

EMBARGOED UNTIL 6:01 CET/00:01 EST TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2023

2022 CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX REVEALS HOW UNDUE INFLUENCE AND FRAGMENTED ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS THREATEN PROGRESS IN WESTERN EUROPE & EU

Nearly a third of countries in the region hit historically low scores this year

Berlin, 31 January 2023 – The 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released today by Transparency International shows that while Western Europe and the EU remains the top-scoring region many countries are showing worrying signs of decline.

2022 exposed how powerful industries and foreign actors have had undue influence over decision-making across the region – from the Uber Files scandal in **France** (72), to a **German** (79) state government’s ties to Russian state-owned gas company Gazprom, to “Qatargate” allegations that members of the European Parliament took bribes from Qatari and Moroccan officials. These cases demonstrate how external influence, poor enforcement of integrity standards and threats to the rule of law undermine the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.

Flora Cresswell, Western Europe Regional Coordinator of Transparency International said:

“Just as Europe faces myriad challenges – from the war in Ukraine and subsequent energy and food shortages to looming recession – the region is failing to fight corruption. This year we’ve seen how powerful industries and foreign leaders can influence policy at the expense of the public interest from France to Germany and the EU itself. In order for leaders to effectively tackle the crises facing the continent, they must prioritise sustained, comprehensive action to combat corruption and ensure integrity in politics.”

WESTERN EUROPE & EU HIGHLIGHTS

The CPI ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption on a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).

The CPI Western Europe and EU average holds at 66.

- **Denmark** (90) tops the region and the world, with **Finland** (87) and **Norway** (84) rounding out the top.
- **Romania** (46), **Bulgaria** (43) and **Hungary** (42) remain the worst performers in the region.
- **Sweden** (83), **Switzerland** (82), the **Netherlands** (80), **Luxembourg** (77), the **United Kingdom** (73), **Slovenia** (56), **Poland** (55), **Cyprus** (52), **Malta** (51) and **Hungary** (42) are all at historic lows on the index this year.

Since 2017, 96 per cent of countries in the region have either declined or made little to no significant progress.

- During this time period, **Luxembourg** (77), the **United Kingdom** (73) and **Austria** (71) have significantly declined on the CPI.
- Only **Ireland** (77) has significantly improved.

SUSTAINED CORRUPTION IN WESTERN EUROPE & THE EU

The region's piecemeal anti-corruption efforts have led to numerous scandals and serious shortcomings in political integrity frameworks. This includes opaque spending in the defence sector – which could become more problematic as European countries step up military funding in the wake of the Russian attack on Ukraine.

- This year the **United Kingdom** (73) dropped five points to its lowest ever score. A number of scandals from public spending to lobbying, as well as revelations into ministerial misconduct have highlighted woeful inadequacies in the country's political integrity systems. Public trust in politics is worryingly low, but government support for an integrity and ethics bill currently in the House of Lords would result in a package of reforms that could help turn around the UK's decline.
- In many countries across the region, defence spending is hidden behind a veil of secrecy over claims of national security, which could prove ever more dangerous as more funds are allocated. In **Germany** (79), for example, the government has now set up a 100 billion euro fund to revamp its military, but such simplified procurement opens up significant risks for corruption. However, a new national security strategy currently being debated within the government could help to strengthen integrity and transparency mechanisms if adopted.
- **Bulgaria** (43) remains one of the lowest CPI performers in the region, and political instability continued to be a challenge. Recent amendments could threaten the integrity of elections, as the country also struggles to maintain the rule of law. The parliament has not taken enough action to protect civic space, with a "foreign agent" law pending. The legislature did finally adopt whistleblower protection legislation last week, so these measures must be implemented right away.

- Even countries that hold the top spots on the CPI have stagnated as they fail to address shortcomings in political integrity frameworks. No Nordic countries have significantly improved since 2017, and now states like **Switzerland** (82) and the **Netherlands** (80) are showing signs of decline amidst concerns over weak integrity and lobbying regulations.

Transparency International calls on governments to prioritise anti-corruption commitments, reinforcing checks and balances, upholding rights to information and limiting private influence to finally rid the world of corruption – and the instability it brings.

Daniel Eriksson, Chief Executive Officer of Transparency International, said:

“Governments must open up space to include the public in decision-making – from activists and business owners to marginalised communities and young people. In democratic societies, the people can raise their voices to help root out corruption and demand a safer world for us all.”

NOTE TO EDITORS

The media page includes the CPI 2022 report, as well as the full dataset and methodology, international press release and additional analysis for Western Europe and the EU. See here: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/media-kit>

INTERVIEW REQUESTS

In case of country-specific queries, please contact [Transparency International's national chapters](#).

In case of queries around regional and global findings, please contact the Transparency International Secretariat: press@transparency.org.

ABOUT THE CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX

Since its inception in 1995, the Corruption Perceptions Index has become the leading global indicator of public sector corruption. The Index scores 180 countries and territories around the world based on perceptions of public sector corruption, using data from 13 external sources, including the World Bank, World Economic Forum, private risk and consulting companies, think tanks and others. The scores reflect the views of experts and business people.

The process for calculating the CPI is regularly reviewed to make sure it is as robust and coherent as possible, most recently by the European Commission's

Joint Research Centre in 2017. All the CPI scores since 2012 are comparable from one year to the next. For more information, see article: [The ABCs of the CPI: How the Corruption Perceptions Index is calculated.](#)