

# Handbook of Good Practices in the Fight against Corruption

Anna Pinggen



## News

On 15 February 2023, the European Commission published a [Handbook of good practices in the fight against corruption](#). It was commissioned by the European Commission and drafted in a collaborative effort between the research team at the international research and consultancy company Ecorys and experts from the network of the Local Research Correspondents on Corruption (LRCC) in each Member State. It is based on desk research and 30 expert interviews conducted between April 2022 and October 2022.

The Handbook is [designed to serve](#) as a cornerstone for further improvement of national efforts to prevent and fight corruption and to stimulate peer learning and exchange between Member States. It is also seen as a tool that can inspire future research.

The Handbook describes 27 good practices, corresponding to one initiative per Member State, either a successful one or a promising new one. An anti-corruption practice was considered “good” if it 1) has a positive effect on countering corruption, and 2) demonstrates a mechanism that is transferable and applicable in other Member States. The handbook and the 27 good practices are structured around eight different themes, each containing a theoretical part and a part featuring case studies that focus on implementation, the estimated costs of a practice, its outcomes, and its limitations:

- Transparency & open data;
- Citizen engagement;
- Collective action;
- Integrity promotion;
- Conflict of Interest management and detection;
- Anti-corruption strategy;
- Anti-Corruption Agencies;
- Detection and investigation of corruption.

The Handbook demonstrates that the anti-corruption strategies used by EU Member States differ significantly. Preventive and repressive measures, internal governmental control and societal monitoring, and group action of many stakeholders are only a few examples of the differences. The analysis carefully examines the benefits and restrictions of each of these approaches.

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According to the list of suggested best practices, a number of anti-corruption trends stand out:

- The goal of new transparency practices is to address issues of inconsistent or weak enforcement of freedom-of-information agreements, varying interpretations of transparency, and making public information both accessible and understandable to the general public;
- There are several efforts to create new data sets and combine data from different databases, including compulsory entries about companies and individuals (e.g. beneficial owners) - however, this brings challenges in terms of ensuring high-quality data, enforcing universal (not selective) obligations for transparency, and making large amounts of data understandable and useful to law enforcement agencies;
- Collaborative approaches, such as the engagement of citizens and other stakeholders, are visible, not only as an objective of many anti-corruption initiatives but also as an implementation mechanism for other outcomes (e.g., creation of anti-corruption strategy);
- Systemic, coherent initiatives on integrity - an important complementary approach to anti-corruption - have been established, which nonetheless are faced with challenges of ensuring effectiveness of the social norms of integrity and setting tangible goals;
- Anti-corruption strategies have been adopted and special anti-corruption agencies have taken up their work, but in future multi-stakeholder engagement in and decentralization of anti-corruption should be increased.

The Handbook forms part of the European Commission's overall anti-corruption policy and precedes a proposal for a directive on the use of criminal law to combat corruption. It also aims to support initiatives such as the experience-sharing workshops between the Commission and Member States' experts to discuss good practices in the fight against corruption.

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