From Commitment to Action: OSCE's Anti-Corruption and Good Governance Report 2023-2024

Contents

Abbreviations

ACN	Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EAG	Eurasian Group on combating money laundering and financing of terrorism
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
OCEEA	Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCE PA	OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
SoP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPU	Support Programme for Ukraine
TNTD	Transnational Threats Department
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Foreword

Corruption is one of the most pervasive and pressing issues of our time, threatening security, peace, and prosperity across the OSCE region and around the world. Preventing and combatting corruption, as well as promoting good governance, remain fundamental elements of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. This progress report outlines the OSCE's on-going efforts to translate commitments into tangible actions in fighting corruption, focusing on our work's impact on the ground.

The negative effects of corruption are vast: it diverts the allocation of resources from essential services such as healthcare, education and infrastructure; it perpetuates economic and social inequality and exacerbates gender inequalities; it erodes trust in institutions. Over the past two years, the OSCE, through its Secretariat, field operations and institutions, has worked tirelessly to enhance transparency, promote integrity, and strengthen institutional capacities in fighting corruption. Corruption is a problem that impacts everyone, therefore fighting it must include everyone. The OSCE recognizes this and takes a whole-of-society approach in its anti-corruption activities, considering the needs of men, women and youth.

Fighting corruption is a demanding and complex process. This multifaceted phenomenon is entrenched across political, economic, and social spheres. Tackling corruption requires good laws and policies, but it also requires the unwavering commitment of institutions and people. In the last two years, the OSCE supported its participating States with a wide range of initiatives and activities across three key pillars: prevention, education and combating corruption.

In the area of prevention, the OSCE emphasized the use of open data and digitalization to enhance transparency and accountability, making it more difficult for corrupt practices to go undetected. OSCE's efforts also focused on the prevention of money laundering, including through the use of virtual assets, and the promotion of integrity through robust corruption risk assessments.

Education and awareness are key components in the fight against corruption. The OSCE engaged with youth and civil society in targeted initiatives, aimed at fostering a culture of integrity from the grassroots level.

Combatting corruption requires strong institutions and trained practitioners. In the area of combating corruption, the OSCE supported numerous capacity building activities, focused on tracing, detecting and prosecuting corruption. The OSCE also supported institutions in enhancing their asset recovery capabilities, ensuring that ill-gotten gains are returned to communities affected by corruption and organized crime.

Preventing and combatting corruption, and promoting good governance is a continuous effort. This report serves as a testament of OSCE's achievements and a reaffirmation of its commitment to continue working in these areas. Together with the engagement of governments, civil society, and all stakeholders, the OSCE is making a significant contribution to the global movement to curb corruption.

Ambassador Bakyt Dzhusupov
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic
and Environmental Activities

1. Executive Summary

This progress report provides an overview of the OSCE's anti-corruption and good governance efforts during 2023 and 2024. By focusing on three pillars — prevention, education, and combating corruption — the OSCE field operations and institutions have implemented over 61 anti-corruption projects, investing more than EUR 5.83 million.

The OSCE's efforts to combat corruption and promote good governance are an integral part of its comprehensive approach to security, which encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. Recognizing corruption as a cross-dimensional threat, the OSCE addresses its risks across all of the three security dimensions. Many of the OSCE's initiatives and activities are developed in close cooperation between the different field operations and institutions, including initiatives that are implemented cross-dimensionally.

Key achievements in the reporting period include:

- **Integrity-Building:** the OSCE provided support to public institutions across several participating States in strengthening their integrity frameworks. Activities in this area included the development of standardized integrity planning mechanisms, integration of integrity measures within public procurement systems, conflicts of interest prevention mechanisms and the establishment of Anti-Corruption Offices.
- **Gender and Corruption Nexus**: the progress report emphasizes notable achievements in supporting gender-sensitive anti-corruption policy frameworks and promoting women's participation in law enforcement decision-making and governance roles.
- **Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Engagement**: the progress report showcases how the OSCE empowered young people to become leaders in the fight against corruption, providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to challenge unethical practices. Additionally, the OSCE facilitated collaboration between government institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) through various educational and awareness-raising activities.
- **Anti-Corruption Capacity-Building:** the OSCE conducted over 281 capacity-building activities, engaging more than 2,000 participants across various regions. These included trainings and workshops designed to enhance anti-corruption knowledge and practices of relevant practitioners.
- **Anti-Money Laundering:** the OSCE has significantly contributed to combating money laundering by supporting participating States in strengthening their financial integrity systems, including through curbing the misuse of virtual assets for illicit activities.
- **Asset Recovery:** the OSCE supported participating States in strengthening their mechanisms and capacities to seize, confiscate, manage and re-use illegally acquired assets, aimed at improving their fight against transnational organized crime and corruption.
- **Regulatory Support**: OSCE institutions and field operations delivered more than 46 regulatory support activities, such as assisting with legal frameworks and developing codes of ethics.

Through international cooperation, capacity building, and innovative approaches to raising awareness on the negative effects of corruption on societies, the OSCE's anti-corruption work has contributed to stronger institutions, enhanced transparency, and a growing culture of accountability across its participating States.

OSCE

The part we play
in the fight against
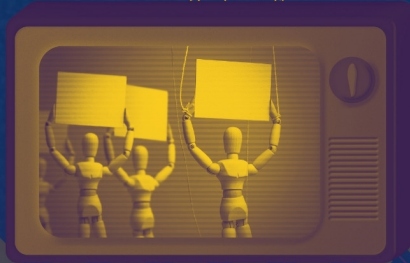
CORRUPTION

We're leading
the fight
against
money
laundering
by tackling
the misuse
of virtual
assets and
cryptocurrencies.

We're shedding light
on how corruption
uniquely impacts
women and pushing
for change that
matters.

We're transforming
justice in the
Western Balkans to
combat organized
crime and
corruption
effectively.

We're empowering
Ukraine to use
open data for a
more transparent
and democratic
future.

We're educating young people on
the importance of integrity and the
alternatives to choosing crime.

Corruption costs us **$2.6 TRILLION** 5% OF THE WORLD'S GDP annually.

2. Methodology

The information compiled in this progress report is based on data submitted by the OSCE field operations and institutions that implemented anti-corruption and good governance initiatives during the reporting period from January 2023 to August 2024. The data was collected by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities through the OSCE Anti-Corruption Focal Points, using a questionnaire comprised of quantitative and qualitative questions.

The impact stories featured in the progress report were chosen from a pool of 34 submitted by the OSCE Anti-Corruption Focal Points. Due to limited space in the progress report, only 25 impact stories were selected, aimed at representing as many participating States and relevant thematic areas where the OSCE has car-

ried out significant work. While not all impact stories could be featured, the ones that were not included were taken into account in the quantitative analysis.

The OSCE aligns with and promotes regional and international legal frameworks, standards, and good practices, supporting participating States in implementing key instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention, the Council of Europe conventions, the standards set by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan of the OECD, as well as recommendations set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

3. OSCE's Added Value in Anti-Corruption and Good Governance Efforts

3.1 OSCE's Holistic Anti-Corruption Approach

The OSCE has adopted a **comprehensive approach to its anti-corruption and good governance efforts,** focused on three complementary and mutually reinforcing pillars: prevention, education and combating corruption. To illustrate the OSCE's approach, the progress report is organized around seven thematic areas:

▪ **Prevention**	✓ Promoting the use of open data and digitalization ✓ Preventing money laundering ✓ Promoting integrity and corruption risk assessment ✓ Empowering women in the fight against corruption
▪ **Education**	✓ Anti-corruption education and involvement of civil society and youth
▪ **Combating Corruption**	✓ Enhancing asset recovery capacities ✓ Increasing institutional capacities to combat corruption

The OSCE's approach to anti-corruption is rooted in the 2003 Maastricht OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension and several Ministerial Council Decisions and Declarations, including:

- Decision No. 11/04 on Combating Corruption (Sofia, 2004)
- Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism (Dublin, 2012)
- Decision No. 5/14 on the Prevention of Corruption (Basel, 2014)
- Decision No.4/16 - Decision on Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity (Hamburg, 2016)
- Decision No. 8/17 on Promoting Economic Participation in the OSCE Area (Vienna 2017)
- Decision No. 5/18 on Human Capital Development in the Digital Era (Milan 2018)
- Decision 6/20 on Preventing and Combating Corruption through Digitalization and Increased Transparency (Tirana, 2020).

Building on these strategic directions, the OSCE adopts a whole-of-society approach to anti-corruption and good governance, guided by several key principles of intervention:

- **Sustainability**: the OSCE interventions seek long-term results and impact;
- **Demand-driven assistance:** the OSCE interventions are tailored and adapted to changing needs of stakeholders;
- **Cooperation and coordination**: the OSCE interventions involve international organizations, governments, private sector, academia and civil society. The OSCE acts as a forum for dialogue between stakeholders.

The OSCE's anti-corruption initiatives encompass a wide range of activities, including capacity building (training, study visits, mentoring, peer-to-peer networking, and sharing good practices through conferences and seminars); developing practical tools (guides, methodologies, roadmaps); and conducting needs assessments (monitoring reports, gap analyses of compliance with international standards, legislative reviews).

The OSCE also provides legislative assistance (drafting strategies and legal amendments) and engages in awareness-raising efforts (information campaigns,

In 2024, OSCE PA Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides sponsored a resolution on Preventing Corruption From Being Used as a Foreign Policy Tool, which was adopted in the Bucharest Declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Voting in the plenary session, 29 June 2024, Bucharest. (OSCE)

meetings with civil society and youth). These interventions help build strong connections between national stakeholders and international anti-corruption organizations or projects.

The OSCE is committed to fostering a collaborative approach to countering the complex challenges of corruption. The OSCE actively seeks and forges partnerships with a range of international organizations, including UNODC, OECD, Transparency International and others. By joining forces in international fora and expert working groups, as well as engaging with state and local authorities, civil society, the private sector, academia, and think tanks, the OSCE enhances its ability to address corruption from multiple angles.

3.2 Preventing Corruption from Being Used as a Foreign Policy Tool

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) Special Representative on Fighting Corruption has a key mandate to raise awareness in the OSCE PA regarding the urgen-

cy to effectively combat corruption at all levels. These efforts seek to foster a greater understanding of the security threats stemming from corruption, of its detrimental effects on our societies, and of its pervasive links with other forms of serious crime.

The resolution calls on international donors to perform due diligence on recipient governments and organizations, in order to avoid providing military or financial resources to corrupt and kleptocratic authorities and organizations controlled by them and their associates. The resolution also aims to involve local civil society organizations and human rights defenders in monitoring the implementation of contracts. Furthermore, it calls on OSCE participating States to strengthen their anti-corruption infrastructure comprising of robust anti-corruption laws, specialized anti-corruption agencies, beneficial ownership registers, extradition treaties, asset recovery mechanisms, asset declaration systems, and whistleblower protection mechanisms.

More information on the work of the OSCE PA Special Representative on Fighting Corruption can be found here.

3.3 OSCE's Approach on Gender and Corruption

One of the OSCE's key priorities in its anti-corruption efforts is gender mainstreaming and empowering women in the fight against corruption. The Gender Issues Programme (GIP) within the Office of the Secretary General (OSG) provides crucial support to anti-corruption and good governance projects by ensuring the integration of gender considerations into the project activities. GIP offers expert advice to project managers on how to enhance gender mainstreaming in their programmatic efforts, ensuring that the projects address gender-specific vulnerabilities and promote equality. This approach strengthens the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies by recognizing the diverse ways corruption affects individuals based on gender, and intersecting factors like age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and rural or urban location.

The progress report examines how gender perspectives have been embedded in the OSCE's initiatives in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, highlighting some of the common approaches and good practices in the different regions.

Common approaches to integrate gender perspectives in anti-corruption and good governance initiatives undertaken by field operations in **South-Eastern Europe** include:

1. **Gender-sensitive policy frameworks**: most anti-corruption initiatives implemented in the reporting period promoted the incorporation of gender perspectives in governmental anti-corruption policies and strategies.
2. **Engagement of women in decision-making and governance structures**: projects promoted women's participation in governance and decision-making bodies. This is in line with the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which promotes women's leadership across all the OSCE dimensions.
3. **Gender-balanced participation in anti-corruption and good governance activities**: most projects ensured gender-balanced representation in trainings, workshops or consultations related to anti-corruption. Sixty % of staff working on anti-corruption and good governance initiatives in the field operations in South-Eastern Europe are women.

No. of beneficiaries of OSCE anti-corruption and good governance activities in South-Eastern Europe
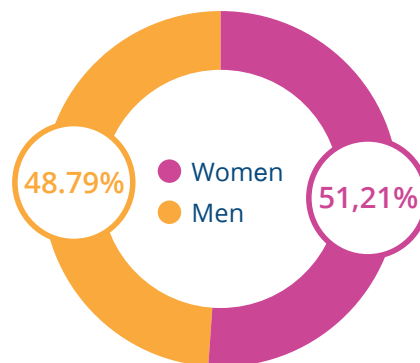
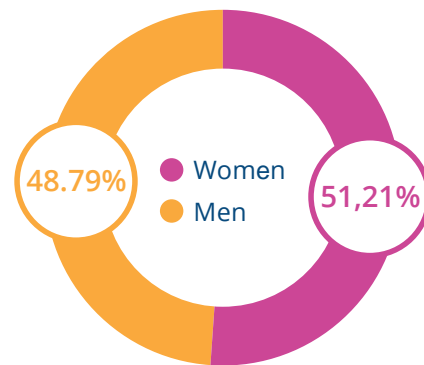OSCE staff working in anti-corruption and good governance in South-Eastern Europe
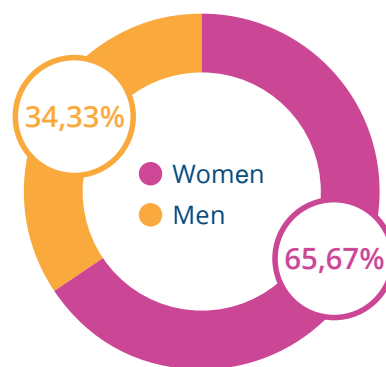
4. **Raising awareness of the impact of corruption on women**: the projects emphasized the disproportionate impact of corruption on women, particularly in terms of access to basic services and participation in economic life. **Research and activities conducted OSCE-wise highlighted the existence of specific forms of corruption that target women, such as sexual extortion, where sexual favours are demanded in exchange for access to resources, services or goods.**
5. **Gender mainstreaming in capacity-building activities**: gender considerations were integrated into training programmes, particularly in leadership, auditing, monitoring, and policy development. Basic and advanced training courses on gender mainstreaming were also run for project managers and external stakeholders in OSCE participating States working on anti-corruption programming.

These approaches contributed to concrete achievements and good practices in the **South-Eastern Europe** region. To highlight a few:

- The introduction of a gender objective in the draft National Anti-Corruption Strategy in **Albania**, aimed at strengthening women's participation to identify and fight corruption.
- The development and adoption of Codes of Ethics at cantonal and municipal levels in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, including gender-sensitive language and promoting equal representation of women and men in ethics committees.
- The focus on increasing women's participation at all levels of policing through the Security Co-operation and Governance programme in **Montenegro**.
- The incorporation of gender-responsive indicators into the monitoring and evaluation of anti-corruption programmes in **Kosovo**[1]. Furthermore, GIP supported anti-corruption authorities in Pristina with advanced and specialized training courses and conducted cutting-edge research on the linkages between gender and corruption in the access to natural resources.
- The balanced participation of men and women in round-table discussions and training sessions in **Serbia**, including the recruitment of women as experts, trainers and resource persons.
- The application of gender-sensitive language to relevant internal programmatic documentation in **North Macedonia**, while engaging balanced participation of men and women in meetings, public debates, conferences and other events.

In **Eastern Europe**, the Extra-Budgetary Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU), in cooperation with the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP), developed a project aimed at supporting Ukraine's efforts to prevent corruption and enhance anti-corruption compliance. The project promotes the application of gender-based approaches in NACP's corruption-prevention and combating work, including the capacity-building of NACP's management in gender mainstreaming and gender analysis. During the reporting period, OCEEA commissioned an analysis of **Moldova's**[2], legislative framework on investigation of corruption, with a specific focus on human rights and gender dimensions. The analysis, implemented as part of a project aimed to support the anti-corruption efforts of the Government of Moldova, provides con-

No. of beneficiaries of OSCE anti-corruption and good governance activities in Eastern Europe

- Women
- Men

48.79% 51,21%

OSCE staff working in anti-corruption and good governance in Eastern Europe

- Women
- Men

34,33% 65,67%
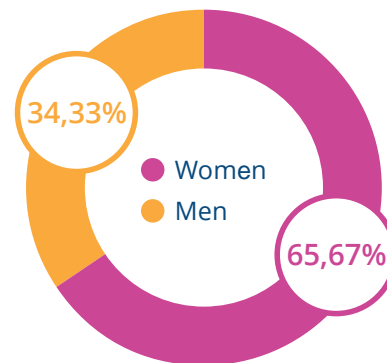
crete policy recommendations on integrating gender perspectives in the relevant legislative framework.

Common approaches to integrate gender perspectives in anti-corruption and good governance initiatives undertaken by field operations in **Central Asia** include:

1. **Promoting gender-balanced participation**: during the reporting period, field operations encouraged equal or near-equal participation of men and women in activities such as trainings, seminars, and workshops.
2. **Inclusivity and gender equality standards**: the field operations in the region upheld gender equality standards and required partners to follow similar guidelines.
3. **The involvement of women in digital transformation and governance initiatives**: several field operations highlighted digital initiatives that

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1   All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244.

2   The OSCE Mission to Moldova is not included in the progress report due to its specific mandate.

No. of beneficiaries of OSCE anti-corruption and good governance activities in Central Asia
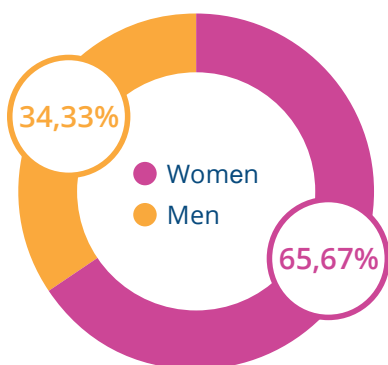

48.79% · Women
51,21% · Men
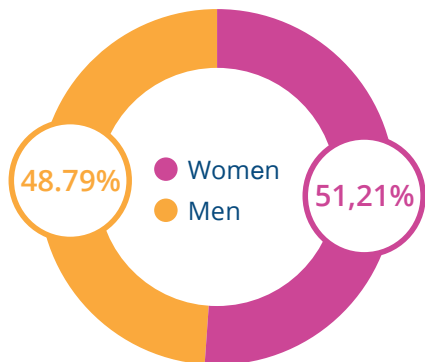
OSCE staff working in anti-corruption and good governance in Central Asia

34,33% · Women
65,67% · Men

facilitate women's access to public services or participation in governance activities.

4. **Targeting youth and female students in anti-corruption activities**: the field operations promoted the engagement of youth, particularly female students, as potential future leaders in governance.

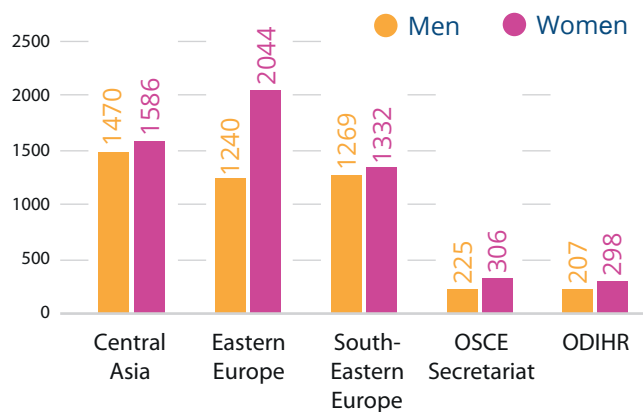Some of the concrete achievements of OSCE's field operations in Central Asia include:

1. **Kazakhstan**: contributed to gender balance with regards to participants in various activities, including those organized by implementing partners. This approach contributes to the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts by promoting equal representation and active participation of men and women.
2. **Kyrgyzstan**: contributed to gender balance among project experts and participants in trainings and seminars.
3. **Turkmenistan**: increased the participation rate

of female students in project activities to prepare future female leaders for roles in governance.

4. **Uzbekistan**: promoted equal participation and active involvement of women in project activities.
5. **Tajikistan**: included equal involvement and participation clauses in the memoranda of understanding and other documents signed with beneficiary government agencies.

Based on available data, the OSCE's efforts to achieve increased women's participation in anti-corruption had visible results across the different initiatives mentioned in this progress report.

No. of beneficiaries of OSCE anti-corruption and good governance activities, 2023-2024

Men · Women

	Men	Women
Central Asia	1470	1586
Eastern Europe	1240	2044
South-Eastern Europe	1269	1332
OSCE Secretariat	225	306
ODIHR	207	298

OSCE staff working in anti-corruption and good governance

	Men	Women
Central Asia	7	7
Eastern Europe	1	4
South-Eastern Europe	23	44
OSCE Secretariat	7	11
ODIHR	1	2
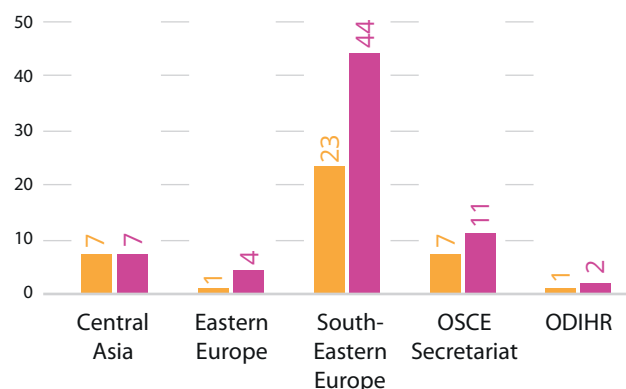
3.4 Key Highlights of OSCE's Anti-Corruption and Good Governance Efforts

In 2023-2024, OSCE invested **over € 5,83 million** in **61+** anti-corruption and good governance projects, more than half of the total investment made in the previous 10 years. Of this funding, 76% was sourced from extrabudgetary contributions, while 24% came from the Unified Budget. The OSCE's work in anti-corruption and good governance was made possible through the generous contributions of donor participating States. Their support has been instrumental in enabling the OSCE to implement targeted programmes, provide technical assistance, and promote good practices in anti-corruption across the OSCE region.
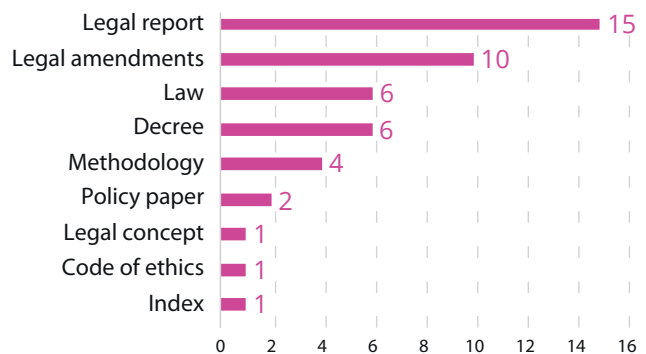
OSCE investment in anti-corruption and good governance (Euro) 2023-2024

UB ACGG   ExB ACGG

- Central Asia: 789.321,41
- Eastern Europe: 512.866,02
- South-Eastern Europe: 1.403.340,54 / 629.573,88
- OSCE Secretariat: 2.495.487,08
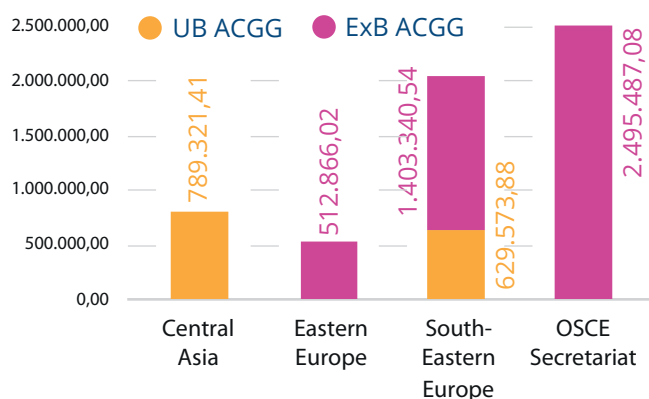
One key aspect of the OSCE's anti-corruption and good governance work in 2023-2024 focused on providing regulatory support. The OSCE field operations and institutions undertook more than 46 targeted regulatory support activities at regional, federal, and national levels. Twenty-two activities referred to assistance in drafting laws, legal amendments, and secondary legislation (such as decrees). Other activities focused on developing methodologies, legal reports, policy papers and a code of ethics.

During the 2023-24 period, OSCE anti-corruption projects produced more than 46 publications and video materials, with several featured in the dedicated section of this progress report. The majority were public policy re-

OSCE's regulatory support activities, 2023-2024

- Legal report: 15
- Legal amendments: 10
- Law: 6
- Decree: 6
- Methodology: 4
- Policy paper: 2
- Legal concept: 1
- Code of ethics: 1
- Index: 1

ports (21) and videos, while the collection also included practical resources for daily use by practitioners, such as toolkits, manuals, handbooks, and guidebooks (12).

In 2023-2024, the OSCE conducted more than 281+ anti-corruption and good governance related events. The majority of these events were capacity-building trainings and workshops (62%), followed by conferences, study visits, roundtables, and forums (19%).

Types of anti-corruption events organized by the OSCE 2023-2024

- Training: 90
- Workshop: 86
- Seminar: 37
- Conference: 22
- Study visit: 16
- Roundtable: 9
- Forum: 7
- Other types: 14
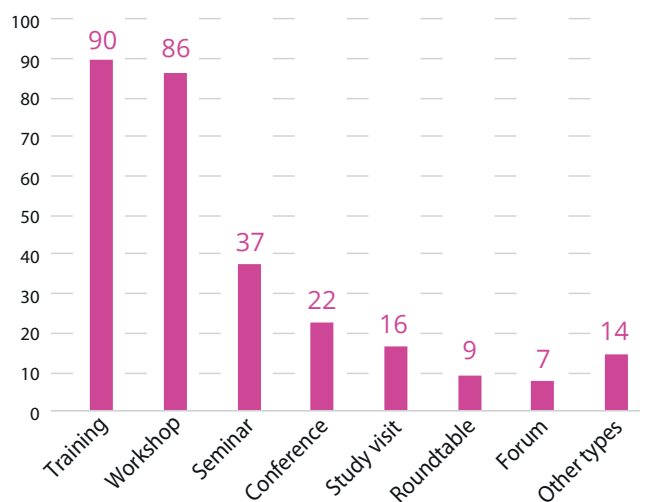
4. Corruption Prevention Pillar

4.1 Promoting the Use of Open Data and Digitalization

Why it matters: *Corruption thrives in opaque environments, discretionary decision-making, and limited access to public information. Preventing corruption requires making governments more transparent and responsive, with open data and digitalization offering some of the best tools for this task.*

Open data provides citizens and civil society with access to crucial information, enabling independent audits and analyses that can expose irregularities and the misuse of public funds. It also empowers journalists and watchdog organizations to investigate and report corruption more effectively. Additionally, open data initiatives foster collaboration between governments, businesses, and citizens, leading to co-created solutions for public sector challenges.

Ultimately, open data and digitalization drive a culture of accountability and integrity, which are essential for the prevention of corruption.

Impact stories on OSCE open data and digitalization

■ In 2024, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek played a key role in developing the **automated information system "Registration of Inspections of Business Entities"**. This system is designed to prevent unjustified interference by law enforcement in business activities, strengthen legal protection for businesses, foster a favorable environment for investment, and reduce corruption risks during inspections. It also promotes greater accountability within public administration. The platform streamlines the recording and management of inspections by integrating reports from both law enforcement and tax authorities. Entrepreneurs can now verify the legitimacy of inspection notices by scanning a QR code, ensuring that they are officially registered. The system also provides legal information about their rights during inspections and offers real-time updates on upcoming inspections. If an inspection appears unlawful, users can use the app to instantly submit photos and videos to the prosecutor's office.

> "*Introducing digital tools, where appropriate, to reduce administrative barriers and burdens, and facilitating interaction between citizens, businesses, enterprises and public administration*".

Ministerial Council Decision no. 6/20 on Preventing and Combating Corruption through Digitalization and Increased Transparency (Tirana 2020)

Participants at the closing event and award ceremony of the Central Asian Women's Entrepreneurship Programme, 18 April 2024, Almaty. (Media Kitchen)

Impact story: Open Data Marathon in Albania

The **Youth Datathon set out to tackle corruption and financial transparency by empowering young people** with the tools to decode their country's financial landscape.

Over the course of three weeks, **in** June-July 2024, a diverse group of 31 students, young professionals, researchers, and data enthusiasts immersed themselves in expert led workshops and mentoring sessions. Together, they delved into the complex world of open budgets and participatory budgeting principles. The sessions taught participants how to wield the power of data to shine a light on the issues affecting their communities.

After putting the data and new tools to good use, the young people presented their findings in front of a wider audience made up of civil society, university representatives, and public institutions. They used creative visual tools that transformed dry numbers into compelling stories, bringing their findings to life in a way that everyone could understand and engage with.

> *"What I liked the most about this activity was its authenticity and the attention brought to important matters that impact all of us."*

Edmorela Myftaraj
Datathon participant

Participants to #Datathon2024, 5 July 2024, Tirana. (Albanian Institute of Science)

Presentation of results #Datathon2024, 5 July 2024, Tirana. (Albanian Institute of Science)

Since 2021, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) has been leading a cross-regional project focused on digitalization and the use of open data. As part of this initiative, from February to April 2024, the **OSCE supported 21 women entrepreneurs in enhancing their digital and business skills**. Over two months, participants took part in tailored workshops, hands-on training, and mentoring sessions, where they developed crucial skills in digital tools, online marketing, and business management. These skills have since helped them grow and strengthen their businesses.

One inspiring participant, from Uzbekistan, left a stable career in pharmaceuticals to pursue her passion for baking. She opened Pirogovaya, an all-female bakery, with the goal of helping working mothers spend more time with their families. Her bakery has since thrived, serving as a source of inspiration for other women in her community. Her success was bolstered by the OSCE Central Asian Women's Entrepreneurship Programme, which equipped her with valuable digital tools and knowledge, enabling her to expand her online presence, attract new customers, and streamline her business operations.

> *"What inspired me to start my own business was a combination of my love of creativity, independence, and my dream of making a positive impact on my community. Through the OSCE programme, I realized what I needed to develop, where I have weaknesses and where I have strengths".*

Nilufar Ukumatshoeva
Food florist in the Pamir region

> *"This personalized focus ensured students received tailored guidance and felt supported throughout their entrepreneurial journeys. In the long run, our hope is that the connections and relationships they made will continue to be a source of learning and support for their businesses".*

Elaine Young
Director of InkubasiaLAB

> *It's very difficult for a woman in business surrounded by men. I was inspired by the thought of being a woman entrepreneur myself and by the fact that I can join forces with other businesswomen and help teach and train other women too".*

Daria Chechenina
Owner of an all-female bakery

"*The successful conclusion of the programme highlights the crucial role of open data in empowering civil society and the private sector as a means towards tackling the most pressing challenges. Through the implementation of innovative digital solutions at the grassroots level, this initiative serves as a compelling demonstration of the transformative potential of technology in enhancing transparency, efficiency, and cooperation in the digital ecosystem of Ukraine, and underscores the OSCE's commitment to assisting Ukraine in its digitalization objectives.*"

Ralf Ernst
Deputy Co-Ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities /Head, Economic Activities
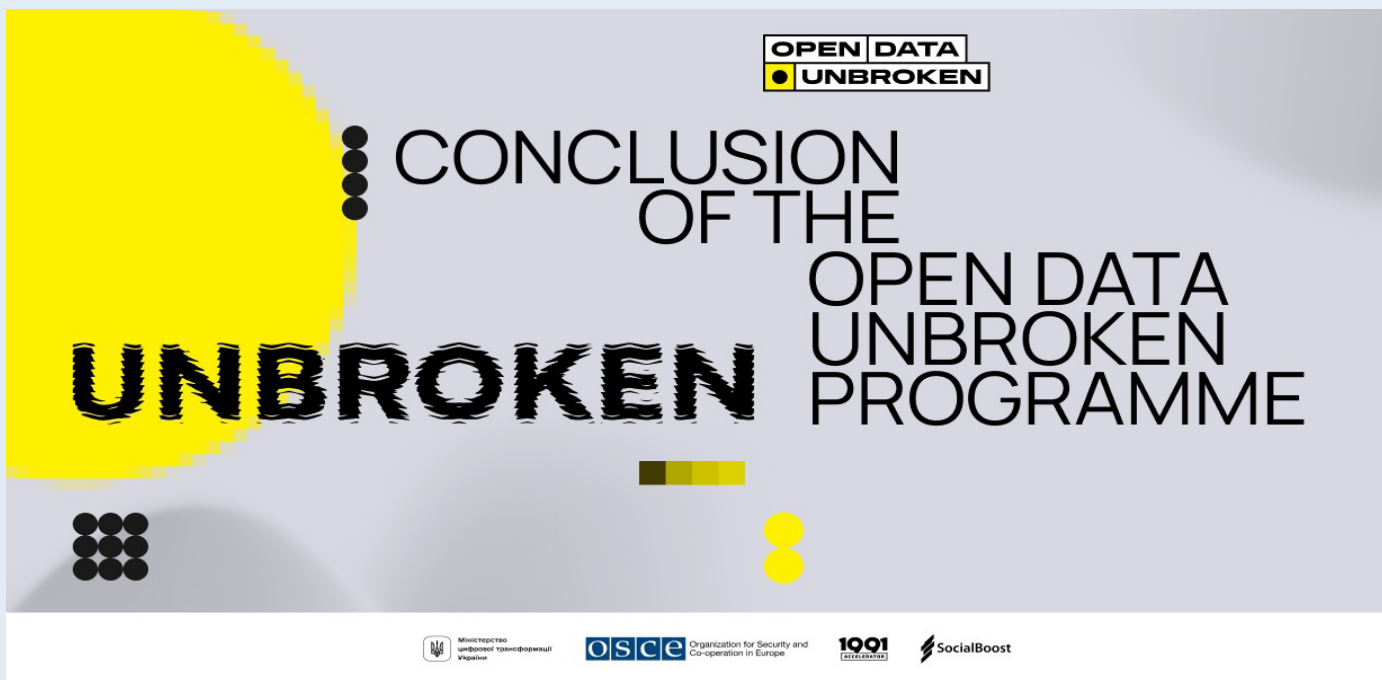
In 2023, the Open Data Unbroken programme in **Ukraine** provided small grants to support civil society organizations and the private sector in developing digital solutions to address challenges related to the war. The programme supported the development of three innovative digital solutions that: (i) use open data to help citizens locate nearby air-raid shelters quickly during crises, (ii) assist internally displaced persons in finding jobs and streamline compensation for destroyed housing, and (iii) empower farmers with data-driven insights to revitalize the agricultural sector.

We provide citizens with an easy way to find nearby shelters and report issues with existing ones, contributing to improved civil safety during wartime. Through the program, our team manually aggregated, cleaned, and structured data on 56,000 registered civil protection locations, helping over 10,000 users locate the nearest shelter during dangerous times."

Thanks to the program, our team was able to add a new feature to the chatbot and significantly expand its capabilities. We created a new section on compensation for destroyed housing for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and enhanced the functionality for job searching. With the Nazar chatbot, it is now easier and faster for IDPs to find employment."

The information aggregator "Plant Varieties" – "The developed tools enable faster and more effective management decisions, improving the selection of plant varieties. This enhances farm profitability and reduces the use of chemical plant protection agents. As a result, it positively impacts product quality, protects the natural environment, and reduces the risk of bee poisoning."

Konstantin Homma
Founder of the chatbot "Where is the shelter?"

Dmytro Sergeev
Founder of the chatbot "Nazar"

Oleksandr Solsky
Developer of information aggregator "Plant Varieties"

■ The OSCE Mission in **Kosovo** supported the development of the **2023-2027 Digitalization and E-Governance Strategy** in collaboration with the Agency of Information Society (AIS), IT officers from government institutions, and the Association of Kosovo Municipalities' IT Collegium. Through a series of consultations, municipal officials engaged in discussions on key e-governance issues, the digitalization of services, and the challenges faced at the local level. These activities helped broaden their understanding of the e-governance framework, strategic objectives, and the importance of engaging municipalities in the process. Officials also received updates on the use of e-services in municipalities and shared plans to further develop digital services, aiming to enhance governance and public service delivery through technology.

Consultation with stakeholders on information technology services,19 June 2024, Pristina. (OSCE)

■ In Canton Sarajevo, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina supported the development of the Antikorrupiks platform which hosts public registers on appointed officials, employees in the cantonal public institutions, allocated subsidies to small businesses, and public officials' property and assets, among other. The platform enables detection of conflicts of interests, increases institutional transparency, and offers a wide range of analytical options and comparisons that are important tools for all interested parties, such as journalists, researchers, and CSOs.

OPEN DATA & DIGITALIZATION

23 events
organized in the OSCE region

996
participants

4.2 Prevention of Money Laundering

Why it matters: *Perpetrators often launder illicit profits from corruption by exploiting the financial sector or using virtual assets. Money laundering conceals the origins of "dirty money," allowing criminals to integrate it into the legal economy. To combat corruption effectively, it is crucial to close loopholes in the financial system, especially in today's digitalized world.*

Strengthening anti-money laundering measures disrupts the flow of illegal funds, making corruption less profitable. However, virtual assets, such as cryptocurrencies, pose new challenges for tracking financial transactions and hiding wealth. Effective regulation helps prevent their misuse for money laundering, terrorism financing, or sanctions evasion, while enhancing financial transparency.

A well-regulated financial and digital asset system deters criminals, protects the integrity of the financial sector, and supports global efforts to curb corruption and promote economic stability.

Impact story: OSCE helped the National Bank of Georgia to develop the first licensing regime for Virtual Assets Service Providers

In 2024, OCEEA successfully assisted the National Bank of Georgia in establishing the country's first licensing regime for Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs). VASPs include businesses or individuals that offer services related to virtual assets, such as cryptocurrency exchanges, wallet providers, as well as platforms that facilitate the buying, selling, or transfer of digital assets. This timely initiative addresses the rapid global rise of virtual assets and cryptocurrencies, which present both opportunities and challenges, particularly in the fight against financial crime. By aligning Georgia with international anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CTF) standards, the new regime enhances the country's ability to safeguard its financial system from illicit actors.

More data here on the OSCE virtual assets project.

OSCE facilitated a workshop to strengthen Georgia's regulations of Virtual Asset Service Providers, 21 July 2023, Tbilisi. (OSCE/Kurban Babayev)

"*With the assistance of the OSCE and involvement of highly qualified experts, several guidelines are being developed to facilitate effective monitoring of virtual assets transactions, to address the challenges in this emerging sector and to strengthen the overall AML/CFT supervision framework in the country. Given the novelty of oversight in this area globally and the scarcity of guidelines, the support from the OSCE is particularly important.*"

Eka Goglidze
Head of International Sanctions Implementation and Inspection and Offsite Supervision of Virtual Asset Service Providers Division, National Bank of Georgia

VIRTUAL ASSETS

17 events
organized in the OSCE region

305
participants

MONEY LAUNDERING

19 events
organized in the OSCE region

618
participants

4.3 Promoting integrity and Corruption risk assessment

Why it matters: Corruption thrives in environments where integrity is lacking, ethical standards are weak, and there is no open discussion about acceptable behaviour. When misdemeanours go unrecognized or unpunished, it blurs the line between right and wrong, creating an environment where corruption becomes widespread, and individuals feel entitled to act without accountability.

Promoting integrity and conducting corruption-risk assessments are essential tools in the OSCE's anti-corruption and good governance efforts, as they address vulnerabilities before they can be exploited. Integrity initiatives establish ethical standards that guide public officials and private sector actors towards transparent and accountable behaviour. These efforts also build public trust, as citizens see institutions actively upholding ethical principles.

Corruption risk assessments identify areas most vulnerable to corrupt practices, allowing organizations to implement specific measures to mitigate these risks. They provide data-driven insights that inform policy decisions and help allocate resources effectively to address high-risk areas.

Impact story: OSCE Strengthens Integrity Planning Mechanism in Kosovo

Delegation from the Agency for Prevention of Corruption in Kosovo in a study visit in Slovenia,7 March 2024, Ljubljana. (OSCE)

In 2023-2024, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo supported Kosovo's Agency for Prevention of Corruption (APC) in strengthening the Integrity Planning Mechanism and improving the implementation of whistleblower protection and conflict of interest laws. To enhance whistleblower protection and prevent conflicts of interest, the Mission facilitated a series of workshops and training sessions for public officials.

The Mission also helped develop a standardized integrity plan template and a guideline for monitoring and reporting on its implementation. These tools were disseminated during workshops with representatives from 112 agencies and institutions.

To further enhance the APC's capacity to hold institutions accountable for their integrity plan commitments, the Mission organized a study visit for APC officials to the Slovenia Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, a recognized leader in integrity oversight and reporting.

Impact stories on OSCE initiatives to promote integrity

■ The OSCE Mission to Serbia supports Ministry of Interior (MoI) to enhance police accountability

Through 2023, the OSCE Mission to Serbia supported the MoI to organize five seminars on assets declaration for police as part of preventive anti-corruption measures. These seminars aimed to address legal responsibility of police officers to report their property, as well as obligation of the MoI's Sector for Internal Control to monitor the changes in the assets registry. Efforts to enhance preventive measures against corruption within the police continued in 2024.

INTEGRITY

2 events on asset declarations

279 participants

9 events on corruption risk assessment

494 participants

Seminar on asset declarations in Nis. (OSCE)

The OSCE supported Ukraine to regulate lobbying. The OSCE participated in the working group convened by the parliamentary committee to improve the draft law. The working group carried out a series of consultations with civil society, legal community, state authorities, and prepared a well-structured document that was adopted by the Parliament and promulgated by the President.

> "The law opens up the lobbying market in Ukraine and should create a culture of virtuous influence. I would like to note that this market already existed, but it was in the shadows, which created the basis for corruption risks. From now on, businesses can enter into contracts with lobbyists to promote their interests, and the activities of people who will transparently lobby for the commercial interests of individuals and legal entities will be regulated"

Viktor Pavlushchyk
Head of the National Agency for Corruption Prevention

Impact story: Supporting Parliaments in the OSCE region to develop and adopt Codes of Ethics

> "The Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic is strengthening its integrity framework and has drafted a Code of Ethics. This study visit of Kyrgyz Members of Parliament to the UK Parliament was extremely useful, as we had a chance to discuss the well-established system of Westminster with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards of the UK and debate practices that can be adapted to our national context".

Cholpon Sultanbekova
Chairperson of the Committee for Constitutional Legislation, State Structure, Judicial and Legal Issues and RegulationsJogorku Kenesh of Kyrgyzstan

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) supports national parliaments in OSCE participating States in developing parliamentary integrity systems. During the reporting period, ODIHR provided assistance to the Jogorku Kenesh of Kyrgyzstan, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in drafting parliamentary Codes of Ethics. As a result, two parliaments (Moldova and Ukraine) have drafted a Code of Ethics, and one parliament (Kyrgyzstan) has adopted such a Code. ODIHR's support has included drafting legal opinions, facilitating dialogue between parliamentary political parties, presenting ODIHR's analysis and practices in the OSCE region to relevant parliamentary committees, and organizing a study visit of a parliamentary working group from Kyrgyzstan to the UK Parliament.

In 2023, the OSCE Mission to Skopje supported three municipalities in North Macedonia in implementing integrity measures aimed at reducing opportunities for corruption, enhancing transparency, and modernizing processes. These efforts not only improved efficiency but also elevated the quality of public service delivery. The project also addressed various elements of the integrity system, including: conflict of interest prevention, ethical behavior, human resources management, public sector quality standards, whistleblower protection, gender equality, transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

38 events on integrity
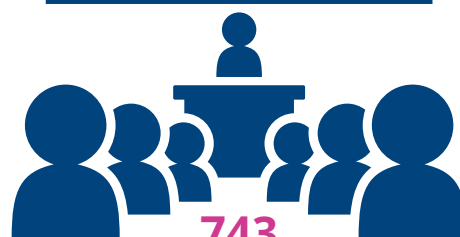
743

participants

One of the training-of-trainers sessions for public procurement officials organized with the support of the OSCE Presence in Albania, 20 March 2023, Tirana. (OSCE)

■ In October 2023, the OSCE Presence in Albania concluded a three-year project to strengthen capacities and increase transparency of the public procurement system in Albania. The project activities included independent research to map corruption risks and propose anti-corruption measures in targeted public procurement sectors, in consultation with CSOs. Additionally, the project provided technical expertise to the Albanian School of Public Administration and the Public Procurement Agency to develop a multi-module curriculum on public procurement and create a new pool of trainers. The Presence also delivered specialized training activities on prosecution and adjudication of procurement offences to judges and prosecutors.

■ The OSCE also supported key reforms that enhanced integrity frameworks: merit-based promotion of police in North Macedonia, development of disciplinary codes and procedures for internal investigations for Armenian police, delivering training on conflict management in Ukraine, and integrity training programme for political advisors in ministerial cabinets in Albania.

4.4 Empowering Women to Fight Corruption

Why it matters: *Corruption disproportionately affects women and prevents the achievement of gender equality. Corruption exacerbates gender disparities, increases or at least perpetuates social inequalities in accessing health and education services, resources and income distribution, and poses a major obstacle to women gaining full access to their civil, social and economic rights. Corruption contributes to increasing social, cultural, political and institutional discrimination against women in the everyday life.*

Empowering women is a crucial strategy for preventing corruption. It leads to more inclusivity and diversity in decision-making processes, thus contributing to a more balanced governance. Studies have shown that when women are in leadership roles, there is often a stronger emphasis on ethics, transparency, and accountability[3]. Women's empowerment contributes to reducing gender disparities in access to resources, reducing vulnerability to exploitation and corruption. Empowering women in law enforcement, judiciary, and anti-corruption agencies brings different perspectives and approaches to combating corrupt practices.

Gender-sensitive policies and women's involvement in community monitoring increase oversight and discourage corrupt behavior. Moreover, women's empowerment fosters stronger civic participation, as empowered women are more likely to report corruption and advocate for reform. This not only curbs corruption but also promotes a fairer, more equitable society.

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3   For an in-depth discussion: Kubbe, Ina, and Ortrun Merkle, eds. Norms, Gender and Corruption. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022.

MEET THE SPEAKERS
Follow online live via UN Web TV

Unpacking the Nexus and Finding Solutions on Gender, Corruption and Access To Natural Resources

Opening remarks

H.E. HELGA MARIA SCHMID
OSCE Secretary General

H.E. MAURIZIO MASSARI
Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations in New York

H.E. KEITH MCBEAN
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland to the UN

Moderation / Closing remarks

DR. LARA SCARPITTA
OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

Thematic discussion

DR. MICHAEL BREEN
Professor, Dublin City University, Ireland

JOACHIME NASON
Head of Humanitarian Section, EU Delegation to the UN in New York

DR. AYSE BETUL CELIK
Professor, Sabancı University & Mediterranean Women's Mediators Network

MARIA VICTORIA CABRERA BALLEZA
Chief Executive Officer, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders

OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Buan-Ionad na hÉireann chun na Náisiún Aontaithe
Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations

Permanent Mission of Italy UN - New York

WIN – Women & Men Innovating & Networking for Gender Equality

The 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) was the UN's largest annual gathering on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Impact story: No Woman's Land: Unpacking the Nexus and Finding Solutions on Gender, Corruption and Access to Natural Resources

> *"Corruption is not gender-neutral; it disproportionately affects women. This is why we need targeted, gender-responsive policies. It's time to unlock women's potential in fighting corruption and remove the barriers that stand in their way to full empowerment.*

Helga Maria Schmid
Former OSCE Secretary General

On 13 March 2024, OSG/GIP co-hosted a side event titled "No Woman's Land: Unpacking the Nexus and Finding Solutions on Gender, Corruption, and Access to Natural Resources" alongside Italy and Ireland at the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) in New York.

The event brought together international experts, civil society leaders, and academics, providing a platform to explore how corruption and gender intersect, particularly in the context of women's access to natural resources. Discussions focused on the political, environmental, social, and economic impacts of corruption, emphasizing how it disproportionately affects women.

The event also featured the presentation of the ground-breaking research on "Gender and Corruption in Access to Natural Resources: Preliminary Findings." This report explores how women's economic empowerment and participation in decision-making are hindered by corruption in four key sectors: water, land, forestry, and extractive industries.

Participants examined the pervasive nature of corruption in various contexts, including peace and mediation efforts and humanitarian settings. High-level speakers and practitioners stressed the importance of integrating women into decision-making processes, especially in humanitarian situations and negotiations over critical resources like water and land.

Impact stories on OSCE activities empowering women against corruption

Participants in the workshop on gender-related ethical dilemmas, diversity, and inclusion within police work in North Macedonia, 27-30 June 2023, Ohrid. (OSCE)

■ In 2023, the OSCE Mission to Skopje organized a **workshop focused on gender-related ethical dilemmas, diversity, and inclusion within police work**, emphasizing their importance for leadership and integrity. Twenty-nine mid- and senior-level police managers attended the workshop. It highlighted the critical role of middle management in upholding ethical standards and increasing awareness of gender-sensitive policies and approaches.

■ To enhance the knowledge of public institution employees at both central and local levels, the OSCE Mission to Skopje in collaboration with the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, developed an **e-learning course on the gender dimensions of corruption**. This course is available on the Commission's website. The training builds on the Mission's pioneering work in analyzing gender aspects of corruption in North Macedonia. The Mission also promoted its findings at online events with key stakeholders and advocated for legal reforms to classify **sexual extortion as a form of corruption**.

■ In August 2024, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo supported the municipality of Obiliq / Obilić in organizing a workshop for village political representatives and women activists. The goal was to encourage **active participation of women in the budgeting process**. Discussions centered on the role of village representatives in budget planning and how they can contribute to **gender-responsive budgeting**. Participants also explored ways to identify the specific needs of women in their communities and incorporate these needs into proposed investment projects.

Workshop for villate political representatives and women activists, 22 August 2024, Obiliq/Obilić. (OSCE)

> *"The primary objective of the Mission's activities has been to enhance the capacities of local women so that they could effectively address the challenges in their environment and lobby with the municipal administration for change"*

Biljana Nastovska
Gender Advisor at the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

OSCE SPU Gender Advisor Paul Fraleigh presents the Gender Equality Policy in the Media Content to media stakeholders, 14 August 2024, Kyiv. (OSCE/Kostyantyn Chernichkin)

■ In 2024, the OSCE's Extra-Budgetary Support Programme for Ukraine backed the development of the **Gender Equality Policy in Media Content** in **Ukraine**, a comprehensive set of standards aimed at promoting gender equality and mainstreaming in the media. The policy outlines key principles for the fair representation of men and women, provides guidance on avoiding sexism, and offers 'dos and don'ts' for covering gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence. This document equips Ukrainian media professionals with the tools to challenge stereotypes, uphold gender equality, and contribute to the protection of women's and men's rights. Watch the video from the launch event here.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND CORRUPTION

12 events
organized in the
OSCE region

614

participants

5. Anti-Corruption Education Pillar

5.1 Involvement of Civil Society and Youth

Why it matters: *Escaping the corruption trap requires a change in attitudes and behavior. Corruption is more likely to diminish when citizens are aware of their rights, understand acceptable conduct, and refuse to tolerate or accept corrupt practices. Youth, in particular, are open to new approaches and eager to improve their societies. This makes anti-corruption education and the involvement of civil society and youth essential for fostering a culture of integrity.*

Teaching young people about the dangers and consequences of corruption equips future leaders with the values needed to resist and challenge unethical practices. Youth activism brings fresh perspectives and innovative solutions, often using technology and social media for advocacy. Civil society plays a critical role in ensuring that anti-corruption efforts extend beyond government initiatives. Organizations act as watchdogs, monitoring government actions, demanding transparency, and reducing opportunities for corruption. Engaging communities in anti-corruption campaigns increases public pressure for reform and strengthens civic responsibility.

Education empowers citizens to recognize, report, and resist corrupt behavior, promoting a more accountable society. This broad participation supports democratic processes and ensures sustainable, community-driven anti-corruption measures. Ultimately, these efforts help build a society where integrity is the norm, not the exception.

Impact stories on OSCE's work with civil society and youth

■ The OSCE Programme Office in Astana, in collaboration with the Public Association "Jastar Alauy", organized the "Youth Against Corruption" case challenge in Kazakhstan. Through engaging activities, panel discussions, and interactive contests, the event empowered young people to take an active role in combating corruption, aligning with national efforts to foster a culture of transparency and accountability.

A standout feature was the contest simulating real-life corruption cases, which encouraged participants to identify corrupt practices and propose solutions. This hands-on approach not only educated but also inspired young people to become champions of integrity in their own communities.

The participants of "Youth Against Corruption" event during the case discussion. (OSCE/ Akbota Sarzhanova)

> *"The enthusiasm that these young people bring to the fight against corruption is truly inspiring, and it shows that they understand the vital role that they play in shaping the future of our country".*

Miras Kargabay
Head of the Preventive Services Department of the Anti-Corruption Agency of Kazakhstan.

Impact story: Using the power of formal and informal education in Kyrgyzstan to educate youth on the dangers of being involved in corruption and criminal activities

In 2023, the OSCE, through a joint TNTD-OCEEA project, contributed to shaping the future of **Kyrgyzstan** by empowering its youth to stand against corruption and crime. Through the development and launch of a **groundbreaking educational curriculum**, 2,000 schools across Kyrgyzstan are now equipped to educate 800,000 schoolchildren on the risks and consequences of engaging in criminal and corrupt activities. This transformative programme aims to nurture a new generation grounded in integrity, respect for the law, and commitment to justice.

Beyond the classroom, the OSCE's reach extended even further. A powerful **crime prevention and integrity campaign**, featuring some of Kyrgyzstan's most influential voices—bloggers, athletes, and activists—engaged 1.5 million young people. These leaders shared personal stories of resilience, highlighting their commitment to honesty and community. Their message? A brighter future can only be built on the foundations of lawfulness and integrity.

Through initiatives like this, the OSCE is not just addressing today's challenges but also laying the groundwork for a future where Kyrgyzstan's youth lead with integrity, fostering a society built on transparency, justice, and hope.

> "We are proud to have created, with OSCE's support, a curriculum that equips young people with the knowledge and tools to champion the rule of law and integrity throughout Kyrgyzstan"

Kyialbek Akmatov
Head of the School Education Policy Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan.

> "From a young age, I knew I could achieve success through my own merit, without relying on nepotism or bribes. Many take dishonest paths out of desperation, but this only holds us all back. Real change begins with zero tolerance for corruption and dishonesty"

Aigerim Akylbekova
Prominent Kyrgyz journalist and activist.
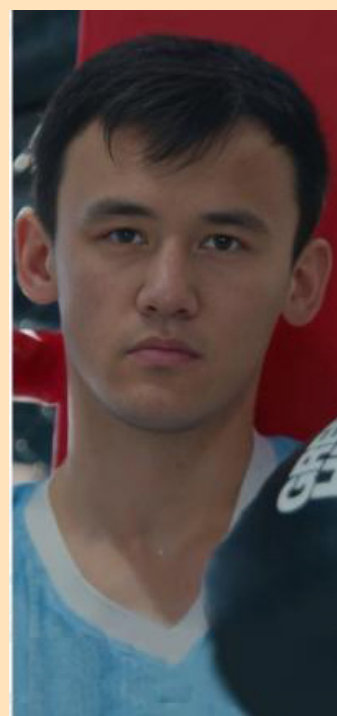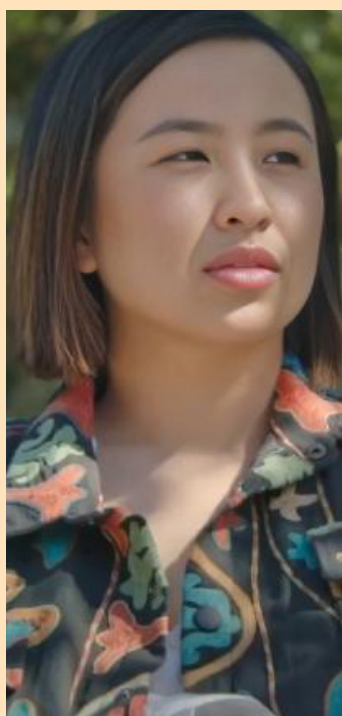
Influencers involved in the awareness raising campaign on youth crime prevention in Kyrgyzstan (Media Kitchen). From left to right: Meerim Tolopbergen, blogger; Aidana Otorbaeva, football player; Urmat Borchenov, TV host; Samat Adbyrahmanov, boxer

In 2023 and 2024, to strengthen the culture of dialogue in public service and meaningful engagement with civil society, the OSCE's Extra-Budgetary Support Programme for Ukraine, together with the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine developed a **training course for public officials on civic participation mechanisms in public policy process.**

Sixty civil servants from central-level executive authorities participated in the training, where they explored the core principles, international standards, and national regulatory frameworks governing public consultations. They also learned about various formats for conducting these consultations, equipping them with the skills to foster more effective interactions with communities and stakeholders.

"We realized that this course could become a stand-alone product with a lasting impact and the potential to multiply its effect. Various communities have already benefitted from this course. For example, a pilot project to establish local councils for accessibility is underway."

Diana Protsenko
Lawyer; trainer in consensus practices and a member of the National Association of Mediators

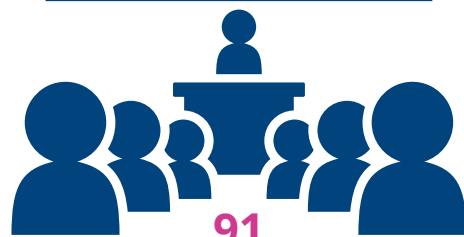## ANTI-CORRUPTION EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUTH

11 events on youth and anticorruption

2904
participants

4 events on anti-corruption education

91
participants

12 events on civil society participation

2431
participants

■ In 2023 and 2024, the OSCE Mission to Serbia, in co-operation with the National Youth Council of Serbia, organized three seminars for participants from various youth organizations. The seminars were designed as an introductory guide to anti-corruption and government transparency, and covered topics such as understanding of corruption and its societal impact, domestic and international legal frameworks, policies and standards, different forms of corruption, access to public information, legal protection of whistle-blowers and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the fight against corruption.

Seminar for participants from various youth organizations, 20 June 2024, Sombor. (OSCE)

Other noteworthy OSCE initiatives are the Essay competition in North Macedonia 2023 and the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Democracy, 2023.

The OSCE field operations and institutions employed several measures to engage with civil society in different participating States:

- **Consultation and partnership with civil society organizations**. Many OSCE projects actively involved CSOs in discussions, policy development, and implementation of anti-corruption and good governance measures.
- **Capacity building and training initiatives for civil society**. In some projects, OSCE conducted training sessions, workshops, or forums to empower CSOs and the private sector with knowledge on transparency, compliance, and good governance.
- **Participation of civil society in policy-level activities**. OSCE projects engaged civil society in formal discussions on policy reforms, legislation, and recommendations for governance improvements.
- **Collaboration with the private sector for ethical practices and compliance**. Private sector collaboration aimed at fostering a culture of integrity through joint initiatives like public-private dialogues and compliance training.
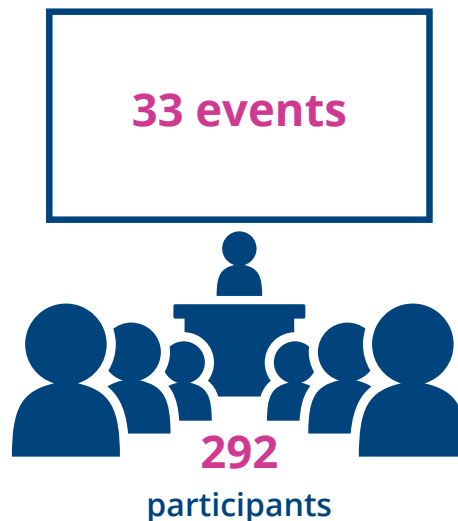
6. Combating Corruption Pillar

6.1 Enhancing Asset Recovery Mechanisms

Why it matters: *Corruption is a calculated crime pursued for material gain, with perpetrators often fearing the loss of their profits more than a prison sentence. Seizing and confiscating ill-gotten assets disrupts criminal networks by dismantling the financial structures that support them. It also deters future corruption by increasing the likelihood that stolen assets will be traced and confiscated. International cooperation plays a key role, making it harder for corrupt actors to hide their wealth across borders.*

Recovering assets also restores public trust by demonstrating that stolen wealth can be returned to societies for public benefit. Repatriated assets can be reinvested into development projects and essential public services. Asset recovery reinforces the rule of law, showing that crime does not pay and that justice can hold offenders accountable.

INTEGRITY

33 events

292
participants

Impact story: Strengthening Asset Recovery Efforts in the OSCE Region

The OSCE and the Special Representative to the Chairperson-in-Office on Combatting Corruption Anita Ramasastry held a side event on asset recovery at the 21st International Anti-Corruption Conference.

Speakers and participants at the OSCE side event,18 June 2024, Vilnius. (OSCE)

The side event "Asset Recovery Speed Dating: 18 Countries in One Hour" focused on the findings of the report "Good practices in asset recovery legislation in selected OSCE participating States". This comparative report outlines established good practices and identifies innovative legal provisions that may serve as inspiration for other states in advancing their asset recovery mechanisms. The workshop panel included experts from the OSCE, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Basel Institute on Governance as well as a practitioner's perspective from Italy and a civil society contribution from Romania. The OSCE's Asset Recovery work is cross-dimensional, leveraging mandates and tools to help participating States tackle the financial aspects of crime and the links between organized crime and corruption. More information on the OSCE asset recovery project can be found here.

6.2 Enhancing Institutional Capacities to Combat Corruption

Why it matters: *Effective corruption prevention is undermined if deterrence is not equally strong. If anti-corruption prosecutions fail to secure convictions and confiscate illicit gains, perpetrators will feel emboldened to continue abusing power, despite public discontent. Thus, a strong track record of prosecuting corruption sends a clear message that corrupt behavior will not be tolerated and will be met with consequences. This also serves as a powerful tool for deterrence, making corruption a high-risk, low-reward activity. It builds public trust in institutions by showing that laws are applied fairly and consistently, regardless of an individual's position or influence. It encourages whistleblowers to come forward, knowing that their reports can lead to tangible outcomes. A credible anti-corruption track record boosts a country's reputation, attracting more foreign investment and enhancing economic stability. Successful convictions and confiscations recover stolen public resources, which can be redirected to critical areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.*

Impact story: The report "From Paper to Practice: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Judicial Response to serious Organized Crime and Corruption in the Western Balkans"

The report was developed within the Regional Trial Monitoring Project funded by the European Union and implemented by the OSCE field operations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia. As of July 2024, Serbia also joined. The project's methodology, drawing on ODIHR's Trial Monitoring Manual and drawing on the extensive experience of OSCE field operations in monitoring organized crime and corruption cases, encompasses trial monitoring from the confirmation of indictment to the final and binding verdict. In addition to attending hearings, trial monitoring teams examined judicial acts and media clippings and conducted an extensive legal analysis of the observed issues. The teams also held consultations with judicial stakeholders and organized both local and regional discussion forums, providing an opportunity for judges and prosecutors to discuss some of the most pressing legal matters.

The report presents key findings identified in the period from July 2021 to March 2024. To remedy challenges related to the independence of judiciary, trial management, sanctioning policy, quality of judicial acts, financial investigations and asset forfeiture, the report introduced a comprehensive set of targeted and actionable recommendations directed towards the judiciary. A Factsheet with the main findings and recommendations is available here.

Project Manager, OMiK, DHRC/LJS Kahramon Sanginov presenting the Report's findings and recommendations.

"*The OSCE report was done very thoroughly, diagnosed the main problems of the proceedings before the courts in Montenegro, and provided good solutions to overcome them. The cooperation of the Special State Prosecution and the OSCE, along with the assistance provided by the studious and expert analyses of the current situation in the judiciary, are of great importance for the improvement of the judicial system and an effective fight against corruption*".

Vladimir Novović
Chief Special Prosecutor of Montenegro

Impact story: Training course on investigative techniques and international cooperation in corruption cases

he OCEEA's training course in July 2024 had a powerful impact on advanced-level practitioners from **Moldova**'s anti-corruption institutions. The course combined theoretical insights, real-life case studies, practical exercises, and international good practices to equip participants with critical new skills and knowledge essential for combating corruption. The training was implemented within the framework of the project "Supporting Anti-Government Efforts of the Government of Moldova".

Participants benefited from the expertise of their counterparts in Italy and Romania, gaining valuable insights into innovative investigative techniques and the effective use of international cooperation tools in the investigation of corruption.

"We need training courses such as this to help us develop our skills and exchange experiences with colleagues from other countries".

Training participant testimony

Participants in the OCEEA training on anti-corruption investigative techniques, 5 July 2024, Chisinau. (OSCE)

## Impact stories on OSCE activities to support the fight against corruption

Participants at the round table on the amendments of the Law on Organization and Jurisdiction of State Authorities in combating organized crime, terrorism and corruption, 15-16 November 2023, Belgrade. (OSCE/Milan Obradovic)

In 2023, the OSCE Mission to Serbia closely monitored the implementation of the Law on Organization and Jurisdiction of State Authorities in combating organized crime, terrorism and corruption, engaging in direct discussions with police, prosecutors, and judges to address operational challenges. As a result of these efforts, the Mission with the consent of the Ministry of Justice, established a dedicated working group to draft amendments to the law. These amendments, informed by the OSCE's recommendations and key priorities, aim to significantly enhance the efficiency of corruption investigations, prosecutions, and court proceedings.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina has been instrumental in supporting the establishment of the independent Anti-Corruption Offices (ACOs) across all cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH). Regarding the institutional framework and the establishment of specialized, independent ACOs, the Mission, alongside its partners from the EU Delegation and US Embassy, facilitated the creation of cantonal ACOs in Una-Sana, Posavina, Tuzla Canton, Zenica-Doboj, and Canton 10 and most recently in Bosnia-Podrinje Canton. Including Sarajevo Canton, there are now seven cantonal ACOs in BiH. Together with the Agency for Prevention of Corruption and Coordination and Brcko District ACO, they form the institutional backbone for corruption prevention in the country. The ACOs undertake activities such as data collection, analysis, and reporting of corrupt activities to authorities and promotion of the fair and equal enforcement of laws to bolster public trust in the government.
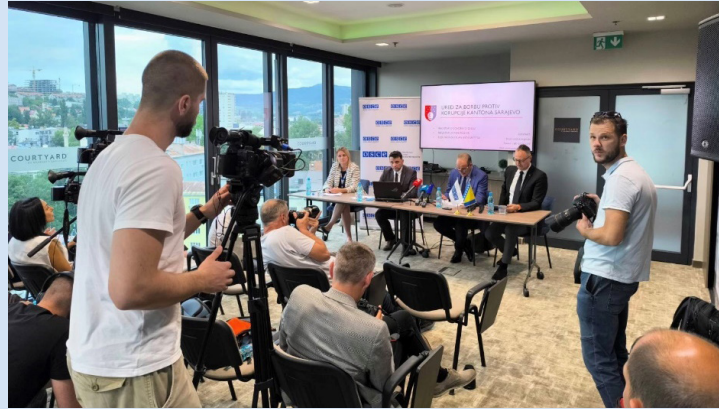
Press conference of Canton Sarajevo ACO regarding promotion of the public registries on data collection. (OSCE)

All ACOs workshop on data collection and analysis. (OSCE)

ACO Una-Sana Canton Opening Ceremony. (OSCE)

ANTI-CORRUPTION CAPACITY BUILDING

51 events

2020

participants

7. Living by Our Values

Integrity is one of the core values of the OSCE. The Organization's commitment to prevent and fight fraud and corruption is reflected in the design and support of policies, procedures, and measures to ensure against misuse of authority for private gain.

The OSCE enforces an internal Code of Conduct that outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Failure to comply with the Code may constitute misconduct warranting disciplinary action. OSCE policies also include provisions that safeguard against conflict of interest in different organizational processes and retaliation against whistleblowers.

Integrity is also one of the values in focus of competency-based interviewing of candidates for OSCE posts, as well as regular performance review of staff.

The OSCE organizes regular sessions to educate employees about policies and procedures, proactively addressing the possibility of non-compliance through lack of awareness.

8. OSCE Key Anti-Corruption and Good Governance Publications

The report examines how women's economic empowerment and participation in decision-making are affected by corrupt practices in four sectors: water, land, forestry and extractive industries.
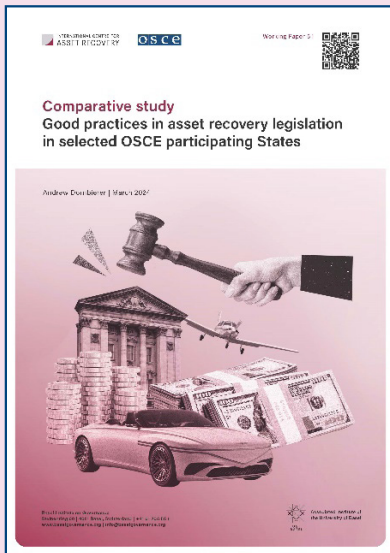
The study identifies legislative mechanisms in OSCE participating States that empower the state to confiscate suspected or proven proceeds of crime.
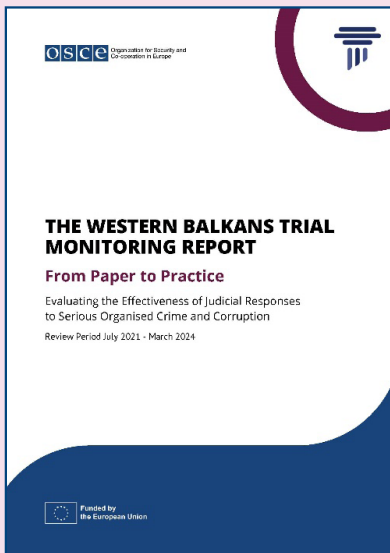
The report is based on a review of judiciary performance in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia in four main areas: fairness, efficiency, capacity and judicial tools. The performance was assessed by monitoring 264 organized crime and corruption cases involving 4164 hearings held between July 2021 and March 2024.

The "Toolkit for Start-Ups" provides guidelines on establishing and developing start-ups in Albania, covering legal, institutional, and financial aspects.

The Guidebook on the Procedure for Whistle-blowers Protection is designed for training and use by individuals who are authorized to receive whistleblower reports in North Macedonia. It is divided into five thematic chapters, providing a brief overview of the legal regulations and by-laws concerning whistleblower protection in North Macedonia. It explains the procedures for receiving reports from whistleblowers, outlines the responsibilities and actions of authorized individuals within public institutions, and details the forms and processes in place to ensure whistleblower protection. The guide includes illustrative examples of whistleblower cases from an international context, as well as developed potential scenarios for handling similar situations.
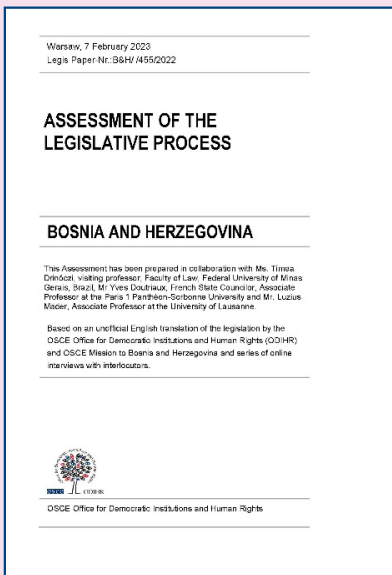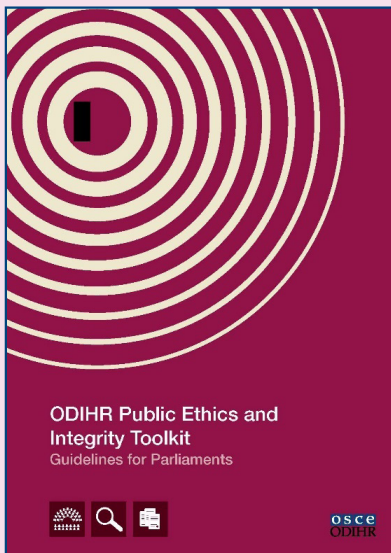
ODIHR Assessment of Legislative Functioning of Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliaments

Manual for journalists on how to cover an electoral campaign in Montenegro
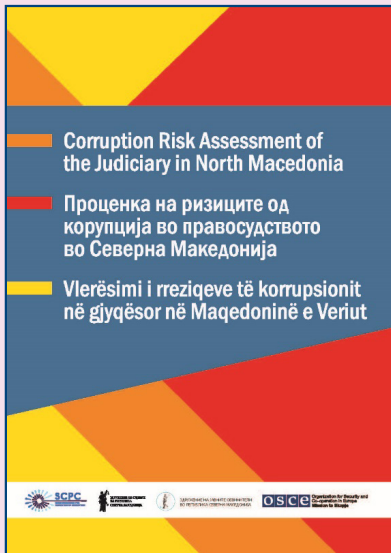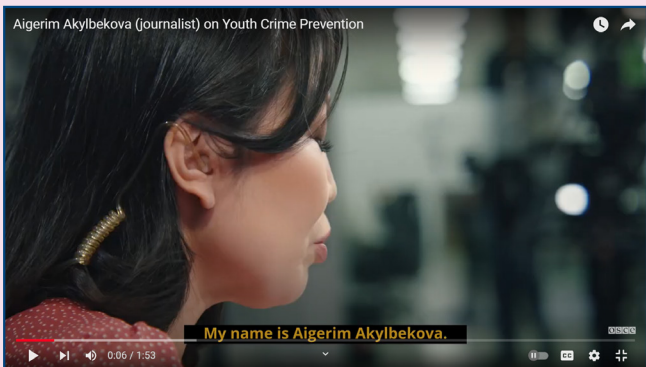
Corruption Risk Assessment of the Judiciary
in North Macedonia

ODIHR Public Ethics and Integrity
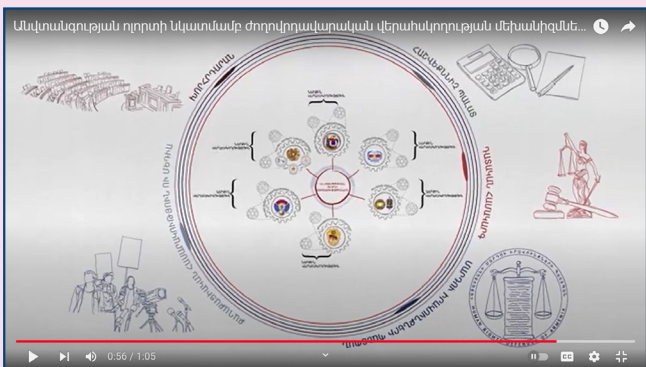Toolkit: Guidelines for Parliaments

Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking
for Better Laws

Video: personal story from Aigerim Akylbekova on corruption (Youth Crime Prevention project)

Video: pilot lesson on the curriculum on Youth Crime Prevention (Youth Crime Prevention project)

Video: Public Service Announcement on democratic oversight of security sector in Armenia

Video: "Feel Justice" JustConf-2023, Ukraine, November 2023

Video: Justice in Ukraine during the war: problems of considering corruption and war crimes in Ukraine, December 2023

Video: Digital Empowerment: Central Asian Women's Entrepreneurship Programme Concludes Successfully

Annex 1: OSCE Commitments in the Area of Anti-Corruption and Good Governance

The **1999 Charter for European Security** is the first OSCE document that makes a reference to corruption, recognizing it as a threat to the OSCE's shared values. Participating States pledged to strengthen their efforts to combat corruption and the conditions that foster it, and to promote a better use of existing international instruments. The Charter also sets the ground for the OSCE's work with civil society organizations in the fight against corruption.

The **2003 Strategy Document for Economic and Environmental Dimension** (*Maastricht*) aims to advance the OSCE's efforts to promote good public and private sector governance and combat corruption. The Strategy calls upon participating States to ratify and implement existing anti-corruption instruments and develop long-term anti-corruption strategies.

The **2004 Ministerial Council decision on Combating Corruption** (*Sofia*) encourages OSCE participating States to sign and ratify the UNCAC as well as to fully implement the Convention. This Decision entails concrete provisions with regards to the responsibilities of the OSCE Secretariat and the OCEEA in the fight against corruption. It tasks the OCEEA, upon request of the OSCE participating States to "provide support in mobilizing technical assistance, including necessary expertise and resources, in the ratification or/and the implementation of UNCAC".

In the **2012 Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism** (*Dublin*) the participating States reiterated "that good governance at all levels is fundamental to economic growth, political stability, and security." They tasked OSCE Secretariat/OCEEA, at their request, with providing support, including the mobilization of technical assistance, developing and/or harmonizing their national anti-corruption legislation, ensuring practical implementation and effective enforcement through exchanges of experience and good practices at the regional, subregional and national levels and providing advice and training in cooperation with other relevant organizations.

The 2014 Ministerial Council Decision on Corruption Prevention *(Basel)* encourages participating States to develop and implement preventive anti-corruption legislation and policies; adopt and strengthen systems that prevent conflicts of interest; foster the involvement of civil society organizations; establish and enhance systems of public procurement; and facilitate asset recovery.

The 2016 Ministerial Council Decision on Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity *(Hamburg)* encourages participating States to adhere to international standards, including the OECD Convention on and FATF Recommendations; to exchange best practices and contribute to good public and corporate governance; tasks OSCE executive structures, including field operations, to contribute to enhancing cooperation between participating States, the private sector and civil society in strengthening good governance, promoting transparency and improving the business and investment climate.

The 2017 Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Economic Participation in the OSCE Area *(Vienna)* recognizes that more effective prevention of corruption and the promotion of good governance reinforce trust in public institutions, improve corporate social responsibility and thereby promote economic participation. The Decision also acknowledges the importance of the active participation of the private sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises, trade unions, civil society and media, in preventing and combating corruption.

The 2018 Ministerial Council Decision on Human Capital Development in the Digital Era *(Milan)* encourages the participating States to promote efforts against corruption in the education and training sectors, as well as open, equal and corruption-free access to education, digital skills and training opportunities. The Decision acknowledges that human capital development, including in the digital context, positively contributes to making economies and societies more resilient to corruption.

The 2020 Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Corruption through Digitalization and Increased Transparency *(Tirana)* recognizes the importance of open government data as a tool that can help to prevent and combat corruption by increasing accountability and transparency, allowing citizens to better monitor the use of public funds. The Decision also encourages participating States to make the best use of the OSCE as a platform for dialogue, coopera-tion, exchange of information and sharing of best practices in the area of preventing and combating corruption through digitalization.

On the side event of the Ministerial Council 2023 in Skopje, five Ministers of Foreign Affairs from South-Eastern Europe signed the **Joint Statement on Combating Corruption in South-Eastern Europe through Asset Recovery and the Use of Digitalization**. This Statement underscores the Region's determination to work together to investigate and prosecute corruption.