

Eurobarometer Survey on Business Attitudes to Corruption

Thomas Wahl

News

The majority of companies (51%) is sceptical that corruption is being tackled efficiently by law enforcement. This is one of the main results of the Eurobarometer survey on the businesses' attitude towards corruption in the EU. It was published on 9 December 2019 ([International Anti-Corruption Day](#)). The survey interviewed 7722 business in all 28 EU Member States between 30 September and 24 October 2019. It is the fourth survey of this kind (the first one was conducted in 2013, the others in 2015 and 2017). For the 2017 survey, see euclid 1/2018, p. 13. The surveys include a wide range of topics, e.g.:

- Problems encountered when doing business;
- Business' perception of the level of corruption in their country;
- The prevalence of practices leading to corruption;
- Corrupt practices in public tender and public procurement procedures;
- Investigation, prosecution, and sanctioning of corruption.

Although corruption is not ranked among the top concerns, corruption is seen as a problem by five in ten European companies. The majority of companies think that tax rates, fast-changing legislation and policies (63%), and the complexity of administrative procedures (62%) are the main problems when doing business. Nevertheless, there is wide divergence among the EU Member States. Whereas 88% of companies in Romania see corruption as a problem when doing business in their country, only 5% of companies do in Denmark.

Furthermore, the general businesses' perception of corruption has decreased compared to 2013 (63%, down from 75%). However, the results also vary among the Member States on this point: in 17 Member States, the feeling that corruption is a widespread problem in their country has decreased since 2017 – most considerably in Germany (-25%) – but increased in 11 countries. Other results of the survey are as follows:

- Favouring friends or family members in business and public institutions is by far the most frequently mentioned corrupt practice;
- Over seven in ten companies agree that too close links between business and politics in their country lead to corruption and that favouritism and corruption hamper business competition;
- 30% of companies believe that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender/procurement contract;
- More than 50% of companies think that corruption in public procurement managed by national and regional/local authorities is widespread;
- 51% of companies feel that anti-corruption measures are not applied impartially.

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The survey also gives the reader a look behind the scenes of different business sectors. In this context, the survey reveals that sector analysis indicates significant differences between the sectors as regards corruption. 38% of companies in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sector, for instance, consider corruption to be a problem when doing business, but only 31% do so in the energy industry. The energy industry is also the business with the lowest proportion (19%) of companies that assume corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender/procurement contract; by contrast, around 30% are convinced of this in the construction and telecom/IT sectors. All in all, corruption remains an issue for both large and small companies.

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