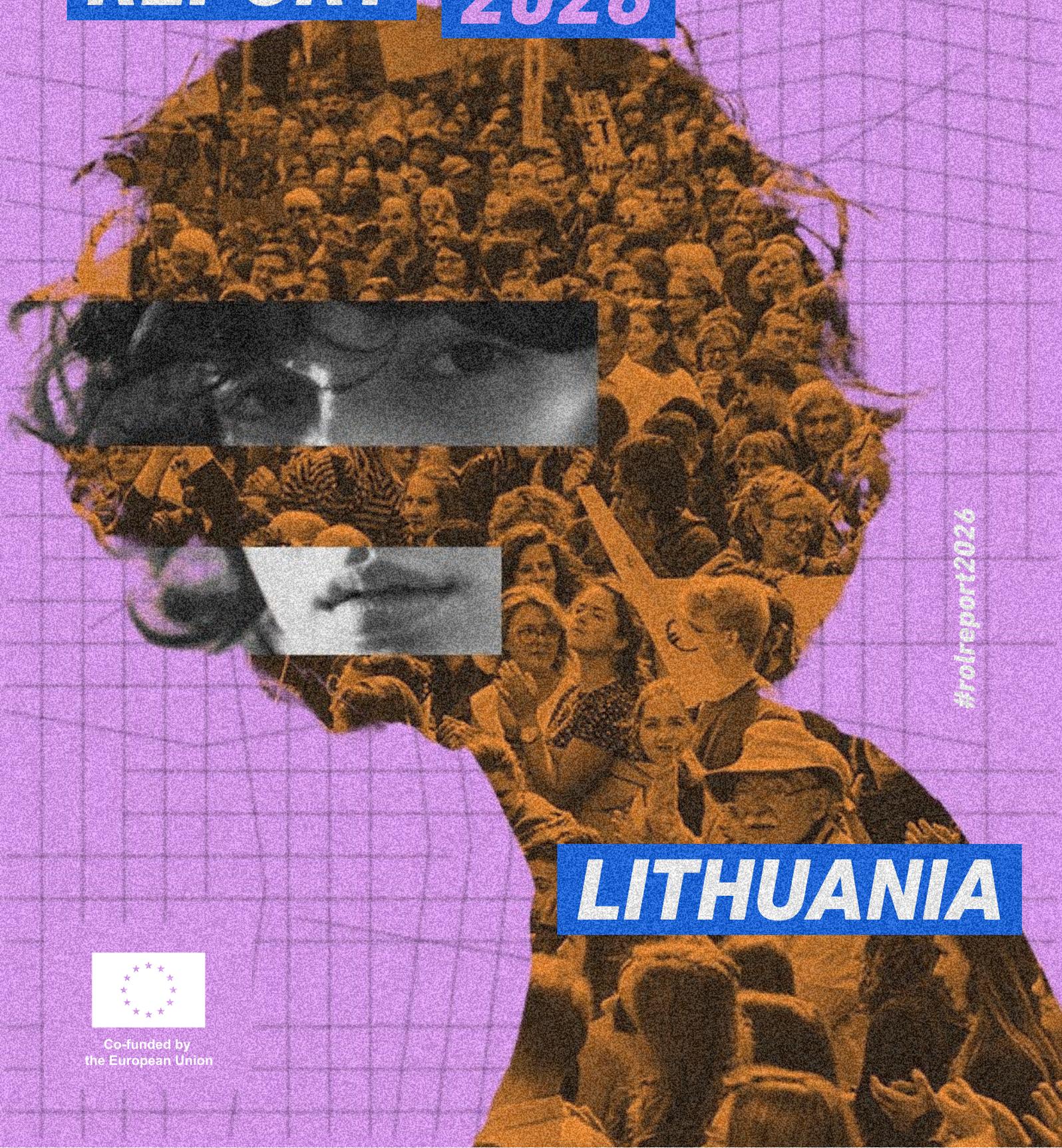


LIBERTIES

RULE OF LAW

REPORT

2026



#roireport2026

LITHUANIA



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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.](#)

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LITHUANIA

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING ORGANISATIONS

Human Rights Monitoring Institute



The Human Rights Monitoring Institute (HRMI) is a non-governmental, non-profit human rights organisation. Since its establishment in 2003, HRMI has been advocating for full compliance of national laws and policies with international human rights obligations and working to ensure that rights are real and effective in practice.

The HRMI team of lawyers and experts in social and political sciences conducts research, drafts legal and policy briefings, compiles reports to international human rights bodies, undertakes strategic cases before domestic and international courts, provides expert consultations, engages in various national and international projects, delivers conventional and online trainings to law enforcement officers, other professionals and members of vulnerable groups.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: STAGNATOR

In 2025, Lithuania's rule of law environment reflected a complex interplay of active judicial oversight, engaged civil society, and ongoing political challenges. At the national level, the Constitutional Court continued to assert its central role in safeguarding constitutional principles, addressing politically and socially sensitive matters such as fundamental rights, executive decisions, and legislative omissions. Notably, in April 2025, the Court ruled that the absence of legal recognition for same-sex partnerships violated constitutional equality and non-discrimination principles, highlighting both the vitality of constitutional review and gaps in legislative follow-through. Draft amendments proposing a gender-neutral partnership were registered in Parliament, bringing partnerships closer to marriage while still leaving some gaps that could affect partners and their children. Several competing models are expected to reach Parliament, making the outcome uncertain. Until a law is adopted, same-sex couples can seek recognition of their relationships through the courts (the courts have already granted such recognition to several couples), however, this process is neither consistent nor fully respectful of human dignity. It is notable that the newly appointed Minister of Justice publicly opposed the reforms, signalling political resistance that undermines the practical implementation of judicial decisions.

Civil society remained active, with structured engagement through national coalitions and events such as the Civic Resilience Forum in 2025. However, NGOs continue to face structural pressures, including limited funding, bureaucratic hurdles, short consultation timelines, and partial access to information, particularly at the local level. These constraints challenge the capacity of civil society to function effectively as a check on power. In the media sector, concerns regarding editorial independence at the public broadcaster, the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT), including allegations of political interference and delayed reporting on governance matters, emerged toward the end of the year, indicating vulnerabilities in the information environment.

In the anti-corruption field, Lithuania maintained functioning oversight and enforcement mechanisms. High-profile investigations by the Special Investigation Service and other institutions, including the ongoing bribery case involving the State Plant Service under the Ministry of Agriculture and probes linked to financial irregularities at the political level, demonstrate active scrutiny and institutional responsiveness. Public perception surveys indicate a decline in everyday corruption experiences, and Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index continues to reflect Lithuania's relatively strong—albeit plateaued—performance.

Internationally, Lithuania's commitments under Council of Europe frameworks, OECD anti-corruption recommendations, and European Court of Human Rights rulings continue to shape domestic governance. Similarly, ongoing attention to freedom of expression, civic participation, and minority rights demonstrates the relevance of international norms for ensuring checks and balances, protecting fundamental rights, and strengthening institutional accountability.

Overall, Lithuania in 2025 presents a rule of law environment characterised by functioning institutions and engaged societal actors, alongside persistent structural weaknesses. Political resistance to judicial decisions, pressures on civil society, and emerging concerns regarding media independence underscore areas requiring vigilance. At the same time, active constitutional review, civil society engagement, and anti-corruption enforcement provide foundational strengths that, if reinforced, can prevent regression and support continued resilience.

Assessment of the trajectory

Across key areas—justice system, media environment, checks and balances, and anti-corruption frameworks—the country maintained formal institutions and procedural mechanisms without significant regression. Courts, particularly the Constitutional Court, remained active and independent; civil society continued to engage in public policy, and oversight bodies functioned effectively. The anti-corruption framework also remained robust, with high-level investigations ongoing and public reporting on corruption risks continuing.

Despite these strengths, progress remains limited and uneven. Legislative follow-through on Constitutional Court rulings, such as those recognising same-sex partnerships, continued to lag, while political resistance in sensitive areas highlighted the gap between judicial oversight and practical policy implementation. Civic space, though formally open, continues to face structural pressures. NGOs encounter limited funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and short consultation timelines, which constrain their capacity to engage effectively in decision-making. In the media sector, concerns about editorial independence, particularly related to governance issues at LRT, emerged toward the end of 2025, indicating potential vulnerabilities in the information environment.

Several early warning signs are evident. The explicit opposition by political actors to the implementation of Constitutional Court decisions risks undermining the authority of constitutional review, while ongoing pressures on civil society could weaken one of the system's key balancing forces over time. Emerging challenges in media governance also highlight the importance of protecting independent journalism. Although these issues do not yet constitute entrenched backsliding, if left unaddressed, they could gradually erode institutional resilience.

At the same time, there are signs of progress that should be built upon. The Constitutional Court continues to assert its independence and uphold constitutional principles, including in areas affecting fundamental rights. Civil society remains active and increasingly structured in its advocacy and consultation with public institutions, contributing to greater awareness of democratic norms. Anti-corruption mechanisms continue to function, investigating high-level cases and supporting transparency, while public perception surveys show a modest decline in everyday corruption experiences.

Looking ahead, Lithuania’s trajectory reflects stability without substantial improvement. Consolidating existing strengths and addressing the warning signs requires timely legislative implementation of court rulings, reinforcement of civil society participation, safeguarding of independent media, and continued strengthening of anti-corruption measures. By addressing these areas proactively, Lithuania can prevent emerging risks from translating into systemic weaknesses, ensuring that its rule of law framework remains effective and resilient.

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> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |

JUSTICE SYSTEM

General assessment

The trajectory of the justice system in Lithuania in 2025 can be assessed as showing cautious progress, primarily in practice rather than in law. Improvements observed during the year indicate a greater capacity for institutions to function more smoothly and predictably, particularly with regard to judicial appointments and access to legal aid. These developments demonstrate that existing institutional frameworks can deliver better outcomes when institutions cooperate and show genuine commitment.

At the same time, the absence of legislative or regulatory reform constitutes an early warning sign. Positive developments remain largely dependent on informal practices, institutional goodwill, and the discretion of current officeholders. This creates a structural vulnerability: progress achieved through practice alone can be easily reversed, slowed down, or unevenly applied in the future. The lack of binding safeguards—such as clearly codified selection criteria, formalised evaluation procedures, or mandatory reasoning for appointment decisions—continues to limit accountability and resilience, especially in appointments to senior judicial positions.

There are no clear indications of entrenched backsliding in the justice system during 2025. However, many of the improvements are based on established practices and institutional cooperation rather than on formalised legal guarantees. Without follow-up through legislative action, improvements may plateau and fail to address long-standing structural weaknesses.

In the area of access to justice, constitutional review and administrative simplification signal a positive direction. The Constitutional Court's intervention highlighted systemic gaps affecting vulnerable persons and reinforced the importance of effective access to legal aid as part of the rule of law. This corrective role represents an important safeguard and should be built upon. Nevertheless, persistent shortcomings in the remuneration of legal aid providers remain a significant warning sign. The continued failure to address this issue undermines the sustainability and quality of legal aid and risks turning access to justice into a formal rather than effective right.

Overall, the key sign of progress lies in improved institutional functioning, increased transparency in practice, and stronger constitutional oversight. These elements provide a foundation for further reform. However, urgent action is needed to translate practice-based improvements into binding legal safeguards and to address structural issues in legal aid financing. Without such steps, the current progress risks remaining fragile and reversible rather than becoming embedded and sustainable.

Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations

Recommendation: Step up efforts to improve the transparency of the system of appointments to judicial positions, notably to the Supreme Court, taking into account European standards on judicial appointments (first made in 2022)

During 2025, no formal changes were introduced to the legal framework governing judicial appointments. Nevertheless, there have been some improvements in the functioning of the system, with appointments now taking place without the prolonged delays previously observed.

The Judicial Council and the Office of the President of the Republic have cooperated to clarify priorities for announcing competitions and appointing candidates, which has contributed to a more straightforward selection process and reduced the number of judicial posts remaining vacant for long periods. Although the President retains discretion in selecting candidates and is not legally obliged to provide reasons, the Office of the President has adopted a practice of presenting the reasons for appointment decisions orally during publicly broadcast Judicial Council meetings, thereby increasing transparency.

To increase the efficiency of the courts, in January 2025, the Judicial Council established¹ a working group on improving the selection procedures for judges and judicial candidates. The deadline for the working group to prepare and submit proposals to the Judicial Council has been extended² until 28 February 2026.

- 1 Judicial Council of Lithuania, “On the Establishment of a Working Group to Improve Procedures for Selection of Judges and Judicial Candidates” („Teisėjų tarybos 2025 m. sausio 31 d. nutarimas Nr. 13P-30-(7.1.2.E), Dėl teisėjų ir pretendentų į teisėjus atrankos procedūrų tobulinimo darbo grupės sudarymo“), Lietuvos teismai, 31 January 2025, https://www.teismai.lt/data/public/uploads/2025/01/d1_13p-30.docx
- 2 Judicial Council of Lithuania, “On Extending the Deadline for the Working Group on Improving Procedures for the Selection of Judges and Judicial Candidates” („Teisėjų tarybos 2025 m. spalio 31 d. nutarimas Nr. 13P-162-(7.1.2.E), Dėl darbo grupės Teisėjų ir pretendentų į teisėjus atrankos procedūrų tobulinimo veiklos termino pratęsimo“), Lietuvos teismai, 31 October 2025, <https://www.teismai.lt/data/public/uploads/2025/11/13p-162-7.1.2.e.docx>

New legislative measures aimed at further improving the clarity and efficiency of judicial selection procedures were foreseen in the Programme of the 19th government,³ particularly through innovations in the selection and career progression of judges, including making the verification of candidates' knowledge an essential criterion for assessing their competence. In the Programme of the 20th government,⁴ however, the commitment is presented more generally, stating that judicial selection procedures will be improved to ensure the continued smooth formation of the judiciary, without specifying concrete measures such as knowledge verification.

Despite these developments, key challenges remain. No legislative or regulatory reforms have been adopted, leaving the fundamental structure of judicial appointments unchanged. The improvements observed rely primarily on internal practices and cooperation rather than binding rules, which makes them potentially fragile and dependent on the discretion of current office-holders. The working group's proposals have not yet been publicly documented or implemented, leaving uncertainty regarding their concrete impact on transparency. As a result, the lack of legally mandated safeguards—such as published selection criteria, formal evaluation procedures, or mandatory justification of appointments—continues to pose a risk to accountability, particularly in appointments to top-level courts such as the Supreme Court.

The recommendation itself identifies the specific issue of improving transparency in appointments, particularly to the Supreme Court, but does not specify which elements of the process require adjustment or how European standards should be operationalised. Therefore, the recommendation is clear in direction but vague in operational steps, and could be improved:

Ensure greater transparency in the appointment of judges, notably to the Supreme Court, by defining the concrete procedural and institutional measures required to align the process with European standards on judicial appointments. This should include establishing clear and public criteria for selection, strengthening safeguards against undue influence, and enhancing the openness and accountability of the decision-making process.

Commission's 2025 assessment: Some further progress

HRMI's current assessment: In progress

- 3 Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, "On the Nineteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania Programme" („Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo 2024 m. gruodžio 12 d. nutarimas Nr. XV-54, Dėl Devynioliktosios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programos"), Register of Legal Acts (TAR), 12 December 2024, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/0b418dc0b89811ef88c08519262548c4>
- 4 Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, "On the Programme of the Twentieth Government of the Republic of Lithuania" („Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo 2025 m. rugsėjo 25 d. nutarimas Nr. XV-439, Dėl Dvidešimtosios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programos"), Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 25 September 2025, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/568b271299f611f0a8bbd1e98310677d>

Recommendation: Finalise the reform of the legal aid system, in particular by ensuring adequate conditions for the participation of legal aid providers, taking into account European standards on legal aid (first made in 2022)

The Ministry of Justice has advanced work on reforming workload distribution among legal aid providers. A draft ministerial order was prepared in 2024 to introduce a point-based system that allocates cases according to their complexity with the aim of ensuring a more even distribution of work. This system was piloted between March and May 2025, after which it is to be revised in consultation with the Bar Association. No further developments have been identified.

In parallel, efforts have been made to reduce administrative burdens, including through the simplification of the Legal Aid Information System⁵, which is intended to streamline procedures for providers. The legal framework governing access to legal aid has also been subject to constitutional review (see below). No further developments have been identified.

The Supreme Administrative Court filed a petition to the Constitutional Court regarding provisions of Article 11 of the Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid. On 26 November 2025, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling⁶ declaring parts of paragraphs 10 and 11 of Article 11 unconstitutional. The Court found that the law failed to empower the Legal Aid Service to grant secondary legal aid in exceptional cases where applicants are unable to pay the required contribution, even when individual circumstances justify such support. The Court emphasised that this legal gap risks denying effective access to secondary legal aid for socially vulnerable persons and may undermine the constitutional right to apply to a court, which forms part of the rule of law. In relation to this ruling, amendments have been made to the State Guaranteed Legal Aid Law.⁷

5 TEISIS, Legal Aid and Mediation Information System („Valstybės garantuojamos teisinės pagalbos tarnybos TEISIS portalas, Teisinės pagalbos ir mediacijos informacinė sistema“), <https://teis.lt/external/home/main>

6 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania News, “The Provisions of the Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid That Do Not Provide for the Possibility of Assessing the Individual Situation of a Person Who Has Refused to Pay Part of the Costs of Secondary Legal Aid and of Granting Him or Her Such Aid Were Contrary to the Constitution” („Valstybės garantuojamos teisinės pagalbos įstatymo nuostatos, kurios nenumato galimybės įvertinti individualią asmens situaciją, kai jis atsisako mokėti dalį išlaidų už antrinę teisinę pagalbą, ir skirti tokią pagalbą jam prieštarauja Konstitucijai“), 26 November 2025, <https://lrkt.lt/en/about-the-court/news/1342/the-provisions-of-the-law-on-state-guaranteed-legal-aid-that-do-not-provide-for-the-possibility-of-assessing-the-individual-situation-of-a-person-who-has-refused-to-pay-part-of-the-costs-of-secondary-legal-aid-and-of-granting-him-or-her-such-aid-were-are-contrary-to-the-constitution:815>

7 Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Law No. VIII-1591 of 2000 on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid (*Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės garantuojamos teisinės pagalbos įstatymas*), <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.EAA93A47BAA1/asr>

Despite the draft order and the pilot project on workload distribution, key elements of the reform remain incomplete. Most notably, no concrete measures have been adopted to increase remuneration for legal aid providers, even though the Programme of the current 20th government includes such a commitment. Remuneration for defence lawyers in criminal cases remains the lowest in the EU,⁸ raising concerns about the sustainability and quality of the service. Although administrative simplification is underway, broader structural issues persist. The insufficient remuneration framework continues to hinder the effective finalisation of the reform.

The recommendation from the Commission is relatively clear, but the steps to take are not fully articulated and it could be improved:

Ensure the effective finalisation of the legal aid reform by adopting the concrete legislative and administrative measures needed to guarantee adequate conditions for legal aid providers. This should include establishing clear rules on workload distribution, improving remuneration in line with European standards, and reducing administrative burdens, developed in close consultation with the Bar Association and other stakeholders.

Commission's 2025 assessment: Some further progress

HRMI's current assessment: In progress

Gaps in the Commission's Report

Lack of binding safeguards and enforcement mechanisms in judicial appointments

While the Commission highlighted the need to improve transparency in judicial appointments and finalise the legal aid reform, it did not explicitly address the lack of legally binding safeguards and long-term enforcement mechanisms to ensure that practical improvements in both areas are sustainable.

The year saw modest progress in the functioning of judicial appointments and legal aid provision. Appointments to courts occurred more smoothly, and workload distribution reforms for legal aid were piloted. The Constitutional Court addressed gaps in legal aid access for vulnerable individuals. However, these improvements remain largely dependent on institutional practices and internal initiatives rather than formalised legal or regulatory guarantees. The Judicial Council's working group on judicial selection continues its work without public interim outputs, leaving uncertainty about when and how structural reforms will be enacted. Key gaps remain, including the absence of mandatory

8 European Commission, 2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter: Lithuania, p. 6, (Figure 25 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard), https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/8db3f59c-a364-4aca-aa3b-4223cb268f8d_en?file-name=19_1_63952_coun_chap_lithuania_en.pdf

publication of appointment criteria, formalised evaluation procedures, and enhanced remuneration for legal aid providers.

Implications and Recommendations for 2026

By not recommending the codification of binding safeguards, the Commission left Lithuania without clear guidance on how to secure the positive developments achieved in 2025. Without such recommendations, there is a risk that progress may stall, regress, or become contingent on current office-holders' discretion, leaving systemic vulnerabilities unaddressed. This represents an early warning sign: while the immediate situation appears stable, entrenched weaknesses could resurface under political or institutional pressure.

The 2026 report should emphasise the need to translate recent practical improvements into durable institutional safeguards, notably through clearer and more transparent judicial appointment procedures.

Suggested recommendation: Timely and concrete follow-up to the Judicial Council's reform work and renewed efforts to address structural weaknesses in the legal aid system, including remuneration, in order to prevent the gradual entrenchment of existing vulnerabilities.

Implementation of Judgments

As of December 2025, Lithuania has 18 judgments⁹ from the ECtHR, still pending implementation, representing a decrease of four compared to the previous year. According to the European Implementation Network (EIN) data¹⁰ from January 2025, the implementation rate for leading judgments issued upon Lithuania over the past decade stood at 68%, up from 66% in 2024, leaving 32% outstanding. The average duration for which these judgments had remained unimplemented was 4 years and 7 months, compared to 3 years and 8 months in 2024. The oldest pending leading judgment, unresolved for nearly 17 years, relates to the absence of legislation governing the conditions and procedures

9 Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Teisingumo ministerija*), Execution of European Court of Human Rights Judgments in Cases Against Lithuania: Cases Against Lithuania in Which Execution Proceedings Are Ongoing, („*Europos Žmogaus Teisių Teismo sprendimų bylose prieš Lietuvą vykdymas: bylos prieš Lietuvą, kuriose vyksta vykdymo procesas*“), Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, <https://tm.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys-1/atstovavimas-eztt/eztt-sprendimu-bylose-pries-lietuva-vykdydas/bylos-pries-lietuva-kuriose-vyksta-vykdyimo-procesas/>

10 European Implementation Network and Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights, “*Preview Brief: Non-implementation of European Court Judgments*” („*Peržiūros santrauka: Europos Teismo žmogaus teisių sprendimų nevykdymas*“), 2025, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55815c4fe4b077ee5306577f/t/6926e434c6ed241ed93d4265/1764156468547/Preview-Brief-Non-implementation-of-European-Courts-Judgments.pdf>

for gender reassignment. Other pending cases relate to various areas of civil, administrative, and human rights law.

Progress has been observed in several instances. Notably, in the *Macatė v. Lithuania* case, concerning the censorship of a children’s book depicting same-sex relationships, all necessary measures—including legislative changes following the Constitutional Court’s intervention¹¹—were implemented in under two years, illustrating relatively timely and comprehensive execution of an ECtHR ruling. This demonstrates Lithuania’s capacity to respond effectively when political and legal priorities align. However, the extended duration of other pending judgments reflects structural or legislative challenges, as well as resource constraints, which can delay full implementation.

Regarding the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), Lithuania has maintained an estimated 80% rate of full compliance with CJEU judgments, with two cases remaining only partially implemented. While Lithuania generally respects CJEU rulings, delays or partial implementation may arise from the need to adjust national legislation or administrative procedures to comply with the Court’s decisions, or from the complexity of coordinating multiple governmental and parliamentary actors.

Overall, Lithuania demonstrates steady progress in implementing ECtHR and CJEU decisions, particularly in cases that have strong institutional or societal support, but a combination of legislative gaps, procedural complexity, and resource limitations continues to slow full compliance in certain cases.

11 The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania, Ruling on the Compliance of Item 16 of Paragraph 2 (wording of 22 December 2009) of Article 4 of the Republic of Lithuania’s Law on the Protection of Minors Against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania* (*“Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos įstatymo, Dėl nepilnamečių apsaugos nuo žalingos viešosios informacijos, 4 straipsnio 2 dalies 16 punkto (2009 m. gruodžio 22 d. redakcija)”*) atitikties Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijai), No. KT101-N15/2024, 18 December 2024, <https://lrkt.lt/en/court-acts/search/170/ta3096/content>

ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK -

General assessment

Lithuania's anticorruption framework in 2025 demonstrates a mixed and partially stagnant trajectory, best characterised as 'no progress' rather than regression or clear advancement. While several indicators point to gradual, long-term improvements in transparency and public attitudes, these gains have not translated into stronger systemic prevention, political leadership, or decisive progress in addressing high-level corruption risks.

From a perception and monitoring perspective, Lithuania's performance remains stable but plateaued. In the 2024 *Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*, Lithuania scored 63 out of 100,¹² ranking 32nd globally and 12th among EU Member States, with no meaningful improvement compared to previous years. Similarly, the Special Investigation Service's (STT) *National Corruption Index*¹³ shows a slow upward trend over time, increasing from 59 in 2018 to 63 by 2024, reflecting incremental improvements in transparency and reporting mechanisms rather than a qualitative shift in corruption prevention. These figures suggest that while deterioration has been avoided, anticorruption efforts have reached a point of limited momentum.

At the societal level, public experience of petty corruption continues to decline, indicating a positive cultural shift. For example, a 2025 Ministry of Health survey¹⁴ found that 87% of respondents did not provide unofficial gifts or payments to healthcare professionals (up from 76% the previous year), while 93% reported no pressure to pay unofficially for services. Increased willingness among citizens and professionals to report corruption, also noted by the STT, points to improving norms and lower tolerance for everyday corruption. These developments constitute a genuine sign of progress that should be built upon.

12 Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2024: Lithuania", <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2024/index/ltu>

13 Special Investigation Service (STT), "National Corruption Index: The Anti-Corruption Environment in Lithuania Is Improving, but Efforts Must Be Strengthened in Areas Where Progress Remains Insufficient", 1 October 2025, <https://www.stt.lt/en/news/7481/national-corruption-index-the-anti-corruption-environment-in-lithuania-is-improving-but-efforts-must-be-strengthened-in-areas-where-progress-remains-insufficient:4081>

14 Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, "Increasing Number of People Believe Corruption in the Healthcare System Is Decreasing", 1 December 2025, <https://sam.lrv.lt/en/during-the-visit-to-japan-the-focus-was-on-patient-safety/increasing-number-of-people-believe-corruption-in-the-healthcare-system-is-decreasing-OIUU/>

However, early warning signs persist at the structural and political level, and these are not being addressed with sufficient urgency. Despite improvements in petty corruption, public perceptions of corruption in key institutions remain high,¹⁵ particularly in areas linked to public procurement and political decision-making. The most notable illustration of these unresolved risks was the resignation of Prime Minister Gintautas Paluckas in July 2025,¹⁶ amid allegations of financial irregularities and possible misuse of public funds connected to closely associated companies. Ongoing investigations by the Financial Crime Investigation Service and the Special Investigation Service brought anticorruption scrutiny to the highest political level. While the resignation itself signals a degree of institutional response, it also underscores the continued vulnerability of political office to corruption risks, rather than demonstrating systemic prevention.

Importantly, these developments do not yet amount to entrenched backsliding. Law enforcement institutions continue to operate, investigations proceed, and overt political interference has not been documented. At the same time, the absence of decisive political leadership in corruption prevention remains a core weakness. Anticorruption efforts too often focus on investigation and punishment after the fact, rather than on proactive prevention, risk mitigation, and accountability at ministerial level. As highlighted by the Special Investigation Service,¹⁷ corruption prevention must be treated as a political priority, requiring sustained engagement by all institutions. The underuse of existing coordination mechanisms, such as the Government Commission on Corruption Prevention, reflects a missed opportunity to ensure high-level and continuous attention to systemic risks. It is crucial that ministers take a more active role in preparing an effective 2026–2029 implementation plan for the National Anti-Corruption Agenda for 2022–2033.¹⁸

15 Transparency International Lithuania, “Corruption Perceptions Index: Lithuania Scores 63 Points and 32nd Place Globally” („Korupcijos suvokimo indekse Lietuvai skirti 63 balai ir 32 vieta pasaulyje”), 17 February 2025, <https://transparency.lt/korupcijos-suvokimo-indekse-lietuvai-skirti-63-balai-ir-32-vieta-pasaulyje/>

16 Eglė Samoškaitė, “Lithuanian PM Paluckas Resigning Amid Allegations of Shady Business Dealings” („Lietuvos Ministras Pirmininkas Paluckas atsistatydina dėl įtarimų dėl neaiškių verslo sandorių”), Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), 5 August 2025, https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2629127/lithuanian-pm-paluckas-resigning-amid-allegations-of-shady-business-dealings?srsId=AfmBOorqfIBN0Ert2Agz2A1GAkqcZ38xaeiM_Q6B4Azozp6rEgx5Vszu

17 Special Investigation Service (STT), “High-Level Meeting of State Leaders: Lithuania Must Sustain Progress in Transparency”, 11 December 2025, <https://www.stt.lt/en/news/7481/high-level-meeting-of-state-leaders-lithuania-must-sustain-progress-in-transparency:4109>

18 Special Investigation Service (STT), “Anti-Corruption Strategic Agenda Document”, August 2022, https://www.stt.lt/data/public/uploads/2022/08/stt_darbotvarke_en.pdf

There are, nevertheless, credible signs of institutional capacity and international alignment that provide a foundation for future progress. According to OECD assessments,¹⁹ Lithuania's indicators for regulating and implementing anticorruption policies exceed the OECD average. In the OECD working group on Bribery's Phase 3 two-year follow-up report, 27 of 49 recommendations were fully implemented, 14 partially implemented, and only eight not implemented, with measures taken assessed as having tangible impact. The report positively evaluated training initiatives for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges, improved detection of foreign bribery, enhanced monitoring of media and financial risks, and strengthened cooperation with international partners. At the same time, the OECD reiterated concerns regarding unresolved legislative gaps, notably the continued requirement linking corporate criminal liability to shareholder knowledge, as well as the need to strengthen whistleblower protection and ensure sufficient resources for complex investigations.

Noteworthy was the fact that whistleblower protection in Lithuania remains legally aligned with EU standards, and institutional engagement (such as the forum on whistleblower protection held at the Office of the Prosecutor General in September 2025 to discuss implementation challenges, the role of internal reporting channels, and practical issues in fostering organisational trust²⁰) shows active discussion of implementation challenges.

However, practical implementation gaps and a lack of systematic data, combined with ongoing cultural reluctance to use reporting channels due to fear of retaliation, indicate that whistleblower protection is still in early stages of effective operation. Authorities and civil society appear to be aware of these challenges and are working on awareness and system improvements (for example, Transparency International Lithuania continues to promote improvements through initiatives such as the 'SAFE for Whistleblowers' project, which aims to strengthen protection across the EU, raise awareness among potential whistleblowers, assess implementation gaps, and encourage better workplace implementation

19 Special Investigation Service (STT), "OECD Acknowledges Lithuania's Significant Progress in Implementing Foreign Bribery Recommendations" 18 December 2025, <https://www.stt.lt/en/news/7481/oecd-acknowledges-lithuania-as-significant-progress-in-implementing-foreign-bribery-recommendations:4117>

20 Government of the Republic of Lithuania Anti-Corruption Programme, "A Discussion in Vilnius Focused on the Progress of Whistleblower Protection in Lithuania and the European Union", Plačiajuostis – Government Anti-Corruption Portal, 6 October 2025, <https://placiajuostis.lrv.lt/en/news/a-discussion-in-vilnius-focused-on-the-progress-of-whistleblower-protection-in-lithuania-and-the-european-union-LY5/>

of protections.²¹ Also, the new whistleblower protection framework is being implemented.²²), but more systematic data reporting, stronger enforcement and cultural change are needed to ensure that whistleblower protections are effective and trusted.

Overall, Lithuania's anticorruption trajectory in 2025 reflects incremental societal and institutional improvements without corresponding political drive or structural reform. Early warning signs related to high-level corruption and procurement risks remain insufficiently addressed, while prevention mechanisms are not fully utilised. Although backsliding is not yet entrenched, continued stagnation risks eroding public trust and state resilience. The existing positive trends—declining petty corruption, improved reporting culture, and strong institutional expertise—provide a solid basis for progress, but only if matched by sustained political leadership, preventive action, and accountability at the highest levels.

Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations

There were no recommendations in this area provided in the 2025 EU Commission's report.

New Issues that Emerged in 2025

Large-scale, organised corruption within the Ministry of Agriculture

In late December 2025, a new and significant corruption case emerged involving the State Plant Service under the Ministry of Agriculture (VAT ŽŪM), revealing alleged large-scale, organised corruption at senior institutional level. The case raises serious concerns about systemic corruption risks within public administration, including failures of internal control and anticorruption safeguards.

During 2025, the Special Investigation Service, under the supervision of the Prosecutor General's Office, launched a large-scale pre-trial investigation²³ into suspected corruption involving senior

21 Transparency International Lithuania, "TI Lithuania Introduces the SAFE for Whistleblowers Initiative to Strengthen Whistleblower Protection", 7 April 2025, <https://transparency.lt/en/ti-lithuania-introduces-the-safe-for-whistleblowers-initiative-to-strengthen-whistleblower-protection/>

22 Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Law No. XIII-804 of 2017 on the Protection of Whistleblowers (Lietuvos Respublikos pranešėjų apsaugos įstatymas), <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/2986b360d-b3611e7910a89ac20768b0f/asr>

23 Special Investigation Service (STT), "Systemic Corruption Under Investigation in the State Plant Service" („Tiriama sisteminė korupcija Valstybinėje augalininkystės tarnyboje“) 17 December 2025, <https://www.stt.lt/naujienos/7464/tiriama-sistemine-korupcija-valstybineje-augalininkystes-tarnyboje:4113>

officials and employees of the State Plant Service and associated private actors, allegedly acting as an organised criminal group. According to investigators, representatives of companies transporting plants and plant products were systematically required to pay bribes in exchange for the issuance of phytosanitary certificates. The total value of the alleged bribes is estimated at approximately €1.5 million, paid not only in cash but also in gold bars and other illicit assets, indicating a high degree of criminal organisation.

The investigation implicated a number of high-ranking officials, including the Director of the State Plant Service, his deputy, senior advisers, and regional division heads. Of particular concern is the fact that the Director of the Service, who is among the suspects, was formally responsible for anticorruption efforts within the Ministry of Agriculture and had previously held the position of ministry chancellor. The case has also revealed links to other senior public offices, highlighting the breadth of the alleged corruption network and pointing to serious weaknesses in institutional oversight and integrity mechanisms.

Recommendations for 2026

In light of this case, the Commission should consider issuing a recommendation aimed at strengthening anticorruption safeguards within public administration, particularly in regulatory and supervisory bodies exposed to corruption risks. Greater attention should also be paid to detecting and preventing organised corruption schemes, including through improved coordination between oversight bodies and law enforcement authorities.

Suggested recommendation: Reinforce internal control systems, enhance the independence and effectiveness of anticorruption functions within ministries and agencies, and ensure effective asset control and conflict-of-interest prevention for senior public officials.

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND MEDIA FREEDOM ➔

General assessment

In 2025, the overall media environment in Lithuania remained operationally pluralistic, but several developments indicate early warning signs that require careful monitoring. The most significant concern relates to public service media governance, particularly the legislative initiatives affecting the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT). While the proposed amendments lowering thresholds for dismissing the Director General, allowing secret ballots, and freezing LRT's budget have not yet been fully enacted, they illustrate a risk of political influence over editorial leadership. The strong domestic reaction, including large-scale protests and a petition against the political takeover of LRT signed by over 144,000 citizens, highlights widespread public concern and the potential reputational costs for media freedom. International institutions, including the Council of Europe and the European Broadcasting Union, have expressed similar warnings, yet the legislative process continues, suggesting that early warning signals are not being fully addressed.

Outside public service media, commercial and online outlets continue to operate with relative independence, and journalists generally face low levels of physical threat. Public trust in the media has remained largely stable. The persistence of partial distrust, in combination with political pressure on LRT, indicates that societal polarisation and challenges in ensuring accountability of public broadcasters remain unresolved issues.

Positive developments in 2025 include continued civil society engagement, protests, petitions, and public debate on media freedom, which demonstrate resilience and a capacity to counteract potential encroachments. The creation of oversight mechanisms for ethical standards and the Media Support Fund for local journalism is also encouraging, although their long-term effectiveness depends on adequate implementation.

In this context, the trajectory of Lithuania's media environment is best described as stable but under pressure. No systemic deterioration has yet occurred in most segments, but the unresolved legislative initiatives concerning LRT, combined with financial interventions and political rhetoric, constitute early warning signs that, if ignored, could lead to entrenched backsliding. Progress is visible in active public and professional engagement, which should be leveraged to reinforce safeguards and institutional independence of public service media.

Overall, while operational pluralism remains, the pressures on LRT governance highlight risks that require urgent attention to prevent future regression and to consolidate the resilience of the media system.

Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations

There were no recommendations in this area provided in the 2025 EU Commission's report.

New Issues that Emerged in 2025

Independence and institutional safeguards of public service media

A major new issue emerged in late 2025 concerning the independence and institutional safeguards of public service media in Lithuania, following legislative initiatives targeting the governance and financing of the national public broadcaster, LRT. While previous discussions on media governance had focused mainly on regulatory frameworks and market conditions, the 2025 developments marked a qualitative shift by directly affecting the internal governance and financial stability of public service media.

In late 2025, members of the parliamentary majority, led by Remigijus Žemaitaitis from Nemunas Dawn political party, introduced amendments²⁴ to the law on LRT that would significantly alter the governance framework of the public service broadcaster. The proposed amendments would lower the threshold required for the LRT Council to dismiss the Director General—from the current two-thirds majority in an open vote (eight of 12 members) to as few as six or seven members—and would allow such decisions to be taken by secret ballot. In parallel, the Parliament adopted amendments to freeze LRT's budget for three years at approximately €80 million per year, interrupting the previously established automatic funding indexation mechanism and halting planned increases. On 6 January 2026, opposition factions in the Parliament collected²⁵ the required signatures to apply to the Constitutional Court regarding the Law on the LRT, which provides for the freezing of allocated funding.

24 Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, Amendments to the Law of the Lithuanian Radio and Television (unofficial translation from the Lithuanian language), CDL-REF(2025)053, Council of Europe, 19 December, 2025, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/cdl-ref-2025-053>

25 Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), “On the LRT Law: Opposition Factions in the Seimas Petitioning the Constitutional Court” („Dėl LRT įstatymo: Seimo opozicinių frakcijų kreipimasis į Konstitucinį Teismą“), 6 January 2026, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2797349/del-lrt-istatymo-seimo-opoziciniu-frakciju-kreipimasis-i-konstitucini-teisma?srsltid=AfmBOop9KwrDwK--7v3JYMGKbrLyq9abKTv6m09Xzwlesk7ugio-QC8d>

Proponents of the reforms justified the measures as a response to governance shortcomings identified in a recent audit²⁶ by the National Audit Office and argued that clearer dismissal rules and stricter oversight were necessary to ensure accountability and enable the LRT Council to act where trust in management is lost. The audit and its conclusions were repeatedly invoked during parliamentary debates as the factual basis for reform. Critics, however, argued that the audit was being used selectively to justify disproportionate changes that weaken institutional safeguards protecting editorial and managerial independence.

While no changes were formally introduced to the broader system of appointments during the reporting period, the combination of the proposed governance amendments—lowering dismissal safeguards, introducing secret ballots, and freezing funding—was widely perceived by journalists, civil society organisations, and international observers as creating conditions conducive to increased political influence over public service media. Stakeholders argued that, taken together, these measures risk politicising LRT’s governance rather than addressing identified shortcomings through proportionate, depoliticised reforms, such as strengthening transparent appointment procedures, improving oversight mechanisms, or enhancing the independence of the LRT Council itself.

The proposals triggered an immediate and strong response from journalists, professional media organisations, cultural figures, and civil society. LRT journalists and professional associations organised protests, symbolic on-air actions and moments of silence, while a large-scale public demonstration under the slogan ‘Hands Off Free Speech’ took place outside the Parliament in Vilnius,²⁷ with police estimating participation at around 10,000 people. Several other wide-scale protests followed throughout December 2025.²⁸ In parallel, the Association of Professional Journalists launched a petition entitled ‘Peticija prieš LRT politinį užvaldymą’²⁹ (‘Petition against the political takeover of LRT’), calling on the Parliament to withdraw the draft amendments. By January 2026, the petition had gathered over 144,000 signatures, reflecting a high level of public concern about threats to media

26 Valstybės kontrolė, “*State Audit Report: Activities of the Lithuanian National Radio and Television, 31 October 2025, No. VAE-10*” („Valstybinio audito ataskaita: Lietuvos nacionalinio radijo ir televizijos veikla, 2025 m. spalio 31 d., Nr. VAE-10“), State Audit Office of Lithuania, <https://www.valstybeskontrole.lt/LT/Product/24361>

27 Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), “*Mass Rally Hits Vilnius as Lawmakers Fast-Track Controversial Media Bill*”, OCCRP, 7 December 2025, <https://www.occrp.org/en/news/mass-rally-hits-vilnius-as-lawmakers-fast-track-controversial-media-bill>

28 Kultūros asamblėja, “*The ‘Hands Off Free Speech’ Protest Continues: Bonfires Will Burn near the Seimas from 16 to 18 December*” („Protestas ‘Šalin rankas’ tęsiasi: gruodžio 16–18 d. degs laužai prie Seimo“), 13 December 2025, <https://kulturosasambleja.lt/protestas-salin-rankas-tesiamas-gruodzio-16-18-d-degs-lauzai-prie-seimo>

29 Peticijos.lt, “*Petition: Against the Political Takeover of LRT*” („Peticija: prieš LRT politinį užvaldymą“), 11 November 2026, <https://www.peticijos.lt/visos/87725/peticija-pries-lrt-politini-uzvaldyma/signed>

independence and freedom of expression. The petition was publicly supported by prominent figures, including former President Dalia Grybauskaitė, who stated that defending free speech was tantamount to defending a free Lithuania.³⁰

Concerns were also raised by domestic institutions and at the international level. Legal advisers to the Parliament flagged potential constitutional issues with the draft legislation, while civil liberties organisations and professional bodies warned that the proposals could conflict with European standards on public service media governance. The Council of Europe publicly warned³¹ against making it easier to dismiss the Director General of LRT and against freezing—and potentially reducing—the broadcaster’s funding, noting that “several ongoing initiatives in Lithuania have raised concern about risks to the independence and effective functioning of the public broadcaster, Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT).” Similar concerns were expressed by international media freedom organisations, the European Broadcasting Union’s Central and Eastern Europe group,³² and other public service media networks, which cautioned that the proposed changes could undermine editorial independence and be incompatible with the principles reflected in the European Media Freedom Act.³³

Despite the scale of public mobilisation and international criticism, the legislative process continued during the reporting period. The Parliament advanced the draft amendments through a first and second reading, using a fast-track procedure, with strong support from the ruling coalition. Notably,

30 Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), “Grybauskaitė Signed the Petition Against the Political Takeover of LRT”, („Grybauskaitė pasirašė peticiją prieš LRT politinį užvaldymą“), 13 December 2025, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2764113/grybauskaite-pasirase-peticija-pries-lrt-politini-uzvaldyma?srsltid=AfmBOopNHMsxtfun-LBzMBDktWCy8U3Pqhb2vBeW7YdGmsQhzkMylt47w>

31 Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), “Council of Europe Warns of “Risks to LRT” over Politicisation Attempts”, 26 November 2025, https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2757273/council-of-europe-warns-of-risks-to-lrt-over-politicisation-attempts?srsltid=AfmBOooNVhvQUd3s9um2-Jri4UQpKU-0N1KDY6W6D9o_kzoxdP2d5hSX

32 European Broadcasting Union, *Open Letter – Safeguarding the Independence of LRT: Appeal from the Public Service Media of Central and Eastern Europe*, 5 December 2025, <https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/News/2025/12/Open%20Letter%20-%20Safeguarding%20the%20Independence%20of%20LRT%20-%20Appeal%20from%20the%20Public%20Service%20Media%20of%20Central%20and%20Eastern%20Europe.pdf>

33 Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), “Signs of Concern: International Organisations Warn Against Efforts to Politicise and Weaken LRT” („Nerimo signalai: tarptautinės organizacijos įspėja dėl siekių politizuoti ir silpninti LRT“), 24 November 2025, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2755177/nerimo-signalai-tarptautines-organizacijos-ispeja-del-siekiu-politizuoti-ir-silpninti-lrt>

the President signed the amendments freezing LRT's budget.³⁴ Opposition parties and independent members of Parliament warned of the risks posed to media freedom and the rule of law, while journalists' organisations and civil society actors signalled their intention to pursue further political and legal remedies, including constitutional challenges. Conservative members of Parliament also referred the proposals to the Special Investigations Service for an anti-corruption assessment, and the Minister of Culture publicly suggested³⁵ pausing the legislative process to allow for broader consultation with the media community.

Overall, the combined effect of weakening dismissal protections for LRT's leadership while freezing its funding was widely perceived as a two-pronged attempt to increase political leverage over public service media. Even where governance shortcomings were acknowledged, the choice of legislative instruments and the speed of the parliamentary timetable amplified concerns about politicisation rather than constructive reform. The episode has already had tangible effects, including newsroom protests, heightened self-scrutiny among journalists and an intensified public debate about Lithuania's media freedom record. As of December 2025, the bill had been referred to parliamentary committees, with the ruling majority signalling its intention to proceed, making continued close monitoring necessary as regards the final content of the law, the sustainability of LRT's funding model, and the adequacy of safeguards to prevent political interference in public service media governance.

Implications and Recommendations for 2026

The Commission should issue a clear recommendation emphasising the independence and editorial freedom of public service media. This could include guidance on maintaining transparent and depoliticised governance structures for LRT, ensuring sustainable and predictable funding, and strengthening safeguards against politically motivated dismissals. Additionally, attention should be paid to fostering pluralism and protecting journalists from indirect pressures or self-censorship, thereby supporting a resilient and free media environment in line with European standards, including the European Media Freedom Act.

34 Augustas Stankevičius, Ieva Martinkutė, Vilmantas Venckūnas, BNS, "*The President Signed Amendments Freezing the LRT Budget*" („Prezidentas pasirašė pataisas dėl LRT biudžeto įšaldymo“), Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), 3 December 2025, https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2764242/prezidentas-pasirase-pataisas-del-lrt-biudze-to-isaldymo?srsltid=AfmBOortUzz4e3KzmmaqcoCoKy_ch_1CkRDgi6ktGTPiM-0w_WZzu22y

35 BNS, "*Minister: Before Submitting a New Bill on Dismissing the Head of LRT, a Pause Should Be Taken*" („Ministrė: prieš naujo projekto dėl LRT vadovo atleidimo teikimą reikėtų padaryti pertrauką“), Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), 9 December 2025, https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2770414/ministre-pries-naujo-projekto-del-lrt-vadovo-atleidimo-teikima-reiketu-padaryti-pertrauka?srsltid=AfmBOors0Wt3F984HHMMcDlCeI-ba5UnN-NoLr_IUh0-Tm32SoIWMNqWm

Suggested recommendation: Ensure the independence of public service media by maintaining robust safeguards against political interference in governance and financing, including transparent and objective procedures for the appointment and dismissal of management and sustainable, predictable funding in line with the European Media Freedom Act.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

General assessment

In 2025, Lithuania’s system of checks and balances remained formally intact, with key institutions—most notably the Constitutional Court, oversight bodies, and civil society—continuing to perform their roles in constraining executive and legislative power. Courts maintained independence and accessibility, providing effective mechanisms for judicial review in politically and socially sensitive matters. Constitutional adjudication continued to address gaps in legislation and executive action, demonstrating that judicial oversight remains a vital safeguard of fundamental rights and the rule of law.

Civil society continued to play an active role, participating in structured consultations on legislative reforms, advocating through coalitions, and contributing to public debate. Ombudsman institutions and other oversight bodies remained engaged, monitoring rights compliance and raising concerns when legal or policy frameworks fell short. These developments illustrate the resilience of institutional pluralism and highlight areas where civic engagement strengthens checks and balances.

At the same time, early warning signs warrant close monitoring. Persistent delays in implementing Constitutional Court rulings, selective political responses, and structural pressures on civil society—such as short consultation timelines, limited feedback mechanisms, and constrained access to information—pose risks to the effectiveness of oversight. Regional and smaller NGOs remain particularly vulnerable due to limited financial and human resources, which could gradually weaken civil society’s capacity to hold authorities accountable. Additionally, emerging tensions in the interplay between constitutional review and political decision-making signal that the authority of judicial institutions may be challenged in practice, even if their formal powers remain robust. Public statements, often framed in ideological and religious terms, by prominent executive figures opposing the Constitutional Court’s ruling signal a willingness to delay or narrow compliance with binding constitutional decisions.

Despite these concerns, there are no clear indications of entrenched backsliding. Constitutional review remains active, oversight bodies continue to function, and civic space, though constrained in certain areas, remains open. Importantly, public awareness of constitutional norms and the role of civil society have grown, creating opportunities to reinforce accountability mechanisms.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of Lithuania’s system of checks and balances would benefit from building on these existing strengths. Timely legislative implementation of constitutional rulings strengthened support for civil society—including through funding, capacity-building, and improved consultation processes—and sustained respect for judicial independence would help prevent structural vulnerabilities from escalating into systemic weaknesses. Proactive attention to these areas is essential

to ensure that Lithuania's institutional safeguards remain effective, resilient, and capable of protecting democratic governance and fundamental rights.

Implementation of 2025 Commission recommendations

There were no recommendations in this area provided in the 2025 EU Commission's report.

Gaps in the Commission's Report

Involvement of civil society in decision-making process

The Commission observed that civil society continues to face challenges in participating in decision-making, particularly at the local level, due to short consultation timelines, limited feedback mechanisms, and restricted access to certain information. It also highlighted funding limitations and concerns about negative rhetoric targeting some NGOs. However, no recommendations were made to address these issues.

Beyond civic space dynamics, emerging developments in Lithuania's constitutional review mechanisms, particularly in areas where courts are shaping policy outcomes in sensitive human rights areas, were not addressed in the recommendations. While some of these developments unfolded only after the Commission's cut-off date, they reflect broader checks-and-balances and civic participation issues that merit explicit attention.

In 2025, Lithuania's Constitutional Court continued to play a pivotal role in upholding constitutional norms on fundamental rights and separation of powers. A landmark decision³⁶ in April 2025 found that the absence of legal recognition for same-sex partnerships in the Civil Code violated the Constitution's equality and non-discrimination principles. This ruling effectively opened a pathway for same-sex couples to seek civil partnership recognition through the courts in the absence of specific legislation. It underscores both the vitality of judicial oversight in addressing legislative gaps and the ongoing need for timely legislative follow-through to ensure full protection of minority rights and inclusivity. Despite such high-profile constitutional interventions becoming more frequent, the

36 The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania, Ruling on the Compliance of Article 28 of the Law on the Approval, Entry into Force and Implementation of the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania and Article 3.229 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania ("Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos civilinio kodekso patvirtinimo, įsigaliojimo ir įgyvendinimo įstatymo 28 straipsnio, Lietuvos Respublikos civilinio kodekso 3.229 straipsnio atitikties Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijai"), No. KT21-N5/2025, 17 April 2025, <https://lrkt.lt/lt/teismo-aktai/paieska/135/ta3121/content>

Commission's 2025 report did not highlight the evolving role of constitutional review or the broader implications of these decisions for checks and balances.

Moreover, while civil society remains active—through initiatives such as the Civic Resilience Forum 2025 and structured NGO engagement in public policy via coalitions—the formal recognition of these civic space dynamics was absent from the Commission's assessment.

New Issues that Emerged in 2025

Intensification of political resistance to Constitutional Court rulings

While political resistance to Constitutional Court rulings is not a completely new challenge in Lithuania, 2025 saw a notable intensification and publicisation of this dynamic. Following the April 2025 ruling of the Constitutional Court on same-sex partnerships, which clarified that the continued absence of a legal framework for same-sex partnerships is incompatible with the Constitution and declared unconstitutional the provision of the Civil Code that restricts partnership exclusively to a union between a man and a woman, draft amendments introducing a gender-neutral partnership regime were registered in Parliament. Nonetheless, the newly appointed Minister of Justice has publicly opposed the registered draft amendments and stated that she would neither submit nor support legislation introducing gender-neutral partnerships, signalling her intent to prevent same-sex couples from receiving rights equivalent to the 'natural family'.³⁷ Although resistance to constitutional decisions has occurred previously, the direct and highly public nature of these statements represents a distinct development in 2025: even with active constitutional review, the effectiveness of judicial oversight depends on political actors' willingness to respect rulings, making these manifestations of resistance a critical point of attention. A broader pattern of resistance to the effective execution of constitutional review is reflected, raising questions about respect for judicial authority and the rule of law.

Implications and Recommendations for 2026

The Commission should recommend the timely and full implementation of Constitutional Court rulings, particularly in areas affecting fundamental rights, and emphasise that political authorities must refrain from actions or statements that undermine the binding nature of constitutional decisions.

37 Gytis Pankūnas, Liudmila Petrakova, "*Tamašunienė Does Not Support Partnership Amendments: They Do Not Reflect My or Many People's Opinions*" („Tamašunienė nepritaria partnerystės pataisoms: neatitinka mano ir daugelio žmonių nuomonės“), ELTA/LRT, 4 November 2025, https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2735307/tamasuniene-nepritaria-partnerystes-pataisoms-neatitinka-mano-ir-daugelio-zmoniu-nuomones?srsItd=AfmBOofz-_2Fe_gtx-73acZP9-MPZtL80eTA9TrSFcUhphv0V52iPgsl

Stronger monitoring of legislative follow-up and safeguards against prolonged non-implementation should be encouraged to preserve the effectiveness of checks and balances and protect civic space.

Suggested recommendation: Fully implement Constitutional Court rulings, particularly in areas affecting fundamental rights.

CONTACTS

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Human Rights Monitoring Institute (HRMI) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit human rights organisation. Since its establishment in 2003, HRMI has been advocating for full compliance of national laws and policies with international human rights obligations, and working to ensure that rights can be exercised in practice.

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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.

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