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CSOs in fight against corruption - Who we are and who we should be?

Monitoring Corruption and Anticorruption Reforms in SEE: the role, capacity and integrity of the civil society



**This project is funded by the European Union
Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) Civil Society Facility (CSF)**
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the Center for the Study
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The mainstream approach in fight against corruption is that it is a security problem and therefore should be tackled by the governments, however

- “Lack of political will to pursue an Anti-Corruption agenda is a **rational choice** since existing system (political powers) is dependent on the **continued reproduction** of corruption.”

NORAD, Anti-Corruption Approaches Literature review, Study 2/2008

Role of the CSOs in the fight against corruption

CSOs due to their traditional engagements in variety of sectors, usually engage in:

- Public Awareness Raising
- Watchdog - Investigative actions
- Direct assistance
- Policy monitoring, research and assessment
- Advocacy actions
- Service providers

Assumptions and discourses

- EC discourse: CSOs must cooperate with the governments in order to improve public policies and their implementation. In order to do so, CSOs must create coalitions and cross-sector cooperation.
- Main assumption: Governments as well as other sectors have desire to change, reform, improve and tackle corruption!?

Science and reality warnings:

Mainstream anti-corruption experts' discourse:

- “Asking governments to fight corruption is conflict of interests per se, as they would need to fight themselves.”

Dilemma:

- If rational choice of the governments is to “avoid any serious anti-corruption activities” and if assumption that governments are “honest” - is false, where does the discourse - *Obligatory cooperation between the Government and CSOs* lead us in field of fight against corruption?

Balance of power - the main precondition

- CSOs' advocacy actions and policy consultations in its essence represent the negotiations among the stakeholders.
- First principle for successful negotiations is the balance of power.
- Is there a balance of power among anti-corruption stakeholders in your communities?

Anti-corruption logic

- If distribution of resources is heavily controlled by the governments (political powers) at all levels - from municipal to the EU,
- If the policy consultation process is reserved for those that “cooperate” with the governments,
- If the access to media is filtered by the political, financial, economic and sometimes ideological interest,
- If CSOs that are part of such schemes form coalitions,
- What is expected result of such actions?

Is there fight against corruption in the Civil Sector?

- At the very beginning anti-corruption agenda has focused on transparency and accountability, leading to more sophisticated actions such as risk assessments and building integrity in public sector.
- However, the CSOs were left out from such trends and there is a significant lack of transparency and accountability among the CSOs.
- Regulation on financing of CSOs from public sources, Civil actions lobbying and advocacy, conflict of interest and incompatibilities is rather non-existent.
- Practice to advocate for its own interest (*give us money and we will solve problem and say that you - the government - is doing a good job*) has become mainstream among the CSOs in Europe.

CSOs - where and who are we?

- Therefore, CSOs have become part of a problem that has lead Europe to one of the worst political, economic and financial crisis in history.

CSOs - who we should be

- Only the strong, ethical, independent and critical civil society supported by the independent media can achieve the status of balance of social powers and lead countries' reforms.
- There is no evidence that any other approach has ever resulted in any kind of sustainable social development.
- Therefore, CSOs have to clean its own sector prior to any development of strategy in fight against corruption or administrative and political reforms.
- Otherwise all of the actions will remain to be influenced, if not controlled by the corrupt governments that have only one interest - **to preserve the power.**
- What can any of us do about this?

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Thank you !

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