Preventing corruption and promoting public ethics at local and regional levels

Conflicts of interest
Transparency and open government
Transparent public procurement
Administrative resources and fair elections
Fighting nepotism
Protection of whistleblowers
Conflicts of interest at local and regional levels

A complex and multifaceted concept, conflicts of interest are one of the most common forms of corruption, to which local and regional authorities are particularly exposed. To address this issue, the Congress proposes the establishment of independent ethics committees to examine members’ financial activities, the adoption of declaration of interest and disclosure policies and clear procedures for identifying, treating and resolving conflicts of interest.


Transparency and open government

The concept of "open government" is an effective response to promote transparency, especially for budgeting, law-making and the provision of services to the population. It is based on three principles: transparency, which aims to make information available and understandable to the public; participation, which allows people to influence the functioning of their government, and accountability, which enables them to hold their government accountable for their actions.


Making public procurement transparent at local and regional levels

The public procurement process entails significant expenditure and a growing transfer of public resources to the private sector, with an increased risk of corruption. The establishment of internal controls, the constant use of evaluation mechanisms, the enhancement of transparency, the introduction of national standards and the systematic use of online public procurement, are among the measures that are proposed by the Congress.

Administrative resources and fair elections
A practical guide for local and regional politicians and public officials

Over the past fifteen years, the Congress has observed over a hundred municipal elections. The misuse of administrative resources during elections is a recurring problem. This practical guide for politicians and local and regional public officials contains concrete examples of such unfair behaviour and explains why Council of Europe member States need to take this problem seriously, particularly at the local level.


Fighting nepotism within local and regional authorities

The Congress calls on local and regional authorities to increase the transparency of recruitment and promotion processes by adopting clear procedures to ensure equality and fairness. It encourages them to put in place mechanisms for reporting possible cases of favouritism or conflicts of interest. In addition, the Congress emphasizes the need for governments to incorporate into their national legislations provisions that mitigate the risk of nepotism.


The protection of whistleblowers
Challenges and opportunities for local and regional government

Whistleblowers often hold information that only they can detect and represent a unique added value compared to institutional control mechanisms. Whistleblower policies must ensure their legal protection and provide internal and anonymous reporting channels. The Congress encourages the establishment of specific independent institutions, such as local and regional ombudsmen, to oversee and process the disclosure of information.

In its many forms, corruption is a major threat to local and regional governance and to democracy in Europe, that public authorities need to address as a matter of urgency.

To tackle this challenge and provide local and regional elected representatives with concrete tools, the Council of Europe Congress has adopted a “Roadmap to prevent corruption and promote public ethics at local and regional level”.

The Congress Governance Committee has prepared six thematic reports to help local and regional elected representatives better understand the risks of corruption and to implement courses of action.

The publications in the “Public Ethics” series present the analysis and the recommendations of the Congress.

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