

REGIONAL ECONOMIC SECURITY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Nataliia Letunovska, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer of the Marketing Department,
Daria Karpenko, Master's Student, Academic and Scientific Institute of Business,
Economics and Management, Sumy State University, Ukraine

Today, Ukraine is facing the problem of ensuring the security of economic entities' activities and the whole country due to unfavorable external and internal factors that have led to a significant undermining of its economy. Therefore, now there is a need for strengthening Ukraine's regional economic security (Aljaloudi & Warrad, 2020; Bublyk et al., 2017; Esmenov & Dunne, 2017).

The economic security system's main direction is creating a permanent economic development of the country and its regions. Economic security is a complex structure, so it has many subsystems to ensure the entire system's sustainable development as a whole. Economic security performs well-defined functions and assumes a significant functional load in the system of national security. The essence is that it is the material basis of national sovereignty, and it determines the real possibility of other types of security. In other words, economic security is the basis for the functioning of all other elements of the system (social, technological, food, ecological) (Kendiukhov & Tvaronaviciene, 2017; Letunovska, 2014; Milova et al., 2019; Rahmanov et al., 2020;

Ensuring a country's economic security means creating a self-protection system that automatically activates a mechanism for protecting it from specific threats (Kostyuk et al., 2010; Sineviciene et al, 2018). Economic security is a complex and multifaceted category. Through the analysis of the actual process and the understanding of the experience of adopting problems, the authors distinguished three crucial elements (Sysoyeva & Kleinschmidt, 2017; Yarovenko et al, 2020; Ziabina et al., 2020; Zolkover & Terziev):

- economic independence, which, firstly, means the ability of the state to control national resources and use the competitive advantages of the country to enable equal participation in international trade;
- stability and sustainability of the national economy ensures the strength and reliability of all elements of the economic system, protects all forms of property, creates a guarantee of effective business development and restrains unstable factors;
- the ability for self-development and progress, i.e., ability to independently realize and protect national economic interests, carry out continuous modernization of production, adequate investment and innovation policy, and ability to develop knowledge and labor potential in the country and its regions.

At this stage, the main threats to Ukraine's economic security are declining GDP, low competitiveness of products, corruption, depreciation of fixed assets due

to unbalanced territorial development, low living standards of many people. Corruption in Ukraine is the main obstacle to implementing the country's European integration intentions. It is one of the main factors that create a negative country image (Balas et al., 2019; Chygryn, 2017; Gatsi, 2020).

Many experts reasonably point out that if it were possible to change the rules of conduct common to all by individual rules, corruption would disappear along with the legal norms because there would be no need to apply them. One of the most complex issues of organizing the fight against corruption is the question of how to balance preventive and punitive measures (Dolgiy et al., 2014; Harust & Melnyk, 2019). The need to prioritize prevention over punishment for corruption is usually only declared. Most countries spend far more on prosecuting corruption than they do on preventing it. The idea that it is easier to prevent corruption than to be forced to punish it is valid only if there are unlimited resources. Preventing corruption by eliminating or mitigating its criminogenic factors costs far more than regular criminal repressive measures (Juarez-Garcia, 2020; Mujtaba et al., 2018; Rosokhata et al., 2020; Subbot, 2014; Vasylieva et al., 2018).

Today, Ukraine spends about 9 % of its annual budget on fighting crime. It is the money spent on solving and investigating about 3.5-3.9 million crimes a year. The prevalence of corruption depends mainly on their solvability, or, more precisely, on the inevitability of responsibility for them. The first and the second are not the same things. According to statistics, almost all of the revealed facts of bribery are disclosed (Letunovska et al., 2020; Levchenko et al., 2018; Lyulyov & Pimonenko, 2017). Punishment is imposed only in every fourth to the fifth case. The penalty is imposed in about one in 100 thousand cases of giving and taking bribes. The "funnel effect" as applied to other corruption offenses, probably looks even more striking. As a result, liability for corruption is an absolute utopia from a theoretical and practical point of view. Moreover, the legislation itself provides several grounds for non-application of punishment, even in cases of conviction. Ensuring the inevitability of responsibility for corruption requires the support of a critical level of punishability (Lev, 2015; Obeid et al., 2020; Omelyanenko, 2016; Tielietov & Letunovska, 2014).

Many foreign countries' experience demonstrates that despite the strict control mechanisms and punitive measures envisaged by law, a significant part of civil servants, especially high-ranking ones, often manages to avoid responsibility for the offenses they have committed. Achieving a level of regional development where corruption is not a decisive factor hindering the development of investment projects, starting new businesses and implementing creative ideas for the development of territories is a goal that can be called local rehabilitation (Syhyda et al, 2018; Sadiq, 2020; Teletov et al., 2019). Further prospects of the authors' research are forming a list of tools for regional rehabilitation, which, combined with improving the region's economic security, can provide a leap in regional life quality.

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