

GRECO Training for evaluators of the Sixth Evaluation Round

Preventing corruption and promoting integrity at the sub-national level

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Addressing and managing risk areas (risk mapping, particular risk areas at sub-national level, devising strategies and follow-up)

General Introductory remarks

- It is a pleasure to take part in this training on behalf of the Congress. As the Congress Spokesperson on Ethics and Prevention of Corruption, and as the Mayor of the Capital City of Skopje in North Macedonia, I welcome this opportunity to discuss with you the critical issue of corruption risk mapping and management at local and regional levels.
- The Reykjavik Summit of the Council of Europe Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that fighting and preventing corruption is fundamental to this Organisation's core focus on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Integrity in governance strengthens democracy, promotes public trust, and enhances quality of life for our citizens.

The Role of Local and Regional Governments in Anti-Corruption Efforts

- Local and regional governments are often the first point of contact for the public and have crucial responsibilities, including processing planning permissions, managing land resources, overseeing communal property, and spending significant sums through public procurement. This makes them particularly vulnerable to corruption risks.
- Given that GRECO is monitoring corruption issues at subnational level in its Sixth Evaluation Round, the synergy and partnership between it and the Congress is essential to ensure its maximum impact and help anchor integrity and good governance as firmly as possible at local and regional levels across Europe.

The Role of the Congress of in Fighting Corruption

- The Congress, as a political assembly of the Council of Europe composed of local and regional representatives, has championed that good governance. Through its monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Congress helps authorities to ensure that local politicians receive fair financial compensation and highlights incompatibilities with their office, for example, in their professional interests. All of this helps ensure high ethical standards and lowers the risk of corruption.
- The Congress has also set standards on anti-corruption and has adopted:
 - The European Code of Conduct for all Persons Involved in Local and Regional Governance (including guidance on conflicts of interest, post-employment, public procurement and reporting wrongdoing);

- and reports on transparent public procurement, fighting nepotism, conflict of interest, whistleblower protection, transparency and open government, and risks of corruption¹.
- However, anti-corruption standards alone are not sufficient. We must educate, inspire, and guide local and regional actors, as well as the public, to value integrity. A cultural approach to anti-corruption is essential for the sustainability of our democratic institutions.

Corruption prone areas and main corruption risks

- Local and regional authorities manage significant public expenditure. Assessing and managing corruption risks is key to an efficient integrity policy at the local and regional level.
- Congress reports highlight public procurement, public works, issuing building permits and inspecting businesses as areas especially exposed to corruption risks and list various corruption risks², including:
 - Fraud
 - Conflict of interest
 - Bribery and embezzlement
 - Extortion
 - Nepotism and patronage (including clientelism, cronyism, and favouritism in public appointments)
- Let me emphasise the critical area of **public procurement** since subnational authorities spend large sums through procurement. Key corruption risks in procurement include:
 - Awarding contracts to friends and political allies
 - Lack of expertise in contracting within local authorities
 - The revolving door phenomenon, where civil servants exploit insider information to shape policy contracts for their own benefit
- The corruption risks occur at every stage of the procurement process:
 1. The Needs Assessment Phase – where risks include inflated needs and cost miscalculations.
 2. The Design Phase – which involves drafting unclear selection criteria or biased requirements.
 3. The Award Phase – in which corrupt officials may favour a particular supplier while discrediting others.
 4. And the Implementation Phase – where poor contractor monitoring can lead to substandard quality or excessive costs.

Addressing Corruption Risks

- To counteract these risks, **awareness, transparency, and public scrutiny** are essential elements of an integrity strategy. Strengthening these factors will enhance public trust in governance.

¹ See [Corruption and Public Ethics Page / Publications; Resolution 316 \(2010\)](#)

² See [Report on Making public procurement transparent ; Corruption Risks - BE-Open online tool on open government, transparency, public ethics and citizen participation](#);

- Integrity strategies should include:
 1. **Tailored Risk Mapping and Integrity Measures:** Risk assessment strategies must be adapted to specific contexts in cooperation with corruption prevention bodies, civil society, and the private sector.
 2. **Training and Awareness:** Local politicians and administration officials should be educated on how to proactively disclose, prevent, and resolve conflicts of interest, particularly concerning gifts, invitations, and declarations of interest.
 3. **Leveraging Technology:** Digital and artificial intelligence tools improve transparency, access to information, and public scrutiny. **E-procurement platforms**, such as Ukraine's Prozorro system, allow citizens to track government spending and tendering processes in real-time.
 4. **Whistleblower Protection:** Those who report wrongdoing in good faith must be shielded from reprisals and intimidation, especially at the local level.
 5. **Engaging Civil Society and Business Associations:** National associations of local and regional authorities play a crucial role in ensuring that anti-corruption initiatives are inclusive and comprehensive. Business associations can help counter corruption in particular through **Integrity Pacts**, which establish commitments between public and private actors to prevent corrupt practices in public contracting.

Conclusion

- Corruption risk mapping and management require a multi-stakeholder approach that combines legal frameworks, political commitment, public awareness, and technological innovation.
- As representatives of local and regional governments, we have a responsibility to foster integrity and uphold democratic principles in the best interest of our communities.
- Through stronger partnerships, enhanced monitoring, and proactive governance, we can build a resilient system that effectively prevents corruption and reinforces the trust of our citizens.
- It is important that GRECO training for evaluators benefits from Congress perspective, essential for this 6th evaluation round. I also hope to learn from the process and the discussion today. I am glad to work with this multi-skilled, talented and experienced team of GRECO evaluators and I am sure that we can achieve a great deal together.