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The Venice Commission, in cooperation with the Constitutional Court of Armenia and the Directorate General for Human Rights and Rule of Law of the Council of Europe, organised an international conference in Yerevan, Armenia, on 14–15 November to discuss the role of constitutional courts in ensuring the rule of law and human rights.

The discussion panels at the conference focused on the enforcement of the rulings of the Constitutional Court and the impact of these rulings on the national legal order as well as on the wider international scene. It was also discussed how the judgments of constitutional courts are reflected in the media: whether and to what extent criticism of the judgments of the constitutional courts, including from other branches of government, is acceptable, what are the limits of the freedom of expression of judges in commenting on various judgments and expressing personal opinions, and what measures can be taken by the courts to ensure

that the content of judgments reaches as many people as possible.

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Discussion panel on the rulings of the Constitutional Court. The debate was moderated by Valentin Georgiev, Secretary General of the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria and Co-Chair of the Venice Commission, and the panellists included Ivo Pilving, Chairman of the Administrative Chamber of the Supreme Court, Nakharin Mektrairat, President of the Constitutional Court of the Kingdom of Thailand, Lilit Tadevosyan, President of the Court of Cassation of the Republic of Armenia, and Srбуhi Galyan, Minister of Justice of Armenia. Photo: Constitutional Court of Armenia

As regards the binding nature and enforcement of constitutional court rulings, national practice was found to vary widely. While in Germany, constitutional court rulings are binding *ex tunc*, i.e. from the moment of publication, this is often not the case in other countries. The courts are given different powers as to whether and to what extent they can give general guidance to the legislature in constitutional review. In any case, compliance with and, more broadly, respect for the rulings of constitutional courts is an indispensable part of a well-functioning rule of law.

Ivo Pilving, the Chairman of the Administrative Chamber of the Supreme Court, emphasised in his presentation and in the ensuing discussion that a constitutional court does not necessarily need to have strong and formal powers to force the Parliament to comply with the court's rulings. More important than strong powers is the independence of the constitutional court that, together with its expertise and fair procedure, helps ensure that judgments are accepted as final, regardless of criticism.

Press releases and press conferences were highlighted as an important part of the communication of

constitutional review rulings, as they convey a clear message to the public, which in turn enhances the credibility of the courts. There will always be those who agree with the content of court rulings and those who criticise it. Criticism that is not based on misinformation provides honest feedback to the courts and also illustrates wider societal trends. However, if criticism of the judge who made the ruling becomes personal, the credibility of the court must be protected. Various social media channels are becoming an everyday part of court communication.

From a journalist's point of view, three ideas were highlighted that contribute to good cooperation in communicating rulings:

1. organise regular meetings with journalists;
2. not to make important decisions that attract a lot of public attention on a Friday night;
3. establish good contact with the communication department.

The meeting of the liaison officers of the 21st Venice Commission also took place within the scope of the conference. The next meeting of liaison officers will take place in Zagreb in 2026.

Supreme Court Justices Ivo Pilving and Paavo Randma and adviser to the President of the Supreme Court and liaison officer of the Venice Commission at the Supreme Court Karin Leichter-Tammisto represented the Supreme Court at the conference.

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Group photo. Photo: Constitutional Court of Armenia

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Pictured (from left) Paavo Randma, Judge of the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court, Arman Dilanyan, President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia and Ivo Pilving, Chairman of the Administrative Chamber of the Supreme Court. Photo: Estonian Supreme Court

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