

5. Multilateral context: In 2024, Moldova ratified the ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the workplace and the CoE Convention for protection of Audiovisual Heritage, signed the CoE Framework Convention on artificial intelligence, human rights, democracy and rule of law, acceded to the Ljubljana-The Hague Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of the Crime of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and Other International Crimes, and put forward its candidature as a member of the Human Rights Council (HRC) for 2027-2029. The CoE has published a positive assessment on Moldova's implementation of the Tromsø Convention on the Access to Official Documents. The Council of Europe adopted the 2025-2028 Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova to bring the country's legislation further in line with European standards. Moldova has not finalised the ratification process of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and of Protocol no. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The issue of low compliance rate with decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) needs to be addressed. Moldova ranks 5th out of the 46 CoE members in terms of the number of applications submitted per capita inhabitant.

Republic of Serbia

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: In 2024, Serbia's general framework for fundamental rights was broadly in place but still required improvement as concerns proper enforcement of the legislation. The Ombudsman was not sufficiently vocal in addressing violations of human rights and his cooperation with civil society was not at an adequate level. Implementation of the new strategies and action plans on gender equality, anti-discrimination and the Roma inclusion started, although monitoring bodies were not in place for most of the reporting period. The new Action Plan for the Realisation of the Rights of National Minorities was not finalised. The action plans and related funding as regards combating violence against women and deinstitutionalisation of children care were not adopted. LGBTI persons, and in particular transgender persons, were subject to violence, abuse and discrimination.

Regarding freedom of expression, the police and the prosecution services reacted swiftly to several cases of attacks and threats, working with the standing working group on the safety of journalists. However, cases of threats, intimidation, hate speech and violence against journalists remained a concern, as was the increase of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), notably launched by members of national and local authorities. Overdue work started in late 2024 to further align the legislative framework on media freedom and media policy with the EU *acquis*. Public broadcasters had limited financial and institutional independence, which impacted their editorial policies. The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) did not publish comprehensive media monitoring reports on the 2023 and 2024 elections. The process of election of the new REM Council members was not finalised and attracted criticism from stakeholders over its transparency and legitimacy. Serbia did not take any action to counter foreign information manipulation and interference, quite the contrary, in December 2024 RT Balkans received a cable licence and has since launched its TV programme in Serbian language. Concerning the implementation of the law on public information and media, though beyond the legal deadline in a number of cases, most local municipalities did launch the media co-funding calls, and significantly reduced public funding was awarded through processes that were not fully transparent.

The conduct of elections requires tangible improvement and further reform. The OSCE/ODIHR recommendations for future elections still need to be implemented. This includes issues such as the audit of unified voter register and those ensuring a level playing field for all contestants, and access to media and ensuring compliance with media legislation. The political polarisation deepened and was illustrated by frequently harsh and intolerant debates and hate speech in the Parliament. Civil society organisations in Serbia operate in a difficult environment. Verbal attacks and smear campaigns against some CSOs intensified, including by high-level officials, allegations of police brutality, including against journalists as well as of the illegal use of spyware. In June, the Ministry of the Interior failed to meet its obligation to ensure a safe environment and instead banned the 'Mirëdita, Dobar Dan' festival in Belgrade, a civil society initiative that contributes to building bridges between the people in Kosovo and Serbia through cultural activities. Following protests against lithium exploitation throughout Serbia during the summer, there were reports of arrests, house searches and seizures of IT equipment of ecological activists. Following the tragic accident at the Novi Sad railway station on 1 November, several mass protests took place in various cities, including student blockades of major universities. While freedom of assembly was ensured by the authorities and protest were allowed to take place, there were some violent incidents against demonstrators and safety of participants was not always ensured.

For more information, please refer to the European Commission's: [Serbia 2024 Report](#)

2. EU action - key focus areas: The key focus areas in 2024 included freedom of expression, human rights institutions (Ombudsman, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection) and the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including the Roma. The EU continued to focus on key areas described in the interim benchmarks of chapter 23 of the accession negotiations: judiciary and fundamental rights. As regards the latter, benchmarks related to the effective application of human rights, procedural safeguards, the rights of persons belonging to minorities and cultural rights, protection against racism and xenophobia and data protection. The EU closely monitored Serbia's continuous implementation of its action plan for chapter 23.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: There is a regular policy and political dialogue, including in the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. This dialogue is based on monitoring of the implementation of the action plan for chapter 23 in the framework of the EU accession negotiations.

4. EU financial engagement: Under the EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III), EUR 27 million were disbursed for the improvement of living conditions of the Roma, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities and woman victims of domestic violence. Further, 14 new grants of EUR 6.7 million have been awarded. Support on freedom of expression and media freedom continued with EUR 16.2 million worth grants, including on quality journalism and the Press Council of Serbia. Under the IPA III Regional Civil Society and Media Facility, EUR 14.4 million worth of grants were awarded to strengthen the capacity of CSOs. The NDICI Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy continued to support the right of persons belonging to minorities, gender equality, rights of the child and human rights defenders (EUR 4.2 million). Cooperation with the Council of Europe continued under the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye – Phase III with EUR 5.52 million for Serbia focusing on support to justice, fighting against discrimination, against organised crime,

the rights of persons in vulnerable situations, including LGBTI persons and persons belonging to minorities, and freedom of expression.

5. Multilateral context: Serbia continued its dialogue and cooperation with European and international human rights organisations and monitoring bodies. Recommendations from the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment's 2023 report on its ad hoc visit to Serbia, which identified shortcomings in the investigations of torture and other forms of ill-treatment were not implemented. Serbia did not align with restrictive measure against Russia, nor with the majority of the statements of the High Representative related to Russia and Ukraine. Serbia also did not align with a number of other statements of the High Representative on behalf of the EU and of EU restrictive measures. The EU expects Serbia to step up its efforts towards full alignment with EU CFSP positions and restrictive measures as a matter of utmost priority.

Republic of Türkiye

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: In 2024, the situation for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Türkiye did not improve and remained an issue of serious concern. Türkiye's refusal to implement certain rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) further increased concerns regarding the judiciary's adherence to international and European norms and standards. The independence and quality of the judiciary remained challenged by the control exercised by the executive power over judicial governing bodies. Trials and convictions of journalists, writers, lawyers, academics, human rights defenders and other critical voices for alleged support for terrorism continued.

The 2021-2023 Human Rights Action Plan, which did not fully address the serious shortcomings in Türkiye's judicial and human rights sphere, expired and was not replaced. Türkiye still needs to align its anti-terror legislation and its implementation, as well as practices against terrorism with European standards, the ECHR, the ECtHR case law, the Venice Commission's recommendations, and the EU acquis and practices. Türkiye needs to ensure a political and legal environment in line with European standards that allows the judiciary to carry out its duties independently and impartially, strengthen the separation of powers, and effectively implement ECtHR jurisprudence, including as matter of priority judgments in the case of *Kavala vs Türkiye*. It also needs to improve the legislative framework and its implementation to effectively tackle all forms of violence against women, all forms of racism and discrimination, including against LGBTI persons, and ensure respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Serious concerns remained about freedom of expression. Broad restrictions on the activities of journalists, writers, lawyers, academics, human rights defenders, politicians and critical voices had a negative effect on the exercise of their rights. The implementation of the criminal laws relating to national security and anti-terrorism contravened the ECHR and diverged from ECtHR case law. Türkiye needs to revise its legislation, in particular the anti-terror law, the Criminal Code, the data protection law, the internet law, the so-called 'disinformation' law, and the Radio and Television Supreme Council law, to bring them in line with European standards, and has to ensure that they are implemented in a proportionate manner. As regards freedom of assembly, several demonstrations for human rights, environmental rights, and political and socio-economic rights were banned and dispersed by the police. Gender-