

Corruption

A: Is the EU corrupt? Have you heard of any corruption cases in the EU? What happens to people who are corrupt?

The NGO Transparency International (TI) (<http://www.transparency.org>) regularly announces a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of countries. In 2002 Peter Eigen, Chairman of Transparency International said that:

'Politicians increasingly pay lip-service to the fight against corruption but they fail to act on the clear message of TI's CPI: that they must clamp down on corruption to break the vicious circle of poverty and graft. Seven out of ten countries score less than 5 out of a clean score of 10 in the CPI 2002, which reflects perceived levels of corruption among politicians and public officials.'

There were some surprises in the figures when for example some ex-communist countries were ranked as less corrupt than some EU countries like Italy and Greece.

The fight against corruption has been a big issue during EU Accession negotiations with the EU concerned about corruption penetrating the EU. The TI survey suggests that the EU should also concern itself more with existing corruption in existing member countries.

But where is the EU itself in the figures? In 1999 complaints about corruption, cronyism and abuse of power led to the resignation of the entire commission and investigations by the European parliament. In fact the cause of the resignation was not the corruption allegations themselves but the fact that the whistleblower, Paul van Buitenen, was suspended from his job on half pay while the accused commissioners were suspended on full pay. Buitenen eventually resigned in April 2003 saying that nothing had changed and that there had been no reform. No charges have been brought against those accused.

A report by the European Commission's anti-fraud unit says that the EU lost a billion dollars in 2002 due to crime and corruption.

The EU Commissioner for Reform and Vice-President, Neil Kinnock, has published a 'whistleblowers' charter' to protect whistleblowers careers and said that 'I have long held the view that conscientious and responsible whistleblowing in public and private sector organisations is necessary and justified.'

Yet in May 2003 the EU's chief accountant, Marta Andreasen, was sacked after she went public with allegations that the EU accounting system was full of loopholes and that people could take money without leaving any traces in the computer systems. Mr Kinnock said that she was sacked because she had not followed correct procedures. She said Mr Kinnock and Romano Prodi both ignored her complaints but that she had really been forced out by fonctionnaires determined to protect the system run by a French Director General.

While there seem to be problems with the EU bureaucracy itself, with individual member states' attitudes towards alleged corruption vary. In the south, in Italy, the Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi is on trial accused of trying to bribe a judge (May 2003) and the French President Jacques Chirac has only escaped prosecution because of immunity. In the north, in Sweden, Mona Sahlin's career as an MP came to an end when she charged some nappies, chocolate and perfume worth 70 Euros to a government credit card in 1995.

A good question to ask is - who will the new member states align themselves with - the more 'relaxed' Catholic south or the 'stricter' Protestant north?

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B: Answer the questions

1. What does TI's survey say about corruption?
2. What were the complaints about corruption in 1999? Where did this lead to?
3. What does the report by the European Commission's anti-fraud unit say?
4. Why was the EU's chief accountant sacked?
5. What is the difference between attitudes towards corruption in northern and southern countries?

C: Vocabulary

Find the words in the text which match the following definitions:

1. to fight/combat
2. to move into or through (something)
3. giving your friends a job
4. wrong use of power
5. accusing somebody of doing something that is wrong or illegal
6. a person who informs people in authority or the public that the company they work for is doing something wrong or illegal
7. a mistake which people can take advantage of
8. to ally with

D: Write an essay: 'Police are losing the fight against corruption' Discuss.

Rank	Country	CPI 2002 score	Rank	Country	CPI 2002 score
1	Finland	9.7	33	Hungary	4.9
2	Denmark	9.5	36	Belarus	4.8
5	Sweden	9.3		Lithuania	4.8
7	Luxembourg	9.0	44	Greece	4.2
	Netherlands	9.0	45	Bulgaria	4.0
10	United Kingdom	8.7		Poland	4.0
12	Norway	8.5	51	Croatia	3.8
	Switzerland	8.5	52	Czech Republic	3.7
15	Austria	7.8		Latvia	3.7
18	Germany	7.3	68	Slovak Republic	3.7
20	Belgium	7.1		Uzbekistan	2.9
	Spain	7.1	71	Russia	2.7
23	Ireland	6.9	77	Romania	2.6
25	France	6.3	81	Albania	2.5
	Portugal	6.3		Georgia	2.4
27	Slovenia	6.0	85	Ukraine	2.4
29	Estonia	5.6		93	Moldova
	31	Italy	5.2	95	Azerbaijan

(Information from Transparency International CPI 2002)

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Teacher's Notes

Procedure:

1. Ask the students: Is corruption a problem in your country?
Discuss with students.
2. Further discussion
 - a) Write a list of countries on the board. Estonia, Italy, Finland, Latvia, Russia, Germany, Norway, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, France
 - b) Ask the students to put them in order starting with the least corrupted country, the students compare their lists
 - c) Give the students the CPI 2002 score list, the students compare their lists with the CPI list.
3. Follow -up questions:

Is your country corrupt?
Which countries are more corrupt, northern or southern countries?
What could be the reasons?
4. Ask students to discuss **A** on the worksheet before reading the text.
Check answers to question after reading.
5. Discuss final question **in the text**.
6. Check questions in **B**.
7. Vocabulary Key
 1. to clamp down on
 2. to penetrate
 3. cronyism
 4. abuse of power
 5. allegations
 6. whistleblower
 7. a loophole
 8. to align with