

# ACER's perspective during its 25 years of fighting corruption

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# Success in the fight against corruption enables the acceleration of integration into the EU.

Corruption is a major obstacle for countries in the Western Balkans that want to join the European Union (EU). It threatens the rule of law, democratic governance, and economic growth. For these countries, addressing corruption is essential—not just to meet requirements, but to ensure stability, trust, and lasting development.

- 1. Rule of Law and Governance**
- 2. Economic Development**
- 3. Public Trust**
- 4. Meeting EU Standards**
- 5. Regional Stability**

In summary, effectively fighting corruption is crucial not only for the ambitions of individual countries to join the EU but also for creating a stable, prosperous, and integrated Western Balkans. A strong commitment to tackling corruption will lead to better collaboration with European institutions and a stronger, more resilient region.

# Experience of ACER: Public awareness, promotion of "best practices" in anti-corruption, collaboration with responsible public institutions.

## Overview of Anti-Corruption Initiatives

ACER has implemented the Corruption Monitoring System (CMS) which was launched in Albania to gauge public perceptions and experiences of corruption. Tailored surveys were designed using the MACPI methodology to gather insights on corruption in state institutions. Monthly reports detailing corruption cases were published to enhance visibility and accountability. CMS and MACPI has served as guidelines for the creation of additional surveys and monitoring systems in ACER's work of measuring and fighting corruption. ACER has periodically advocated not only the findings of surveys but also for emerging issues within the country through its connections with the media channels in the country and region.

# Experience of ACER: Public awareness, promotion of "best practices" in anti-corruption, collaboration with responsible public institutions.

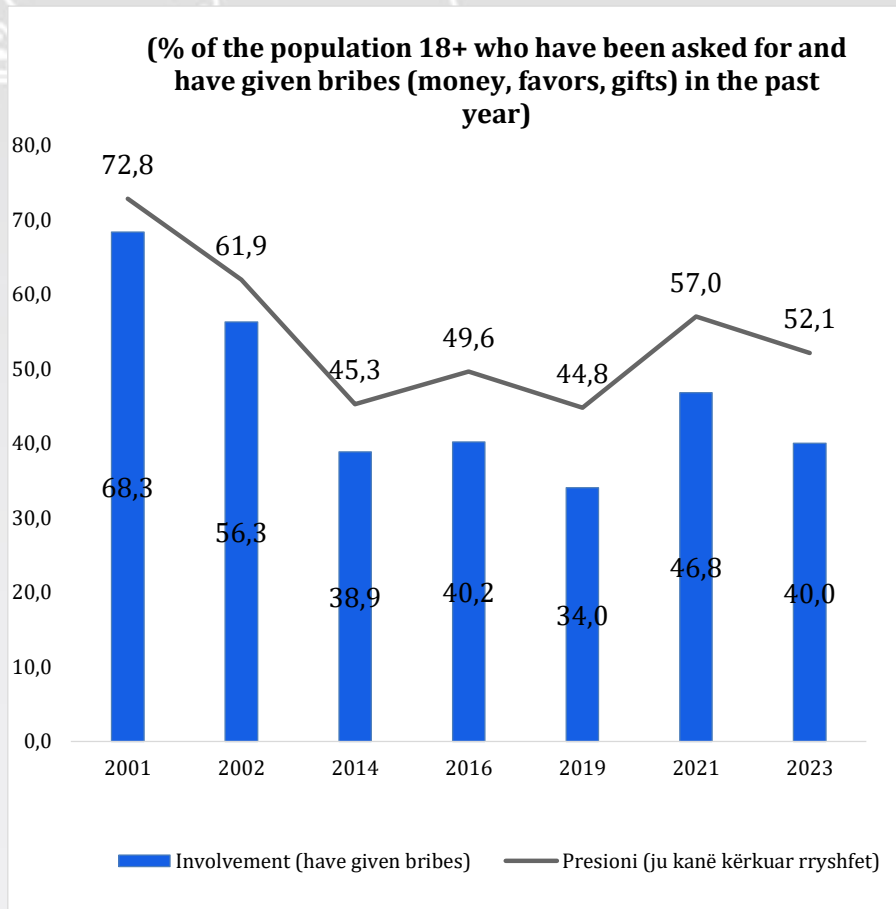
## Key Findings

Surveys revealed that **52% of citizens felt pressured to pay bribes**, while **65% stated they would refuse to engage in bribery**. However, **54% admitted they might accept bribes if offered**, reflecting deep-rooted cultural challenges. Only **25% believe significant progress in reducing corruption is possible**, highlighting the need for continued advocacy.

## Impact on Public Perception

Data shows a positive trend in public rejection of bribery, indicating growing awareness. Increased collaboration between civil society and state institutions has sparked dialogue on anti-corruption efforts. Successful campaigns by ACER have strengthened ties with government agencies, promoting transparency. Public participation in anti-corruption forums has also risen, enhancing community accountability initiatives.

# Experience-Based Corruption Indexes: Corruption pressure and involvement in corruption.



## Corruption Pressure

Consider the instances when a public official has requested bribes from citizens either directly by asking them for an informal payment, or indirectly, by implying that if they make an informal payment, their request/problem will be resolved.

**52.1%** of respondents admit to having given bribes, a figure that is **5% lower** compared to 2021.

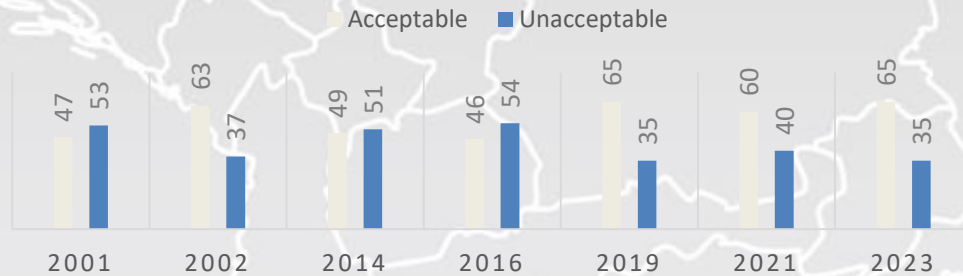
## Involvement in Corruption

Evaluate the instances when citizens make informal payments to public officials. This indicator summarizes citizens' reports and divides them into two categories: citizens who have had experience (those who have made an informal payment at least once in the past year) and citizens who have not had experience (those who have not made informal payments).

**40%** admit that they have been asked for bribes both directly and indirectly by public officials, a figure that has **decreased by 6.8%** compared to 2021.

# Attitudes based corruption indexes: Identification, acceptability and susceptibility to corruption .

## ACCEPTABILITY OF CORRUPTION

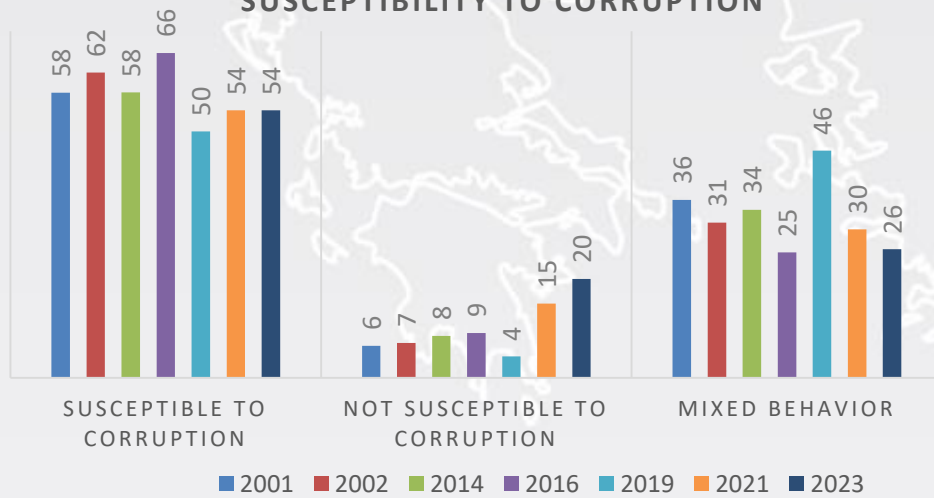


## Acceptability of corruption

It assesses citizens' views on the acceptability of receiving gifts, money, and various favors from public officials in exchange for resolving a specific problem. Therefore, it measures the level of tolerance among citizens towards corrupt practices.

The majority of respondents (65%) do not consider the offering of bribes in exchange for receiving a service to be acceptable or normal.

## SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CORRUPTION



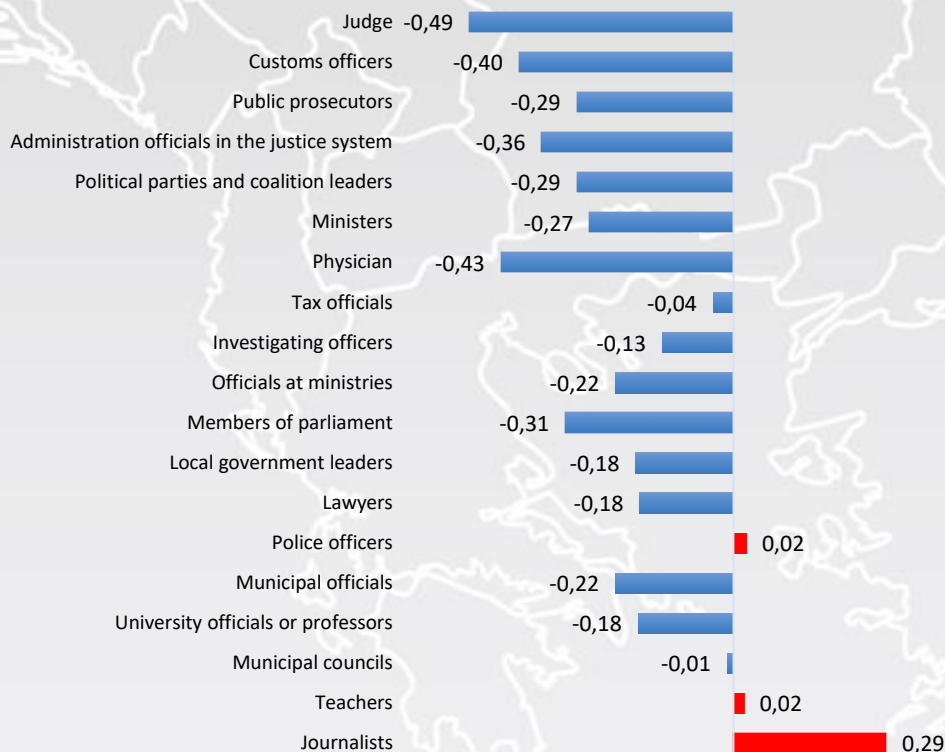
## Susceptibility to corruption

It indicates the respondents' tendency to react in two hypothetical situations: one situation presupposes that, if they were in the position of a public official, they would accept or reject a bribe that is offered to them; and the other situation involves whether or not they would give a bribe to a public official (specifically requested) to resolve a major problem.

**54%** of respondents are categorized as sensitive to corruption (they would both give and receive bribes). **20%** would neither give nor receive bribes (5% more than in 2021), and **26%** are categorized with mixed behavior—meaning they would do one but not the other (4% less than in 2021).

# Assessment of Corruption : Public Officials

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## Corruptness of officials

It indicates citizens' perceptions of the corruption levels among various groups of public officials. This indicator helps rank the sectors most affected by corruption. Positive values imply an increase in the level of corruption, while negative values imply a decrease.

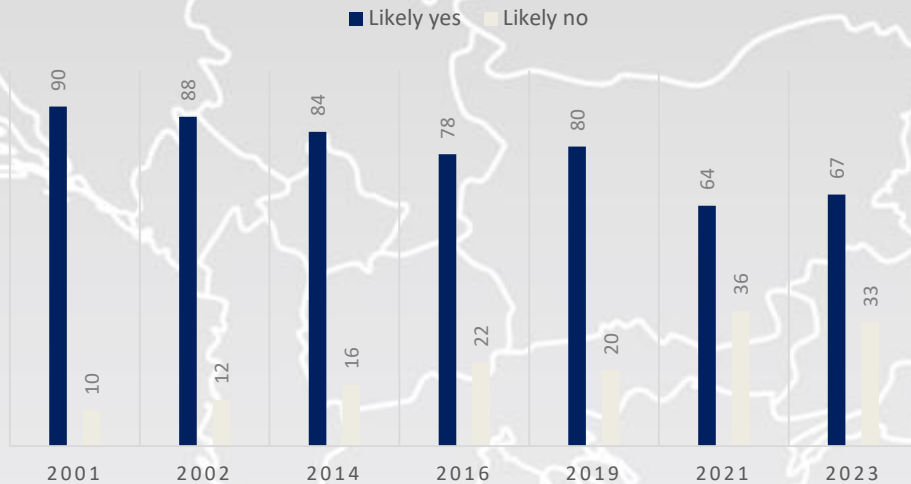
Respondent judges have been rated as less corrupt compared to 2021 (0.49 points lower), suggesting that justice reform has begun to show its results.

Meanwhile, the greatest increase is seen among journalists, with a perception change of 0.29 points as more corrupt compared to 2021.

Groups with an increase in the perception of corruption: Police officers (0.02 points), Teachers (0.02 points), Journalists (0.29 points).

Groups with the greatest decrease in the perception of corruption: Judges (0.49 points), Doctors (0.43 points), Customs officers (0.40 points).

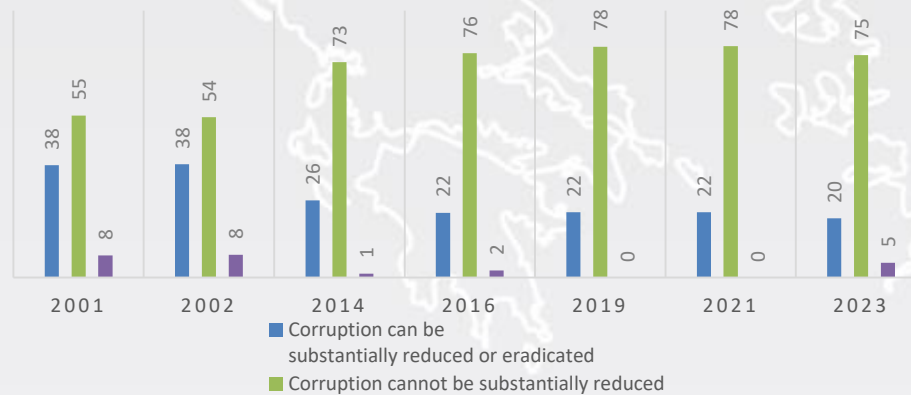
# Assessment of the Corruption : Likelihood of corruption pressure and Feasibility of policy responses to corruption.



## Likelihood of corruption pressure

It measures citizens' expectations regarding the possibility of facing corruption pressure when interacting with public officials. This indicator evaluates the overall corrupt environment.

Based on the assessment using options—likely, very likely, unlikely, not at all likely—the majority (67%) of respondents consider corruption to be possible.



## Feasibility of policy responses to corruption

It assesses the 'citizens' opinions' regarding political responses (government policy measures) to corruption. Therefore, this indicator evaluates the potential public support for anti-corruption policies.

The majority (75%) of respondents believe that corruption cannot be significantly reduced, while only 20% of them (2% less than in 2021) believe it can be significantly reduced.



# Collaboration with various civil society actors to foster the success of the Justice Reform.

- ✓ Civil society organizations (CSOs) have actively monitored the reform to ensure its effectiveness, advocating for necessary legal changes and defending citizens' rights.
- ✓ Public awareness campaigns have informed citizens about their rights and the justice reforms, utilizing social media and community outreach to build support. CSOs also collaborate with government agencies to promote transparency and participate in policy-making.
- ✓ Increased public engagement has led to higher citizen participation in advocacy efforts, fostering greater awareness of judicial processes. Feedback from civil society has influenced reform strategies, improving government responsiveness and communication with the public.

## Challenges:

Some state actors resist civil society oversight, viewing it as a threat to authority. Additionally, sustaining advocacy efforts amidst political changes and varying public interest poses a significant challenge.

# Public Trust in Institutions and Support for SPAK

- ✓ Public sentiment towards government institutions is marked by concerns about corruption and accountability, with fluctuating trust levels in the judiciary, law enforcement, and anti-corruption bodies.
- ✓ SPAK, established to combat high-level corruption and organized crime, focuses on prosecuting public officials. Public awareness campaigns aim to inform citizens about SPAK's role and enhance transparency in its operations.
- ✓ Successful prosecutions have attracted public attention and boosted trust in SPAK's effectiveness, while positive media coverage has further shaped public opinion. This has led to increased confidence in state institutions, supported by testimonials demonstrating the impact of SPAK's work.

## Challenges and Concerns:

Despite some progress, scepticism remains regarding SPAK's effectiveness and impartiality, with worries about political interference. Sustained public support and ongoing transparency are essential for SPAK to operate effectively and bolster trust in governance.

# Enhancing Civil Society Mobilization

Civil society plays a crucial role in anti-corruption efforts by acting as a watchdog, promoting accountability, and fostering public dialogue. It significantly influences anti-corruption legislation and collaborates with government for better governance.

Key civil society organizations (CSOs) are active in anti-corruption initiatives, with coalitions like SELDI enhancing regional collaboration. Recent campaigns have effectively raised awareness and engaged communities.

- ✓ To boost effectiveness, training programs for CSOs can enhance advocacy and public engagement skills. Encouraging partnerships among CSOs, communities, and international organizations promotes knowledge sharing. Utilizing social media and digital tools can also broaden outreach, particularly to younger audiences.
- ✓ Evaluation frameworks are essential for assessing mobilization efforts through metrics on community awareness and participation. Successful case studies highlight initiatives that led to policy changes, supported by testimonials from community members.

## Challenges:

Barriers to participation include funding constraints and political pressures. Ongoing support for civil society organizations is vital, emphasizing the need for stakeholders to empower CSOs in anti-corruption work.

# Ideas and discussion topics on best practices and successful models in the fight against corruption.

- ✓ Highlighting successful anti-corruption initiatives globally and regionally reveals innovative practices that enhance governance and public trust. Evaluation frameworks are essential for assessing mobilization efforts through metrics on community awareness and participation.
- ✓ Effective models involve multi-stakeholder collaboration, uniting governments, civil society, and the private sector to promote transparency. Community engagement is vital, with grassroots movements demonstrating significant impacts on public policy.
- ✓ Data-driven decision-making and robust monitoring frameworks are essential for informing policies and assessing initiative effectiveness. Successful interventions are often rooted in thorough research and feedback mechanisms.
- ✓ Technology plays a crucial role in enhancing transparency through e-governance and online reporting tools. Public awareness campaigns also effectively shift attitudes towards corruption.

## **Conclusion and Lessons Learned:**

Understanding common challenges faced by successful models and how they were overcome is critical. Scalability and adaptability ensure that effective initiatives can be applied in various contexts.

# **Strengthening the joint efforts of civil society, the business community, and law enforcement institutions against corruption—an opportunity to accelerate the European integration of Western Balkan countries.**

Public perception is vital in the fight against corruption, with civil society playing a crucial role in advocating for accountability and transparency. While there have been successes in initiatives and reforms, ongoing challenges require continuous innovation in anti-corruption strategies.

## **Call to Action:**

Engage government, civil society, and the private sector to work together and encourage public participation in anti-corruption efforts. Advocate for sustained support of justice and anti-corruption reforms, prioritizing integrity in policies. Invest in education and awareness campaigns to inform citizens about corruption and their rights.

Envision a society where integrity and accountability are standard, leading to improved public trust in institutions. Empower citizens to actively hold institutions accountable and participate in governance, reinforcing that everyone has a role in creating a corruption-free society.

Thank you !

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