

STRENGTHEN THE RULE OF LAW BY CHANGING THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMBATING CORRUPTION

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ABSTRACT

Numerous surveys and rankings of international organizations on corruption issues show that North Macedonia has serious problems in combating corruption and therefore a substantial approach is needed to improve the situation.

That is the point of this paper - taking essential steps in the fight against corruption. The focus is on the change in the institutional approach in the fight against corruption, ie replacement of the current preventive model (where the leading institution is the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption - SCPC) and replacement with the model of law enforcement agencies, ie in the future leading institution in North Macedonia to be the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption.

The paper emphasizes that by changing the main body for fight against corruption, the SCPC will be transformed into a Commission for Prevention of Conflict of Interest. In that way, the current body will continue to work but with competencies of educational, preventive and administrative character, because even today that body has no operational competencies.

In the paper the author points out that to achieve a significant result in the fight against corruption, substantial changes are needed in the composition and operation of the Judicial Council, the Council of Public Prosecutors and the Steering Committee of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors. These are the key institutions in the judiciary and it is necessary to increase transparency and accountability in their work, and especially in their composition.

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Throughout the paper, special emphasis is placed on gender representation on an equal basis in order to jointly improve the situation in the fight against corruption, from which everyone suffers.

In the paper, the author creates a strategic approach to reducing the high level of corruption in North Macedonia, by offering several recommendations that in the medium and long term should improve the situation in the suppression of corruption.

KEYWORDS: corruption, rule of law, strategic approach, gender representation, transparency, accountability.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: K10, K14

INTRODUCTION

„Anti-Corruption Roadmap:

Political Will - Quality Legislation - Independent Institutions - Reduced Corruption“

Macedonian anti-corruption legislation framework was adopted in 2002 by the Law on Prevention of Corruption, followed by the establishment of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC). Additionally, in 2007 the regulation on conflict of interests was adopted - the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest.

The SCPC is basically a preventive body. Although the new Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest, from 2019, makes efforts to increase its investigative powers, overall, the SCPC retains the model established in 2002.

If we combine the previous results of the work of the national body for prevention of corruption, the numerous analytical reports prepared by experts, civil society organizations, international evaluation bodies, as well as the expectations of the public, we will conclude that it is necessary to think towards building a new approach in the fight against corruption.

Regarding the above, for example, Transparency International registered a continuous decline in the CP Index for North Macedonia, namely in 2014 – 64th, 2018 – 93th, 2019 – 106th and in 2020 – 111th place (<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/nzl>), which indicates that substantial steps need to be taken to improve the situation.

The fact is that the Law on Lobbying from 2008 was not implemented at all (the new law from 2020 does not give much hope that the situation will change for the

better), also the application of the law on protection of whistleblowers is very weak. Overcoming this situation requires a change in the institutional approach towards the fight against corruption.

In a situation where you have a high perception of corruption, that it has penetrated into every pore of society, it is necessary to approach comprehensive reforms of the system, but in the first place it is necessary to change the anti-corruption model.

Basically, in North Macedonia the preventive model for fighting corruption should be changed to a model from the second group - in law enforcement agencies (where the leading institution will be the Public Prosecutor's Office), In the world there are many models of anti-corruption bodies but are generally grouped into three: preventive bodies, law enforcement agencies and multi-purpose bodies for prevention and repression).

Research methods

Within the paper, the method of content analysis is applied in order to determine the factors that are obstacles in the practical implementation. Based on this method, potential solutions are created to overcome the weaknesses because through the analysis we come to the essential elements.

A comparative method is used in order to present practical experiences in other countries and their results. This method compares the effects of specific policies and is the basis for drawing conclusions.

In addition, the comparative method is used in the analysis of research data and rankings.

The statistical method also takes its place, through the analysis of data from various rankings and researches, as well as the historical method, which presents the historical circumstances that had an impact on certain relations.

The case study method also has its place because the paper focuses on the weaknesses of the institutional anti-corruption framework in North Macedonia and creating solutions to improve the situation.

In the final part, the author of the paper offers general solutions for improving the situation in dealing with corruption in North Macedonia through a comprehensive change of the institutional framework for its suppression.

1. HOW DID THE MACEDONIAN SOCIETY REACH THE 111TH PLACE IN THE RANKING OF TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL?

For more than three decades, the Republic of Macedonia (now North Macedonia) has faced numerous challenges related to its existence, development, prosperity and future. The problems arose with the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and the creation of the state of the Republic of Macedonia. Problems were of various grounds, namely: economic, political, social, then, conflict relations on a national basis, non-recognition of independence, imposition of the name issue by the southern neighbor. All this together has led to uncertainty about the future.

The economic collapse of Macedonian citizens began with the privatization of state-owned companies, known as the transition process. In the process, capital fell into the hands of former managers, many companies went bankrupt and hundreds of thousands of workers lost their jobs.

Social problems exploded, tax evasion began to rise, and at the same time incidents on a national basis were on the rise. The Kosovo war in 1999 brought additional chaos when about 300,000 Albanian refugees came to Macedonia. Only two years later was the war in Macedonia ending with the Ohrid peace agreement. The agreement envisages equitable representation of nationalities in the state administration (according to the percentage of the census) but one important element was forgotten - quality.

The Republic of Macedonia has ratified all major international instruments in the fight against corruption and organized crime, starting with the Criminal Law Convention against Corruption and the Civil Law Convention against Corruption of the Council of Europe, as well as the UNCAC of the UN. In 2002, the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption was established, as a preventive body, and a number of other measures.

Regarding the CPI rankings of Transparency International, it should be noted that in 2013-2014 Macedonia was ranked 67th and 64th, respectively, Slovenia and Croatia were better than it, while the other Balkan countries were ranked worse (<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2014/index/mkd>).

The situation changed drastically in 2019-2020 when Macedonia (now North Macedonia) was ranked from 111 to 114th place, behind other Balkan countries (<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/mkd>).

A similar conclusion will be drawn from The Heritage Foundation data on their Index of Economic Freedom. Namely, in 2018 Macedonia was on the 33rd place (2018 IEF (XLS) table download The Heritage Foundation) while in 2021 (<https://www.heritage.org/index/ranking>) on the 46th place, with special remarks in the area of rule of law and the fight against corruption.

North Macedonia's reversal in the fight against corruption is also presented by the Global Risk Profile (GRP) in their 2021 Global Corruption Index ((GCI) (<https://globalriskprofile.com/>)). Namely, in their ranking, North Macedonia is on the 85th place, unlike in 2020, when it was on the 81st place (<https://risk-indexes.com/global-corruption-index/>).

Domestic corruption surveys provide more detailed information on the situation. Thus, in the Corruption Assessment Report - Level of Corruption, issued in 2020 by the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (<https://mcms.mk/images/docs/2020/izveshtaj-za-procena-na-korupcijata-vo-severna-makedonija-2020.pdf>) concludes that an inefficient judicial system is a major factor in the prevalence of corruption. In addition to the widespread prevalence of corruption, its impunity is also emphasized, which has a strong impact on the social fight against corruption. The report emphasizes that the judiciary and the prosecution are sectors in which there is the most widespread corruption, according to the perception of citizens.

Following a research conducted by the Center for Civil Communications for conducting public procurement, a "Shadow Report on Public Procurement in North Macedonia 2020" was prepared (<https://www.ccc.org.mk/images/stories/senkamk2020.pdf>). The report emphasizes that there is no improvement in the fight against corruption in public procurement, that very few investigations are opened and even fewer cases reach indictment. While at the same time the number of findings on irregularities in public procurement by the State Auditor is growing. That is, confirmation of the conclusion about impunity from the research of the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation. In doing so, it

should be borne in mind that through public procurement huge funds are spent from the state budget, expressed in hundreds of millions of euros.

If we continue with the analysis, we will conclude how North Macedonia reached those positions.

Namely, for years, the most attractive sector for employment is the state administration, with guaranteed salaries and other benefits. Thus, each ruling party sought to bring its supporters into the administration (a kind of reward, but also an obligation for future support). Thus, the basic principles for employment and promotion in the public sector have become loyalty to the party (not the state) and clientelism, in contrast to countries with low levels of corruption where the dominant criterion is professionalism and skills.

This way of employment and promotion is largely present in all areas, including the police, judiciary, prosecution, prisons, ministries, various agencies. In short, the system can no longer function because it is blocked.

In 2015, the affair with the wiretapping of telephone conversations of a huge number of citizens appeared, an affair that had a substantial impact on the future direction of the country. A Special Public Prosecutor's Office was set up to clear up the affair, but to make matters worse after three years, a new corruption affair broke out in which the special public prosecutor played a key role (<https://balkaninsight.com/2019/08/21/north-macedonia-arrests-outgoing-chief-special-prosecutor/>).

In addition, information was published that the employees of the mentioned Special Public Prosecutor's Office received a significant amount of compensation without a legal basis (it was announced to the public that the case is being acted upon but so far nothing concrete).

As a result of the decisive influence of the ruling political parties in the formation of key institutions in the judiciary, the space for professionals is minimal, so we come to the key problem - impunity.

All these processes take place in front of the public, the citizens lose faith in the institutions, see no perspective and most often decide to move to another country, mainly in western countries with a high degree of functional institutions – ie., where the rule of law.

The dysfunction of the institutions was also demonstrated during the COVID pandemic. Namely, in the middle of August 2021 North Macedonia was on the sixth place in the world in the number of deaths per 1 million inhabitants ([https://www.statista.com/statistics/1104709/coronavirus-deaths-worldwide-per-million-inhabitants /](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1104709/coronavirus-deaths-worldwide-per-million-inhabitants/)).

Meanwhile, the public was informed of a corruption scandal involving the supply of vaccines from China. Namely, it became known that senior government officials tried to procure vaccines from China through an intermediary company, of course for a commission. There was a strong reaction from the public, but to date, there is no information that the public prosecutor's office has opened an investigation into the case (<https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/nabavkata-na-vakczini-od-kina-pod-lupana-antikorupczionerite/>).

The high level of corruption in North Macedonia is an obstacle to EU integration, it destroys the national economy (government debt is more than 60 percent of GDP, <https://netpress.com.mk/avniot-dolg-otide-na-60-7-procenti-makedoni-a-dolzhi-6-5-mili-ardi-evra/>), the security sector is very weak, and thus human rights and freedoms are endangered. This situation is unsustainable because the next step is complete system dysfunction.

This situation can not be overcome by "moderate" measures, but by strong and decisive action, ie, the citizens to feel that there are independent institutions and that there is hope for "rule of law".

2. WHAT TO CHANGE AND HOW?

The fight for suppression or reduction of corruption takes place according to a defined roadmap, ie, it is about steps that are realized sequentially.

The first step is to have a strong and determined political will to fight corruption (Brinkerhoff, D.W. 2000, „Assessing political will for anti-corruption efforts: an analytic framework“, Public Administration and Development). This means that the people who will be in key positions in the country do not have "dark spots" from their past, to have high moral capacity and repulsion of all forms of unacceptable behavior, such as nepotism, clientelism, conflict of interest.

The second step is the adoption of quality legislation for the prevention and repression of corruption. This is the easiest step and that is why in North Macedonia

there is largely compliance with anti-corruption regulations at European and world level.

The third step is the final, ie the existence of independent institutions (according to the Jakarta principles) that will implement the law (Institutional Arrangements to Combat Corruption - A Comparative Study, 2005, UNDP). Here is the problem, namely, in the above I emphasized the great political influence in composing all institutions, with special emphasis on key institutions.

Politicized institutions are an obstacle to the proper implementation of laws and thus indicate that there is no political will for an effective and objective fight against corruption.

This is an anti-corruption roadmap that applies to all countries, but because the subject of this paper is the situation with corruption in North Macedonia, in addition, strategic approach to reducing corruption in North Macedonia will be presented.

How to reduce corruption in the Macedonian system?

In order to tackle North Macedonia's high level of corruption, substantial reforms are needed.

The National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest (<https://dksk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Nacionalna-strategija-DKSK-KONECNA.pdf>) prepared by SCPC and adopted by the Parliament is a good document, but the point is that in the fight against corruption we need to take a step back, to build a functional foundation of the system because the problem is there. No matter how great your desire to achieve results, it is still unachievable if the realization of the processes takes place through politicized institutions.

There are a number of institutional models for fighting corruption in the world (Slamkov Gj., Filipovski Z, 2019 „Institutional approach in the fight against corruption - Anti-Corruption Bodies“) but they are generally classified into three groups: preventive bodies (with core competencies: education, prevention, training, strategy development, asset declarations), law enforcement agencies (with preventive and operational competencies) and multi-purpose law enforcement agencies (there are a small number of them, including the strongest anti-corruption body in the world - the Independent Commission Against Corruption in Hong Kong).

Macedonia has had the preventive model of an anti-corruption body for almost 20 years, with SCPC as the leading institution. The fact is that the situation has changed and that the new challenges need to be adequately addressed, ie a change in the institutional model for combating corruption is needed, ie, from a preventive body to a law enforcement body (Slamkov Gj, 2019, "New mechanisms for strengthening efficiency in the fight against corruption", Monograph: The role of innovation as a development factor).

The reform of the Macedonian system should be broader, namely, the essential strategic activities should include: changes in the competencies of the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecuting Organized Crime and Corruption, transformation of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption into a Commission for Prevention of Conflict of Interests, partial change in the manner of election / appointment of members of the Judicial Council, Council of Public Prosecutors, as well as of the Steering Committee of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

That means:

- Increasing the competencies of the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption in order to be the main institution in the fight against corruption.
- Transformation of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption into a Commission for Prevention of Conflict of Interest,
- Improving independence and prevention of influences in the work of the Judicial Council, the Council of Public Prosecutors and the Steering Committee of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

a) ***The competencies and organizational structure of the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption are regulated by the Law on Public Prosecution*** (<https://jorm.gov.mk/zakon-za-javnoto-obvinitelstvo-2/>).

Practice and comparative experience (eg Croatia, <http://www.dorh.hr/Default.aspx?sec=609>) show that in order to deal with the high level of corruption in North Macedonia, the leading institution should be an operational body.

Comparatively speaking, the choice is between a body in the Ministry of Interior (e.g. Central Office for the Repression of Corruption -Belgium), and a special anti-corruption prosecutor's office (e.g. The Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime – Croatia).

For Macedonian occasions, a more appropriate solution is the Public Prosecutor's Office for Fighting Corruption because it will have the competencies for both, investigation and prosecution, ie the most appropriate choice of a leading body for combating corruption is the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption.

However, the current legislation needs to be changed. It is necessary to adopt a special law on the Basic Public Office Office for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption.

Given the gravity of the problems dealt with by this prosecution, it is necessary to adopt a special law that will regulate all issues within its competence, the manner of election of public prosecutors, investigators and other employees, as well as other issues (starting from the positive examples in the region).

Within the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption, it is necessary to have several organizational units, as follows: for prevention, for investigations and documentation, for examination and securing of assets acquired by committing a crime, for accusations, for international cooperation.

However, the most important issue is the selection of staff who will work in the institution, because they represent the institution, realize its competencies. Namely, on paper we can create the best institution but if the staff is not competent then we can not expect success.

Thus, the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption in order to be able to take the expanded role requires a qualitative selection of staff in the largest possible transparent procedure, primarily for the professional public, with gender equality, with an emphasis on professionalism, expertise, moral credibility. The above implies conducting staff trainings for the new competencies, as well as exchange of international experiences.

b) Transformation of the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption into a Commission for the Prevention of Conflict of Interest is the most appropriate solution starting from the current position of the Commission.

Namely, the Commission for Prevention of Conflict of Interests will be responsible for the conflict of interests in exercising public powers and taking actions in case of conflict of interest, monitoring and checking the asset declarations, developing personal and institutional integrity, education in the field of conflict of interest, as well as lobbying.

Achieving the mentioned goal requires the adoption of a Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest. The law will be the legal basis for the establishment and action of the Commission for the Prevention of Conflict of Interests, by precisely defining its competencies. Such a body will be the legal successor of the existing State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, in terms of established legal competencies.

Regarding lobbying, although regulated by law from 2008, the issue of lobbying was not applied at all in practice. Therefore, initial steps are needed to implement these normative solutions.

Namely, in 2020, a new law on lobbying was adopted (<https://dsk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Zakon-za-lobiranje.pdf>), which regulates lobbying more deeply, but still this law has a weak point that will have a direct impact on the implementation - and that is the control mechanisms.

First of all, lobbying requires a campaign to raise awareness of the importance of lobbying. Public campaign for introducing the citizens to the meaning of lobbying, its purpose, as well as the institutions where lobbying can be done (Slamkov Gj., Stamevski V., 2019 „Lobbying as a way to achieve common goals and Corruption - touch points and delineation“, International Journal of science and arts IDEA).

In addition, training is needed for decision makers in the legislature, the executive and local self-government on law enforcement. Introducing the above categories with their rights and obligations in the application of the law, in order to prevent illegal lobbying that has the character of corruptive actions.

One of the most important components in the fight against corruption is integrity, as a system of internal defense elements that prevent the individual from entering into corruption, conflict of interest or other socially unacceptable phenomena.

Despite the fact that in the past several projects related to strengthening integrity have been implemented, the high level of corruption shows that much needs to be done in this field. Thus, campaigns are needed to raise citizens' awareness of the

importance of integrity, from public officials in the most important institutions to individuals in basic positions.

It is very important to emphasize that the success of these campaigns will be influenced by the functioning of the criminal justice system, especially the work of the courts and the adjudication of corruption cases in which holders of high state positions are involved.

Non-selectivity is an indicator of the success of these policies, because if there is selective justice and controlled procedures then the citizens will not have faith in the judiciary, and thus the projects for strengthening integrity will have no effect.

c) *Reforming the central bodies of the judiciary that have a strong connection with the fight against corruption.*

The goal is reformed institutions that will include people with high integrity and great professional experience. In that way, qualitative conditions need to be created for objective selection and dismissal of judges and public prosecutors, as well as listeners at the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

This will improve the independence and prevention of influences in the work of the Judicial Council, the Council of Public Prosecutors and the Steering Committee of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

One of the first activities is the Amendment of the Law on the Judicial Council, the Law on the Council of Public Prosecutors and the Law on the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

The Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors are constitutional matters, but the Constitution leaves the procedure for their composition to be regulated by law (Law on the Judicial Council, Law on the Council of Public Prosecutors). The point of the legal changes should be on the principle of transparency in the election / appointment of members.

Problems from practice impose the need for a more objective procedure for appointment / election of members of the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors.

The members of the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors who are appointed in the Assembly of North Macedonia should go through two control filters, ie, except the political one (President and Parliamentary Committee on

Elections and Appointments) to be include the expert factor . They need to go through a public interview to answer the questions of the above.

Transparency should also be increased in the selection of members of the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors who are directly elected by judges / public prosecutors.

This is a key activity for strengthening the integrity and independence of the judiciary / public prosecutor's office, and thus in the fight against corruption.

The next important activity is a better approach to composing the Steering Committee of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

According to the current legal solution, the Steering Committee consists of four representatives of the judiciary (two appointed by the Judicial Council, one appointed by the Association of Judges and one appointed by the Supreme Court) four representatives of the prosecution (two appointed by the Council of Public Prosecutors, one appointed by the Association of Public Prosecutors and one appointed The Public Prosecutor Office of North Macedonia) and one member is appointed by the Minister of Justice. They have their deputies (https://jpacademy.gov.mk/initial_training/zakon-za-akademijata-za-sudii-i-javni-obviniteli/).

The whole process lacks transparency, namely, the transparency in the appointment of the members of the Steering Committee should be increased, but also the model of its composition should be changed. In fact, this body has many great competencies, among them, elects the Director of the Academy and listeners for future judges and public prosecutors.

In the past, cases of conflict of interest for members of the mentioned institutions have been reported in the media. In order to prevent such occurrences, it is necessary to create effective procedures to prevent nepotism, cronyism or corrupt practices in the work of the Judicial Council, the Council of Public Prosecutors and the Steering Committee of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

In that direction, the adoption of a code of ethics in the above institutions and their consistent application is needed.

But in any case, strengthening transparency in the work of the Judicial Council, the Council of Public Prosecutors and the Steering Committee of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors is essential.

The above outlines the basic activities that need to be undertaken in order to build preconditions for reducing corruption in North Macedonia. The point is placed on the most important bodies in the judiciary, as well as on the specialized anti-corruption body.

Within the second phase, it is necessary to create solutions for other institutions that have points of contact in this area, such as the State Audit Office, the Public Revenue Office, the Financial Police, the Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

Achieving the above activities and goals requires the involvement of civil society, especially organizations working in the field of rule of law and the fight against corruption.

The harmful consequences of corruption affect all citizens, because through corruption the state system is destroyed, so it is necessary to emphasize gender representation as one of the factors for sustainable and successful reforms.

Starting from the fact that we live in a global society where information is transmitted at high speed around the world, with a high degree of interdependence, it is necessary to use international experience (of course, taking into account our own characteristics) in order to reduce and suppress corruption through the implementation of planned measures.

By undertaking these steps, the work of the relevant anti-corruption bodies will be strengthened, while by doing so, the compliance of institutions with the rule of law and the respect for human rights will also be enhanced.

3. TRIANGLE OF SUCCESS

Rule of law is one of the basic Copenhagen criteria (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen.html) which requires the state to have functional institutions to preserve democratic governance and human rights. This is one of the criteria that are a prerequisite for membership in the European Union.

The Republic of Macedonia (now North Macedonia) has been a candidate country for EU membership for more than 15 years. A time period in which there were many oscillations in various sectors, including the fight against corruption.

The current situation with the fight against corruption in North Macedonia is worrying and therefore essential measures are needed that will show effect in a reasonable period.

The above text presented several strategic institutional initiatives but they can not be applied in isolation from other processes in society.

One of the rules of psychology is that if a person lives for a long time in a certain environment and in certain circumstances, he/she gets used to those living conditions and considers them normal. Thus, Macedonian citizens for a long time in their daily lives have corruption and all its negative consequences. Thus, for example, today someone may succeed in getting something in front of others that he does not deserve, but in the coming days he will be discriminated (victim) because someone else will get a privilege that he does not deserve, but to the detriment of other citizens.

Therefore, together with the preventive and repressive measures, it is necessary to run a campaign to raise public awareness about the harmfulness of corruption, both in general and on an individual level.

This is a triangle of actions: strengthening public awareness, prevention and repression. This is the model through which Hong Kong managed to get out of the widespread corruption in the 70s of the last century and today to be in the top 15 in the ranking of Transparency International (<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/nzl#>), to be for more than 20 consecutive years in the first place of the Heritage Foundation for Economic Freedom (<https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/HongKongsAdvantages/WorldsFreestEconomyAgain.html>).

Raising citizens' awareness of the fight against and resistance to corruption largely depends on the full implementation of justice by the judiciary, especially in cases involving high-ranking political figures or businessmen. If this is not the case, then awareness-raising and prevention policies will have no basis for implementation, and thus it is unlikely to get out of the group of corrupt countries.

This situation can be overcome only by strengthening the independence of the most important institutions in the system, because then, in the lower structures, the system itself will be cleansed of corruption and crime.

And this brings us back to the beginning - political will. It is the key to liberating the institutions and creating conditions for them to independently and objectively realize their competencies.

CONCLUSION

Corruption is everywhere and the fight against it should be constant, but which instruments will be used depends on the degree of its prevalence.

Holders of dealing with corruption are institutions that have such a mandate or have another field of action but are closely related to the fight against corruption.

However, institutions are legal entities that are managed by individuals, with staff specialized in the given area. The integrity of individuals builds the integrity of the institution, they are mutually conditioned.

In Macedonia (now North Macedonia) according to numerous rankings, a high degree of corruption has been found. This situation brings with it all the negative consequences, from mass emigration of citizens to dysfunction of the system.

In such situations it is necessary to act substantially, in order to solve the problem basically, because the modified actions are not solutions but a waste of time.

Within the paper, several proposals for changes in the institutional model for dealing with corruption in North Macedonia are presented. All solutions are related to several principles: transparency, professionalism, integrity, moral values and accountability.

Radical anti-corruption solutions are needed in countries with high levels of corruption, the only question being - how long it will take to realize that they must be implemented.

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