

Transparency International Publishes 2016 Corruption Barometer for Europe and Central Asia

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Transparency International (“TI”) has published its regional Corruption Barometer for Europe and Central Asia¹ (“Report”) on 16 November 2016. According to the findings of the Report, one third of the citizens of the region perceive corruption as one of the biggest three challenges facing their country. More than half of the people do not think their government is doing a good job combating corruption in the public sector. Indeed, nearly one in three of the participants believe their government officials, elected and appointed, are mostly or entirely corrupt. As for the private sector, 26% think that business executives are highly corrupt. The Report further finds that in the last year 1 in 6 households have paid bribes to access public services.

The Report suggests that 22% believes corruption or bribery is one of the three biggest problems in Turkey. This was selected among issues such as economy, unemployment, crime, immigration, health and education. Further, 40% in Turkey believe most or all members of the parliament are corrupt. 42% in Turkey think that government’s actions to fight corruption are very bad or fairly bad. In European Union accession countries (including Turkey), just under 1 in 5 had to pay bribes when in contact with the police and civil courts.

The report suggests that according to the respondents, the most effective actions one can take to help combat bribery are “reporting corruption incidents” (18%) and “refusing to pay bribes” (20%). An overwhelming 27% believe that there is nothing ordinary people can do to fight corruption. The Report also notes that such actions are rarely taken by the population. Research finds only 19% of those who said they paid bribes in last year actually reported it. This is mostly because 30% fear retaliation if they report corruption (2 in 5 actually suffer retaliation when corruption is reported), 14% believe that corruption is too difficult to prove and 12% think that nothing will be done even if they report corruption.

In 2014, TÜSİAD (a Turkish private sector NGO titled “Turkish Industry and Business Association”) had conducted a survey within the Turkish private sector called “Corruption from Business Perspective: Perception and Policy Recommendations”². The related findings

¹https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/governments_are_doing_a_poor_job_at_fighting_corruption_across_europe

²The survey, led by Gönenç Gürkaynak, the Managing Partner of ELIG, Attorneys-at-Law, was conducted in Istanbul over a sample of 801 respondents, representative of the business community. A total of 80 representatives from the construction sector, 144 representatives from the wholesale and retail sector, 134 representatives from the accommodation sector, 80 representatives from transportation and communication sector, 186 representatives from the manufacturing sector and 177 representatives from other service sectors participated in the survey. The survey was based on nine in depth interviews in Istanbul and three focus group meetings in Denizli, Gaziantep and Antalya, the opinions of 36 business people in total were taken into consideration.

of the survey indicated that Turkish business world view corruption as a problem with medium significance, preceded by problems such as high taxes, labor costs and unrecorded economy. Nevertheless, the survey indicated that 37% of the participants believe that corruption is frequent and on a large scale. Further, 46% of the participants believe that corruption will increase. The survey found that, of the people who do not think they would report corruption believe they would not because there is no legal reporting mechanism (30%), reporting would not bear any results (12%) and they fear their identities would be exposed (6%).

From a Turkish point of view, both the Report and the survey when reviewed together, provide perspective into corruption perceptions and how to fight corruption. On the matter of how to eradicate corruption, one of the measures suggested by the Report is increasing whistleblower protection through legislation. The TÜSİAD survey on the other hand, recommends collective actions as a way of fighting corruption. Both very valuable recommendations, TÜSİAD's policy recommendation is more targeted towards prevention, while TI's recommendation is regarding misconduct occurring after corruption, which in the long run is also aimed towards prevention.

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