

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7:01 CET/01:01 EST TUESDAY, 30 JANUARY 2024

2023 CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX: WEAK CHECKS & BALANCES UNDERMINING ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS IN WESTERN EUROPE & EU

Region's first CPI score drop in almost a decade

Berlin, 30 January 2024 – The [2023 Corruption Perceptions Index \(CPI\)](#) released today by Transparency International shows that while Western Europe and the EU remains the top-scoring region, its 2023 regional average score has fallen for the first time in almost a decade from 66 to 65. The weakening of checks and balances are undermining robust anti-corruption measures in the region.

Weak accountability and political corruption are diminishing public trust and enabling narrow interest groups to exert excessive control over political decision-making. Several high-ranking democracies, including **Sweden** (82), **Netherlands** (79), **Iceland** (72) and the **United Kingdom** (71), have recorded their lowest-ever scores. In countries such as **Poland** (54) and **Hungary** (42), weaknesses within judicial systems act as impediments to accessing justice and prevent the judiciary from effectively limiting the powers of the executive.

Flora Cresswell, Western Europe regional coordinator of Transparency International said:

"The fall of the regional CPI score in Western Europe and the EU demonstrates that European governments need to take the fight against corruption and upholding the rule of law more seriously. Rollbacks on checks and balances leave the door open to corruption. Countries must raise their standards and better enforce their own rules to step up efforts against corruption, shielding the justice system from interference and putting a backstop to powerful interest groups in politics."

WESTERN EUROPE AND 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).

Anti-corruption efforts have either stagnated or declined in over three-quarters of the assessed countries. Out of 31 countries, only six have significantly improved their score, while eight experienced a decline since 2012.

- **Denmark** (90), **Finland** (87) and **Norway** (84) top the CPI ranking.

- The lowest-performing countries include **Hungary** (42), **Romania** (46) and **Bulgaria** (45).
- Since 2012, only the **Czech Republic** (57), **Estonia** (76), **Greece** (49), **Latvia** (60), **Italy** (56) and **Ireland** (77) have significantly improved their scores.

For each country's individual score and changes over time, see the global [2023 CPI page](#). For in-depth analysis on trends and countries, see the region's feature article: [CPI 2023 for Western Europe and the European Union: Rule of law and political integrity threats undermine action against corruption](#).

CORRUPTION AND INJUSTICE

Corruption in the justice system erodes trust and public confidence in the administration and application of justice. It deters honest individuals from reporting crime – as they feel that justice will not be served – while also discouraging them from entering public office and the civil service.

- **Poland's** (54) seven-point decline over the last decade underscores the systematic efforts by the previous ruling Law and Order (PiS) party to monopolise power at the expense of public interest. The implementation of judicial reforms, which permitted political appointments and establishment of mechanisms to investigate and penalise judges for their rulings, has disrupted the balance of power and eroded the rule of law in the country. Following the October 2023 elections, restoring this equilibrium and upholding the rule of law are among the new government's priorities. However, the considerable influence that the PiS still exerts over the judiciary poses a significant challenge. Balancing the restoration of the rule of law while respecting democratic processes makes this undertaking a particularly demanding task.
- The rule of law crisis in **Greece** (49) has damaged its CPI gains over the past decade. Wiretapping of journalists and opposition politicians, attacks on press freedom, and weak judicial independence have contributed to the sharpest rule of law decline in the EU. To reverse this trend, the government must ensure the safety and protection of journalists, enhance legislative oversight of lobbying and political party finances, and uphold the autonomy of the anti-corruption authority.

Transparency International calls on governments to guarantee the independence of justice systems, including through resources and transparency to effectively punish all corruption offences and provide checks and balances on power. Where necessary, they must also introduce better procedures and laws to help justice institutions shield themselves from and target corrupt acts.

Daniel Eriksson, Chief Executive Officer of Transparency International said:

“Corruption worsens social injustice and disproportionately affects the most vulnerable. In many countries, obstacles to justice for victims of corruption persist. It is time to break the barriers and ensure people can access justice effectively. Everyone deserves fair and inclusive legal systems where victims’ voices are heard at every stage. Anything else is an affront to justice.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

The media page includes the CPI 2023 report, the full dataset and methodology, international press release, and additional analysis for the Western Europe and the European Union. See here: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023/media-kit>.

To obtain login details, please send an email to press@transparency.org, ensuring that the email explicitly acknowledges the embargo.

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, not the public.

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](#).