

PUBLIC INTEGRITY INDEX: THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES' EXPERIENCE

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Implementing the reforms among the Eastern and Central European countries, even taking into account the possible differences between them, demonstrates the positive movement into decreasing the corruption level. However, the majority of civil society lowly perceive the positive reforms' effects. Moreover, the state of democratization and market economy couldn't be estimated highly because of the political conflicts, economic crises, corruption and non-transparency of internal privatization. In view of the abovementioned, this study is aimed to theoretically investigate the value of the Index of Public Integrity (IPI) in the fight against corruption. The author indicated, that IPI was considered to be a new approach to investigate the level of anti-corruption reforms in different countries. Nowadays, the comprehensive picture of the corruption control in 117 countries are introduced. It should be noticed, that global corruption could be overcome by the common efforts on the international level. Thus, IPI allows comparing similar countries by the regions or income in order to implement the best practices of anti-corruption management. In view of this, the authors emphasized that IPI used to estimate the effects of implementing reforms in order to improve the ones as well as decrease the level of corruption in the countries. Thus, in the frame of this article, the IPI from 2015 to 2019 of the Visegrad countries were considered on the base of six following components of IPI such as: judicial independence, administrative burden, trade openness, budget transparency, e-citizenship as well as freedom of the press. The authors indicated that an effective strategy of anti-corruption management demands the collaboration of the government, the business sector, civil society as well as scientific communities in order to develop, realize and estimate the anti-corruption strategies and policy. Moreover, it has been indicated that there was a gap between the corruption theory and practice. In the wake of this, the obtained results in this study could be considered in the scientific society for future investigation in the field of anti-corruption management.

Keywords: *index of public integrity, Visegrad countries, corruption, anti-corruption policy*

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INTRODUCTION

The systematization and summarization of the literature indicated that the studies on corruption issues have become more popular and drawn the more attention of scientists. In turn, the anti-corruption progress hasn't yet got a peak despite the high interest in investigating this topic among the scientific circles. In view of this, there is the gap between the theory and practice in anti-corruption policies. Thus, the study [1] is aimed to combine the latest researches in order to bring to some extent the clarity of the debate among the scientists on the issue of the effectiveness of legal and market decisions in implementing the anti-corruption tools. On the base, the theory with quantitative evidence and case studies on the international level, the authors [2, 3] considered the virtuous circles of anticorruption in order to provide transitions to good governments. In the frame of the researches [4, 5, 6, 7], the author considered the influence of fiscal decentralization on the macroeconomic stability. In accordance with the papers [8, 9, 10, 11, 12], national growth depends on the social and economic development while it provides a higher level of government transparency. In turn, in the paper [13] the EU is considered to be the vector for the development of the economic and social stability stabilities that require implementing the special reforms to overcome the corruption in the country. The studies [14, 15, 16, 17] considered the relationship between the level of education and economic prosperity. The authors indicated that the higher

education level was, the more interested in the government's affairs the citizens were. Moreover, the high level of education provides the development of e-citizenship.

RESULTS

There are many factors why it is hard to overcome corruption on the national or international levels. Thus, the low people's awareness about the possible tools to fight against corruption as well as lack of knowledge about their own rights and government services are ones of the abovementioned factors. It should be noticed, that the anti-corruption management is effective when it combines the government, business and educational forces. In view of this, the government should increase the level of awareness and engagement of the citizens into the issues of necessity to fight against corruption.

In turn, the considered Index of Public Integrity (IPI) is used to help the policymakers or social leaders to investigate the measures that countries provide in order to prevent corruption. It should be noted that the IPI concept doesn't mean to measure the corruption level in the country but demonstrates the countering against it. In view of the above mentioned, IPI measuring includes the analysis of the anti-corruption mechanisms and their effects, the society access to online platforms, the freedom of media, transparency in the legal procedures, etc. In sequent, this approach allows getting both the common view of the corruption level in the country and estimating the strengths and weaknesses in the anti-corruption reforms. Based on the components of IPI it is possible to compare the countries to the peer ones in similar regions or income accordingly to the specific policy areas. It should be noted that all data for the value of abovementioned components were transformed in the range between 1-10, while IPI 10 was the highest score. In view of this, IPI consists of the following six special components such as [18, 19, 20]:

- judicial independence that shows the level of nonprejudiced and non-corrupt judicial services which are the legal constraints to control the level of corruption in the countries. In turn, the data to determinate this component are introduced by the Global Competitiveness Database developed by the World Economic Forum.

- administrative burden presents the extent of bureaucratic regulations on the national level, where the bureaucracy increases the risks of corruption emergence. This component combines the average number of procedures and the time needed to launch the business and pay tax. At the same time, the data are used from the World Bank's Doing Business dataset.

- trade openness provides information about the trade regulation with the international agents. This component measures the average number of needed procedures and the duration of importing and exporting goods. Accordingly, the data to measure this component is presented by the World Bank's Doing Business dataset.

- budget transparency measures the accessibility of publicity to the budget proposals in order to control the public spending that could be discretionary. The base of the budget transparency component is the data from the Open Budget Survey that are provided by the International Budget Partnership.

- e-citizenship introduces the citizens' ability to use online tools as well as social media platforms. Thus, the component consists of information about the number of internet users relative to the total number of citizens. In turn, the data is provided by the International Telecommunication Union and Internet World Stats.

- the freedom of the press shows the freedom level of media to open the information related to corruption issues or any crime. Freedom House is the base of the assessment of freedom of the press.

Nowadays in the conditions of the deep recession of national industry activities and economic stagnation, anti-corruption management is considered to be one of the most important issues to save the national prosperity. However, achieving the real effects in the anti-corruption fight isn't possible just adopting the law amendment and implementing the anti-corruption laws without the society's involvement in the budget procedures. Moreover, the international experience could be significantly important in the anti-corruption fight on the national level. In accordance, to control the government's work the legal mechanisms and

institutions providing transparency, integrity and society-control while preventing the official arbitrary behavior and civil-liberties violations are used. In view of this, in the frame of this article, the experience of the Visegrad countries was considered to compare with Ukrainian one.

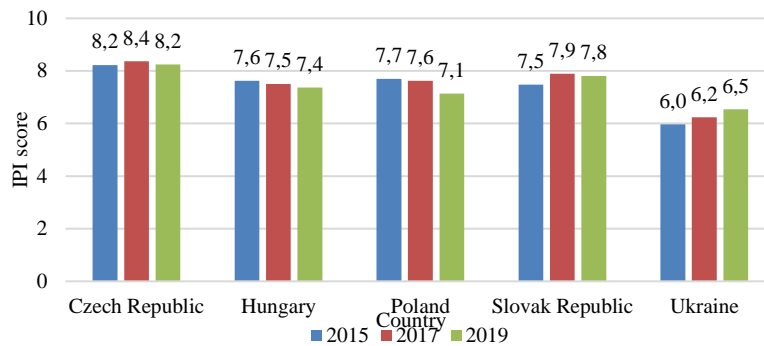


Figure 1 – The dynamics of IPI from 2015 to 2019

*Source: structured by the authors on the data retrieved from [19]

According to Figure 1, in 2019 the Visegrad countries showed the slowdown of IPI while Ukraine has a positive tendency in realizing the system reformation to overcome corruption. In turn, the leader among the considered countries was Czech Republic. It should be noticed that Poland and Hungary have the negative tendencies in improving the government affairs and decreasing the corruption level. The anti-corruption experience of the analyzed countries indicated that in order to get the positive effects in corruption overcoming it was necessary to provide political competition, judicial independence, freedom for media, the motivation of government authorities, etc. in view of this, to deeper consider the effectiveness of implementation of the reforms to overcome the corruption, the components of IPI were considered.

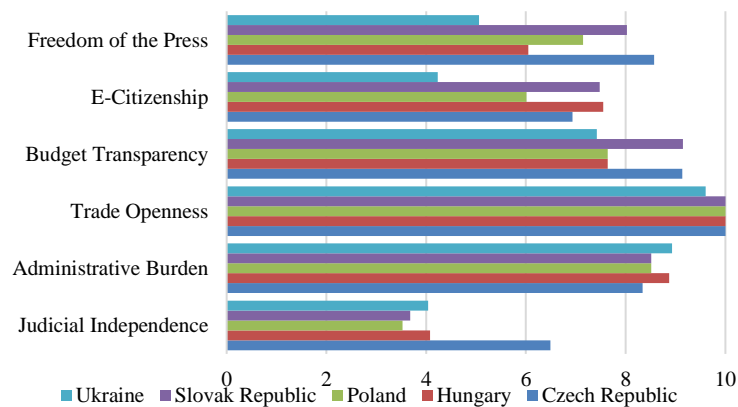


Figure 1 – Rates of IPI Components in 2019

*Source: structured by the authors on the data retrieved from [19]

The Visegrad countries demonstrate balanced social and economic development which is connected with the functioning of democratic institutions including the control under the government. In accordance with Figure 2, each country of the Visegrad group had the highest ranks of trade openness [21] that means the countries' economic policy is effective in restricting and inviting trade between countries. At the same time, Ukraine's trade openness

is a little bit lower. Generally, the more trade open country is, the higher the control of corruption is too. It should be indicated, that existing weakness in custom mechanisms cases the transaction costs high. In order to improve the trade openness, the Visegrad countries boost free competition by removing the administrative trade barriers and reforming the custom services simplifying procedures and selective control in order to increase the level of transparency and partnership. In turn, the level of administrative burden in Ukraine was higher comparing to the Visegrad countries. The Visegrad countries had more effective regulation procedures for launching new businesses and paying taxes [22]. Furthermore, the Czech Republic had less bureaucratic procedures that decreased the level of administrative burden. However, the countries should decrease the level of impartial and non-corrupt judicial systems in order to improve anti-corruption control. In view of the Visegrad experience, the regulations which lead to the emergence of discrimination should be avoided in Ukraine too.

The analyzed results of 14 specific questions from Open Budget Survey [23] indicated that the budget procedures in Hungary and the Czech Republic were more transparent comparing them to Ukraine, Slovak Republic and Poland. It means that the citizens and external agents could be able to more easily get access to budgets. Moreover, the companies and all government agencies should post the budgets of procurement and contracts for society. To decrease the corruption level in the country, the press should be free from pressure as the private sector and as government. However, in the case when the government doesn't repress the press, there is a risk of business pressure [24]. In view of this, the Visegrad countries' free press strategy combines the transparent government and private press ownership. Furthermore, the press and individuals are defended by the civil courts from spreading libel in press and blackmail [25].

Table 1 – The reform proposals to provide the society control of corruption

TRADE OPENNESS	BUDGET TRANSPARENCY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to simplify procedures of import and export regulation; - to improve the trade procedures; - to reform custom policy to get higher performance, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to develop the international budget partnership based on the international standards of budget; - to track expenditures on the local and national levels by the way of e-portals; - to simplify the access to key budget documents, etc.
E-CITIZENSHIP	FREEDOM OF THE PRESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to achieve internet freedom; - to develop and invest in IT education investing; - to expand access to the internet; - to provide the free sharing of information; - to use the online tools in order to assure the work of civil society actors, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to assure the press freedom and minimize the government regulation in media; - to eliminate the pressure on the journalists; - to fund the special online communities investigating and reporting on any crime or corruption; - to transpire the paid content and ownership of it, etc.
JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE	ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to assign and sanction the judges by the professional bodies that validated by the 2/3 of legislative authorities; - to prevent the nepotism by the way of using the clear rules and legal procedures separating the private and public interests; - to eliminate the intervention of political authority, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to simplify the business registration process; - to reduce administrative procedures due to the improving the tax code, development of online tax payments; the private agent acquisition to introduce the tax collection; - to decrease or remove the legal privileges regulations, etc.

*Source: systemized by the authors on the base of [26, 27, 28]

The free information law isn't considered enough to decrease corruption. In turn, it becomes more significant in the case of combining it with active citizens. According to Figure 2, the Visegrad countries had a higher rate of e-citizenship engagement. The civil society broadly uses online tools and social media to increase their empowerment.

According to the statistical data [19] IPI demonstrates how the countries implementing the reforms were successful in anti-corruption regulations. Herewith, prosperity for

corruption could be eliminated by decreasing the number of bureaucratic procedures and red tape as well as opening the doors for society and external agents to take part in the budget procedures. Generally, the anti-corruption reforms are aimed to decrease government power and rationalize public spending. In view of this, the governments aren't eager to take the abovementioned reforms. Accordingly, to get the highest effects in the anti-corruption movement, as the national society as international donors should be interested in reforming the political system of the country. For these reasons, table 1 provides the reform proposals to decrease the corruption burden in the country which could be considered in order to overcome corruption's manifestations.

CONCLUSIONS

The modern economic development is characterized by active globalization processes. In view of this, developing the unique global market where the countries are toughly interrelated is necessary. Moreover, economic globalization defines the political integration processes. In turn, the role of political, military as well as cultural relationships between countries has been rising. In the wake of it, the impact of international organizations which to some extent considered to be the over national regulation authority increases too. It worth to notice that the important precondition of the globalization process is existing of global problems such as environmental crisis, poverty, terrorism, corruption, etc. Moreover, corruption takes place at the national as well as international levels. The systematization and summarization of the scientific resources on the issues of corruption demonstrated the high interests of the scientific circles to investigating the anti-corruption mechanisms. On the other hand, there is the deep gap between theoretical investigations of anti-corruption tools and their practical implementations. In view of this, this study introduced the IPI which allows measuring the effect of anti-corruption reforms in the country. This index shows how effective the anti-corruption policy is on the base of six aspects such as: judicial independence, administrative burden, trade openness, budget transparency, e-citizenship as well as freedom of the press. Moreover, IPI allows comparing the anti-corruption progress of different countries which could be similar in their income levels or geographical location. In view of this, the authors considered the anti-corruption progress of the Visegrad countries and compared it with the Ukrainian one. The experience of the investigating countries in the anti-corruption management indicated that the forces of government, business sector and civil society should be combined to get the best results of implementing the anti-corruption reforms. Furthermore, it is worth to increase the awareness level of civil society on their right and the government affairs. The obtained results could be the base for future investigation in the anti-corruption issues.

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