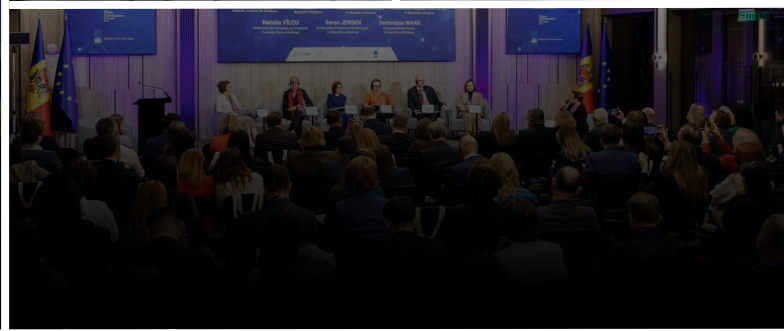




STATE OF JUSTICE

REFORM THROUGH THE LENS OF RESULTS

2026



RJC
Justice & Anticorruption
Reforms Forum

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2026 edition of the Justice Reform and Anti-Corruption Forum was organized by the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (LRCM), in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Republic of Moldova, the Soros Foundation Moldova, and New Democracy Fund.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the aforementioned partners.



INTRODUCTION

Justice reform in the Republic of Moldova has reached a stage at which legislative and institutional changes must deliver lasting results for citizens. Progress has been made in integrity assessments and institutional strengthening, but staff shortages, lengthy proceedings and implementation challenges continue to affect the functioning of the justice system. In the context of the European Union accession process, institutions' ability to translate reforms into results has become a key measure of progress.

These concerns were at the heart of the eighth edition of the Justice and Anti-Corruption Reforms Forum, held in Chişinău on 16 September 2026. The event brought together over 200 justice sector professionals, policymakers, civil society representatives and development partners. Discussions focused on identifying practical solutions to strengthen the independence and efficiency of the justice system and combat corruption, amid institutional pressures and high public expectations.

Through this publication, the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (LRCM) aims to provide professionals, policymakers and international partners with a clear and accessible annual assessment of the state of justice in the Republic of Moldova. The digest brings together relevant statistical data and the key findings and recommendations from the Forum's discussions, complemented by the LRCM's analytical observations. Its purpose is to track progress, stagnation and setbacks from one edition to the next, and to identify priority areas for action.

For a more in-depth exploration of the topics covered, video recordings of the discussions are available on the [Forum's website](#).

We thank the participants and partners who contributed to the event.

The LRCM welcomes collaboration with organisations and institutions interested in supporting future editions and the continuation of this annual assessment. Partnership proposals may be sent to contact@crjm.org.

Ilie Chirtoacă,
Executive Director

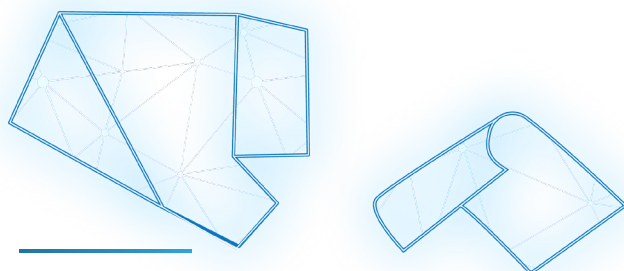
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POLITICAL SIGNALS

Waiting for the vetting process to end must not become a way for candidates for appointment to the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) to avoid integrity checks.

"The vetting will continue until the last member of the Supreme Court of Justice has been appointed."



Maia Sandu,
President of the Republic of
Moldova

Integrity requires ongoing accountability and independent monitoring. The media, civil society and whistleblowers must be able to work in conditions that allow them to identify and report abuses without fear.



Søren Jensen,
Ambassador of
Denmark

Progress towards accession depends on verifiable results in justice and anti-corruption. The credible completion of vetting must be accompanied by stronger staffing capacity and greater institutional capacity to fulfil mandates.



Iwona Piórko,
Ambassador of the
European Union

National institutions must be equipped to uphold integrity standards through regular evaluation mechanisms, so that the results of reform endure after vetting has ended.



Esselien van Eerten,
Ambassador of the Kingdom
of the Netherlands

Citizens' experience is the test of reform. Effective access to justice, proceedings within a reasonable time and respectful treatment must be the benchmarks for this assessment.

"When we say that reform is progressing, we should ask ourselves: what difference does a person in need of justice actually see and experience?"



Natalia Vilcu,
Director of Programmes and Advocacy,
Soros Foundation Moldova

As Moldova moves closer to accession, its justice system will attract greater scrutiny from the European media and public. The results of reform will be examined both by EU institutions and by journalists and citizens in EU Member States.



Dominique Waag,
Ambassador of
France

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

During the opening session, progress in accession negotiations was presented as a further impetus to strengthen the rule of law. It was emphasised, however, that reform had been driven by a domestic need for change and that its objectives go beyond meeting accession requirements. The discussions also highlighted a major challenge: the integrity assessment process must be completed at a time when staff shortages are hampering the work of courts and prosecutors' offices.

Development partners reaffirm their support for continued reform. Speakers emphasised the institutional capacity that must remain within the system once the extraordinary evaluation mechanism comes to an end. Support for civil society and the independent media was presented as a prerequisite for monitoring reform and identifying shortcomings at an early stage.

October 2026 is a target date agreed by the national authorities and the European Union for filling vacancies in key positions within the system. The authorities acknowledge, however, that meeting this deadline is not realistic, as the aim is not to fill posts at any cost but to identify and select suitable candidates. The process may therefore take longer to allow for rigorous candidate selection.

A further challenge is ensuring that the results of reform are sustained after vetting. Checks at the point of entry into the system must be complemented by effective internal accountability mechanisms. Any decision to extend external evaluation (full vetting) must be taken by the Republic of Moldova, with due regard to the justice system's ability to function throughout the country. Partners stressed that national institutions must be able to uphold these standards once the extraordinary exercise has ended.

External pressures raise the stakes of reform. Protecting democracy depends on institutions' ability to combat the illegal financing of political parties, vote-buying and political bribery. At the same time, panellists emphasised the independence of justice sector professionals and citizens' experience: access to justice, effective protection of rights and the resolution of cases within a reasonable time.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **BRINGING EXTERNAL EVALUATION TO A CREDIBLE CONCLUSION.** The process must be pursued consistently, with the same integrity standards applied to all candidates. For the SCJ, the political message was explicit: waiting for vetting to end must not become a means of avoiding evaluation.
- **STRENGTHENING PERMANENT INTEGRITY MECHANISMS.** The Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM), the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP) and the other competent institutions must be able to prevent and sanction misconduct after vetting. Internal controls, ethical rules and whistleblower protection must work in practice. The random allocation of cases within the prosecution service remains a priority highlighted in the discussions.
- **DELIVERING CONSISTENT RESULTS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION.** Investigations must be based on robust evidence, and the recovery of criminal assets must remain a priority. Results must be sustained throughout the accession process and after accession, while respecting fundamental rights.
- **ASSESSING REFORM THROUGH CITIZENS' EXPERIENCE.** The accessibility of procedures, the length of proceedings and respectful treatment must guide the modernisation of the justice system. Digitalisation must be pursued responsibly, and civil society and the independent media must remain involved in monitoring results and highlighting problems.

Vladislav COJUHARI

Ministrul Justiției al
Republicii Moldova

Vasile GRADINARIU

Vicepreședintele Comisiei Juridice Numiri și Imunități
Parlamentul Republicii Moldova

Sergiu SARAIU

Președintele Consiliului Superior
al Magistraturii

Mariana CHERPEC

Membră a Consiliului Superior
al Procurorilor

Rodica CRUDU

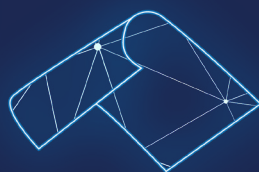
Secretar de Stat al Guvernului pentru
Integrare Europeană

Chloe LELIEVRE

Șefa Unității Justiție și Stat de Drept
Direcția Guvernanță Publică,
(OCDE)



JUSTICE AFTER THE OPENING OF ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS: THE NEW 2027-2030 STRATEGY AND THE PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEARS



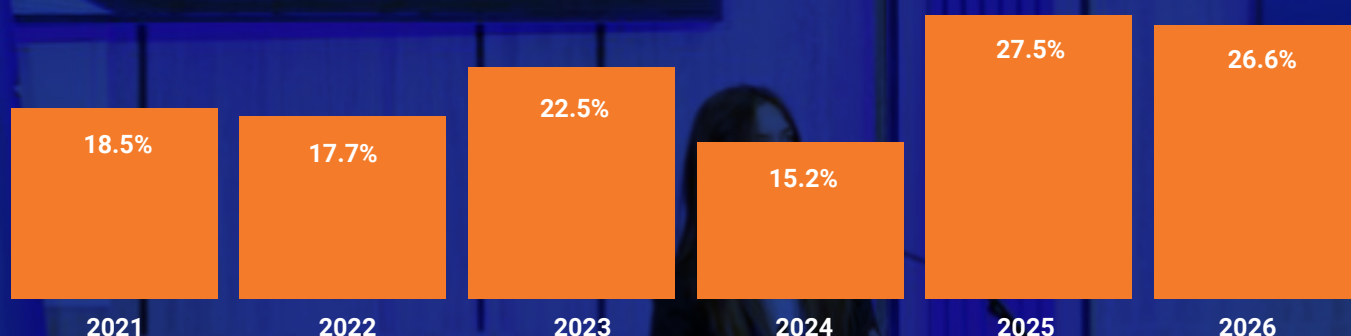
WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The opening of negotiations on the Fundamentals cluster on 15 June 2026, which includes Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security), places justice reform within a new framework. Following a cycle of extensive legislative and institutional changes, the focus is shifting towards effective implementation of the legal framework, stronger institutional performance and a “track record” of tangible and sustainable results.

This transition coincides with the end of the 2022–2025 strategic cycle. The review of the Strategy for Ensuring the Independence and Integrity of the Justice Sector shows moderate but incomplete progress: of the 156 actions monitored, 110 (71%) have been completed.

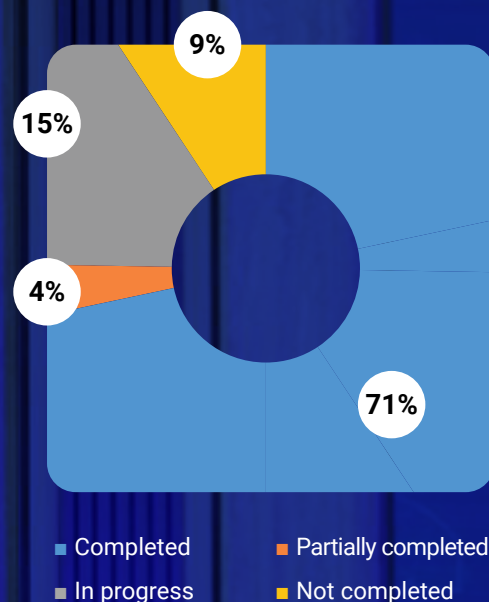
Alongside progress in implementing reforms, changes in public perceptions provide a further indication of the state of the sector. Public confidence in the justice system has fluctuated considerably: after falling to 15.2% in 2024, it rose to 27.5% in 2025, the highest level recorded during the period under review, before declining slightly to 26.6% in 2026.

Trends in Public Trust in the Justice System



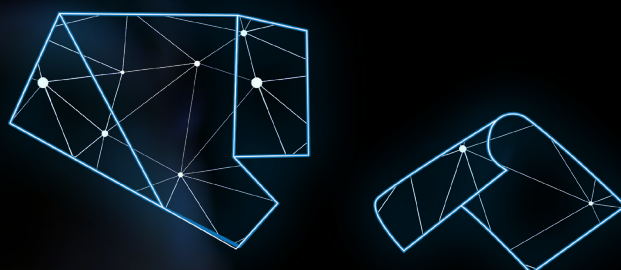
Although still Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice is developing the Justice Sector Development Programme for 2027–2031, which will set national priorities for the coming years in areas such as the quality of justice, efficiency, integrity, human resources and digitalisation. The new strategic framework is to be aligned with accession-related commitments, including the Rule of Law Roadmap, the National Accession Programme and the benchmarks established as part of the negotiations. The interim benchmarks for Chapter 23 include strengthening the independence and accountability of the judiciary and the prosecution service, continuing external evaluation and ensuring post-vetting integrity, strengthening the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) and the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP), reducing vacancies, and improving judicial efficiency, including by reducing the length of proceedings and case backlogs.

Actions under the 2022–2025 Strategy (Ministry of Justice Report, 2026)



“For any reform or reform priority we include in the new strategic framework, I think it is important to answer three very simple questions: what have we adopted, what have we implemented, and what results is the reform delivering in practice?”

Rodica Crudu, Government State Secretary for European Integration



WHAT IS WORKING?

The reconstitution of the SCM, the SCP and their respective boards through the selection of members who have passed integrity assessments has been accompanied by progress in the external evaluation of judges and prosecutors. Reports by the Judicial Vetting Commission show an increase in the cumulative number of completed evaluations, with the total exceeding 100 in 2026. In May 2026, the Commission also completed the initial evaluation of judges who hold or have held managerial positions in first-instance courts.

Reform of the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) has also progressed, including through the gradual filling of judicial vacancies. At present, 12 of its 20 judicial posts are filled. The new appointments have brought the number of judges above the statutory threshold of 11 required to end temporary transfers and have enabled the SCJ's Plenum to become operational.

Beyond institutional strengthening, tools have also been developed to monitor court efficiency. In September 2026, the SCM adopted a mechanism for monitoring long-running cases, collected and analysed the initial data, and approved an action plan to reduce the length of proceedings and case backlogs. Clearance rates also show positive results at first-instance level: in 2025, the clearance rate reached 147% for administrative cases and 102% for civil cases.

Measures to strengthen court capacity have also addressed the pressures facing the courts of appeal. Legislative amendments adopted in August 2026 allow each court of appeal judge to be supported by up to two judicial assistants. On 8 September 2026, the SCM increased the courts' staffing ceiling by 103 judicial assistant posts, corresponding to the number of authorised judicial posts in the courts of appeal.

Digitalisation has also progressed, both through improvements to existing systems and through their wider use. In 2025, 18 updates were made to the Integrated Case Management System (ICMS), six new statistical reports were introduced, and approximately 30 existing reports were revised. Between 2022 and 2025, [31 training sessions were organised](#) on the use of the e-Dosar Judiciar (electronic court file) system and the videoconferencing system, with 1,765 participants drawn from among judges, prosecutors, lawyers and court staff.

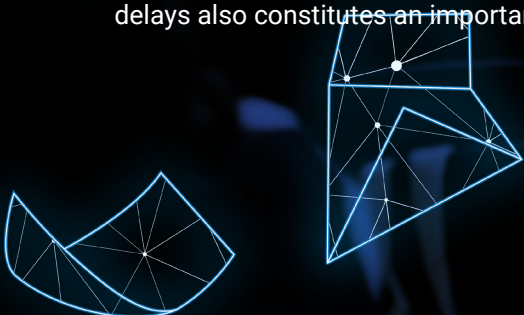


WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

Staff shortages remain one of the main obstacles to the effective functioning of the justice system. External evaluation has been accompanied by departures from the system, particularly at the courts of appeal and the Supreme Court of Justice, while filling vacancies takes time. The situation is particularly difficult at the Central Court of Appeal, where approximately 70% of judicial posts are vacant. Temporary transfers of judges have been among the measures used to keep courts operational. The large number of vacancies, in turn, places a heavy workload on serving judges and affects the length of proceedings, at a time when reducing backlogs and procedural delays also constitutes an important benchmark in accession negotiations.

"We cannot talk about results in justice reform without talking about people."

Mariana Cherpec,
Member of the Superior Council
of Prosecutors



These pressures are also reflected in differences in performance indicators across levels of the justice system. In 2025, clearance rates at the courts of appeal were approximately 81% for civil cases, 73% for administrative cases and 70% for criminal cases, compared with rates of 102% for civil cases and 147% for administrative cases at first-instance level. These differences indicate where interventions should be concentrated, particularly as reducing backlogs and the length of proceedings also constitutes an important benchmark in accession negotiations.

Completing external evaluation and moving into the post-vetting phase presents another challenge. Evaluation continues for the categories of judges and prosecutors specified in legislation, including in connection with the filling of certain vacancies. At the same time, vetting is an extraordinary, time-limited mechanism. The next phase therefore requires regular integrity mechanisms to function effectively and standards to be maintained after external evaluation has ended. Post-vetting integrity is also among the priorities under Chapter 23.

Attracting and retaining professionals remains closely linked to the issue of vacancies. Interest in becoming a judge or prosecutor is influenced by heavy workloads, the pressures associated with these roles and the public image of the justice system, as well as by working conditions, remuneration, social protection guarantees, and opportunities for professional development and career progression.

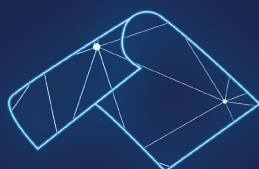
The effective use of digital tools remains a challenge. Although information systems have continued to be developed and professionals have received training, uptake of the available solutions remains low. The government's target for 2028 is an uptake rate of 15%, indicating a still modest level of adoption and the need to identify the barriers preventing professionals and court users from making effective use of digital tools.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **ORIENTING THE NEW POLICY DOCUMENT TOWARDS MEASURABLE RESULTS.** The new framework for the justice sector must shift the focus from adopting legislation and establishing mechanisms to effective implementation, institutional performance and tangible results for court users. Progress indicators must make it possible to assess the impact of reforms, rather than merely the formal completion of actions.
- **ALIGNING JUSTICE REFORM WITH ACCESSION COMMITMENTS AND MAINTAINING DIALOGUE WITH EUROPEAN PARTNERS.** The Justice Sector Development Programme for 2027–2031 must be aligned with the Rule of Law Roadmap, the National Accession Programme and the interim benchmarks for Chapter 23, so that together they form a coherent framework of priorities and actions. Dialogue with the European Commission and specialised European bodies must be integrated into the design and implementation of reforms.
- **ENSURING A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT REFORMS.** The development and implementation of the new policy document must involve justice sector institutions, professionals, civil society, development partners and court users, to strengthen ownership of reforms and incorporate the perspectives of those who use the justice system. At the same time, the pace of reforms and accession-related lawmaking must be calibrated to institutions' capacity to implement changes effectively, rather than merely adopt them.

"The European Union expects us to do more than adopt laws; above all, it expects to see functioning institutions in the Republic of Moldova."

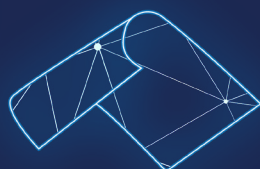
Sergiu Caraman,
President of the Superior Council of
Magistracy





THE JUDICIARY AND THE PROSECUTION SERVICE:

BALANCING REFORM AND EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The judiciary and the prosecution service are undergoing external evaluation while also grappling with its impact, notably significant staff shortages. In the judiciary, 168 of the 528 judicial posts are vacant, representing approximately 32% of the total. Of the 360 judges in office, seven are seconded to the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM), while more than 30 are temporarily suspended from exercising their duties, including in connection with criminal investigations or parental leave. According to the data presented, 316 judges are actively performing judicial duties, representing approximately 60% of the total number of posts.

In the prosecution service, 137 of the 720 prosecutorial posts are vacant. This shortfall is attributed not only to vetting but also to the reorganisation of territorial prosecutors' offices, whose number has been reduced from 36 to 14. The new structure became operational on 1 April 2026. Virtually all chief and deputy chief prosecutor positions in territorial prosecutors' offices are held in an acting capacity, with some prosecutors combining regular prosecutorial duties with managerial responsibilities. Staff shortages also affect the specialised prosecutors' offices, where vacancies are temporarily covered, including through the temporary assignment of prosecutors from territorial offices.

Meanwhile, external evaluation continues in both systems. The SCM has accepted approximately 69 reports from the Judicial Vetting Commission, ordered the dismissal of judges in 22 cases, and referred 15 reports back to the Commission for a reassessment of the circumstances. Of the reports referred back, seven were resubmitted with the same outcome and two with a different outcome (passing the evaluation); two cases are undergoing reassessment, and one report is under consideration by the SCM.

Initially, 157 prosecutors were notified that they would undergo external evaluation. Of these, 28 resigned, leaving 129 in the process. To date, the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP) has examined 39 reports: 33 prosecutors passed the evaluation, while six did not. In five cases, the SCP rejected the Commission's report and ordered the evaluation procedure to be repeated. According to the data presented, approximately 30% of the prosecutors notified have been evaluated.



WHAT IS WORKING?

Despite staff shortages, procedures to fill vacancies have continued. Since the vetting process began, the SCM has appointed 75 judges to first-instance courts. Against the 168 vacant posts, the register of candidates for judicial office lists 103 people: 100 graduates of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and three candidates applying on the basis of prior professional experience. A further 39 people are attending the training course required to sit the examination for candidates applying through the professional-experience route. Filling vacancies at first-instance level, in turn, creates scope for promoting judges to higher courts.

The SCM's regular selection and evaluation mechanisms have also become operational. The Selection and Evaluation Board of Judges and the Disciplinary Board have been constituted, with one further member still to be appointed to the latter. Meanwhile, the SCM and the SCP continue to examine the results of external evaluation, including by referring reports back to the vetting commissions where a reassessment of the circumstances is required.



WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

Staff shortages place considerable pressure on judges' workloads and on courts' capacity to manage pending cases. The average caseload has increased from approximately 780 cases per judge in 2017 to 1,073 at present, while the backlog is approximately 59% larger than in 2017. With only 316 of the 528 judicial posts occupied by judges actively performing judicial duties, the workload associated with vacant posts or with judges who are not currently exercising their functions is absorbed by the remaining judges.

Within the prosecution service, staff shortages are compounded by prolonged acting appointments and the time required to complete recruitment procedures. A total of 137 prosecutorial posts are vacant, and some chief prosecutor positions have been held in an acting capacity for more than four or five years. The organisation of competitive selection procedures for these posts is linked to completion of external evaluation, which can significantly prolong acting appointments. This situation undermines the ability to set medium- and long-term objectives and take responsibility for sustained results. At the same time, 76 NIJ graduates are awaiting opportunities to participate in competitive selection procedures to enter the prosecution service.

The pace of external evaluation of prosecutors poses an additional challenge. For prosecutors at the Prosecutor General's Office and the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office who were notified in May 2024 that their evaluation was being initiated, approximately 30% of procedures have been completed. Meanwhile, no evaluation report has yet been submitted for prosecutors from the Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organized Crime and Special Cases (PCCOCS). At the same time, vetting addresses a specific dimension: financial and ethical integrity. It cannot substitute for the measures needed to improve the system's efficiency. The effective functioning of the justice system also depends on process optimisation, support staff, digitalisation and the resources available.

Ensuring that results are sustained after the extraordinary evaluation mechanism has ended is a long-term challenge. Albania's experience highlights the importance of ensuring that the system's regular mechanisms can uphold integrity standards after vetting. As an extraordinary mechanism, vetting cannot be repeated periodically.

"At present, we have cases where prosecutors have served as acting chief prosecutors for more than four or five years, which shows that things are not working as they should."

Elena Roșior, Member of the Superior Council of Prosecutors

"Many magistrates simply began preparing for the process, focusing not on how many cases they needed to resolve that day, but on how to survive it. Those who knew or thought they would not survive simply resigned."

Theo Jacobs, International Observer with the International Monitoring Operation in Albania



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **REDUCING STAFF SHORTAGES AND RELIANCE ON ACTING APPOINTMENTS.** Efforts to fill vacancies must continue in both the judiciary and the prosecution service. In the prosecution service, a proposal was made to revise the sequence of steps for filling managerial positions so that the successful candidate would be appointed before undergoing external evaluation. This would also allow NIJ graduates to enter the prosecution service more quickly and help reduce prolonged acting appointments.
- **STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE JUDICIARY.** Vetting must be accompanied by the optimisation and simplification of processes, stronger support staffing and continued digitalisation. Increasing the number of judicial assistants must go hand in hand with training them to use new digital tools and technologies.
- **PREPARING PROFESSIONALS TO APPLY EU LAW.** Judges, prosecutors and support staff must be prepared to apply European Union law, including in view of the role national courts will play in applying the EU acquis after accession.
- **ENSURING THAT INTEGRITY STANDARDS ARE SUSTAINED AFTER VETTING.** The standards developed through extraordinary evaluation must be incorporated into regular selection, evaluation and promotion mechanisms, so that the integrity of the system is maintained after vetting has ended.



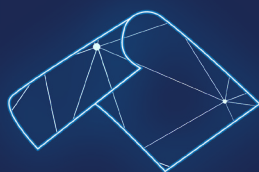
"We propose that, once the successful candidate has been selected, they should be appointed to the post and only then undergo vetting. Depending on the outcome, they would either remain in the system or leave if they failed. This would allow us to recruit young prosecutors, specifically graduates of the National Institute of Justice. There are currently 76 such graduates waiting to take part in competitive selection procedures."

Elena Roșior, Member of the Superior Council of Prosecutors





COMBATING CORRUPTION



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The fight against corruption can no longer be viewed solely in terms of individual offences. Complex forms of corruption develop within criminal infrastructures that combine illicit financial flows, money-laundering channels, smuggling, networks of individuals and mechanisms for transferring assets across jurisdictions. Such infrastructures can also be used by hostile actors to undermine public order, democratic institutions and national security. From this perspective, reforming law enforcement institutions is not an end in itself: it must be assessed by the system's capacity to proactively identify and disrupt such networks and deprive offenders of the economic benefits of crime.

In the Republic of Moldova, this discussion follows a series of changes to the institutional anti-corruption framework. The panel discussion at the 2026 RJCC Forum highlighted that effectiveness depends not on any single institution, but on the functioning of the entire chain: detection, investigation, prosecution, adjudication and confiscation. Fragmentation or uneven institutional development can hamper cooperation and delay results.

In parallel, the European Union accession process has introduced a more rigorous framework for measuring performance. Monitoring covers progress in investigations and convictions in high-level corruption cases, parallel financial investigations, asset seizure and confiscation, asset recovery, interinstitutional and international cooperation, operational capacity and transparency. For institutions, this monitoring can also serve as an internal tool to guide their work, allowing them to compare results and identify areas in need of strengthening.

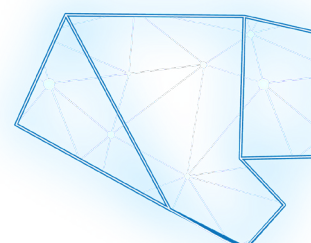
WHAT IS WORKING?

One of the panel's central themes was the shift from a predominantly reactive to a proactive approach. High-level corruption and complex financial crime are rarely uncovered through reports of suspected offences alone. Investigations must examine how criminal infrastructures operate, the connections between those involved and, in particular, the money trail.

Parallel financial investigations were presented as an essential tool. Identifying an offence and gathering the evidence needed to bring a case before a court are not enough if the proceeds of crime remain at the offenders' disposal. Investigations must trace the origin, movement and destination of funds and, where the legal requirements are met, lead to the freezing and confiscation of assets. The role of the Criminal Assets Recovery Agency (CARA) was highlighted for its capacity to uncover the financial dimension of cases and connections that might remain undetected in an investigation focused solely on the facts of the offence.

The National Anticorruption Center (NAC) pointed to the strengthening of its mandate and the expansion of its powers to cover economic and financial offences as a positive development. The next step is to translate these powers into operational capacity and results, which requires rapidly rebuilding expertise and strengthening human resources. Effectiveness must be assessed not only by the number of criminal investigations initiated, but also by the quality of the evidence and the outcomes achieved in terms of convictions, confiscation and actual asset recovery.

France's experience added a further dimension by emphasising specialisation. An appropriate legal framework is necessary but not sufficient: it must be supported by prosecutors and judges with expertise in complex cases, well-managed investigations, techniques suited to current realities, and clear and consistent guidelines, methodologies and procedures. Asset recovery must be integrated into the case strategy, and results must be communicated transparently to the public.



WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

The first is the genuine independence of the anti-corruption system. This becomes particularly important when investigations target individuals who hold power and can influence institutions, legislation or the resources available to those institutions. Independence cannot be assessed solely at the level of prosecutors or officers responsible for criminal and special investigations; it must be safeguarded throughout the system.

Ukraine's experience illustrated this problem directly. The discussion covered investigations into high-level corruption, attempts to restrict independence through legislation, campaigns against the institution and pressure on its staff.

A second challenge is institutional capacity: qualified staff, technology, special investigative techniques and financial expertise.

The third is the cross-border nature of the proceeds of crime. Assets can be transferred between jurisdictions or converted into virtual assets within minutes, while identifying, freezing and recovering them can take months or years. Cooperation through specialised networks and mutual legal assistance mechanisms therefore becomes decisive.

"The real test of independence is not investigating those who are easy to investigate, but investigating those in power."

Oleksandr Abakumov,
National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine

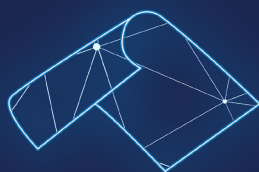
Another challenge is translating institutional results into public trust. Citizens have differing perceptions of progress in the fight against corruption. Some see improvements, while others consider the final outcomes insufficient or question the impartiality of enforcement action. External indicators and conditionality cannot substitute for tangible results for citizens. At the same time, institutions have highlighted the low number of reports of suspected offences. This underscores the need both for proactive law enforcement and for efforts, undertaken in cooperation with civil society and the media, to foster public intolerance of corruption.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **SAFEGUARDING INDEPENDENCE AT EVERY STAGE OF ANTI-CORRUPTION ENFORCEMENT.** Safeguards against undue influence must operate from the detection of offences through to adjudication and asset recovery, including when investigations concern individuals with political or institutional power.
- **PROVIDING THE NECESSARY RESOURCES AND SPECIALISATION.** Institutional powers must be underpinned by qualified staff, financial expertise, technology and modern investigative methods. The specialisation of prosecutors and judges in complex cases must be supported by clear guidelines, methodologies and procedures.
- **DEVELOPING PROACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS AND INTEGRATING THE FINANCIAL DIMENSION FROM THE OUTSET OF EACH CASE.** Investigations into high-level corruption must examine criminal networks and mechanisms, including the money trail. In cases involving profit-generating crime, parallel financial investigations must enable the identification, freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of crime, in accordance with the law.
- **ACCELERATING INTERINSTITUTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION.** Information sharing and the coordination of asset tracing and freezing measures must be improved through the use of specialised networks and mutual legal assistance mechanisms, with particular attention to cross-border transfers and virtual assets.
- **COMMUNICATING TRANSPARENTLY AND ENCOURAGING THE REPORTING OF CORRUPTION.** Institutions must explain their results, the difficulties they face and the status of cases to the public, within the limits of the law. Cooperation with civil society and the media must support public awareness, the reporting of offences and a reduction in social tolerance of corruption.



CAREER IN JUSTICE: HOW DO WE ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT WITHIN THE SYSTEM?



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Careers in the justice sector are marked by a paradox: the judiciary and the prosecution service face severe staff shortages, yet well-trained young professionals and a substantial pool of candidates remain unable to enter these professions despite having met all formal requirements and passed every stage of the selection process. Judicial staffing data show that 168 of the 528 judicial posts provided for by law are vacant: 87 in first-instance courts and a combined 82 in the courts of appeal and the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ).[1] The situation in the prosecution service is similarly contradictory. Of its 720 authorised posts, 137 are vacant, including 81 managerial positions.

The declining attractiveness of these professions is also reflected in admissions to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). In 2025, only 17 candidates were admitted for the 50 available places, comprising 30 places for prospective judges and 20 for prospective prosecutors: 12 candidates were admitted to the judicial training programme and five to the prosecutorial training programme. The NIJ attributed the unfilled places to its rigorous admission standards, including a minimum average admission mark of 8. In 2026, the situation improved: 24 candidates were admitted for the 30 places allocated to prospective judges, and nine for the 15 places allocated to prospective prosecutors. The total intake thus increased from 17 to 33, almost double the previous year's figure, although 12 of the 45 places remained unfilled.

Meanwhile, 76 NIJ graduates are listed in the [Register of Candidates for Prosecutorial Office. csp.md](#) A substantial pool of candidates also exists for the judiciary: 103 NIJ graduates are listed in the [Register of Participants in Competitive Selection Procedures for Vacant Judicial Posts](#).

WHAT IS WORKING?

In recent years, measures have been introduced to address the main stages and dimensions of a career in justice: initial training, entry into the profession, pay and benefits, professional safeguards, and a more balanced distribution of workloads. These measures have not yet produced sufficient results to fill the vacancies, but they indicate a shift from isolated responses towards a policy focused on retaining professionals within the system.

In July 2026, the Ministry of Justice established a joint working group with the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM), the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP) and the NIJ to examine barriers to entry into the professions, the length of selection and evaluation procedures, the filling of vacancies, and career progression. This is an important step, as it moves the discussion on professional attractiveness from individual institutions to a shared coordination mechanism. [justice.gov.md](#)

A new initial training curriculum has been introduced, extending beyond traditional legal training to include subjects such as critical thinking, ethics, communication, social and emotional skills, and digitalisation. In parallel, the network of trainers has been strengthened: the Trainers' Statute and its implementing methodology have been amended, and assessments of integrity and reputation have been introduced. Tools for assessing training quality have also been developed, enabling training to be adapted in light of results rather than merely the number of activities delivered.

At the same time, the governing bodies have taken steps to create a safe working environment and prevent burnout. Workshops on burnout prevention have been organised within the prosecution service, and the SCP is considering establishing a psychological counselling mechanism for prosecutors facing heavy workloads, complex cases, public pressure and stress. In September 2026, both the [SCM](#) and the [SCP](#) adopted internal policies on preventing and combating violence, workplace harassment and discrimination.

"We need to think not only about how to attract people to these roles, but also about how to ensure they stay in the system."

Ingrid Derveaux, Secretary
General of the European Judicial
Training Network

To encourage professional mobility and help fill vacancies in other localities, compensation schemes have been introduced in both the [judiciary](#) and the [prosecution service](#) to cover transport or housing rental costs for judges and prosecutors working in a locality other than their place of residence. These measures aim to ease the financial burden associated with relocation and make vacant posts more attractive, particularly in local courts and territorial prosecutors' offices.

"The current system cannot serve new generations when it is based on a model from 20 years ago."

Aliona Nesterov, Member of the Superior Council of Prosecutors

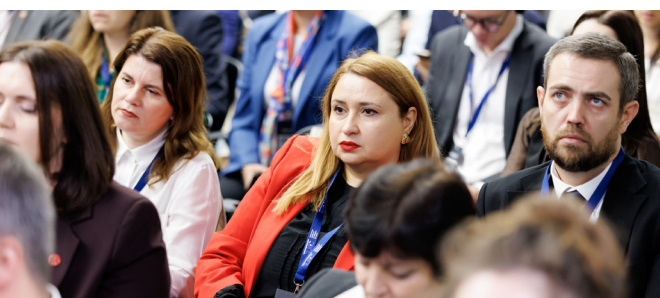
WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

One of the main barriers to attracting and retaining professionals is uncompetitive remuneration relative to the responsibilities, workloads and risks involved.

A salary of MDL 23,000–25,000 (approximately EUR 1,140–1,240) for a first-instance judge is insufficient in light of inflation and the cost of living. Although compensation for transport and housing rental costs has been introduced, the fixed amounts do not always cover actual expenses, making posts in other localities less attractive. The system also struggles to attract qualified support staff, as the salaries offered cannot compete with those available in other public institutions or the private sector.

Another concern raised is the absence of a clear prospect of appointment as a judge or prosecutor after graduation from the NIJ. Lengthy selection and evaluation procedures may lead well-qualified candidates to choose other professions. Career progression is not always sufficiently swift or predictable either, while young professionals expect clear, digitalised, efficient and merit-based procedures.

The risk of burnout, uneven working conditions, a sense of isolation, the duty of restraint, public attacks and the pressures associated with handling sensitive cases are further barriers identified by justice sector professionals. External evaluation has created professional uncertainty and personal strain. At the same time, the negative image of the justice system and public discourse that generalises its shortcomings diminish the prestige of judicial and prosecutorial careers and discourage potential candidates.



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

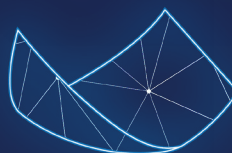
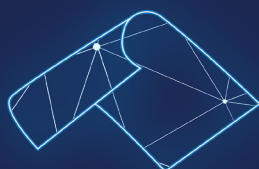
- **INTRODUCING OPTIONAL UNIVERSITY COURSES TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR ADMISSION TO THE NIJ.** In partnership with law faculties, the SCM and the SCP, the NIJ could organise optional courses for students interested in becoming judges or prosecutors.
- **ENSURING CONTINUITY BETWEEN GRADUATION FROM THE NIJ AND APPOINTMENT TO OFFICE.** The SCM, the SCP and the NIJ should establish a predictable, coordinated timetable for graduation, evaluation, competitive selection procedures and appointments, with time limits for each stage.
- **ESTABLISHING A PERMANENT SYSTEM OF MENTORING AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT.** Newly appointed judges and prosecutors should benefit from mentoring during their first years of service, continuing training tailored to the difficulties identified after three and six months in post, confidential psychological counselling, and measures to prevent burnout.
- **ADOPTING AN INTEGRATED PACKAGE TO RETAIN PROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE SYSTEM.** This should include remuneration commensurate with the responsibilities and risks of the role, regular adjustments to compensation for transport and housing rental costs, adequate working conditions, and competitive salaries for support staff.
- **MANAGING WORKLOADS STRATEGICALLY AND FILLING VACANCIES.** The SCM and the SCP should treat staff shortages and excessive workloads as interrelated problems. Regular studies of the volume and complexity of work in each court and prosecutors' office are recommended to identify the most appropriate mechanisms for allocating cases and redistributing judicial, prosecutorial and support staff posts.

In conclusion, the attractiveness of legal careers must be strengthened through a multidimensional approach that combines high standards of initial and continuing training, a predictable route to appointment after graduation, clear opportunities for professional development and promotion, adequate working conditions, and an institutional culture in which integrity, competence and performance are recognised and valued.





DIGITAL JUSTICE: INTEGRATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INTO COURTS AND PROSECUTORS' OFFICES



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already being used in professional practice, including in the justice sector, before institutions have established clear rules on permitted tools, the data that may be processed and responsibility for the outputs generated. The discussion is no longer about whether AI will reach courts and prosecutors' offices, but about how it can be used without compromising confidentiality, independent decision-making and fundamental rights.

One practice highlighted during the panel was so-called "shadow AI": the unauthorised use of publicly available tools through personal accounts to transcribe hearings, summarise documents, analyse data or draft legal documents. When institutional documents or confidential information are uploaded to these public platforms, the institution may lose control over where the data are stored, how they are reused and who may have access to them.

This phenomenon shows that AI cannot be managed through prohibitions alone. Legal professionals in Moldova already use such tools to save time, particularly on repetitive tasks. In the absence of secure institutional solutions and clear guidance, however, their use continues in an environment without clear rules and where monitoring is difficult.

Speakers at the RJCC Forum drew a distinction between using AI to support judicial work and delegating decision-making itself. The technology can transcribe recordings, organise large volumes of information, summarise documents and search case law. It must not replace the assessment of evidence, legal reasoning or the judge's or prosecutor's responsibility for the decision. In sensitive areas, the "human-in-the-loop" principle must apply: the professional verifies the output, checks it against the evidence and legal sources, and retains full responsibility for the decision.

"Justice is, at its core, the work of people for people. Entrusting artificial intelligence with the power to decide a person's fate goes too far."

Victor Guzun, Digitalisation Expert and Former Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Estonia

WHAT IS WORKING?

Applications already exist that can reduce the time spent on technical tasks without taking over decision-making responsibilities. One example is Whisper, an open-source tool for transcribing audio recordings that can be installed and run locally.¹ This removes the need to transmit data to an external provider's servers and allows the data to remain under the institution's control.

Locally deployed models can be particularly useful for courts and prosecutors' offices. They run on the user's computer or on the institution's infrastructure, reducing the risk of procedural documents, evidence or information from investigations being transmitted to third parties. These solutions do, however, require suitable hardware, technical management, training and user support.

Relatively low-risk applications include transcribing hearings, anonymising judgments, classifying and summarising documents, extracting data, conducting legal research, and preparing standardised information sheets or draft documents.² Carefully managed automation of these activities could give judges, prosecutors and support staff more time to examine evidence, provide reasons for their decisions and communicate with the parties.

An important step is to assess the judiciary's readiness to use AI. The study mentioned during the panel seeks to identify the resources available, institutional needs and areas in which the technology can be introduced safely. Existing European frameworks, including the EU Artificial Intelligence Act and documents issued by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), can guide both the assessment and the development of operational rules.

"Judicial work involves a great many supporting tasks. Using AI in these areas would save resources and give judges and their teams more time to analyse case files."

Tatiana Ciaglic, Member of the Superior Council of Magistracy

WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

The first challenge is the protection of data and confidential information. Courts and prosecutors' offices handle personal data, evidence, and information about victims and individuals under criminal investigation. Uploading such information to a publicly available tool may lead to data being transferred outside the institution's infrastructure and reused under conditions beyond the professional's control.

The second issue concerns data quality. Incomplete databases, non-standardised documents and a lack of interoperability can lead to inaccurate or discriminatory outputs. A system developed for one specific task must not automatically be used for another. Generative models can also produce inaccurate or entirely fabricated information, presented in a coherent and convincing manner, a phenomenon known as "hallucination". They may even generate non-existent legal provisions, sources or case-law references. For this reason, any output used in professional work must be checked against the original document and verified using official sources. Models may also reinforce the user's assumptions rather than subject them to critical scrutiny.

"The use of artificial intelligence to analyse large volumes of data is welcome. Ultimately, however, the decision rests with the judge."

Adrian Bordianu, Prosecutor,
Prosecutor General's Office

Access to national legislation presents a distinct challenge. The protective measures on the government portal Legis.md restrict automated access, and AI tools cannot always directly consult the up-to-date texts of legislation. In the absence of a structured official source, they may rely on outdated versions or generate non-existent references. Creating a public application programming interface (API) that allows information systems to access legislation in a structured format, assigning a stable identifier to each article, and clearly distinguishing historical versions would support the development of safer legal tools.

Infrastructure is another constraint. Locally deployed models require high-performance servers, maintenance, cybersecurity and specialised staff.³ External services are more accessible but may be incompatible with confidentiality requirements. At the same time, there is not yet a sufficiently clear coordination mechanism: institutions risk adopting different tools and standards, with uneven levels of protection.

Finally, routinely delegating processes such as data processing, synthesis and drafting may weaken critical scrutiny and professional skills. In justice, efficiency cannot justify uncontrolled automation. Speed must be assessed alongside accuracy, explainability and the impact on rights.



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **ADOPTING A PROTOCOL ON THE USE OF AI IN THE JUSTICE SECTOR.** The Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM), the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP), courts and prosecutors' offices should specify which tools are permitted, the tasks for which they may be used, the data that must not be entered, and how outputs are to be verified. The protocol must expressly regulate the use of personal accounts and address "shadow AI".
- **COMPLETING THE READINESS ASSESSMENT.** The assessment must cover the legal framework, governance, data, infrastructure, cybersecurity, professional skills and oversight mechanisms. Its findings can inform a phased integration plan.
- **STARTING WITH LOW-RISK APPLICATIONS.** Initial projects should focus on local transcription, anonymisation, document classification, legal research and repetitive administrative tasks. Using AI to profile individuals, assess evidence or formulate decisions requires much stricter safeguards.
- **PROVIDING STRUCTURED ACCESS TO OFFICIAL LEGISLATION.** Legis.md should be developed to include a public application programming interface (API), stable identifiers for individual articles and clearly distinguished historical versions. This infrastructure would allow digital tools to access legislation in a structured format and provide verifiable references to official sources.
- **ENSURING CONTINUING TRAINING AND TRANSPARENCY.** Training must cover data protection, effective prompting, source verification, the identification of hallucinations and other erroneous outputs, the risk of discrimination, and the legal limits on the use of AI. Where a system may affect a person's rights, its use must be transparent and open to challenge.





HOW DOES THE JUSTICE SYSTEM COMMUNICATE IN A WAY THAT IS UNDERSTANDABLE TO THE PUBLIC?

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The justice system must build trust without promising outcomes that will please the public. Judicial independence means that court rulings and procedural measures are not negotiable in response to public opinion. At the same time, the system's legitimacy also depends on institutions' ability to explain the reasoning behind procedures and decisions.

Public perceptions are divided: while some people consider information accessible, others say that they learn about the justice system almost exclusively through the media, do not understand the terminology used, or do not know where to look for explanations. In this context, silence or delayed communication leaves room for assumptions, misinterpretation and disinformation. The problem is not a shortage of information, but a lack of clarity: the public receives fragments of information quickly, often without the context needed to understand what has been decided, what has not, and what happens next.

"The justice system should not compete on the volume of information it provides, but on the meaning it conveys."

Ludmila Andronic,
Communication Expert

WHAT IS WORKING?

Institutions have begun to treat communication as an institutional function. Both the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) and the Superior Council of Prosecutors (SCP) have adopted communication strategies aimed at increasing transparency in decision-making and strengthening public trust in the justice system. A key component of institutional communication is the live streaming of SCM and SCP meetings. This allows the public to follow the debates, see how members vote and subsequently understand the underlying reasoning set out in the decisions.

In the judiciary, these measures are complemented by training for court presidents and staff responsible for communication, as well as the online streaming of some Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) hearings. Together with the publication of judgments and communication through social media, these practices help explain judicial proceedings more clearly and bring the work of the justice system closer to citizens.

"Communication should not be seen as a tool for image management; it is, in fact, part of institutional accountability."

Mariana Cherpec,
Member of the
Superior Council of
Prosecutors

WHAT IS CHALLENGING?

Social media moves faster than the institutional process for issuing a press release, and other voices may shape the interpretation of an event before the institution responds. Technical language, messages centred on legal provisions, purely reactive responses and disparities in institutional capacity reduce the effectiveness of communication.

At the same time, judges' duty of restraint and restrictions on disclosure during criminal investigations are sometimes mistaken for a blanket prohibition on communication. The challenge is therefore to distinguish judges' duty of restraint in individual cases from institutions' obligation to explain procedures, relevant information, their powers and the legal limits on disclosure to the public.

Another weakness is the lack of proactive, coherent communication on sensitive issues, including external evaluation, high-profile cases, the length of proceedings and attacks on justice sector professionals. Formal transparency,

particularly making a document or a broadcast available, does not guarantee that the information is understood. It must be accompanied by context, consistent messaging, trained spokespersons and responses tailored to the public's actual questions.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

- **COMMUNICATING CLEARLY AND EXPLAINING DECISIONS OF PUBLIC INTEREST.** Justice sector institutions must explain, in accessible language, what has happened, why a particular measure was taken, what it does and does not mean, and what the next steps are. Where information cannot be disclosed, the institution should explain the legal limits on communication and, where appropriate, when further details may be provided.
- **STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION CAPACITY.** The SCM, the SCP, courts and prosecutors' offices should strengthen the network of staff responsible for communication, provide practical training and develop common press release templates, question-and-answer sections and crisis communication protocols. Messages should be better coordinated while respecting each institution's powers and autonomy.
- **DEVELOPING PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE WITH THE PUBLIC.** Institutions should communicate relevant information promptly, correct false information and explain sensitive issues before speculation dominates the information environment. Dialogue should extend beyond institutional channels through cooperation with the media and outreach to school pupils, university students and other audiences. The aim is not institutional popularity, but informed trust built on clarity, consistency, predictability and honesty.





INSPIRATIONAL STORY

THE COURAGE TO BE INDEPENDENT: JUDGES UNDER PRESSURE

The 2026 Justice Reform and Anti-Corruption Forum hosted a special session with Raluca Moroșanu, a judge at the Bucharest Court of Appeal.

She had previously become known for her firm public stance in defence of judicial independence, speaking out against pressure on magistrates, intimidation through disciplinary procedures and abusive practices within Romania's judicial system.

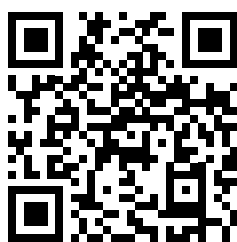
The discussion at the RJCC Forum, moderated by investigative journalist Liuba Șevciuc, explored judges' personal courage, administrative irregularities and the lessons that the Republic of Moldova can draw from Romania's experience.

"To be independent, a judge needs to be physically and mentally healthy, so that they can withstand any pressure without breaking down and build a protective shield against all forms of hostility."

Raluca Moroșanu, Judge,
Bucharest Court of Appeal.



Watch the full session with Judge Raluca Moroșanu



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