

Corruption Assessment Report on Serbia 2023

The Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI), an alliance of approximately 40 civil society organizations (CSOs), conducted its seventh round of the Southeast European Corruption Monitoring System (CMS) in 2023. The Centre for Contemporary Politics (CSP), SELDI's local partner in Serbia, conducted a national survey throughout Serbia in 2023, which monitored citizens' experiences of pressure and involvement in corruption and their perceptions of the level of corruption and confidence in anti-corruption policies. This report, prepared by CSP, includes an analysis of the corruption levels in Serbia, providing a detailed overview of citizens' experiences with corruption, their perception of the spread of corruption in the country, and attitudes towards this phenomenon.

In September 2023, the Centre for Contemporary Politics (CSP) conducted a public opinion poll on corruption utilizing the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) methodology.

The survey results suggest that corruption in Serbia is widely perceived as a significant issue that extends beyond institutional levels to impact different structures of society. According to 42.2% of citizens, corruption will always exist in Serbia, but it can be limited to a degree. On the other hand, 33.1% of citizens believe that corruption in Serbia can be substantially reduced, while 8.2% believe in the possibility of eradicating corruption in Serbia.

Also, 11.4% of citizens think that widespread corruption cannot be reduced, which shows the alarming perception of corruption in Serbia among the citizens. This

means that more than 50% of citizens believe that corruption will always exist in Serbia. On the other hand, a substantial number of citizens stay hopeful that corruption can still be limited.

According to the results of the CMS survey, a significant portion of the population in Serbia holds a rather bleak view regarding the prevalence of corruption among officials in the public sector.

Approximately 10% of citizens believe that almost all officials in the public sector are involved in corrupt practices, while a substantial 41.2% perceive that most officials partake in such activities. Moreover, 35% of respondents think that few officials are involved in corruption, suggesting a widespread belief in the pervasiveness of this issue. Even more worrying is the fact that a mere 4.4% of citizens perceive scarcely any officials are involved in corrupt acts. These results indicate a widespread lack of faith in the integrity of public officials.

According to the survey, the groups perceived as the most corrupt are judges, public prosecutors, and political leaders. Meanwhile, less corruption is perceived among doctors, teachers, and journalists.

Corruption Assessment Report on Serbia analyses a current state of anti-corruption legislative background in Serbia, as well as the institutional practices, role of civil society and international cooperation in combating corruption in Serbia. It concludes with a call for more effective efforts from state institutions and the implementation of promised reforms to address public dissatisfaction in the fight against corruption in Serbia.

Policy recommendations:

- Update the Law on Prevention of Corruption to fully align with international standards, particularly addressing the recommendations by GRECO and other relevant international bodies. Ensure the definition of "public official" is

comprehensive, closing loopholes that may exempt certain officials from accountability.

- Mandate the proactive disclosure of information by all government agencies, particularly related to budgets, procurement, and project implementations. Enhance the functionality and responsiveness of mechanisms for accessing public information.
- Enhance the legal and operational environment for civil society organizations (CSOs) working on anti-corruption. Ensure meaningful participation of CSOs in policymaking processes, monitoring of public services, and the National Anti-corruption Strategy implementation.
- Strengthen cooperation with international and regional anti-corruption initiatives to benefit from shared experiences, best practices, and technical assistance. Ensure full compliance with international anti-corruption conventions and actively participate in mutual evaluation processes.
- Utilize the EU accession process as a framework and motivation for implementing comprehensive anti-corruption reforms. Align anti-corruption efforts with EU standards and actively engage with EU institutions for support and guidance.
- Identify and target sectors with high risks of corruption, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Implement sector-specific strategies, including increased oversight and specialized anti-corruption measures.