

Press Release

Serbia continues to fall on global list of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index

Serbia continued its decline in the most important global ranking of countries due to the perception of corruption in the public sector. In the ranking for 2023, it retained the index of 36, which is the worst in the last 12 years since the same evaluation methodology has been applied, Transparency Serbia (TS) announced.

According to the ranking published today by the global network Transparency International, Serbia fell three places on the list to the 104th position. TI ranks 180 countries.

Serbia's index is seven points lower than the world average and even 28 points worse than the EU average.

In the region, only Bosnia and Herzegovina is worse, with an index of 35. Albania, with which Serbia shared the 101st position last year, is now better and has an index of 37; Kosovo, which is ranked separately, has 41, North Macedonia and Hungary 42, Bulgaria 45, and Montenegro and Romania 46.

For the sixth year in a row, Denmark is at the top of the list, with an index of 90, the same as in the previous ranking.

Corruption Perceptions Index and the results – in details

For the twenty-seventh year in a row, the Corruption Perceptions Index has been compiled by the leading global anti-corruption organization, Transparency International. The number of ranked countries and territories was 180 this year as well. Countries are scored on a scale from 100 (very clean) to 0 (very corrupt). Serbia continued to fall on the list this year as well. Although the score remained the same (36), this year, it was enough for 104th place on the list (last year, 101st). We share this place with Algeria, Brazil and Ukraine. Compared to the previous year, we were overtaken by Albania, Gambia, Zambia and Kazakhstan.

Therefore, the rating and ranking for 2023 is the worst in the last 12 years since the current methodology and scale from 0 to 100 has been applied. For the fifth year in a row, Serbia is in the "worst half of the world". The current place is the worst in the entire period in which the number of ranked countries is equal to the current one (since CPI 2007).

The last two rankings, when the rating for Serbia was approximately equal to the global average, were in 2013 and 2016, and we are now seven points behind. The average score for our continent is 57, i.e., 21 points more than Serbia's current score.

The gap is even more significant compared to the countries of the EU countries (64), whose members we would like to become. That membership in the EU is not a guarantee of good results is shown by the scores

of countries from our neighbourhood, especially Hungary (42), Bulgaria (45), and Romania (46). Greece (49) and Croatia (50) got slightly better marks.

With a current score of 36, as in the previous two decades since it was ranked on the CPI, Serbia is "stable" in the group of countries with widespread corruption (with a score below 50).

Denmark (90) took first place this year, followed by Finland (87) and New Zealand (85). At the bottom, as last year, are Somalia (11), South Sudan and Syria, with 13 points; this year, Venezuela joined them.

Among the former socialist countries of Europe, Estonia is, traditionally, by far the best placed with a score of 76, while among non-EU members, Georgia has the best result (despite the drop from 56 to 54 points). Within the former SFRY, Slovenia is still the best placed, with a score of 56, the same as last year.

Of the countries in the region, only Bosnia and Herzegovina is worse, with an index of 35. Albania, with which Serbia shared the 101st position last year, is now better and has an index of 37; Kosovo, which is ranked separately, has 41, North Macedonia and Hungary 42, Bulgaria 45, and Montenegro and Romania 46.

The fact that Serbia is getting worse within the so-called "Western Balkans" should be of particular concern while most of the neighbours are progressing. Better results than last year were recorded by Montenegro (46), North Macedonia (42), Albania (37) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (35). The only one still ranked slightly worse than Serbia. Kosovo, for which special research is being done, recorded the same result as last year (41).

When creating the CPI, 13 relevant surveys that measure the perception of corruption in the public sector are taken into account. These surveys represent the opinion or impression of those who do business with them or advise business people, governments and international institutions about the corruption of state officials and public servants. Research must be published within the last 24 months, and there must be at least three such data sources for a country/territory to be ranked.

This year, Serbia was included in eight relevant studies, which guarantees the findings' high degree of reliability. The comparability of data with those from earlier years is at an even higher level - even 11 years ago, the same seven sources of information were used for the CPI, and in the last six years, identical eight.

The project findings used for Serbia in the latest CPI came from Global Insight Country Risk Ratings, Bertelsmann Foundation, World Economic Forum, Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House, International Country Risk Guide, World Justice Project Rule of Law Index and Varieties of Democracy Project.

Of the relevant research for Serbia, in three cases, data was collected in 2023, in three researches during 2022, in one case in both years, while one research, completed in 2023, was conducted over a longer period. In the seven original surveys based on which the CPI 2023 was compiled for Serbia, the score was the same as in the CPI 2022. Significant deterioration was noted in one case (a survey among company managers for the needs of the World Economic Forum), but the final score remained the same.

The standard deviation of the grades is 1.26.

Transparency International on CPI 2023 results

Justice and corruption

Transparency International indicates that the global average has not changed for 12 years and that even two-thirds of the world has a score of less than 50, indicating severe corruption problems.

TI emphasizes the significant correlation between problems in the functioning of judicial systems and corruption. Thus, when comparing the data from the Rule of Law Index with the data from the CPI, an apparent connection can be observed between them in terms of the relationship between corruption and impunity of public officials who break the rules, corruption and the ability of citizens to achieve their rights before the court, as well as corruption and discrimination.

TI points out that it is necessary for the courts, prosecutor's offices and the police to be independent, transparent and well-equipped, but it is equally important to prevent the abuse of political power or bribery that endangers the judicial system.

The global report cites negative examples from individual countries, such as the amendment of the criminal code in North Macedonia, which led to the release of around 200 suspects of corruption, the capture of institutions in Venezuela, the takeover of control over the judiciary by the president of Tunisia, the impossibility of access to justice in the DR Congo and discrimination in Cambodia.

Quality of Democracy and Corruption

The comparisons of the CPI results with the regime type classification are even more interesting, according to the division published by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The average for "full democracy" countries is 73, for "flawed democracy" countries 48, for "hybrid regimes" 36, and for "authoritarian" 29.

According to the division from 2022, Serbia was still among the "flawed democracies", but its corruption perception index, 36, is far below the average of this group, which then included North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, as well as Croatia and Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Index 36 corresponds to the group of hybrid regimes in which Bosnia and Herzegovina found itself in 2022, together with Turkey, Ukraine, Armenia, and many South American and Asian countries.

Serbia in the TI regional report - the law on EXPO and the lack of reaction of the prosecution regarding the elections

In the regional report for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Transparency International comments on some of the events in our country:

"Serbia is witnessing a democratic decline, with its autocratic government using special laws to limit transparency in large-scale projects. A recent law opened up at least one billion euros of public funds, earmarked for Expo 2027, to the risk of inflated contract prices and poor-quality construction work. The prosecution service has also neglected to act on publicly presented evidence that election fraud benefited the incumbent Serbian Progressive Party and its allies in December 2023. This politically captured justice institution is failing to protect the public interest at a crucial time, reducing the country's ability to stop corruption."

Complete research results can be downloaded from the TS website:

<https://www.transparentnost.org.rs/en/ts-and-media/press-conference>

Belgrade, 30 January 2024