



Justice & Anticorruption
Reforms Forum



DIGEST

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FOREWORD



“This forum has become a benchmark of substance and expertise in the debate on the rule of law in the Republic of Moldova.”

Alexandru Munteanu,
Prime Minister of the
Republic of Moldova

This Digest provides an overview of the key topics, challenges, and recommendations discussed during the 7th edition of the Justice and Anticorruption Reforms Forum, held in Chişinău on 16–17 December 2025. Organized by the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (LRCM) in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, and with the support of the Embassy of the Netherlands, the Forum served as an important platform for dialogue, bringing together over 150 professionals and key stakeholders from the justice sector, policymakers, civil society representatives, and development partners.

The event aimed to identify effective solutions and practical approaches to accelerate justice reform and strengthen anti-corruption efforts, in a context marked by institutional pressures and high public expectations.

This summary reflects the main discussions. For a comprehensive overview of all debates and conclusions, we encourage you to consult the [full video recording of the event](#).

LRCM is actively seeking partners interested in contributing to the organization of the 2026 edition. If you are interested in supporting this important initiative aimed at strengthening democracy in the Republic of Moldova, please contact us at ilie.chirtoaca@crjm.org.

Yours sincerely

Ilie Chirtoacă,
Executive Director

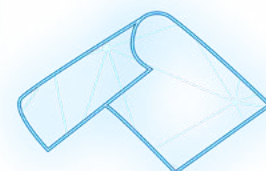
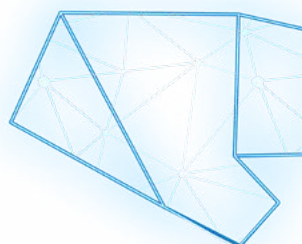
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POLITICAL SIGNALS

JUSTICE – A DECISIVE TEST FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Prime Minister Alexandru Munteanu framed justice reform as the foundation for all other public policies and an indispensable prerequisite for EU accession. He stressed that without a credible justice system, there can be neither a European future nor sustainable economic development. While acknowledging that the reform is challenging and affects entrenched interests, the Government remains committed to completing the external evaluation of judges and prosecutors. The focus is now on delivering tangible results beyond the vetting process, including filling vacant positions, accelerating the examination of corruption cases, confiscating criminal assets, and advancing digitalization. This also requires clearer delineation of responsibilities and more effective interinstitutional coordination. Equal application of the law—without exceptions or double standards—remains the true test of the rule of law. Justice is not merely “one chapter”, but the foundational contract between the state and its citizens, and its success determines the credibility of the entire government.

JUSTICE REFORM MUST DELIVER VISIBLE RESULTS FOR CITIZENS

EU Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova, Ivonna Piorko, acknowledged the progress reflected in the European Commission’s 2025 Report, including improvements in the integrity of the system and the continuation of the external evaluation process. She emphasized that vetting has become a structural component of the reform, not merely a formal requirement of the accession process, but a response to citizens’ expectations. At the same time, she highlighted the need to accelerate the pace of reforms and to strengthen interinstitutional cooperation. Enhancing the capacities for criminal prosecution and asset recovery remains essential for achieving tangible results. The digitalization of the justice system is a key instrument for modernization and transparency, and the EU Delegation will make substantial investments in this sector in the coming years.

JUSTICE REFORM – AN EXPRESSION OF DOMESTIC WILL AND RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS EUROPEAN STANDARDS

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Fred Duijn, underlined that justice reform originated from the internal will of Moldovan society, rather than being externally imposed. He stressed the importance of sustained political commitment and the adoption of the necessary legislation to support this complex process. The rule of law, he noted, entails clear rules and courts capable of applying them independently when they are breached. EU accession requires resilient institutions and a culture of compliance with legal norms. The Ambassador encouraged a critical, solution-oriented dialogue to accelerate Moldova’s preparedness for accession.



INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF THE JUSTICE SECTOR

Taking Stock of the 2022–2025 Strategy

MAIN RESULTS

RESET OF THE SELF-GOVERNING BODIES (SCM AND SCP)

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE VETTING PROCESS FOR JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS

REFORM OF THE SUPREME COURT OF JUSTICE AND THE APPOINTMENT OF APPROXIMATELY 50% NEW JUDGES

ADOPTION OF A NEW LAW ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

FACILITATION OF INDIVIDUALS' ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH THE USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

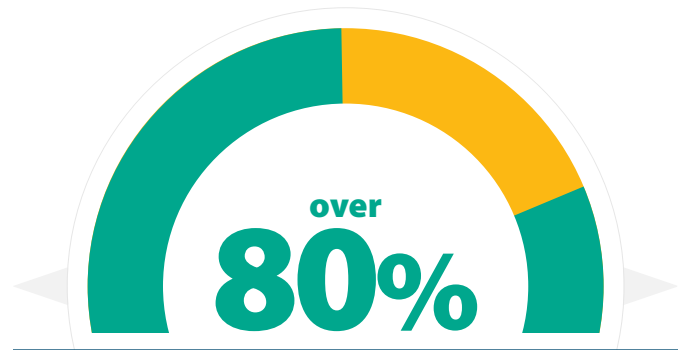
STRENGTHENING OF THE ASSET AND PERSONAL INTERESTS CONTROL MECHANISM AND INCREASED EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL INTEGRITY AUTHORITY



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

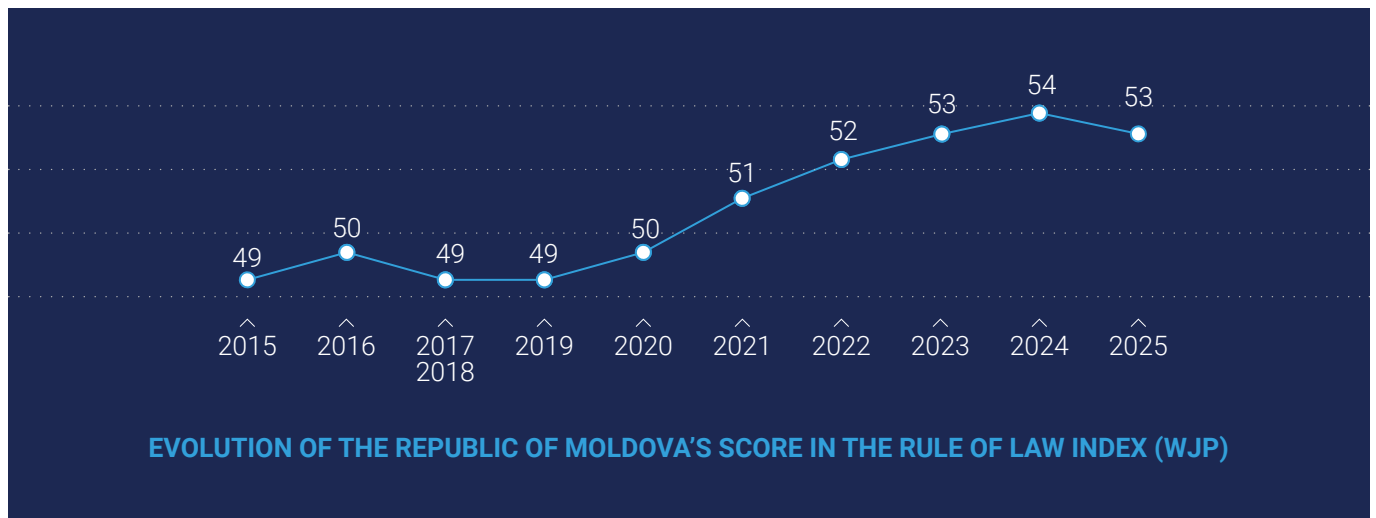
The Strategy for Ensuring the Independence and Integrity of the Justice Sector (2022–2025) has, overall, been implemented in line with the established timeline, without successive extensions of deadlines. This reflects more realistic planning and a stronger institutional ownership compared to previous iterations. During the reference period, authorities report the completion of over 80% of the envisaged measures, with an estimated implementation rate of approximately 90% upon final evaluation. The European Commission's 2025 Enlargement Report¹ considers the implementation of both the Strategy and its Action Plan to be "satisfactory."

MEASURES IMPLEMENTED



More than 80% of the planned measures were implemented within the prescribed timeframe

As the implementation of the reform has advanced, the Rule of Law Index has moved beyond its historically stagnant phase, recording a steady upward trend between 2020 and 2024. However, the global trend identified by the World Justice Project (WJP) points to an accelerated regression: in 2025, 68% of assessed countries recorded a decline in the rule of law (compared to 57% in 2024). In this context, Moldova has experienced a mixed trajectory: following progress in 2024 (ranked 64th out of 142), it recorded a slight decline in 2025 (a decrease of 1.1% in score), ranking 68th out of 143. This trajectory may be explained by the fact that reform policies are beginning to produce visible structural effects.²



At this stage, discussions on the independence and integrity of the justice sector are situated in the transition between the 2022–2025 strategic cycle and the forthcoming 2026–2030 strategy, with an increasingly clear focus on the tangible impact on citizens.

In the absence of robust data and consistent indicators, the reform remains vulnerable to perceptions and contestation, while planning risks becoming reactive rather than strategic. Looking ahead to the new strategic cycle, it is essential that the strategy be anchored in a coherent "metrics" framework for the sector (including opinion and perception surveys, CEPEJ data, and international measurements), based on relevant data series capable of capturing and demonstrating real trends.

¹ European Commission, 2025 Enlargement Report, available at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/23fa6af0-89b3-4532-a3d9-d1638727d14c_en?filename=moldova-report-2025.pdf

² World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Moldova/>.

In the final phase of the Strategy’s implementation, the most significant achievements focused on strengthening the institutional framework of the justice system and establishing more credible mechanisms for integrity and accountability. A major milestone was the completion of the reset of the self-governing bodies, with the Superior Council of Magistracy and the Superior Council of Prosecutors becoming fully operational, composed of members selected through vetting procedures. This has contributed to enhancing both the legitimacy and the decision-making capacity of these institutions. In parallel, the external evaluation process of judges and prosecutors was operationalized, with the SCM and SCP playing a central role by reinforcing internal safeguards of integrity and professionalism within the system.

At the same time, the Strategy placed emphasis on improving access to justice through digitalization, expanding the use of videoconferencing, and enhancing courts’ electronic tools—measures that have reduced procedural barriers and brought judicial services closer to citizens.



WHAT IS WORKING?

The Strategy has contributed to establishing a new institutional foundation for the justice system, through the vetting processes and the reorganization of governance mechanisms aimed at restoring trust and enhancing accountability among system actors. These interventions have enabled a more coherent functioning of the self-governing bodies and have created the conditions for a more stable system of judicial governance, oriented towards integrity and professionalism.

The European integration pathway has played a decisive role in energising interinstitutional cooperation and in steering reforms towards European standards, prompting institutions to act in a more coordinated manner and to deliver results at an accelerated pace. Alignment with the objectives set within the accession negotiations has strengthened strategic discipline and contributed to transforming previously fragmented initiatives into coherent public policies. In parallel, the digitalization of justice sector services has evolved from a declarative concept into a concrete programme, through the expansion of videoconferencing and the modernization of court administration. These measures have facilitated access to justice and reduced reliance on traditional bureaucratic procedures. As such, digitalization has been perceived not merely as a technical tool, but as an essential component for enhancing efficiency, transparency, and limiting unnecessary human intervention in sensitive judicial processes.

MAIN RESULTS

UNSTABLE GEOPOLITICAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

ACCELERATED PRESSURE STEMMING FROM THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AGENDA

CARRYING OUT REFORMS CONCURRENTLY WITH OTHER COMPLEX INITIATIVES AND REFORMS

LIMITED INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

DEPENDENCE ON SUSTAINED POLITICAL WILL

WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

The implementation of the Strategy for Ensuring the Independence and Integrity of the Justice Sector took place in a context marked by multiple challenges, which have influenced both the pace of reforms and the prioritization of institutional interventions. A key factor has been the unstable geopolitical and regional environment, which required continuous adaptation of the reform agenda and demanded increased resilience and coordination from institutions. At the same time, the European integration process has generated additional pressure on authorities to deliver tangible results within a limited timeframe, particularly in light of the recommendations accompanying the granting of candidate status. This overlap of strategic agendas has intensified the institutional workload and highlighted capacity constraints among the actors involved in implementation.

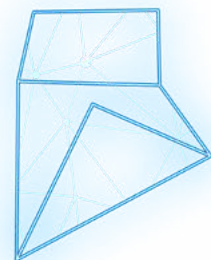
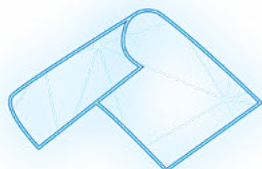
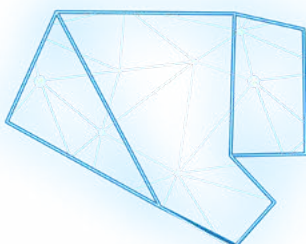
Another challenge was carrying out reforms in parallel with complex initiatives, such as the de-oligarchisation agenda and the strengthening of anticorruption mechanisms, which have added an additional layer of complexity to the transformation process. Moreover, the frequency of legislative amendments and the accelerated pace of regulatory interventions have created a perception of instability of the legal framework, underscoring the need for a phase of institutional consolidation and stabilization of the reforms already initiated. All these elements have demonstrated that the success of implementation did not depend solely on the content of the Strategy, but also on the maintenance of consistent political will and on the capacity of institutions to manage internal and external pressures simultaneously—an essential lesson for shaping the next strategic cycle.

“Justice is precisely the field where one case is too many. It has the most ambitious minimum standard, because the minimum standard for justice is 100%.”

Vladislav Cojuhari, minister of Justice

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW STRATEGIC DOCUMENT ANCHORED IN THE ACCESSION AGENDA:** The new strategy must be grounded in a rigorous independent evaluation and should organically integrate European priorities, with its assessment and development to be carried out by December 2026 in cooperation with the OECD and the European Union.
- **STABILISATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE RESULTS ACHIEVED:** The new strategy should place emphasis on institutional consolidation and on capitalising on the changes already implemented, by shifting from continuous reform to predictable and sustainable functioning.
- **EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO JUSTICE:** Streamlining procedures and orienting the system towards tangible results, so that justice becomes faster, more predictable, and closer to citizens.
- **CONTINUATION OF INTEGRITY MECHANISMS AFTER VETTING:** Developing permanent tools for professional and ethical accountability to ensure the sustainability of the results achieved.
- **ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC TRUST IN JUSTICE:** Strengthening transparency, public communication, and the quality of the administration of justice so that reform outcomes are directly felt by society and the business environment.





DIGITALIZATION

Digital Justice in Action

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

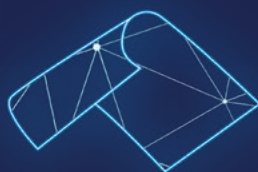
INTEGRATED CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
(PIGD) IMPLEMENTED NATIONWIDE

ESTABLISHMENT OF ADJAJ: INTEGRATED
INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION OF
DIGITALIZATION

PILOTING OF THE E-FILE SYSTEM (UNTIL 31
DECEMBER 2026)

FUNCTIONAL DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM:
VIDEOCONFERENCING, SRS "FEMIDA",
JUSTAT, NATIONAL COURTS PORTAL

LAUNCH OF THE E-COURTROOM: HEARINGS
CONDUCTED VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE FROM
ANY LOCATION

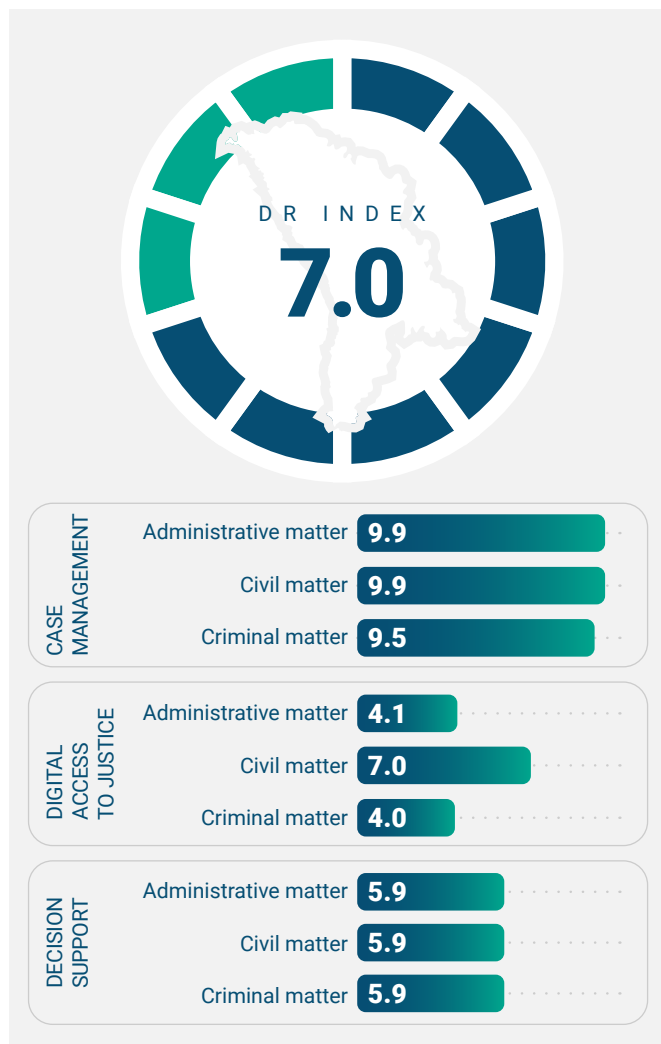


WHAT IS HAPPENING?

In the context of the most recent data from the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), as well as the institutional reforms implemented in 2025, the Republic of Moldova has strengthened its position in the field of digitalization of judicial infrastructure. According to CEPEJ data on the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into the judicial system, the country ranks among the top 20% in Europe, with a score of over 6.2 out of 10, alongside states such as Estonia, Romania, Latvia, Austria, Croatia, and Italy. Moldova thus exceeds the European average in terms of digital infrastructure and the use of IT tools in court administration. However, the data reveal an uneven development: while internal court management and case administration reach an advanced level (over 7 out of 10), digital communication with court users remains limited (approximately 4 out of 10). This discrepancy calls for a reorientation of reforms towards strengthening citizens' digital access to judicial services and developing user-centred e-justice mechanisms.

The current architecture of the judicial information system includes several essential components. The Integrated Case Management Program (PIGD) ensures the electronic management of court cases and constitutes the backbone of the courts' digital infrastructure. The new version of the PIGD, launched in November 2025, introduces a paradigm shift through its interconnection with 12 essential public registers—including the population register, the register of legal entities, fiscal and customs registers, as well as registers relevant for the investigation of economic and financial crimes. This creates the preconditions for expanded interoperability with other governmental systems, with the aim of reducing verification time and the volume of interinstitutional requests.

In parallel, the judicial “e-File” IT system, a component of the PIGD, aims to fully digitalize procedural communication and ensure online access for parties to case documents and materials, with a view to reducing physical interactions between courts and participants in proceedings. In 2025, the pilot phase was extended until 31 December 2026, to allow for the adjustment of technical components and digital workflows, as well as for the gradual adaptation of all stakeholders to the use of new electronic tools. At the same time, the videoconferencing system, audio recording of hearings through solutions such as the SRS “Femida”, the National Courts Portal (instante.justice.md)—one of the most accessed government portals, with approximately 6,700 daily visits—and the JUSTAT Information System, which provides



digital access to judicial statistics, complement the existing digital ecosystem. The launch of the first e-Courtroom at the Bălți Court in 2025 represents a further step towards the dematerialisation of judicial proceedings, enabling hearings to be conducted via videoconference and allowing participants to connect from any location, thereby enhancing the accessibility and flexibility of the administration of justice.

The establishment in 2025 of the Agency for Digitalization in Justice and Judicial Administration (ADJAJ), through the merger of structures previously responsible for court administration and legal information resources, reflects the need to transition from a fragmented development of IT systems to an integrated approach, based on institutional interoperability and technical standardisation.

In 2025, the debate on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the justice sector focused on its practical application in court activities, with explicit references to ethical standards, including the European Ethical Charter on the Use of AI in Judicial Systems and their environment, and to governance principles such as effective human oversight, transparency,

accountability, and the prevention of algorithmic discrimination. Discussions addressed the delineation of AI's role as a support tool and the need for a legal framework to define the limits of its use. The institutional consensus is that AI should remain a support instrument for technical functions—such as the anonymisation of judgments, automated transcription of hearings, statistical analysis, and the management of large volumes of data—without substituting the constitutional role of the judge in the administration of justice.

From the perspective of law enforcement authorities, the digitalization of justice acquires a pronounced investigative dimension. The migration of criminal activity to the digital environment, including the use of cryptocurrencies, online platforms, and AI tools by criminal groups, requires a rapid adaptation of police and prosecution services to new types of offences. The development of digital skills, the use of OSINT tools, and specialised software for the analysis of large datasets are essential for an effective response to these threats. At the same time, this transformation must be accompanied by strict compliance with fundamental rights, in particular the protection of personal data and procedural safeguards, in order to ensure that technology is used in the service of citizens and not to their detriment.

Overall, developments in 2025 demonstrate that the digitalization of justice in the Republic of Moldova is no longer an isolated reform, but a central direction of transformation of the judicial system. It encompasses both administrative efficiency and the proper and secure functioning of institutions, with full respect for procedural guarantees. The challenge for the next phase lies not only in expanding digital tools, but in ensuring their intelligent and ethical use, so that technology contributes to a faster, more accessible, and more predictable system of justice, without undermining the human role and the fundamental principles of the rule of law.

WHAT IS WORKING?

In 2025, several components of the digital judicial infrastructure are being used nationwide. The Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) is implemented across all courts, and the system for the random allocation of cases limits human intervention in case distribution. During 2025, the system was interconnected with 12 public registers managed by various authorities, including population, legal entities, and fiscal registers, enabling direct access to relevant information within judicial proceedings.

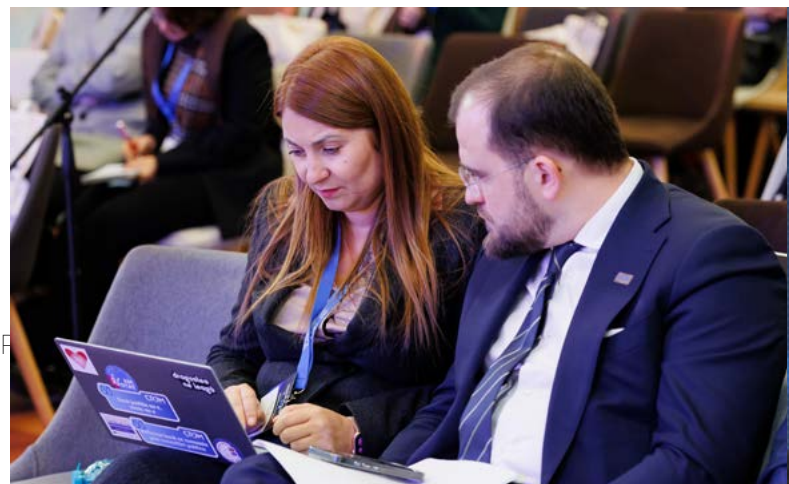
“Where previously lawyers or participants in proceedings had to travel hundreds of kilometres from Chişinău to Edineţ or Cahul to attend a hearing—sometimes only to be informed that it had been cancelled— today we can say that the courtroom has become just a click away.”

Dumitru Darea, Director, the Agency for Digitization in Justice and Court Administration

Videoconferencing technology is available nationwide and is used across different types of cases, including for the remote participation of parties and the hearing of individuals outside the courtroom. Audio recording systems for hearings are also used in court activities, while the e-File platform continues to be piloted and adjusted, showing a slight increase in the number of applications submitted compared to previous years. The JUSTAT Information System provides automated statistical data on court activity. The National Courts Portal (instante.justice.md), one of the most accessed government portals, offers public access to information on court activity, while the Legis.md portal is widely used for consulting updated legislation. In parallel, institutional measures have been initiated to strengthen interoperability and coordination among justice sector information systems.

WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

Despite the progress achieved, the digitalization of justice continues to be marked by a number of structural challenges. One of the main difficulties is the historical fragmentation in the development of information systems. Over time, multiple institutions have developed their own platforms to manage similar legal processes—particularly in criminal cases—without full interconnection. This form of “institutional egoism” has resulted in parallel systems,



while interoperability between courts, prosecution services, and law enforcement authorities remains incomplete. The circulation of electronic case files between institutions has not yet been fully achieved in a digital format.

Digitalization also entails significant costs, including infrastructure, maintenance, licensing, cybersecurity, and technical support. The issue is not only the level of funding, but also the efficiency of its use and the proper implementation of technological solutions, so that investments do not generate additional costs in the future.

At the same time, the legal framework does not fully reflect ongoing digital transformations. The concepts of “electronic case file” and “electronic document” are not coherently integrated into legislation, particularly in criminal procedure, which limits the full use of digital tools and the exclusive electronic transmission of materials between institutions.

Beyond these technical and regulatory aspects, the human dimension remains essential. The adaptation of experienced professionals to new technologies requires continuous training, while newer generations must be trained in areas such as digital hygiene, data protection, and the use of licensed tools. In the field of digital investigations, IT solutions support the analysis of large volumes of data—interceptions, decryption, OSINT activities—but cannot substitute human analysis and do not provide automated answers for identifying perpetrators in complex cases, such as cyber fraud.

Regarding artificial intelligence, the challenges are both technical and conceptual. There is still reluctance towards its use in sensitive activities, such as drafting judicial reasoning or processing judicial data. Identified risks include the generation of inaccurate information or plausible but incorrect reasoning, as well as the lack of transparency of the algorithms used. At the same time, the availability of specialised human resources in information technology and cybersecurity remains limited.

At the same time, the level of use of certain digital platforms, including the e-File system, remains low relative to their potential. Data indicating a limited number of submitted applications suggest that existing tools are not yet being fully utilised.

At the legislative and technical levels, the accessibility and structure of normative databases constitute another limitation. Although the Legis.md platform allows consultation of updated normative acts, it is not configured in a way that facilitates integration into artificial intelligence systems or the automated processing of legislative data, thereby limiting the development of advanced solutions based on comprehensive and systematic legal analysis..

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **SYSTEM INTEROPERABILITY STRENGTHENING:** Ensuring effective interconnection among the courts, the prosecution service, criminal investigation bodies and other relevant institutions, so that the electronic case-file can circulate entirely in digital format. This requires not only technical integration, but also the optimisation and simplification of existing platforms, as well as the strengthening of interinstitutional trust and cooperation on the basis of a shared commitment to effective implementation.
- **REGULATORY FRAMEWORK CLARITY:** Coherently integrating into legislation the concepts of “electronic case file” and “electronic document”, particularly in criminal procedure, to enable fully digital procedural workflows and eliminate legal bottlenecks.
- **INCREASE IN THE USE OF EXISTING PLATFORMS:** Simplifying procedures, improving the user experience and making technical adjustments tailored to the real needs of court users and professionals. Public awareness campaigns and proactive measures are needed to enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of digital tools.
- **SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL PLANNING:** Ensuring predictable multiannual planning for infrastructure, maintenance, cybersecurity, licencing, and technical support, with an emphasis on the efficient use of resources and the avoidance of redundant investments.



- **ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC AWARENESS AND TRUST:** Educating society on the advantages of using digital services in justice and addressing scepticism regarding the use of artificial intelligence as a controlled tool, applied in compliance with ethical standards, including the European Ethical Charter and the deontological principles applicable to digital justice.
- **TARGETED USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:** Controlled implementation of AI in areas with demonstrated added value, such as rapid document search and analysis, anonymisation of judgments for data protection purposes, management of repetitive cases, automated audio-to-text transcription, and the provision of accessible legal information to citizens, while maintaining human control over judicial decisions.
- **DIGITAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** Strengthening the continuous training of justice professionals, including in the fields of digital investigations, the use of OSINT, data protection, and cybersecurity. More frequent cooperation between state institutions, justice professionals, and IT experts is necessary, including through the use of international expertise.
- **DIGITALIZATION OF LOW-COMPLEXITY CASES:** Expanding the use of fully digital procedures for cases of low complexity, including by exploring the use of artificial intelligence in mediation processes, in line with the recommendations formulated by international development partners and experts.





IS THERE LIFE AFTER VETTING?

How the External Evaluation Is Unfolding and Lessons Learned After the Completion of the Pre-Vetting Process

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

COMPLETION OF THE PRE-VETTING PHASE

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY IS CLEARER AND MORE PREDICTABLE THAN IN THE INITIAL PHASE

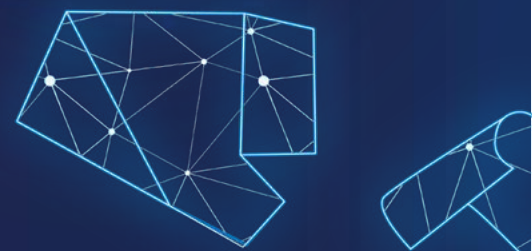
THE SCJ EXAMINES APPEALS AGAINST THE COMMISSIONS' DECISIONS MORE QUICKLY

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE COMMISSIONS, THE SCM AND THE SCP HAS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY COMPARED TO 2024

SOLID EXPERTISE HAS BEEN BUILT UP IN ASSESSING FINANCIAL INTEGRITY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

STANDARDS FOR REASONING DECISIONS ARE MORE DETAILED AND CONSISTENT

THERE IS INSTITUTIONAL OPENNESS TO DEVELOPING A MORE SUSTAINABLE POST-VETTING PHASE



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The external evaluation process of judges and prosecutors has entered a stage of maturity. After three years of implementation, vetting is no longer an experiment, but a structural reality of justice reform. Over the past year, the pace of evaluations has accelerated, the methodology has become more predictable, and cooperation between the Commissions and national authorities (the SCM and the SCP) has strengthened. At the same time, the Supreme Court of Justice has become more efficient in examining appeals against the Commissions' decisions, contributing to greater consistency of case law and increased predictability of the process.

Data presented by the Ministry of Justice in 2025 indicate a relatively balanced distribution of outcomes: approximately one third of candidates passed, one third did not pass, and one third chose to leave the system before the completion of the procedure. This confirms that the mechanism has not been applied formally and has produced tangible effects in filtering integrity, with over 60% of subjects no longer remaining within the system.

At the same time, the judicial system is also strongly experiencing the side effects of the process. The number of vacancies at the Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Justice (around 50%) remains high. Acting appointments to leadership positions have become the rule rather than the exception. In the prosecution service, the situation is numerically more stable, but pressure on specialised institutions remains significant.

A newly emerging issue, intensively discussed, is the approaching completion of the current phase of the vetting process. In the absence of a clear political decision on whether to extend or conclude the process, the system operates in a climate of uncertainty. This uncertainty affects both applications for senior positions and medium-term institutional planning.

„There is life before vetting, after vetting, and during vetting as well, but the quality of that life may change depending on the results of the vetting.”

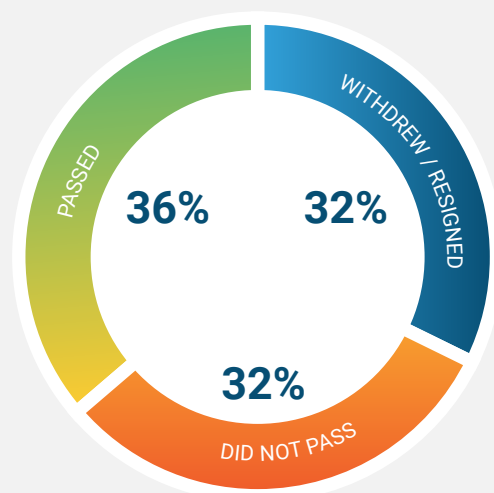
Dumitru Obadă,
President of the Superior Council of Prosecutors

WHAT IS WORKING?

First, the evaluation standards are clearer and more consistent than at the outset of the process. The assessment of financial and ethical integrity is more structured, and the reasoning of decisions is communicated in greater detail. Second, institutional cooperation has improved. The Commissions, the SCM, and the SCP interact more effectively, and procedures appear to be better coordinated. There is a genuine accumulation of technical expertise, including in the analysis of complex financial flows. This development is largely due to the pre-vetting mechanism, which, although now completed, has laid the foundation for more rigorous regulations and practices. Third, the mechanism has generated a self-regulatory effect: a number of judges and prosecutors have chosen to leave the system without waiting for the completion of the procedure. While this phenomenon creates temporary challenges, it has contributed to clarifying the professional profile of the system.

Another positive element is that the judicial review process is functioning. The existence of judicial control over the Commissions' decisions strengthens the legitimacy of the entire mechanism and reduces the risk of arbitrariness. Finally, there is a genuine openness to developing a post-vetting phase. Discussions are ongoing regarding the strengthening of the National Integrity Authority (NIA), the role of the boards of the SCM and the SCP, and the integration of the accumulated expertise into permanent evaluation mechanisms.

VETTING RESULTS OF JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS
(november 2025)



WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

The most serious challenge is the shortage of human resources. The judicial system of the Republic of Moldova is facing a severe staffing deficit, with approximately 120 judicial positions vacant (December 2025). The number of candidates for positions in higher courts is decreasing. The reasons invoked are multiple: the high workload, the relatively modest salary differences, uncertainty regarding the future of the reform, and the intrusive nature of the evaluation procedure. Vacant positions directly affect the efficiency of the system. Prolonged acting appointments in leadership positions reduce the capacity for strategic planning and create institutional fragility.

Another challenge is the dilemma regarding the extension of vetting. Continuing the evaluation for the entire body of judges could generate a new wave of resignations and blockages. However, stopping the process without solid alternative mechanisms could limit the impact of the reform. Indecision is, at this moment, the greatest risk.

Post-vetting institutional capacity remains insufficiently clarified. The SCM and the SCP do not have secretariats and analytical teams comparable to those of the Commissions. Without a concrete plan for the transfer of competences and resources, there is a risk of a rupture between the exceptional phase and permanent mechanisms.

At the same time, the experience of other states, including Albania, shows that large-scale evaluation processes can produce significant delays in the examination of cases and can affect public perception if they last excessively. This is already visible in the system of the Republic of Moldova. The most recent data (2024) show that the Supreme Court of Justice received 6,390 cases and resolved 4,646, while the backlog increased to 6,937 (+33.6% compared to 2023). At the Chişinău Court of Appeal, only 56% of the cases pending were resolved, and at the level of all courts of appeal, the backlog reached 23,395 cases (+34.8%). If departures continue and recruitment is delayed, the data for 2025 may indicate an even more severe impact.

Finally, the conflict between quality and speed remains central. Rigorous evaluations require time. But the judicial system needs stability and predictability. Managing this balance is essential.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **ADOPTION OF A CLEAR POLITICAL DECISION ON THE DURATION OF THE VETTING PROCESS:** The reform cannot remain in a zone of ambiguity. A public, realistic, and firm timetable is required, endorsed by all stakeholders, including political actors.
- **DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF AN OFFICIAL POST-VETTING TRANSITION STRATEGY:** This must define the role of the SCM, the SCP, and the National Integrity Authority in the continuous evaluation of integrity and performance.
- **STRENGTHENING OF THE NATIONAL INTEGRITY AUTHORITY AS THE MAIN PILLAR FOR THE VERIFICATION OF ASSETS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** Financial integrity in the public service, and particularly in the judiciary and the prosecution service, must become part of permanent oversight, not only of exceptional evaluation.
- **INTEGRATION OF EXPERTISE ACCUMULATED BY THE COMMISSIONS INTO PERMANENT STRUCTURES:** Some of the analysts and specialists could be temporarily taken over by the relevant institutions in order to ensure continuity of standards.
- **ENHANCEMENT OF THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF POSITIONS IN HIGHER COURTS:** Salary increases, workload reduction through digitalization, and clarification of career prospects are necessary measures.
- **ACCELERATION OF COMPETITIONS AND FILLING VACANT POSITIONS:** The stability of the system depends on the swift and transparent filling of key positions.
- **TRANSPARENCY AND PERIODIC REPORTING:** Public communication on the progress of the reform must be continuous in order to maintain citizens' trust.



CORRUPTION: RESULTS OF ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS AND ILLICIT ASSET RECOVERY

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS (DEFINITION OF THE “SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCE,” ADJUSTMENTS TO SANCTIONS, STRENGTHENING THE RESPONSE TO ELECTORAL CORRUPTION).

FORMAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION TO SUPPORT THE APO (SECONDMENTS AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT).

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CORRUPTION CASES REFERRED TO COURT.

271 CASES INVESTIGATED BY THE NAC AND 55 CASES INVESTIGATED BY ANTI-CORRUPTION PROSECUTORS, WITH CONCERNS REGARDING THE DECLINING SHARE OF HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION CASES.

APPLICATION OF SIGNIFICANT SEIZURES: MDL 191.7 MILLION IN ASSETS FROZEN (APPROXIMATELY MDL 60 MILLION IN CORRUPTION CASES), 280 DELEGATIONS EXECUTED BY CARA IN 2025;

INTRODUCTION OF THIRD- PARTY CONFISCATION, PARALLEL AND POST-CONVICTION FINANCIAL INVESTIGATIONS, INTERNATIONAL ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS, AND STRENGTHENING OF ASSET RECOVERY TOOLS (THIRD-PARTY CONFISCATION, PARALLEL FINANCIAL INVESTIGATIONS, INTERNATIONAL ENFORCEMENT).



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Discussions supported by the Embassy of France in the Republic of Moldova.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Corruption Perceptions Index

MOLDOVA

Score

42/100

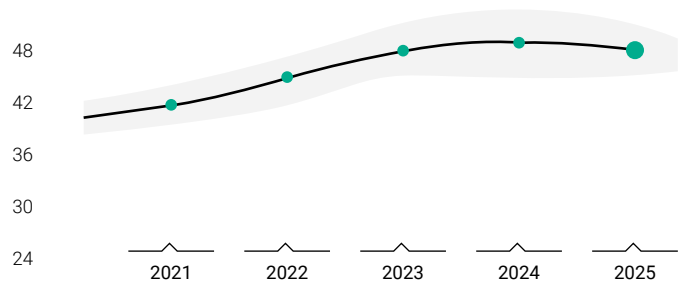
Rank

80/182

Score change



-1 since 2024



Corruption remains one of the main concerns for Moldovan citizens, alongside the standard of living, the level of economic development, the safeguarding of peace, and infrastructure development, as reflected in the latest Public Opinion Barometer.¹ At the international level, the Republic of Moldova dropped by one point in the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International, ranking 80th out of 182 countries in 2025, with a score of 42 points (a slight decline from 43 in 2024), while still outperforming countries such as Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Hungary.²

In 2025, the anticorruption agenda in the Republic of Moldova evolved simultaneously along two directions: (i) strengthening the legal framework and reconfiguring competences among key institutions, and (ii) increasing (internal and external) pressure to deliver verifiable results in combating high-level corruption and in the recovery of illicit assets. This phase is characterised less by a lack of legal instruments and more by the difficulty of translating them into consistent institutional performance, in the context of a tension between two objectives: credible investigations and ensuring the continuity of cases.

The reconfiguration that entered into force on 1 March 2024, concerning the delineation of competences between the National Anticorruption Centre (NAC) and the Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office (APO), aimed at clarifying roles in prevention, investigation, and criminal prosecution.

However, discussions during the panel indicated that the delineation of competences, in the absence of a complete package of resources (premises, staff, budget, equipment, and analytical capacity), may produce adverse transitional effects: a slowdown in outputs in the area of high-level corruption, fragmentation of operational flows, and the emergence of grey areas regarding the transfer of cases and responsibilities.

At the same time, 2025 brought an intensification of debates regarding the institutional architecture of specialised prosecution offices, including through the merger initiative (PACCO), adopted by Parliament in the first reading. The debate highlighted a structural tension: the need for rapid reforms in contexts perceived as high-risk (including electoral corruption and illegal financing) versus the need for reform governance based on public consultation, impact assessment, continuity of criminal proceedings, and the protection of the independence of specialised prosecutors. In its report of 4 November 2025³, the European Commission noted the need to improve cooperation between the APO and the NAC, to provide premises for the APO, and to significantly increase its staffing levels.

1 Institute for Public Policy, Public Opinion Barometer, September 2025: <https://ipp.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Sondaj-BOP-2025.pdf>.

2 Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2025: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2025>.

3 See European Commission, Moldova Report 2025, available at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/23fa6af0-89b3-4532-a3d9-d1638727d14c_en?filename=moldova-report-2025.pdf.

WHAT IS WORKING?

In 2025, several functional elements can be identified that point to the gradual maturation of anti-corruption and asset recovery policies. First, the legislature defined the notion “substantial difference,” which provides clarity and predictability in the classification of illicit enrichment offences, in response to earlier guidance from the Constitutional Court. Similarly, the criminal policy on penalties for corruption and corruption-related offences was revised. The Contravention Code was supplemented with the offence of passive electoral corruption, the finding of which was initially entrusted to the NAC; however, as of 2025, the police have also been granted the competence to establish such contraventions.

The specialisation of judges increases the pace of examination of corruption cases through improved organisation, scheduling of hearings, and management of evidence. However, specialisation produces effects only if it is accompanied by adequate human resources and appropriate institutional conditions. In 2025, the number of corruption and corruption-related cases referred for trial also increased. Thus, 271 cases investigated by officers of the NAC and 55 cases investigated by anticorruption prosecutors were brought before the courts.

Asset recovery is increasingly treated as a distinct and technical component of anti-corruption policy, rather than merely as a secondary consequence of criminal prosecution. The set of tools recently introduced (third-party confiscation, planned freezing measures, the definition of beneficial ownership, and special procedures in certain situations) is aligned with the European “follow the money” approach and can enhance the effectiveness of the system if applied consistently. Secondly, the Criminal Assets Recovery Agency (CARA) is strengthening its role as an operational hub in the identification and freezing of assets, including through access to a significant number of databases and the use of international cooperation channels. This infrastructure reduces the time costs of locating assets and can accelerate the application of precautionary measures in relevant cases.

“Recovery to the state budget alone is no longer sufficient. The benefits must be visible.”

Radu Nicolae,
International Expert

WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

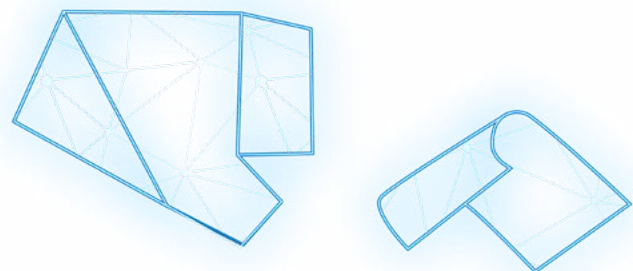
Compared to 2023, when 18 high-level officials were referred for trial, in 2024 only 8 individuals in this category were brought before the courts, while the results for 2025 will only become visible in 2026. This represents a significant decline, which may be explained, inter alia, by the impact of the 2024 reforms concerning the decoupling of competences. Accordingly, one of the most serious concerns relates to the operational capacity of the APO. Despite high expectations regarding the fight against high-level corruption, the institution operates with a major staff shortage, limited financial resources, and insufficient technical support. Budgets in recent years have not increased proportionally with the assigned responsibilities, and the investigative structure remains understaffed.

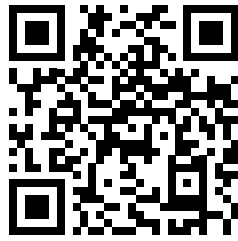
At the same time, the changes concerning the delineation of competences have generated periods of adjustment and uncertainty. Diverging views expressed during the panel reflected two distinct diagnoses: some emphasised the lack of institutional will and courage, while others pointed to structural capacity constraints. This tension in perspectives remains one of the central challenges of the reform. Participants also highlighted the risks associated with frequent reforms and successive reorganisations, particularly in the context of recent legislative initiatives (including PACCO). Rapid changes in competences, introduced under expedited procedures, may affect the continuity of investigations and create adjustment periods that weaken operational performance. It was noted that managerial instability and uncertainty regarding the future of specialised institutions affect both morale and predictability within the system. In combating high-level corruption, stability is an essential element for achieving sustainable results. A major warning signal was the complete lack of candidates in the competition for specialised anticorruption panels. Despite the existing legal framework and the technical support provided, no judge applied. The identified causes include: the absence of additional salary and social guarantees; significant public exposure and reputational pressure; the risk of denigration and attacks; and the lack of dedicated infrastructure. This situation raises a sustainability concern: without real mechanisms of motivation and protection, specialised institutions may remain functional only on paper.

Despite declared efforts and certain concrete results, public perception regarding the fight against corruption remains cautious. Societal expectations are oriented towards tangible outcomes: high-profile cases, final convictions, and effective confiscations. This gap between institutional efforts and the perceived outcomes represents a constant pressure on the system, as well as a challenge of both communication and performance.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT OF THE DELINEATION OF COMPETENCES BETWEEN THE NAC AND THE APO, BASED ON DATA AND RESULTS:** Conducting an operational audit (case flows, investigation timelines, quality of evidence, share of high-level corruption cases, judicial outcomes), followed by targeted adjustments. The recommendation is to avoid institutional “resets” in favour of calibrated corrections.
- **INSTITUTIONAL CONSOLIDATION PACKAGE FOR THE APO:** Ensuring functional premises, a distinct and predictable budget, full staffing (including investments in financial investigation, analytical capacity, and technical support), as well as equipment funded from public resources in order to reduce dependence on external projects.
- **STABILITY AND CONTINUITY IN REFORMS:** Any proposal for major reorganization (such as the PACCO initiative) should be preceded by genuine consultations, cost-benefit analysis, assessment of risks to pending cases, and a transition plan that guarantees the continuity of criminal prosecution and the protection of the mandates of specialized prosecutors.
- **MOTIVATION AND PROTECTION POLICIES FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION POSITIONS:** The introduction of a set of salary and social guarantees, security measures, an institutional response to intimidation and denigration, as well as psychological and logistical support, especially for judges and prosecutors handling high-profile corruption cases.
- **INTERVENTIONS IN THE NIA REGIME TO PREVENT THE ALIENATION OF ASSETS:** Legally allowing the application of freezing measures immediately after the finding, so that suspicious assets cannot be transferred until a final judgment is obtained.
- **STRENGTHENING OF THE FULL ASSET RECOVERY CHAIN:** Developing capacities for asset management and disposal (including early disposal, where justified), expanding post-conviction financial investigations, improving cross-border cooperation, and ensuring consistent alignment with the 2024 EU standards on asset recovery and confiscation.
- **OPERATIONAL CLARIFICATIONS FOR THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION IN PENDING CASES:** Developing rules/protocols that allow the controlled transmission of information to authorized bodies (e.g. evaluation commissions, etc.) without affecting criminal prosecution, with clear criteria and defined responsibilities.
- **OUTCOME-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:** Public communication should go beyond the stage of announcements about the initiation of cases and include periodic updates on the outcome of relevant cases, confiscations, and effective recoveries, in order to reduce the gap between “effort” and “result” in public perception.





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