

New Surveys on Citizens' and Businesses' Perception of Corruption in the EU

News

Thomas Wahl

On 13 July 2022, the European Commission published [two Eurobarometer surveys](#) showing the public's opinion on corruption in the EU.

[Citizens' perceptions of corruption](#)

The first survey captured European citizens' perception of and experiences on corruption. It covered the following areas:

- General perceptions of corruption including acceptability, its extent and the perceived changes in incidence in recent years;
- Attitudes to corruption in public institutions and business, and the effectiveness of government, the judicial system and institutions in tackling corruption;
- Personal experience of bribery, and the incidence of corruption in contact with institutions;
- Bribery and corruption in the healthcare sector;
- Reporting of corruption.

The main results of the survey are:

- 68% of EU citizens believe that corruption is widespread in their country;
- 58% of respondents do not think government efforts to combat corruption are effective;
- Up to 6% of Europeans say they experienced or witnessed a case of corruption in the last 12 months, but only 15% of them reported the issue;
- 53% of Europeans do not know where to report corruption;
- Regarding the reasons why corruption is not reported, nearly the half of Europeans believe that it is difficult to prove anything, 30% think that the responsible persons will not be punished, and 28% submitted that there is no protection for those who report corruption.

It is stressed that, as has been the case in surveys of previous years, the results vary across EU countries. Also socio-demographic differences must be taken into account. In conclusion, and in comparison with the last wave, the general consensus amongst Europeans remains that corruption is unacceptable, that it is widespread – particularly in public bodies and institutions – and that national government efforts to curb corruption are not effective.

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The second survey focused on businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU. The survey covers a range of areas, including perception of:

- Problems encountered when doing business;
- Businesses' perception of the level of corruption in their town;
- The prevalence of practices leading to corruption;
- Corrupt practices in public tender and public procurement procedures;
- How corruption is investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned.

The main results of this survey are:

- 34% of companies in the EU believe that corruption is a serious problem when doing business in their country – however, this attitude varies considerably across Member States;
- 63% of the companies think the problem of corruption is widespread in their country. The highest proportions reporting that corruption is widespread in their country are seen in Greece (90%), Cyprus and Italy (both 92%), and Croatia (93%);
- Favours friends and/or family members in business or in public institutions is considered the most widespread corruptive practice in the EU countries;
- 79% of respondents agree that too close links between business and politics in their country lead to corruption and 38% believe that having political connections is the only way to succeed in business;
- 52% of the companies think it is likely that individuals and businesses engaging in corrupt practices in their country would face charges and go to court.
- About half of companies (49%) also believe that individuals and businesses engaged in corrupt practices are likely to be caught by or reported to the police or prosecutors.
- 38% of the respondents think that individuals and businesses engaging in corrupt practices will be heavily fined or imprisoned by a court.

The surveys are important sources of information for the European Commission to further develop EU legislation and actions against corruption. The last surveys on the public's perception of corruption in the EU were conducted in 2019.

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