

Corruption Perceptions Index 2025: Serbia scores worst in the past two decades

In the ranking of countries and territories by the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Serbia, with a score of 33 and 116th place, has further worsened its result and, for the first time, is ranked the worst in the region.

Serbia's index is two points lower than last year and the lowest since 2012, when the current scoring methodology was introduced, on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). A comparison by position in the table relative to the number of ranked countries shows that this is the worst placement since 2004. On this year's list of the global organization Transparency International, there are a total of 182 countries and territories, and Serbia's position is as many as 45 places lower than the best result recorded ten years ago.

Compared with other Western Balkan countries and the former Yugoslavia, Serbia ranks the worst, for the first time behind Bosnia and Herzegovina (34), and in the whole of Europe only Belarus (31), Turkey (31) and Russia (22) are ranked lower.

At the top of the global list are Denmark (89) and Finland (88), while at the very bottom are Somalia (9) and South Sudan (9).

Serbia's score is nine points below the global average and 29 points lower than the European Union average.

The regional press release by Transparency International notes that weak institutions and democratic backsliding foster corruption and limit the space for the functioning civil society.

As stated, in several Western Balkan countries, insufficient judiciary engagement is one of the main obstacles to successful anti-corruption efforts, while judges and prosecutors nevertheless become targets of attacks from other branches of government.

As an illustration of this phenomenon, developments related to the Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime in Serbia are cited: "After probing alleged abuses by cabinet members, the Prosecution for Organised Crime in Serbia (33) is facing mounting pressure, including government-led smear campaigns, obstruction of police cooperation, and legal changes that weaken its ability to investigate organised crime and high-level corruption"

The regional report also points to non-transparent decision-making related to valuable public and private investments, citing as one example the "Generalštab" case, where the Government of Serbia, without applying competitive procedures, signed a secret contract with a foreign investor and unlawfully lifted the cultural heritage protection for a luxury hotel to be built at that site.

In TI's global statement, concern is expressed about the deterioration of the situation worldwide and the rise of corruption, even in stable democratic societies.

It is recalled that 2025 was marked by anti-corruption protests by young people (Generation Z),

mostly in countries that are in the lower half of the CPI table and whose scores had stagnated or declined in previous years.

François Valérien, Chair of Transparency International, said on the occasion of the launch of CPI 2025: “Corruption is not inevitable. Our research and experience as a global movement fighting corruption show there is a clear blueprint for how to hold power to account for the common good, from democratic processes and independent oversight to a free and open civil society. At a time when we’re seeing a dangerous disregard for international norms from some states, we’re calling on governments and leaders to act with integrity and live up to their responsibilities to provide a better future for people around the world.”