

23 ANCORAGE-NET: Sharing knowledge-based solutions to corruption control

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ANCORAGE-NET is a research network of anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) whose primary aim is to provide comprehensive and easily accessible information about the format, functioning and activities of these bodies to practitioners and analysts in the field of corruption control.

Anti-corruption agencies are publicly funded bodies whose specific mission is to fight corruption and associated crimes, and to reduce the opportunity structures favourable to the occurrence of corruption through preventive and repressive strategies. The first ACAs date from the post-colonial period after World War II and they have since been set up in many countries in the developed and developing world.² Many global institutions³ recommend the creation of ACAs as an important piece of the national institutional architecture. In Central and East European countries, ACAs have also been recommended as part of macro anti-corruption programmes promoted in view of EU membership.⁴

ACAs vary in scope and powers. Some have been endowed with investigative and prosecuting powers (e.g. Croatia, Romania and Slovakia), others play a more preventive, educational and informative role (e.g. France, Malta and Montenegro). There are also differences with regard to their scope of action, resources, accountability requirements, and so on. Independent of format and competences, however, ACAs encounter various constraints to their mandate, which explains the meagre results obtained by some of them:

- Technical, statutory and cultural difficulties in unveiling corruption via complaints
- Difficulties in obtaining information about corruption and its opportunity structures from other state bodies/agencies
- Difficulties in establishing a good working relationship with the politicians

Certain ACAs remain unknown to the wider public and have not anchored their anti-corruption/fraud role in civil society. This may partly be due to their format and partly to a lack of understanding of the centrality of citizens to the process of control.

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2 1952, Singapore, Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau; 1967, Malaysia, Anti-Corruption Agency; 1974, Hong Kong SAR, Independent Commission Against Corruption.

3 Art. 6 of the UN Convention Against Corruption, Art 20 of the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, OECD Ethics infrastructure, Transparency International's *Anti-Corruption Handbook*.

4 The Copenhagen Criteria suggest reforms related to the functioning of the political sphere and the judiciary as a pre-condition to accession.

ANCORAGE-NET is the first attempt to provide an internet database with substantive country-based and comparative institutional information on ACAs in Europe and abroad. Its intention is to help ACAs gradually anchor their activities in civil society (by making citizens more involved and aware of their activities and modus operandi) and to bring about knowledge-based, innovative and integrated solutions to corruption control.

Prior to a first meeting to discuss the project,⁵ the heads of ACAs voluntarily replied to a National Assessment Survey on ACAs. We wanted these primary data to be provided by ACAs themselves, rather than relying on expert perceptions external to the organisation. The intention was to understand the nature, format and performance of these institutions, which have grown in numbers and visibility in recent years.

The survey was composed of 65 questions focusing on various aspects of their mission, mandate, competences, special powers, internal and external accountability framework, funding, organisation and social composition, activities, networking and usage of ICT. Participating countries, which included Argentina, Australia, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovakia, and Turkey, provided an account of their national strategies against corruption, including those that do not have them officially or those where there is a current debate about the creation of such specialised agencies. For the purposes of our analysis, we only considered countries that have such agencies effectively in place.

Some results from the survey are shown below. As can be seen from Table 1, the most common reasons given for the creation of ACAs are to curb corruption in a knowledge-based manner, to curb corruption without political interference and to transform policy into action.

Most agencies were initially expected to combat and address corruption in areas such as public administration and national politics (see Table 2). It can be seen that corruption in public administration has remained a priority area of intervention for most of the countries surveyed. There can, however, be big differences in response times to complaints (see Table 3), ranging from one week to one year.

The sample is still small and we cannot yet extrapolate any general patterns or conclusions, but given its homogeneity, we expect to find interesting clusters as we expand the project beyond its initial focus on ACAs in Europe.

⁵ For further information, visit aca2006.cies.iscte.pt/ The meeting was organised by CIES – Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia (Lisbon, Portugal) in collaboration with The Australian National University (Canberra, Australia) and was co-financed by the Hercule Grant Programme of the European Antifraud Office.

Table 1: Raison d'être of ACAs

| Main reasons justifying creation of ACAs | Country |
|--|--|
| To curb corruption in a knowledge-based manner Croatia | Montenegro, Moldova, Latvia, Argentina, Slovakia, France, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Malawi, |
| To curb corruption without political interference | Slovakia, Australia, Malta, Macedonia, Malawi, Czech Republic |
| To transform policy into action | Romania, Moldova, Argentina, Slovakia, France, Croatia |
| To avoid the inertia of traditional enforcement mechanisms | Slovakia, Malawi |
| To get visible results fast | Lithuania |
| To prevent investigations being stopped by corrupt members in traditional enforcement mechanisms | Argentina, Slovakia, Lithuania, Czech Republic |
| To retain control over the chain of command | |

Table 2: Type of corruption the agency was initially expected to combat/address and the agency's current top priority

| Type of corruption | Initial priorities of agencies | Current priorities of agencies |
|---|---|--|
| In the public administration | Moldova, Latvia, Argentina, Australia, Lithuania, Malawi, Croatia | Czech Republic, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Argentina, Latvia |
| In national politics | Romania, Latvia, France, Malawi, Croatia | Czech Republic |
| In local politics | Latvia, Australia, France, Malawi | France |
| In police forces | Latvia, Australia, Malawi, Croatia | Slovakia |
| In judiciary | Montenegro, Latvia, Malawi, Croatia | Croatia |
| In quangos or the para-public sector (institutes, public foundations, etc.) | Romania, Moldova, Macedonia, Malawi | |
| In the private sector | Montenegro, Moldova | |
| In the armed forces | Montenegro, Latvia, Malawi | |

Table 3: Acting on complaints (timings)

| Timings | Country |
|---------------------------|--|
| One week to one month | Montenegro, Latvia, Malawi |
| One month to three months | Lithuania, Czech Republic |
| Three to six months | Argentina, Australia, Republic of Macedonia, Croatia |
| Six months to one year | – |
| More than one year | Malta |