



## Le principali attività del Centro EUROPE DIRECT Siena

Il Centro EUROPE DIRECT è un progetto europeo - ospitato dall'Università di Siena - che prevede l'attivazione di iniziative al fine di Informare, comunicare e formare sui temi dell'Unione europea.

Si tratta di un network di oltre 40 Reti Europe Direct (ED) in tutta Italia, coordinate dalla Commissione Europea; in Toscana si trovano a Siena e Firenze che cooperano attraverso un Coordinamento Toscano.

La EUROPE DIRECT Siena si rivolge a tutti i cittadini e ha l'obiettivo di diffondere sul territorio le informazioni relative alle politiche ed ai programmi dell'Unione nonché dei finanziamenti al fine di soddisfare le esigenze informative e formative su questo tema.

La EUROPE DIRECT Siena si occupa, inoltre, di organizzare, in collaborazione con altre istituzioni e associazioni del territorio, iniziative ed eventi volti a sensibilizzare i cittadini e soprattutto a promuovere il dibattito, favorendo la conoscenza delle tematiche legate all'Unione europea.

## 2024 Rule of Law Report: EU better equipped to face rule of law challenges

The Commission has published its fifth annual **Rule of Law Report** which monitors significant developments and takes stock of the **rule of law situation in all EU countries**. It shows that **the EU is much better prepared to detect, prevent and address emerging challenges than 5 years ago**.

This means more resilient European democracies, mutual trust in the EU, good functioning of the single market and a business environment that fosters competitiveness and sustainable growth.

Each year, the report includes **new recommendations for EU countries**. **68% of the 2023 recommendations** have been, **fully or partially, addressed**, showing that the report has become a true driver of positive reforms. However, in some EU countries systematic concerns remain and the situation has further deteriorated.

This year's edition also introduces chapters on Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, to support their reform efforts and ensure continued work on the rule of law to further progress towards EU membership.

Key findings and recommendations of the 2024 report:

1. **Justice reforms:** Important reforms to strengthen judicial independence have been initiated. However, systemic concerns regarding judicial independence persist and specific cases of deterioration have been observed. There is a need for safeguards in judicial appointment procedures, autonomy of the prosecution service and adequate resources.
2. **Anti-corruption frameworks:** Corruption remains a serious concern, however, the EU countries are better at fighting it – they have increased resources on the capacity of law enforcement services, prosecution authorities and the judiciary. Further action is needed to strengthen preventive frameworks and ensure the effective investigation and prosecution of corruption cases.

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3. **Media freedom and pluralism:** Concrete steps were made to improve journalists' safety and working environment, and the tasks and competences of several national media regulators have been expanded. Concerns about the independent governance or financial stability of public service media, transparency of media ownership, the right of access to public documents and the transparent and fair allocation of state advertising persist. Recommendations focus on these areas to ensure a free and pluralistic media landscape.

4. **Institutional checks and balances:** Efforts to improve legislative processes have been noted. However, challenges remain, including the excessive use of accelerated procedures, the quality of law-making, and restrictions faced by civil society and human rights defenders. Recommendations aim to strengthen legislative processes and support the functioning of independent authorities.

The rule of law is an integral part of the very identity of the EU and a precondition for the respect of other values. According to the latest Special Eurobarometer survey, more than 7 in 10 EU citizens agree that the EU plays an important role in helping to uphold the rule of law in their country. Close to 9 in 10 EU citizens think it's important that all EU countries respect the core values of the EU.

[https://commission.europa.eu/news/2024-rule-law-report-eu-better-equipped-face-rule-law-challenges-2024-07-24\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/news/2024-rule-law-report-eu-better-equipped-face-rule-law-challenges-2024-07-24_en)



## New law to make products on the EU market more sustainable

An EU law has come into force that will enable the setting of ecodesign requirements and information for almost all categories of physical goods that come onto the EU market. The new Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation builds on the existing Ecodesign Directive, which currently only covers energy-related products. It aims to significantly improve the circularity, energy performance and other environmental sustainability aspects of products placed on the EU market.

Ecodesign concerns the integration of environmental considerations into all stages of product development. It is crucial, in a world where there is such a high demand for efficient and sustainable products as a way of reducing energy and resource consumption.

The EU has long been active in this area. You may recognise the energy label that comes on your washing machine or fridge, for example, which we have thanks to the EU. But environmental sustainability is about more than just energy efficiency. With the passing of the regulation, a sustainable product will have to display one or more of the following characteristics:

- uses less energy
- lasts longer
- can be easily repaired
- parts can be easily disassembled and put to further use
- contains fewer substances of concern
- can be easily recycled
- contains more recycled content
- has a lower carbon and environmental footprint over its lifecycle

The Regulation also introduces measures to ban the destruction of unsold textiles and footwear and opens a way to extend similar bans on other sectors, if evidence shows they are needed. Companies will also be required to publicly disclose on their websites annual information, such as the number and weight of products they discarded, as well as the reasons for doing so. Finally, it also enables mandatory Green Public Procurement criteria to spend public funding in a more sustainable direction. Public authorities in the EU in fact spend around € 1.8 trillion purchasing works, goods and services.

With this new law, the EU looks to build on its long track record of delivering benefits to businesses, consumers and the environment. After all, in 2021 alone, the impact of the current ecodesign measures, covering 31 product groups, saved EUR 120 billion in energy expenditure for EU consumers and led to a 10% lower annual energy consumption by the products in scope.

[https://commission.europa.eu/news/new-law-make-products-eu-market-more-sustainable-2024-07-19\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/news/new-law-make-products-eu-market-more-sustainable-2024-07-19_en)

## Train travel is making a comeback

Travelling by train in Europe is becoming more convenient and sustainable thanks to recent EU initiatives. New regulations for the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) to improve rail connectivity and make travel greener have recently entered into force. This means better and more efficient rail services across Europe.

The EU's Action Plan to boost long-distance and cross-border passenger rail services is a key part of these efforts. It aims to double high-speed rail traffic by 2030 and triple it by 2050. Launched in 2021, this plan focuses on removing obstacles, improving interoperability, modernising passenger rail infrastructure, and enhancing the quality of services across EU countries.

To further support cross-border travel, the European Commission has announced its support for 10 pilot projects to boost cross-border rail services. This will improve cross-border rail connections across the EU and make travel faster, easier and more affordable.

Young travellers can particularly benefit from the DiscoverEU programme, which regularly offers free travel passes to 18-year-olds to explore Europe by train. This programme encourages cultural exchange and highlights the environmental advantages of rail travel. The next call for applications should be published in autumn 2024.

Passenger rights are also a significant focus of the EU's transport policy. Travellers in Europe are well-protected in case something goes wrong during their trip. EU passenger rights cover delays, cancellations, and accessibility issues.

The EU is committed to making train travel a top choice by improving regulations, creating ambitious plans, and supporting special programmes. These efforts aim to make rail travel more sustainable, efficient, and well-connected across Europe.

[https://commission.europa.eu/news/train-travel-making-comeback-2024-07-17\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/news/train-travel-making-comeback-2024-07-17_en)



## European Health Insurance Card: keeping you safe while travelling abroad

The EHIC allows you to receive **necessary** and **urgent medical care** abroad, including for chronic or existing illnesses, as well as pregnancy and childbirth. It's **not** an alternative to travel insurance, and it **does not** cover any private healthcare costs or planned medical treatments. EHIC is valid **in any EU country, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.**

By presenting the card, you can obtain healthcare services directly from a **public** or **contracted provider under the same conditions** and **at the same cost as people insured in the country you are visiting.** Each country's healthcare system is different, and services that cost nothing at home might not be free in another country. You can claim reimbursement for the costs you incur from the national institution whilst still in the country and get reimbursement directly there or ask for reimbursement from your health insurer when you get home.

More than half of the EU population has the EHIC. Applying for one is easy and free – simply contact your health insurance institution before your trip. You'll typically receive it by mail within a few days. If you're going to travel before obtaining the card, you can apply for an EHIC replacement certificate.

Travel with peace of mind, knowing the EHIC is there to support your healthcare needs abroad.

[https://commission.europa.eu/news/european-health-insurance-card-keeping-you-safe-while-travelling-abroad-2024-07-12\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/news/european-health-insurance-card-keeping-you-safe-while-travelling-abroad-2024-07-12_en)



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Numero chiuso in redazione: 25 luglio 2024  
Stampa: *Centro Stampa dell'Università*  
Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Siena  
n. 8 del 27 dicembre 2012