STRATEGY OF TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BULGARIA

2023–2026

The purpose of this strategy is to outline the main guidelines, priorities and approaches in the work of the "Transparency International Bulgaria" Association for the period 20 23 – 202 6. The strategy has been developed accordingly the vision and goals of Transparency International Bulgaria, taking into account socio-political context in the country, the progress and deficits identified in the field of the rule of law, good governance and the prevention and fight against corruption. The Strategy is based on European and international standards and good practices, the national strategic and legislative framework and seeks to contribute to the achievement of the objectives and results set out in the general Strategy of Transparency International *Holding Power to Account – A Global Strategy Against Corruption 2021-2030.*[1]

Implementing the strategy will be jointly effort of the members of the organisation, the management Council and the team of the Transparency International Bulgaria. Important component for success implementation of the objectives set out in the strategy aims to provide funding for specific initiatives and directions of activity.

The document has been prepared in accordance with the commitments of the association as part of the world anti - corruption network Transparency International.

ABOUT TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BULGARIA

The "Transparency International Bulgaria" Association – the Bulgarian national a representative office of Transparency International, has been established through June 1998. Our founders are prominent personalities from all areas of public life. Since the establishment you in 1998 our organization accumulated significant capacity to create and implement projects to combat corruption, to promote good governance standards management in the activities of public institutions and managed to build professional authority working, political impartial and active civil organization. Transparency International Bulgaria has created a wide circle of supporters and relies on a large number of independent experts from different fields of science and public life, which participate at the implementation of the organization 's projects and initiatives. The established contacts with national and international institutions were extended with common initiatives and cooperation with civil society structures society and the media, and the association won name of a respected and stable organization.

The mission of Transparency International Bulgaria is the unification of the efforts of state institutions, local authorities, business, civil society, academia and the media with the aim of conducting systematic

[1] https://www.transparency.org/en/the-organisation/our-strategy

reforms and the undertaking of specific actions against the spread of corruption at the national, regional and international levels.

CONTEXT OF OUR WORK

Situational analysis

Corruption and non-transparency management for years dominate public discourse in Bulgaria as one of the most serious problems in the development of the country. Numerous studies, analyses and reports show low level of trust in institutions, low level of media freedom, weak progress and lack of consistency in the conducted policies and reforms, high level of bureaucracy and difficulties for business, non-transparent public appointments positions, low level of trust in the tools for reporting corrupt practices and violations, which threaten public interest.

Corruption Perception Index

The analysis of the results of the Corruption Perceptions Index in Bulgaria for the period 2012 – 2022 gives grounds for criticism rating: none essential progress in combating corruption, against the backdrop of the positive development at some of the EU member states (such as for example Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Czech Republic) the country index stands out trend of serious lag.

Bulgaria 's index in 2022 it is 43 points, which ranks the country 72nd in the world ranking and the penultimate place in the European union, as through this same year Hungary borrow the last place in the ranking. Bulgaria is included for the twenty - fifth way in the Transparency International survey.

Compared to the previous one year the index notes insignificant increase of 1 point. The change of one point in the Index result is not statistically significant, as in this connection should be taken considering two circumstances: 1) index values below 50 points are indicator of systematic problem with corruption and ineffective fight; 2) to mark a significant progress is needed improvement of the result with statistically significant promotion over 3 points.

The report for 2022, in which Bulgaria is one of the three countries mentioned by name, outlines the main risks and problems faced which is facing country:

- The fragmentation of the political life, which leads to ongoing political crisis and to the management of official governments that are not subject to effective control and accountability.
- The political corruption, which leaves unresolved the issue of lobbying in the legislature process. The last-minute changes in the electoral system legislation increase the risk of manipulation of the upcoming parliamentary and local elections.
- Lack of visible and effective actions to implement the Anti - Corruption Strategy for the period 2021-2027.

- Big part of the leadership of the independents regulatory institutions are expired mandate, which leads to crisis of legitimacy and to limited opportunity to realize their policies.

Situation in the field of the rule of law in Bulgaria

The report regarding Rule of Law 2022 - Country Chapters: Situation in the Rule of Law in Bulgaria outlines the main commitments made by the country regarding the rule of law, progress in some areas, as well as challenges and problems, and provides specific recommendations.

Some of the main challenges and problems outlined in the report regarding the prevention and counteraction of corruption include:

- Anti - Corruption Commission continues to implement their own activities, such as plans reforms aimed at restructuring and improving its capacity to investigate corruption cases;
- Everything more are missing stable results regarding the final condemnatory convictions in high - level corruption cases levels of power.
- Lobbying and whistleblower protection are still not yet appropriately regulated way, despite that there are plans for this.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, they were established specific sectoral corruption risks, such as for example in budget management means and controls activities, including public procurement.

Some of the main challenges and problems outlined in the report regarding media freedom and pluralism include:

- The lack of a clear regulatory framework for ensuring transparency at the distribution of state advertisement continues to wake up anxiety, despite that are undertaken some measures to improve transparency.
- Measures for more effective implementation of obligations regarding transparency of media ownership are still lacking;
- Legal guarantees regarding the independence of public media exist, but they look insufficient;
- The professional environment of journalists has improved slightly since last year, but everything more remains questions as access to public information, working conditions and strategic judicial proceedings.

Some of the main challenges and problems outlined in the report regarding the judicial system include:

- Establish an effective accountability and punishment mechanism responsibility of the principal prosecutor and his deputies, as well as a court control of the prosecutor 's decisions should not begin investigation;

- Growing concerns related to the functioning of the Supreme judicial council, and an increasingly urgent need to consider its composition; concerns related to the Inspectorate to the Supreme judicial advice; lack of regular competition for the promotion of magistrates, combined with the broad using secondments, risks affecting the independence of magistrates;
- They continue to exist. challenges in the field of digitalization of justice.

European and international standards

The priorities and approaches of Transparency International Bulgaria are based on European and international standards in the field of human rights, the rule of law, combating corruption and good governance.

European Union:

- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- Convention drawn up on the basis of Article K.3 (2) (c) of the Treaty on European Union on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union;
- Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA of 22 July 2003 on combating corruption in the private sector;
- Council Decision 2008/852/JHA of 24 October 2008 on a contact-point network against corruption;
- Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2019 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law;
- Directive (EU) 2014/42 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the freezing and confiscation of instrumentalities and proceeds of crime in the European Union;
- Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC;
- Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC;
- Directive 2014/23/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on the award of concession contracts.

Council of Europe:

- Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, ETS No. 173;

- Civil Law Convention on Corruption, ETS No. 174;
- Additional Protocol to the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, ETS No. 191;
- Resolution 97(24) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Twenty Guiding Principles for the Fight Against Corruption;
- Recommendation Rec (2003)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on common rules against corruption in the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns.

United Nations:

- The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), ratifies by the National Assembly of Bulgaria on 15 August 2006 (prom. in State Gazette, No. 66/2006);
- The International Code of Conduct for Public Officials was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 51/59 on 12 December 1996;
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted on 16 December 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly via Resolution 2200A (XXI); ratified by Bulgaria on 21 September 1970, following its initial signature on 8 October 1968 (prom. in State Gazette, No. 43/1976);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), adopted on 16 December 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly via Resolution 2200A (XXI); ratified by Bulgaria on 23 July 1970 (prom. in State Gazette No. 43/1976).

National Strategic Framework

In 2023, 197 strategic documents are in force in Bulgaria[2] – strategies, programs, plans, etc. The main strategic documents that inform the work of the association are:

- National Development Program "Bulgaria 2030"
- National recovery and resilience plan
- National Strategy for preventing and combating corruption (2021 – 2027)
- National road map of cooperation activities of the Republic Bulgaria with the Economic and Social Organization Cooperation and Development (OECD) for the three-year period from 2023 to 2025
- Updated Strategy for the development of electronic governance in the Republic Bulgaria 2019 – 2025

[2] https://strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/List.aspx?categoryId=1&typeConsultation=1

- Domestic Development Strategy control in public sector of the Republic Bulgaria for the period 2023 – 2026
- Updated strategy for continuing the reform of the judicial system
- National strategy for preventing and combating irregularities and fraud affecting financial interests of the European Union, for the period 2021 – 2027
- Action plan to limit the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing
- Decentralization Strategy 2016 – 2025
- National strategic document "Digital transformation of Bulgaria for the period 2020–2030"

Transparency International 's Global Anti-Corruption Strategy 2021-2030

Priorities in the activities of Transparency International Bulgaria, outlined for the period 2023-2026, are informed and based on the spirit, principles and goals of the Global Strategy of the movement and will contribute to achieving the following goals and outcomes of the Global Strategy:

Objective 1. Protect the public's resources

- Outcome 1.1. Maximum openness, transparency and responsiveness in public contracting

Objective 3. Secure integrity in politics

- Outcome 3.1. Removal of undue influence from elections and political appointments
- Outcome 3.2. Greater transparency, accountability and equity in influence over public decision-making

Objective 4. Drive integrity in business

- Outcome 4.1. A critical mass of business leadership fulfilling strong integrity commitments

Objective 5. Pursue enforcement and justice

- Outcome 5.1. Strengthened independence, capacity and will to act for integrity institutions
- Outcome 5.3. An effective international anti-corruption enforcement framework

Objective 6. Expand civic space for accountability

- Outcome 6.1. Enhanced freedom and security for activists, whistleblowers and journalists to challenge abuse of power
- Outcome 6.2. Increased channels for people to demand results for the common good

Objective 7. Build community leadership against corruption

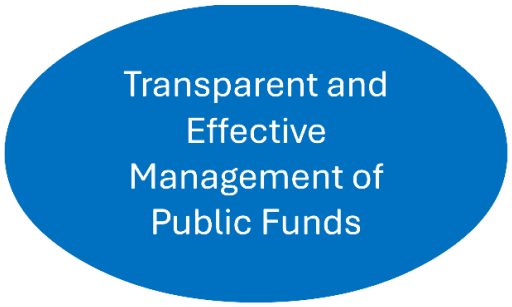
- Outcome 7.1. Strengthened public discourse based on deeper understanding and acceptance of accountability values
- Outcome 7.2. A next generation of civic, public and business leaders better equipped to fight corruption

PRIORITIES

The situational analysis, the current strategic and legal framework, the European and international standards and the affiliation of the "Transparency International Bulgaria" Association to the global Transparency International movement served to outline 5 priority areas for the next 3 years.



Our goal: Introduction and systematic implementation of specific anti-corruption policies and instruments, with a view to reducing the risk of unregulated forms of influence on decision-making contrary to the public interest; increasing the integrity, transparency and accountability of all participants in public life; regulating lobbying.



Our goal: Reducing the risk of harm to the public interest because of abuses of national and EU funds through establishing standards for publicity and transparency in the award of public procurement contracts with a view to minimizing opportunities for corruption, abuse with taxpayers ' funds and encouragement the development of free and fair market competition, as well as promoting public trust in the decision - making process.



Our goal: Business adopts of a framework of ethical rules, structures and policies that are based on the strict compliance with laws for the implementation of economic activity, and additional voluntary self-regulation which determine the rules of conduct for companies and interaction them with the outside environment, as well as introducing the principles of good governance and assessment of corruption risk.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BULGARIA



Our goal: Availability of secure and safe mechanisms for reporting irregularities; ensuring effective protection of whistleblowers; promoting whistleblower reporting as a key a tool for exposing corruption, fraud, mismanagement and other violations that threaten public security, public health, financial integrity, environment and the rule of law.

MAIN APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

Data generation and analysis: conducting research initiatives on the issues of corruption, good governance, the rule of law, etc., in this number through Mobilizing the efforts of experts, representatives of institutions and academia community in the relevant area and.

Piloting of tools: development / adaptation, testing, testing and evaluation of various tools for civil monitoring and control aimed at reducing the risk of corruption; research and adaptation of international recognized tools in the field of good governance and anti-corruption policies.

Interaction and partnership: establishing practices for sustainable interaction and cooperation with central and local authorities, business associations, experts, media, academic community, non-governmental organizations, bodies of the EU, the Council of Europe, the UN.

Information and communication: development and implementation of information and communication activities, creation and dissemination of information and communication materials to increase the knowledge of representatives of public institutions, business and media representatives, as well as the general public on topics related to the prevention and counteraction of corruption, rule of law, good governance, the protection of whistleblowers, etc.

Advocacy and technical support: developing advocacy activities and providing technical support to central and local authorities, businesses and the media regarding the introduction of European and international standards and good practices in the field of prevention and counteraction to corruption, the rule of law and good governance, integrity in business, protection of whistleblowers, etc.

Synergy with the structures of the Transparency International network to achieve goals at local, European and global levels level in line with the Global Strategy 2021-2030 of the world network; efforts to strengthen bilateral working with the organization 's representative office in front of The European alliance; sharing experience within the Transparency International network, as well as with other partnership organizations in the country and the region.

Evaluation and analysis of the implemented by the "Transparency International Bulgaria" Association initiatives; assessment of the results and reasons that are had favourable or negatively impact on achieving the goals.