
Terms of Reference – CCBE Rule of Law Contact Points Network

1. Background and rationale

The CCBE contributes annually to the European Commission’s Rule of Law Report and relies on accurate and timely national information to prepare its submission. In order to streamline and strengthen this process, it was decided to establish a network of national contact points, composed primarily of representatives of Bars and Law Societies of EU Member States, who will support the annual information-gathering and drafting cycle.

As the Commission’s report covers only EU Member States, the Network’s primary operational focus is on EU jurisdictions. However, the importance of broader rule of law developments to the CCBE community is recognised, and participation beyond the EU is addressed in Section 4 below.

2. Objectives

The Network’s remit is limited to supporting the CCBE in:

- collecting, checking, and consolidating national information required for the CCBE contribution to the European Commission’s annual Rule of Law Report;
- ensuring consistent, accurate, and timely inputs throughout the annual reporting cycle;
- assisting the CCBE Secretariat in structuring and preparing the draft CCBE contribution to the European Commission’s annual Rule of Law Report for consideration by the Standing Committee or Plenary Session.

3. Relationship to other CCBE rule of law work

Where contact points become aware of rule of law-related matters that fall outside the scope of the annual reporting exercise, these may be:

- brought to the attention of the CCBE Standing Committee or Plenary Session, and/or
- referred to the relevant CCBE Committee or Working Group, where the subject matter falls within that body’s mandate (e.g., deontology, surveillance, procedural safeguards in criminal and civil law).

This ensures that broader or urgent rule of law concerns are channelled through the appropriate CCBE governance and policy structures, without expanding the Network’s remit beyond the annual Rule of Law Report process.

4. Thematic scope of work

The Network will gather national information relevant to the European Commission’s Rule of Law Report, particularly developments concerning:

- the independence and functioning of the legal profession, Bars, and Law Societies;
- relevant aspects of the administration of justice, where they affect lawyers’ independence, access to justice, or professional rights;

- significant case law, legislative reforms, or institutional developments falling within the Commission's reporting structure.

5. Composition

Each **CCBE EU Member State delegation** is invited to appoint one or two national contact points responsible for:

- coordinating national information gathering relevant to the annual report;
- submitting the required inputs within agreed timelines;
- liaising with national structures (e.g., Bar leadership, committees, professional bodies).

Contact points should ideally have expertise in rule of law matters, including national and EU-level case law and legislative developments.

Full and affiliate CCBE members not covered by the European Commission's annual Rule of Law Report may also participate in the Network on a voluntary basis. Their participation:

- allows them to follow exchanges, remain informed on rule of law developments, and benefit from the shared analysis;
- does not require them to provide national data unless they choose to do so;
- enables them, if they wish, to share information for the general awareness of other members, without contributing to the CCBE's submission to the Commission.

This voluntary participation ensures inclusiveness without extending the Network's formal reporting scope beyond the EU.

6. Working methods

- Meetings will be organised in accordance with the annual reporting cycle, including early-cycle methodological discussions and pre-submission consolidation meetings.
- The Secretariat will provide templates, methodological guidance, and key deadlines.
- National contact points may be invited to submit contributions ahead of the final Plenary Session of the year to facilitate discussion and prepare the CCBE's consolidated input.

7. Deliverables

The Network may produce:

- national factual inputs supporting the CCBE's contribution to the Commission's annual Rule of Law Report;
- clarifications or supplementary notes necessary for the accuracy of the final submission;
- background information that may also inform, where relevant, the work of other CCBE committees or the Standing Committee.