

## The Struggle Against Corruption in Poland

Corruption is a serious topic in Europe. It exists in the EU and in European institutions. However, it has a different quantity and quality in eastern Europe: In all reputable international comparisons, the corruption indices of the states of eastern Europe are worse than those of most of the older EU members. Corruption and the struggle against corruption have also been among the central problems dealt with as part of the eastward extension of the EU. Corruption is a gigantic problem in Poland. The countries of eastern Europe, including Poland, have made tremendous efforts to deal with the problem of corruption. The strategies for combating corruption are as diverse as the different aspects of the phenomenon itself. Poland has used great legislative creativity to establish new institutions and regulations to stem corruption. Some regulations clearly indicate western European influences, while others are genuine eastern European developments. Countless scandals and dubious incidents have shaken the general public in Poland. It is now extremely important to build up administrative capacity in all areas of public administration, because the results of the most recent developments have been very different, and more efforts are still needed.

The struggle against corruption can be waged against its symptoms and also against the factors that encourage the growth of corruption. Training sessions aimed at increasing sensitivity to the problems of corruption should be conducted at all levels of administration. In the Polish system, the struggle against corruption is taking place at two administrative levels: one that is bound by the regulations and one that is not. The current government proposed the creation of a special institution whose responsibility is to combat corruption. This proposal is causing mixed feelings among the experts. On the other hand, it has become evident that the existing regulations are incomplete and that they have been implemented in a negligent way, e.g. with regard to the swearing of oaths of disclosure.

Today, the only place where there is an organized system of training sessions is the civil service, and these training sessions include the theme of governmental administration. In the institutions of territorial self-government, the existence of such training sessions depends on the level of activity, state of knowledge and commitment of the local power structure. There is no obligation to organize such training sessions. However, a very interesting phenomenon is the development of local educational, preventive, organizational, procedural and juridical ventures, as well as numerous mechanisms that promote ethically correct administration and the organization of anti-corruption systems in Polish administrative organs. Poland's membership in the EU is having a very great influence on this kind of activity; another important influence is the public institutions' need for ethical standards. The great store of experience accumulated by our western neighbors is teaching us a great deal. It is showing us, through samples, mistakes and measures, which ventures can be helpful for the process of building up an ethically correct infrastructure.

Other factors are also influencing the total picture of the processes of change in this area: the increase of citizens' influence on the monitoring of the quality and transparency of administrative processes, the increase in the precision of juridical formulations, changes in the mentality of Polish society, the sensitization of people to the problem of corruption, and the demonstration of the results of corruption in public life.

The transparency of public administration has been legally guaranteed in Poland since 2002. The basic principle of transparency in Polish public life must also be understood in the legal and supra-legal sense. Very often, the practical application of this principle is the job of specific legal

procedures, whose result depends on the actors' ability to interpret and apply the laws. The implementation of this basic principle is also dependent on the historical aspect of its application, as well as many other aspects, e.g. the recruitment and hiring procedure in public administration.

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