European Commission Report 2026: Where We Are Falling Behind and What Needs to Be Done

At a glance

> Half of the negotiating chapters, 16 out of 33, are below the "moderately prepared" level. No chapter is "advanced", and only three have a "good level of preparation": the customs union, energy, and foreign and security policy.

The Commission's report finds good progress in most areas, and this deserves recognition. However, in 24 of the 31 chapters for which the Commission assesses last year's recommendations, those recommendations have been implemented only partially. The same is true for justice, anti-corruption and both economic criteria. The largest gaps are precisely in the areas that will determine whether accession changes people's lives: justice and anti-corruption, public finances, economic competitiveness and readiness to access European funds.

With the goal of concluding negotiations in 2028, there is a considerable gap to close in two years. It cannot be closed through press releases about how highly we are regarded, but through measurable results.

How to read the report

The Commission assesses each area along two different dimensions, and confusing the two underpins the self-congratulatory narrative.

- Progress indicates how much has been achieved over the past 12 months. The scale has six levels: backsliding, no progress, limited progress, some progress, good progress, very good progress.
- Level of preparation indicates where the country stands in relation to EU standards. The scale has five levels: early stage, some level of preparation, moderately prepared, good level of preparation, advanced.

"Good progress" means that the pace of advancement over the past year was good. It does not mean that we are prepared. An area can make "good progress" and still be at "some level of preparation", the second of five levels. For accession, the level matters, not the pace.

The overall picture

Of the 33 negotiating chapters, 16 are below "moderately prepared" and only 9 are above it. Both economic criteria – a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition in the EU – are at "some level of preparation".

Level of preparation	Chapters	Which ones
Advanced	0	–
Good level	3	customs union (29), energy (15), foreign, security and defence policy (31)
Between moderate and good	6	free movement of capital (4), intellectual property (7), fisheries (13), science and research (25), education and culture (26), external relations (30)
Moderately prepared	8	free movement of goods (1), right of establishment and services (3), digital transformation (10), food safety (12), social policy and employment (19), enterprise policy (20), regional policy (22), justice,

Level of preparation	Chapters	Which ones
		freedom and security (24)
Between “some level” and moderate	11	free movement of workers (2), public procurement (5), company law (6), competition (8), financial services (9), transport (14), economic and monetary policy (17), trans-European networks (21), judiciary and fundamental rights (23), consumer protection (28), financial control (32)
Some level of preparation	4	agriculture (11), taxation (16), statistics (18), environment and climate (27)
Between early stage and “some level”	1	financial and budgetary provisions (33)

Judiciary and fundamental rights (Chapter 23) is one of the “fundamentals” chapters. Under the negotiating methodology, these chapters are opened first and closed last, and their pace determines the pace of the entire process.

Major outstanding issues

We have selected six areas where the gap from EU standards is greatest or has the most serious consequences for citizens. In each case, the recommendations are those issued by the Commission for the following year.

1. Justice and anti-corruption

> **Assessment:** between “some level of preparation” and moderately prepared (Chapter 23). The judiciary is moderately prepared; the fight against corruption is between “some level of preparation” and moderately prepared.

What the Commission finds: external vetting is advancing, but the Supreme Court of Justice is not operating at full capacity, vacancies remain numerous and court proceedings are excessively long. The extension of the Minister of Justice’s ex officio membership of the Superior Council of Prosecutors until January 2028 is described as a reversal of a commitment made. In anti-corruption, the number of criminal investigations has increased, but investigations still do not lead to enough convictions, including in high-level cases. Several indicators under the National Integrity Programme, particularly those concerning governance and justice, show a slight deterioration compared with 2024.

Key recommendations:

- complete the vetting and appointment of judges, particularly at the Supreme Court and in anti-corruption panels, and make substantial progress in vetting prosecutors in specialised prosecution offices;
- end the Minister of Justice’s ex officio membership of the Superior Council of Prosecutors and introduce random electronic allocation of cases among prosecutors;
- conduct proactive anti-corruption investigations leading to final convictions, deterrent sanctions and asset confiscation, and establish an integrated electronic criminal case-management system.

2. The economy and public finances

> **Assessment:** “some level of preparation” for a functioning market economy; between “some level of preparation” and moderately prepared for economic and monetary policy (17) and financial control (32).

What the Commission finds: the fiscal position has deteriorated, with a persistently high deficit and debt on an upward trajectory. Implementation of public investment remains weak, and structural tax reforms “have

not yet produced results". Governance of state-owned enterprises remains a persistent problem. A large informal economy, low labour-market participation and weak enforcement of competition rules discourage investment.

Key recommendations:

- broaden the tax base through a systematic reduction of tax exemptions and increase spending efficiency through spending reviews;
- accelerate reform of state-owned enterprises: independent board members, reform of the Public Property Agency and full digitalisation of the public property register;
- adopt legislation establishing an independent fiscal institution and increase the implementation rate of Court of Accounts recommendations.

3. Competitiveness

> **Assessment:** "some level of preparation" for the capacity to cope with competition in the EU; between "some level of preparation" and moderately prepared for competition policy (8).

What the Commission finds: labour shortages, persistently low foreign direct investment and weak innovation undermine competitiveness. The investment gap in infrastructure, especially transport, remains substantial. Exports rely on a narrow range of low-value-added products.

Key recommendations:

- narrow the gap between skills acquired and those demanded by the labour market: more dual education, work-based learning and employer involvement;
- increase public investment, including through the Growth Plan, in transport and cross-border trade infrastructure, energy security and climate resilience;
- attract foreign investment into export-oriented sectors and ensure that the Competition Council has sufficient resources and autonomy, with fines and state-aid rules aligned with the EU.

4. Readiness for European funds

> **Assessment:** "some level of preparation" in agriculture (11); between the early stage and "some level of preparation" for financial and budgetary provisions (33) – the weakest assessment in the entire report.

What the Commission finds: the legal framework for financial support in agriculture and for the paying agency has been aligned, but the integrated administration and control system (IACS), through which European subsidies are paid, is only now being built. Chapter 33 recorded only "some progress". Without these systems, farmers will not be able to receive direct payments under the Common Agricultural Policy from the date of accession, and the state will not be able to fulfil its obligations to contribute to the EU budget.

Key recommendations:

- strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture;
- build IACS: the land parcel identification system (LPIS), the farm register and the farm sustainability data network;
- make the own-resources coordination body operational, modernise IT systems and align VAT rules and gross national income calculations.

5. Taxation and statistics

Assessment: "some level of preparation" in both areas (16 and 18).

What the Commission finds: VAT and excise legislation has advanced, but European anti-tax-avoidance rules are missing. In statistics, alignment of macroeconomic statistics continues to lag behind, while insufficient staffing remains a constraint.

Key recommendations:

- adopt the provisions of the Anti-Tax Avoidance Directives (ATAD 1 and 2) and the BEPS minimum standards;
- digitalise the State Tax Service, including an automated system for managing compliance risks;
- align macroeconomic statistics with EU standards and use administrative data, including a geospatial database based on the 2024 census.

6. Environment and climate change

Assessment: "some level of preparation" (27).

What the Commission finds: legislative alignment has advanced in some areas, but efforts need to be strengthened on waste, water and biodiversity. The system for monitoring, reporting and verifying greenhouse gas emissions, which is needed for carbon pricing, is not yet operational. For candidate countries, the environment is generally the chapter with the highest costs of alignment.

Key recommendations:

- strengthen the capacity of environmental institutions, including for protected areas, and improve monitoring;
- make the emissions-monitoring system operational with a view to alignment with the EU emissions trading system;
- develop investment plans with estimated costs and secured financing for waste, water, air quality and biodiversity.

What the Movement calls for

The Commission's report is not a diploma; it is a list of homework assignments. To ensure it is treated as such, we call on the Government to:

1. Publish a plan to implement the Commission's recommendations, specifying for each recommendation the responsible institution, deadline, cost and source of financing.
2. Report publicly every quarter on implementation status, using the same assessments as the Commission rather than formulations such as "we are highly regarded".
3. Prioritise the fundamentals chapters. Remove the Minister of Justice from the Superior Council of Prosecutors without delay and adopt a realistic plan to fill vacancies at the Supreme Court of Justice.
4. Set a timetable for the systems without which European funds cannot be received: IACS and the agricultural paying agency, the own-resources body and financial control systems.
5. Ensure transparency about the costs of accession, chapter by chapter, for the state and the business community, before negotiations on each cluster advance.

Accession is a national project, not a communication exercise. The more openly we discuss the outstanding issues, the better our chances of addressing them by 2028.