tiesas.lv (2025). Tiesa Ievai Raubiško par nelikumīgas robežas šķērsošanas atbalstīšanu piespriež 200 stundu sabiedrisko darbu, 20.08, <https://www.tiesas.lv/lv/jaunums/tiesa-ievai-raubisko-par-nelikumigas-robezas-skersosanas-atbalstisanu-piespriez-200-stundu-sabiedrisko-darbu>

58 LSM.LV (2025). Bēgļu atbalstītāju Raubiško par robežas nelikumīgas šķērsošanas atbalstīšanu soda ar sabiedrisko darbu, 20.08, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/20.08.2025-beglu-atbalstitaju-raubisko-par-robezas-nelikumigas-skersosanas-atbalstisanu-soda-ar-sabiedrisko-darbu.a611088/>

Raubiško is accused of organising the illegal movement of a group of people across the Belarus–Latvia border. The charges stemmed from her assistance to five asylum seekers who had been granted interim measures by the ECtHR, instructing the Latvian authorities to refrain from returning them to Belarus and to provide basic humanitarian support. Raubiško and her colleague Egils Grasmanis were detained by border guards while visiting the border area to monitor Latvia’s compliance with the ECtHR ruling. Proceedings against Grasmanis were later dropped.

The anti-LGBTIQ+ propaganda law

The draft amendment to Article 20 of the Law On Assemblies, Marches and Pickets was submitted by MPs from an opposition party in September 2025 to seek the prohibition of minors from participating in events that promote LGBTQIA+ ideas and values.⁵⁹ On 18 September 2025, the Saeima held a vote on whether to refer the draft for further consideration.

The motion passed with 42 votes in favour, including some MPs from a governing coalition party, 33 votes against, and 1 abstention; 8 MPs did not vote. Following this vote, the draft was referred to the Human Rights and Public Affairs Commission for detailed review.

Two draft amendments have also been submitted to the Law On the Protection of Children’s Rights.⁶⁰ The first is an amendment to Article 13(2), which adds the term ‘morality’ to the list of grounds on which a child’s right to freedom of association may be restricted, so that the provision would read: “A child has the right to freedom of association insofar as it does not endanger their health, life, or morality.”⁶¹ The second is an amendment to Article 20, which introduces a new sentence explicitly prohibiting minors from participating in events that promote LGBTQIA+ ideas and values. Draft amendments are designed to align the provisions of the child-protection legislation with those proposed for the assemblies law. On 18 September 2025, the Saeima held a vote at committee level on whether to refer the draft for further consideration. The motion passed with 46 votes in favour, 33 votes against, and 0 abstentions. Following this vote, the draft was referred to the Human Rights and Public Affairs Commission for detailed review.

59 Draft Law “On Assemblies, Marches and Pickets”, <https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/saeimalivs14.nsf/0/5E9700885DDBA372C2258D070045B1F4>

60 Draft law “Amendments to the Law on the Protection of Children’s Rights” (No. 1046/Lp14), <https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/saeimalivs14.nsf/0/7641B29BE552698DC2258D0700456558>

61 Draft law “Amendments to the Law on the Protection of Children’s Rights” (No. 1046/Lp14), <https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/saeimalivs14.nsf/0/7641B29BE552698DC2258D0700456558>

Government approves the draft Law on the Protection of Persons Engaged in Activities in the Public Interest

On 22 December, the government approved the draft ‘Law on the Protection of Persons Engaged in Activities in the Public Interest’⁶² and the related amendments to the Civil Procedure Law⁶³. Their aim is to strengthen protection against strategic lawsuits. The Ministry of Justice stated that the changes will reinforce freedom of expression and the public’s right to receive comprehensive and high-quality information, ensuring greater independence for journalists, editorial offices, civil society activists and researchers, while protecting them from malicious litigation and reducing the risk of self-censorship.

The draft laws provide for the following:

- a clear definition of what constitutes acting in the public interest and for the protection of the public interest;
- the establishment of criteria for identifying claims brought with malicious intent;
- the introduction of procedural safeguards for persons targeted by such proceedings, including the possibility for the court to terminate the proceedings, require the claimant to cover the defendant’s legal costs, or impose a financial penalty;
- ensuring protection also in cases where a strategic lawsuit is initiated outside the European Union.

The draft law requires adoption by the parliament in three readings.

Implications and Recommendations for 2026

Given the above-mentioned developments over the last year, the next report from the Commission should include several new recommendations to address existing issues.

Suggested recommendation: Latvia must remain a state party to the Istanbul Convention and ensure that human rights protections are not weakened.

62 “Law on the Protection of Persons Engaged in Activities in the Public Interest” [*Sabiedrības interesēs iesaistīto personu aizsardzības likums*], <https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/structuralizer/data/nodes/68ee0795-751f-447a-bbed-8c3bb5881219/preview>

63 “Amendments to the Civil Procedure Law” [*Grozījumi Civilprocesa likumā*], <https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/structuralizer/data/nodes/a4a63e16-7000-457b-abda-985127846887/preview>

Suggested recommendation: Human Rights defender Ieva Raubiško should be acquitted, as her actions were carried out in the context of providing humanitarian assistance and ensuring compliance with interim measures issued by the European Court of Human Rights. Criminalising such conduct risks undermining the protection of asylum seekers' rights and discouraging legitimate human rights monitoring at the EU's external borders.

Suggested recommendation: The proposed amendments to the Law 'On the Protection of Children's Rights' should not be pursued. Adding vague notions such as 'morality' to restrict children's freedom of association, and prohibiting minors from attending events that promote LGBTQIA+ ideas and values, would undermine fundamental rights and conflict with Latvia's human rights obligations.

CONTACTS

Latvian Centre for Human Rights

The Latvian Centre for Human Rights (LCHR) was established in 1993 as an independent non-governmental organisation. Over the past three decades, LCHR worked with integration (minority rights and promotion of tolerance) issues, elimination of discrimination and hate crimes/speech, asylum, migration and fundamental rights issues, as well as human rights observation in closed institutions (prisons, immigration detention facilities).

Latvijas Cilvēktiesību Centrs (LCC)
Latvian Centre for Human Rights
Skolas street 21, 6 floor, 609c,
Rīga, LV - 1010, Latvia
office@humanrights.org.lv
<https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/en>

The Civil Liberties Union for Europe

The Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) is a non-governmental organisation promoting the civil liberties of everyone in the European Union. We are headquartered in Berlin and have a presence in Brussels. Liberties is built on a network of 24 national civil liberties NGOs from across the EU.

c/o Publix, Hermannstraße 90
12051 Berlin
Germany
info@liberties.eu
www.liberties.eu

Photo by Aiony Haust and Markus Spiske on Unsplash



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority - the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.