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HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND THE JUDICIAL CAREER

On October 31, 2025, the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine has announced a selection for positions in the newly established specialised administrative courts. A total of 27 judges will be selected, of whom 17 will work in the specialised district administrative court, and another 10 in the specialised appellate administrative court.

The new courts have been granted the status of higher specialised courts, which will hear administrative disputes, including cases against government authorities. The necessity of establishing these courts stemmed from Ukraine's international obligations.

During January to October 2025, the High Council of Justice submitted a list of 110 candidates for the positions of judges to the President of Ukraine, among those positions are:

- to local general courts - 52 judges;
- to local commercial courts – 3 judges;
- to local administrative court – 1 judge;
- to appellate common courts – 15 judges,
- to appellate commercial courts –18 judges,
- to appellate administrative courts - 19 judge;
- to the High Anti-Corruption Court - 2 judges.

For reference: since the beginning of 2025, the President of Ukraine supported the appointment of 45 judges.

During January to October, 2025, the High Council of Justice dismissed 193 judges.

On common grounds, 155 judges were dismissed, as follows:

- **Resignation requests:** 145 judges, including 105 judges of local courts, 35 judges of appellate courts, and five judges of the Supreme Court.
- **Requests for voluntary dismissal:** 10 judges of the local courts

Under special circumstances, the High Council of Justice dismissed 38 judges, including **for committing a serious disciplinary offence:** 28 judges.

For reference: The High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine reports that there were 2255 vacant positions in Ukrainian courts as of December 01

CHALLENGES FOR THE JUDICIARY DURING WARTIME

On November 24-26, 2025, within the framework of a training programme for judges, Hryhoriy Usyk, the Chairman of the High Council of Justice of Ukraine (HCJ), delivered a speech and outlined the current issues of reforming the judiciary in the context of fulfilling Ukraine's obligations under the Road Map on the Rule of Law and the Ukraine Facility program.

In particular he stressed that the reform of the judiciary should occur in response to current challenges, especially martial law, the need for stable justice, and Ukraine's further European integration.

In his speech, he outlined the key directions that will determine the further strategy of judicial reform:

- strengthening the independence of the judiciary and guarantees for judges in their professional activities;
- improvement of procedures for selection, career development, and evaluation of judges;
- enhancement of the institutional capacity of the courts, ensuring their staffing and resource capabilities;
- digitalisation of justice, the implementation of modern technological solutions, and the expansion of the functionality of electronic justice;
- Strengthening public trust in justice through increased openness, transparency, and predictability of court decisions.
- Ensuring the stable operation of courts in conditions of wartime risks, including issues of security for judges, courts, and participants in the proceedings.

The Chairman of the HCJ paid special attention to the need to fill numerous vacant positions of judges.

He also reported a critically low level of funding for the judiciary in the draft 2026 budget, amounting to only 59.4% of the need. 90% of the provided funds are allocated solely to the payment of judges' remuneration and employees' wages in court apparatuses.

On October 28, 2025, as a result of several shelling by the Russian army, the institution of the justice system of the city of Kherson was severely damaged. The blast wave knocked out almost 100 windows, damaged the building's roof, and destroyed the official and personal property of the institution's employees and court guards.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE UKRAINIAN JUDICIARY

On October 23, 2025, a coalition of civil society organisations led by the Agency for Legislative Initiatives (ALI) presented the [Shadow Report](#) to the European Commission’s 2024 Report on Ukraine.

The report covers Chapters 23, ‘Judiciary and Fundamental Rights’ and 24, ‘Justice, Freedom and Security’ — chapters that the European Union considers fundamental to Ukraine’s integration process. The presentation became a platform for open dialogue between government, experts and European partners — about Ukraine’s progress towards EU integration and the challenges that still lie ahead.

The main goal of the Shadow Report is not criticism but to propose a roadmap for strengthening the state on its path to the EU. This was underlined by Svitlana Matviienko, Executive Director of the Agency for Legislative Initiatives:

“The Shadow Report is not an 'oppositional' document — it is our shared assessment with state institutions, a kind of mirror reflecting Ukraine’s progress towards EU membership. And on this path, civil society remains a reliable partner in advancing reforms.”

[The document contains more than 500 specific recommendations on 1046 pages](#), covering the rule of law, judicial independence, reform of law enforcement agencies, human rights protection and the fight against corruption and organised crime. The practical value of this analytical work was emphasised by Oksana Tsymbrivska, Head of the EU Project Pravo-Justice:

“The Shadow Report not only highlights achievements and challenges — it offers over 500 concrete recommendations this year. I want to thank all coalition members led by the Agency for Legislative Initiatives and the experts involved for producing such a comprehensive document. I am confident it will be practically useful for the state as it continues reforms on the path to the EU.”

On November 4, 2025, the European Commission presented the [annual Report](#) under the 2025 European Union Enlargement Package (Ukraine Report 2025), which assesses the progress of candidate countries for EU accession.

It was underlined, that Ukraine has continued to show remarkable resilience and strong commitment to its European path despite the escalation of Russia’s ongoing war of aggression including a substantial increase of Russian air attacks against cities and civilian objects that has led to more civilian victims.

Ukraine applied for EU membership on 28 February 2022 and the intergovernmental conference to open accession negotiations with Ukraine took place on 25 June 2024. Bilateral screening meetings were completed in September 2025. On 14 May 2025, Ukraine adopted roadmaps on rule of law, public administration reform and on the functioning of democratic institutions, as well as an action plan on national minorities and its negotiating position for Cluster 1. This progress, which has been made despite the challenge of the Russian aggression,

signals Ukraine's strong commitment to its European future. However, there have also been some elements of notable concern, in particular in ensuring a robust and independent anti-corruption framework.

Ukraine has some level of preparation regarding the judiciary, the fight against corruption and respect for fundamental rights and made some progress, with progress seen across all areas.

For reference: The European Commission's Enlargement Report is the European Commission's annual assessment of the candidate country's fulfillment of the membership criteria, progress in implementing reforms and approximation to the EU acquis.

The Ukraine report 2025 is the first report after the completion of the EU screening of Ukrainian legislation and the third overall. This means that the report also takes into account the results of the screening, which show in which areas Ukrainian legislation meets EU standards, and where changes are still needed.

On December 12, 2025, the Council of Europe announced that the leaders and senior officials from across Europe and beyond gather at the World Forum in Hague to launch the International Claims Commission for Ukraine.

This new body represents the second pillar of the compensation mechanism addressing Russia's war of aggression. It builds on the Register of Damage for Ukraine, created in 2023, which has already recorded 80,000+ claims and is supported by 44 states and the European Union.

The Commission will review and assess these claims and determine compensation, an initiative led by the Council of Europe, in partnership with the Netherlands, Ukraine, and more than 50 states.

INDEPENDENCE OF THE UKRAINIAN JUDICIARY

November 9, 2025, marked the fourth anniversary of the launch of the Ethics Council. This independent body assesses all candidates for the High Council of Justice (HCJ) for compliance with professional ethics and integrity criteria. The establishment of the Ethical Council became one of the key steps in the judicial and legal reform aimed at ensuring the formation of an independent, professional, and upright judiciary.

During its period of operation, the Ethical Council conducted assessments of candidates nominated by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (1 competition), by the Congress of representatives of higher legal educational institutions and scientific establishments (3 competitions), by the Congress of Judges of Ukraine (3 competitions), by the All-Ukrainian Prosecutors' Conference (1 competition), as well as by the President of Ukraine (3 competitions).

A total of 197 candidates and 4 current members of the High Council of Justice have been evaluated.

Currently, the fourth competition for the position of member of the High Council of Justice from the Congress of Judges of Ukraine is ongoing. By decision dated 11 August 2025, the Ethics Council approved 24 candidates for the interview stage.

On December 2-4, 2025, the Committee of Ministers reviewed the progress made by Ukraine in implementing the European Court of Human Right’s judgments in the [Oleksandr Volkov](#) group concerning structural issues related to the independence of the judiciary and the system of judicial discipline and careers (violations of the right to a fair trial and the right to respect for private life). [It has been supervised by the Committee of Ministers since 2013.](#)

The Committee noted with satisfaction the functioning of the reformed framework governing the system of judicial careers and discipline, a development made possible by a range of multifaceted legislative and institutional reforms carried out since 2016 with extensive expert assistance of the Council of Europe. In view of the substantial progress achieved, the Committee closed the supervision of the Oleksandr Volkov case as a leading case in this group of cases (Final Resolution CM/ResDH(2025)399).

The Committee will continue its supervision of the outstanding measures, notably as regards the coherent operation of the new disciplinary system and consolidation of the disciplinary practice, the application of the Unified Indicators for Assessing Integrity and Professional Ethics of Judges, and further improvement of the legal and institutional framework within the framework of the Denisov and Golovchuk cases, with a continued focus on judicial independence, impartiality and the principle of irremovability of judges.

ANTICORRUPTION MEASURES

On November 13, 2025, the panel of judges of the High Anti-Corruption Court (HACC) approved the specialised anti-corruption prosecutor's request. It [extended the period of procedural obligations](#) imposed on the former President of the Supreme Court.

The validity period of the resolution is until 13 January 2026 inclusive.

For reference: the former President of the Supreme Court is accused of a criminal offence under Part 4 of Article 368 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (receiving an unlawful benefit in a considerable amount, or committed by a person holding a particularly responsible position).

In accordance with part 1 of article 62 of the Constitution of Ukraine a person is presumed innocent of committing a crime and shall not be subjected to criminal punishment until his or her guilt is proved through legal procedure and established by a court verdict of guilty.

On 18 November 2025, judge [Vira Mykhailenko](#), the President of the High Anti-Corruption Court (HACC) gave an interview to Ukraine’s leading professional legal publication “Юридична газета”. Here is an extract from the interview - some questions and answers regarding the independence of the HACC and its communication policy.¹

“Question: Your statement that 'the independence of the judicial institution may be under threat' has resonated widely. How would you characterise the most serious challenges currently facing the High Anti-Corruption Court (HACC)?

Response: HACC today is like a tower of light, but there is often fog around it. Institutional support is weak, judges' workloads are overwhelming, and societal expectations are inflated. We live under a constant microscope: journalists, politicians, and international partners – all observe and evaluate the institution and the judges' work. But who assesses the conditions in which the court operates? There is no sustainable state approach to providing the court with the necessary resources, a lack of understanding of the specifics of anti-corruption justice, and the global problem of locating both court instances has not been resolved since the beginning of our activities. The guarantees with which judges entered HAAC are constantly being narrowed, and so on.

We also feel subtle pressure through attempts to change the balance and rewrite the rules, public statements by politicians regarding the court and judges, manipulation of information and statistical data, assessments of the decisions made, dissemination of narratives about the court’s inefficiency, and so on. This is just the tip of the iceberg, which is visible. The real processes in this regard occur beyond human sight but require enormous resources. The anti-corruption court should not be convenient; it must be independent and just. And it is precisely this that many people dislike.

Question: How does the court protect judges from unlawful pressure (politics/activity of public activists)?

Response: Each case of possible judicial interference is reported in the manner prescribed by law. We do not leave any signal that may indicate pressure on the court or the judge without a response.

HACC consistently adheres to a policy of transparency. The majority of court hearings are public, the texts of decisions are published in the register, and the court comments on

¹ The original language of the interview is Ukrainian. It was translated into English using the AI tools and edited by Professor Tetyana Antsupova.

individual issues within the limits permitted by law. Transparency is not only a requirement of society but also an effective means of protecting judges from distortion of facts and pressure through disinformation.

We recognise the public's right to criticise, as it is an element of the democratic process. However, when criticism turns into coordinated campaigns of discreditation, the spread of false information, or personal attacks on judges, it is no longer freedom of speech but an attempt to influence justice. In such cases, the court responds officially and publicly.

No judge of the High Anti-Corruption Court (HACC) is left alone to face pressure. The court, as an institution, provides support to colleagues and ethical unity in defending independence.

The independence of the court is not a privilege, but a duty. And this duty lies not only in making lawful decisions but also in doing so without fear, without influence, regardless of the political climate. That is why we protect this space.

Question: Recently, the HACC press service has been actively explaining on social media its decisions in favour of suspects or accused, while it only provides brief notices of guilty verdicts. Why is this? Is it an attempt to justify themselves to the public when the decisions do not align with public expectations? Or do HACC judges genuinely feel pressure or fear of hate?

Response: The approach of the High Anti-Corruption Court in public communication is simple: the court does not justify itself, it explains instead. Decisions in favour of suspects or accused persons are often perceived by society as exoneration or leniency. Therefore, such decisions require a detailed explanation of the motives to demonstrate that the law and evidence guide the court. Conversely, guilty verdicts in the public consciousness do not require detailed explanation, as they are perceived as justice having been served. At the same time, we do not assign any particular tone to different messages.

We are not afraid of hate, but we must prevent it from turning into distrust. We see how emotionally society reacts to decisions that do not align with its expectations. Therefore, we do not apologise – we warn against distortion of facts. This is part of our responsibility to society, which has the right to know that the court does not make decisions in the shadows.

A court decision may not be to everyone's liking, but it must certainly be understandable. Therefore, our communication strategy aims to restore a rational conversation about justice in a society where emotions often replace trust.”

On November 28, 2025, [the Assembly of Judges of the High Anti-Corruption Court approved an important document – the HACC Strategy for 2026–2028.](#)

This document addresses the next steps in institutional development and systemic change. The strategy aims not only to enhance the effectiveness of HACC's activities but also to support

its contribution to achieving national priorities, especially those outlined in the Roadmap on the rule of law concerning Ukraine's path to EU membership.

The strategy was developed in three stages. Judges and staff of the HACC worked on its development.

The strategy is a unique document that defines five strategic expected results for the High Anti-Corruption Court's activities for 2026–2028. Namely: effective justice; operational efficiency; resource capacity; systemic communication; a sustainable institutional culture and judicial self-governance. The implementation of this Strategy should further strengthen public trust in the HACC.

The full text of the VAKS Strategy for 2026–2028 (in Ukrainian) is available here: <https://bit.ly/4pF39oh>.

AI IN THE COURTS

On October 17, 2025, the press service of the Seventh Administrative Court of Appeal published information entitled “E-Court: Progress or a Problem?”

In judicial proceedings, the product of digitalisation became an "E-Court". This system is designed to make justice more accessible, simpler and faster.

During the wartime, when the parties have a limited opportunity to be physically present in court, the electronic format became not just a modern solution but a real necessity.

Any citizen, lawyer, representative of an institution or enterprise who has access to the Internet and an electronic digital signature can:

- submit an application or other documents to the court online: no need to go to court in person or send by mail;
- receive court decisions and notices via e-mail or in your personal account;
- follow the status of the case: see dates of meetings, resolutions and decisions;
- participate in the meeting via video link (if such a request is granted by the court);
- have access to court decisions in electronic form;

The Seventh Administrative Court of Appeal has been actively using electronic services, including the Electronic Court, for quite some time.

In the first 9 months of 2025, the Seventh Administrative Court of Appeal received over 16,000 pieces of correspondence through the "Electronic Court" system, and 8,530 letters via postal mail. Notably, in the same period of 2024, nearly 11,000 pieces of correspondence were received electronically. This indicates a clear upward trend in adopting digital justice. The data reflects positive progress toward shifting justice processes online, making it more convenient for all involved in the judicial system.