

NEWSLETTER

ANTI-CORRUPTION

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WELCOME TO THE ANTI-CORRUPTION NEWSLETTER

Corruption is a pervasive problem that affects countries, institutions, and individuals across the globe. It undermines trust in government, distorts markets, and hinders economic development. Anti-corruption efforts are crucial for promoting transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. In this newsletter, we will explore the latest developments in the fight against corruption, including legislative and policy updates, investigative reports, and case studies of successful anti-corruption initiatives. We hope to inspire and inform our readers on the importance of anti-corruption measures and the impact they can have on building more equitable and just societies.

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NEWS BY SELDI MEMBERS

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS IN THE CORRUPTION MONITORING OF JUDICIARY AND MEDIA CAPTURE

On March 29, 19 representatives from 7 organizations in the SELDI anti-corruption network attended an internal workshop to discuss expanding the Corruption Monitoring System to include judicial and media capture. Aleksandar Gerganov from the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) presented the existing system and gave guidelines for implementation, while definitions and methodologies for assessing media and judicial entrapment were also discussed. Todor Galev (CSD) focused on media capture and analysis, followed by a discussion on future research. The SELDI initiative is coordinated by MCIC and receives financial support from the EU. **MCIC, 30 March, 2023**

THE REGIONAL ANTI- CORRUPTION NETWORK SELDI PLANNING LOCAL ACTIVITIES IN THE COMING PERIOD



On March 22, 2023, the steering committee of the “Civil Society for Good Governance and Anti-Corruption in Southeast Europe” initiative met in Sofia with 14 representatives from 6 member organizations. Participants shared updates on anti-corruption and good governance developments in their countries, including issues with the judiciary in Albania, highway construction agreements in North Macedonia, vetting processes in Kosovo*, state controls on civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and corruption scandals in Serbia and Bulgaria. The meeting also included discussions on future coordination and was coordinated by MCIC with support from the European Union. **MCIC, 24 March, 2023**

COORDINATED ACTIONS ARE NEEDED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE



The Anti-Corruption and National Security policy forum was held in Sofia as part of the Summit for Democracy. It aimed to enhance cooperation among government, civil society, and international representatives to combat corruption and protect citizens’ rights. Keynote speakers included the Bulgarian President, along with officials from the USA and the Netherlands. Discussions covered achievements, future steps, good practices, and practical solutions in anti-corruption efforts. Topics encompassed detecting illicit enrichment, effective use of questionnaires in prevention, and the importance of upgrading policies and public-private partnerships in the fight against corruption. **MCIC, 27 March 2023.**

TRAINING OF LEADERS IN THE FIELD OF ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVISM



CCI held a two-day training for 19 leaders in the field of anti-corruption activism who are ready to contribute to the fight against corruption through active engagement and practical work in the local community. Those interested in the fight against corruption in their local communities and positive changes in their environment received knowledge in the field of advocacy and PR campaign management and had the opportunity to talk with civil activists who have been fighting corruption in their local environment for years. **CCI, 15 March 2023**

TRAINING „HOW TO WIN OVER THE MEDIA FOR THEM TO BE ALLIES IN PUBLIC ADVOCACY?“

Centres for Civic Initiatives (CCI) held a training on the topic “How to win over the media for them to be allies in public advocacy?”. The training was for civil society organizations - beneficiary of the grant and representatives of informal groups of citizens who implement campaigns in the field of fight against corruption. The participants underwent training on tools for communication and communication skills with the media in order to better promote the public advocacy campaigns they implement. **CCI, 16 March 2023**

INITIATIVE FOR THE WORK PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

The Centers of Civil Initiatives (CCI), which are currently implementing the project “Strengthening responsibility in the management of public enterprises in BiH”, sent a letter to all clubs of deputies in the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska to propose including in the work program of the National Assembly the obligation of reviewing the report on operations of all public companies at the level of the Republic of Srpska. **CCI, 13 March 2023**

VETTING PROCESS IN KOSOVO IS ONGOING

During March and April, ÇOHU! participated in three consultative meetings within the framework of the debate on the constitutional changes related to the vetting process in Kosovo*. ÇOHU! is a member of the working groups within the process that aims to formulate legislative and constitutional changes to enable a vetting process in the justice system. **ÇOHU!, 25 April 2023**

DISCUSSING REPORT STRATEGY

In April, ÇOHU! held a focus group meeting with the participation of citizens and media representatives, where the strategy of the Kosovar Center for Investigative Journalism – PREPOTR, the investigative media arm of ÇOHU! was discussed. The strategy is focusing on the models of reports and investigative research publications alongside current trends and challenges of investigative media. **ÇOHU!, 25 April 2023**

CITIZENS AGAINST CORRUPTION

MCIC continues its efforts for good governance and the fight against corruption by strengthening the democratic capacities of all stakeholders. The “Citizens Against Corruption” programme is part of those efforts. The overall objective is to increase the involvement and cooperation of citizens, civil society, the media and the private sector in the fight against corruption, which will lead to an improvement in the reaction of state institutions and effectiveness in dealing with corruption in all sectors at the national and local level. **MCIC, 12 April, 2023**

ANTI-CORRUPTION NEWS FROM THE WESTERN BALKANS



US DEPARTMENT OF STATE REPORT STATES ALBANIA WITH A CORRUPT GOVERNMENT, WEAK MEDIA AND AN UNDER-PRESSURE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The US Department of State emphasized “corruption in all branches and levels” of government while highlighting the media financed by incinerators as an indicator of the weakness of journalism in the country. The US State Department notes that political pressure, intimidation, corruption and scarce resources have caused the justice system to not function “fully, independently and efficiently”, while highlighting corruption in the country’s governance and free media but not independent as the main problems in respect of basic human rights in Albania. **US Department of State, 20 March 2023**

INCINERATORS OF ELBASAN AND FIER UNDER SERIOUS ACCUSATIONS IN ALBANIA

Elbasan’s incinerator: The first trial session for the Elbasan incinerator failed to take place, but the court found that Mirel Mërtiri, Stela Gugallja and Klodian Zoto issued special powers of attorney before notaries in November 2022, although they were wanted internationally by SPAK.

Fier’s incinerator: The Special Court opened the way for the trial of the former Minister of the Environment Leter Koka, the former socialist deputy Alqi Blako, as well as the officials and businessmen accused of the corruption affair in the realization of the Fier incinerator. **Reporter.al, 30 March 2022**

ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS OF MAY 14TH ARE STIRRING THE WATERS IN ALBANIA

1 month before the elections, the car of the head of the opposition party is blown up in Vau of Deja (Shkoder County). The car of Bernard Ndreca, leader of the Democratic Party faction led by Sali Berisha, was blown up. Ndreca and his mother escaped unharmed. **Reporter.al, 11 April 2023**

DECRIMINALIZATION, CEC REQUIRES VERIFICATION OF 30 CANDIDATES FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS

The State Commissioner of Elections, Ilirjan Celibashi, decided to send to the Prosecutor's Office for in-depth verification a list of 30 candidates for mayors and councilors running in the local elections on May 14. **Reporter.al, 12 April 2023**

KEK CEO ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF CORRUPTION

On April 19, 2023, by order of the Special Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kosovo, the Chief Executive Officer of the Energy Corporation of Kosovo, Mr. Nagip Krasniqi was arrested under the suspicion of having committed criminal offenses, such as misuse of official duties, exercise of influence and conflict of interest. He was sent to detention for 48 hours, while the Basic Court of Pristina assigned him a month's detention due to abuse of official duty. After the latter's arrest, the KEK Board of Directors, on April 25 took the decision to suspend him from the job of Chief Executive Officer. The arrest of the head of KEK on suspicion of corruption, marks one of the highest-level cases of public officials in recent years, and ÇOHU! will monitor the development of this criminal procedure.

ONLY 10 PERCENT OF THE PLANNED ACTIVITIES FROM THE ACTION PLAN OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST WERE COMPLETED IN 2022

Only 10 percent of the planned activities from the Action Plan for prevention of corruption in North Macedonia have been completed in 2022, and the reason for this low realization is the weak commitment of the institutions, according to the head of the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, Biljana Ivanovska. There are institutions with three to four ministers changed during the period while the national strategy is being implemented, while there are insufficient professional administration thanks to political influences during employment. The absence of integrity, the strong political influence, especially when hiring through the known channels of nepotism, cronyism, further impunity, the absence of transparency, digitalization, etc., all contribute to creating such a climate and it's time they finally wake up and give their contribution because no one else can organize our country if we don't try to do it ourselves, said Ivanovska **MIA, April 5, 2023**

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS, IRRESPONSIBILITY FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION, THE STATE DEPARTMENT RECORDS FOR N. MACEDONIA

The report of the US State Department on Human Rights for 2022 highlights several issues in North Macedonia, including inhumane and degrading treatment in some prison wards, violence and threats of violence against journalists, serious government corruption, lack of accountability for gender-based and domestic violence, and crimes of violence and threats of violence against the LGBT+ population. The report notes that domestic violence is a persistent problem in North Macedonia, with hundreds of victims registered by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Public Prosecutor's Office. The report also emphasizes the inadequacy of investigations and processing of cases of violence against the LGBT+ community. Overall, the report highlights several challenges faced by North Macedonia in ensuring human rights, including the need to address issues related to prison conditions, violence against journalists and marginalized communities, and government corruption. The full report is available here. **Radio MOF, 21 March, 2023**

REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES IN THE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS



The position Executive Director is used in all fields of activity and in all types of public institutions in North Macedonia. The laws either limits of the mandate of the executive directors up to 6 months, but in practice this position is used very often and for longer period of time, contrary to the legal regulations. Furthermore, the report, prepared by the Center for Change Management, states that there is a lack of evaluation practices over the work of the directors, as well as a lack of procedure for managing the effect of their work. The laws, on the other hand, allow any staff profile to be appointed as a director, regardless of the type of education. The full report on the monitoring of management structures in institutions from the public sector is available [here](#).
Radio MOF, 14 April, 2023

THE AMENDMENTS BY A SHORT PROCEDURE TO THE LAWS FOR CORRIDORS 8 AND 10D BYPASS THE RISK OF CHANGES ANALYSIS

IDSCS held the event “Increased risks from rapid changes to the laws for the construction of corridors 8 and 10d” underlining that legal amendments are foreseen after a shortened procedure, without prior discussion with stakeholders.

Misha Popovic, head of the Center for Good Governance at the Institute for Democracy reminded that even in 2021 there were reactions to the passing of the special law for the construction of corridors 8 and 10d due to increased risk of corruption. “By proposing the amendments to the eight laws after a shortened procedure, a larger public debate is prevented in which all stakeholders will be involved who will express their views from the position of experts and in this way the deputies will make a better decision”, he added. **IDSCS, 18 April, 2023**

ESTABLISHED FORUM OF WOMEN LEADERS FROM SOUTHEAST EUROPE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

The Forum of Women Leaders from Southeast Europe for Good Governance and Anti-corruption, supported by UN WOMEN, RAI and UNODC, was held in Skopje on 23 March 2023. The initiative aims to create a regional network that strengthens women’s leadership through professional development and international networking. US Ambassador to North Macedonia, Angela Ageler, spoke in support of the initiative, emphasizing the importance of empowering women and strong leadership for peaceful and stable democracies. The declaration for the establishment of the Forum was signed by Deputy Prime Minister Grkovska and other prominent female leaders from the region. UN Women and UNODC representatives highlighted the need for a strong female perspective in achieving sustainable development and ensuring that no one is left behind. **MakFax, 23 March, 2023**

CORRUPT PRACTICES THRIVE IN NORTH MACEDONIA'S MURKY CONTRACTING LANDSCAPE

Allegations of corruption and suspicious activity have arisen regarding the supervision of large infrastructure projects in North Macedonia. The country's Government continues to push forward with plans for multi-billion euro highway and energy projects, despite growing concerns over their financial viability and environmental impact. The controversial firm IRD Engineering is set to supervise the construction of the project, with three of the four companies being investigated for different corruption scandals. The high price of the services involved in the supervision raises serious questions about the management and transparency of the country's major infrastructure projects. The situation in North Macedonia has raised concern, particularly regarding the Law on Public Procurement adopted in 2019, which almost fully complies with EU Directives, but seems not to be adequate. **EWB, 13 April 2023**

TELEKOM SRBIJA AGAIN IN AMENDMENTS ON THE EP REPORT ON SERBIA: CONCERN ABOUT THE IMPACT ON THE MEDIA MARKET

Several amendments submitted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the European Parliament (AFET) to Vladimir Bilčík's draft report on Serbia have raised concerns about the operation of Telekom Srbija as a tool for increasing the ruling party's influence on the media market. MPs have called on the European Commission to investigate the company's financing and ownership concentration in the media, while several international organizations have warned of the increasing capture of the media through state-owned Telekom. The controversial business of the state-owned company, which provides telecommunications services, has been under scrutiny for several years, with allegations that it gives the company an unfair competitive advantage and contributes to the collapse of independent media in Serbia. **EWB, 07 March 2023**

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOLLOWS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HIGH PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE IN SERBIA

The European Commission is closely following recent developments in the High Public Prosecutor's Office in Serbia, according to a statement from spokeswoman Ana Pisonero. The transfer of prosecutors Bojana Savović and Jasmina Paunović and the removal of the embezzlement case from them has raised concerns about the independence of the judiciary in Serbia. Pisonero stressed that the independence and integrity of the prosecution service are crucial to Serbia's progress in the area of rule of law. The Commission expects Serbia to implement legislation aimed at strengthening the autonomy of individual prosecutors and establishing High Judicial and High Prosecutorial Councils. **EWB, 08 March 2023**

DISBALANCE IN MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION AN INCREASING PROBLEM IN SERBIA

The issue of the unequal representation of political actors in Serbian media has been recognized by international and domestic observers as a significant problem for media freedom and the fairness of elections. Although the situation improved during the 2022 election campaign, the latest report by the CRTA shows that pluralism in the media still tends to deteriorate, with parties in power being disproportionately represented and portrayed positively. This imbalance is exacerbated by the political and economic influence of media ownership in Serbia, which is recognized as a frequently used and effective method for media control. The dominance of national frequency televisions also reduces media pluralism, undermining the supervisory function of the media. **EWB, 24 March 2023**

THE CORRUPTION CASE IN SERBIAN STATE COMPANY EPS – WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR?

Serbia's state-owned company Elektroprivreda Srbije (EPS) has been embroiled in yet another corruption scandal after the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade replaced two prosecutors working on a case investigating abuses within the company. The two deputies, Bojana Savović and Jasmina Paunović, were replaced without explanation. This followed the arrest of six people for embezzling \$7.5m during the construction of a 21-kilometer industrial railway from the Stig station to the Kostolac B thermal power plant. Nemanja Nenadić, executive director of Transparency Serbia, said the fraud is just a segment of what's happening in EPS. **EWB, 27 March 2023**

PISONERO: PROGRESS ON THE RULE OF LAW AND THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS CONTINUES TO DETERMINE SERBIA'S OVERALL PACE IN THE ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

The pace of Serbia's accession negotiations with the European Union (EU) is being determined by progress in the rule of law and normalization of relations, according to Ana Pisonero, spokeswoman for the European Commission. The EU views peace, reconciliation, and economic development as prerequisites for accelerated progress in the Western Balkans region's EU integration. Pisonero emphasizes that Serbia must implement reforms across various chapters, particularly in the area of the rule of law, to speed up negotiations. She praises Serbia's constitutional amendments and judicial laws but stresses the need for swift and effective implementation to establish the High Judicial and High Prosecutorial Councils. **EWB, 31 March 2023**

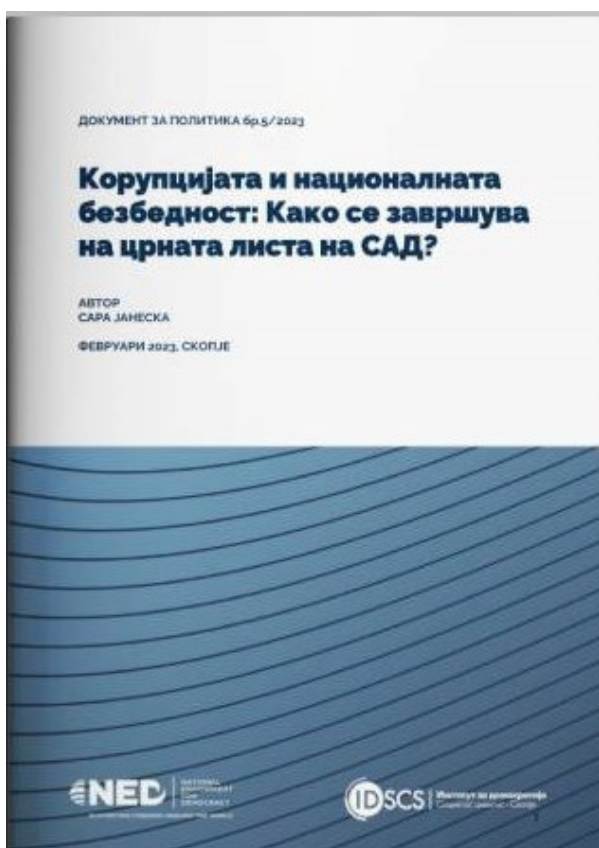
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**30
MAY**

FOLLOW THE MONEY: TRACKING ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS AND COUNTERING OF SANCTIONS' EVASION SCHEMES

In order to increase the capacity of its civil society and government partners to monitor, diagnose and tackle #corruption and close #governance gaps, the Regional Good Governance Public-Private Partnership Platform (R2G4P) is holding a summer school on the 30 May 2023 in Belgrade. The event will present good practices on: Risk assessment and prevention of corruption, political patronage and illegal lobbying, Investigating and tackling illicit financial flows and undue foreign influence Use of anti-money laundering and investment screening mechanisms, Protecting media pluralism and challenging disinformation, Efficient sanctioning of corruption and illicit finance, Rebuilding political and economic alliances, and establishing robust monitoring mechanisms and transparency in the distribution of recovery funds. **R2G4P, May 2023**

PUBLICATIONS



CORRUPTION AND NATIONAL SECURITY: HOW DOES ONE END UP ON THE USA BLACKLIST

The “black list” that the US has begun to create for persons from the Western Balkans involved in acts of high corruption should be recognized as an opportunity to strengthen domestic anticorruption efforts. National authorities should show readiness to join the global sanctions against persons who, with their participation in corruption, act corrosively in countries that are our partners and follow the example of the USA, the United Kingdom and the EU. Even more important than this is for the authorities to take action and sanction domestic corruption actors in a timely manner, thus demonstrating readiness to fight corruption, rather than waiting for international partners to solve the problem. In this way, the country will show that it is an ally in the fight against corruption and joins the efforts of the international community to deal with corruption in the country. The full analysis is available in Macedonian and English. **IDSCS, March 2, 2023**

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