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UDC: 316.32:316.344.5]:343.352(4-15)

**ROLI I SHOQËRISË CIVILE NË LUFTËN KUNDËR
KORRUPSIONIT NË BALLKANIN PERËNDIMOR**

**УЛОГАТА НА ГРАЃАНСКОТО ОПШТЕСТВО ВО БОРБАТА
ПРОТИВ КОРУПЦИЈАТА ВО ЗАПАДЕН БАЛКАН**

**ROLE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST
CORRUPTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**

Abstract

One of the problems facing the Western Balkans is corruption. It is one of the most serious diseases that accompanies all countries in the regions such as Albania, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and remains even greater for those aiming for EU membership. Corruption has infected the legal system of these countries, stripped the institutional structures of their responsibilities, overthrown justice, is killing true democracy and the hope and rights of citizens.

At a time when anticorruption reforms and anticorruption structures by the European Union are not yielding the expected result, the questions arise: What can civil do to eradicate the corruption that kills the dreams of the younger generations? The purpose of this paper is to address corruption as one of the main causes of EU countries for their non-membership and to study the role of civil society in the face of

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corruption. Ultimately the existence, prevention and avoidance of such phenomena starts from society itself.

Keywords: corruption, Civil Society, Western Balkans, EU etc.

Introduction

Corruption is an old phenomenon and present in every society, but it varies at different levels. Western Balkans has highlighted this problem where it is posed as a factor: the communist regime, the transition, the political unrest, which have brought political difficulties. According to the surveys conducted by the Corruption Index, the citizens of Albania, Northern Macedonia, Kosovo, rank corruption as one of the main problems after unemployment and poverty. The EU, within the accession process, systematically monitors changes in the anticorruption process. This is also followed by the domestic policies of the states themselves.³

Kosovo adopted in 2004 “the anticorruption strategy”.⁴ As far as Albania is concerned, corruption does not have only one goal, but it is one of the 5 conditions set by the EU for its membership. The network of anticorruption structures is a system led by the coordinator for anticorruption structures and these structures aim to fight any corruption cases and to rebuild a reliable administration and service of the citizens.⁵

Despite oversight bodies and anticorruption reforms by the government, the public has the greatest role in the fight against corruption. Civil society and the media can assist in gathering information and reporting corruption cases. It is much more important for the media institutions, citizens, municipalities, public institutions to conduct campaigns and meetings to inform the society that the fight against corruption starts from the awareness of the people themselves. Various political factors and economic difficulties should not be a reason for citizens to embrace corruption. This paper aims not only to illuminate the role of

³ https://pashtriku.beepworld.de/files/kosova_2010/mars_2010/elife_luzha_kashtkorrupsioni_31.3.10.htm

⁴ http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Lufta_Kund%C3%ABr_Korrupsionit_Analiz%C3%AB_Krahasuese_Mes_Kosov%C3%ABs_Dhe_Kroacis%C3%AB_164083.pdf

⁵ <https://drejtesia.gov.al/rrjeti-i-koordinatoreve-anti-korrupsion/>

civil society against corruption, but also to raise the personal awareness of every citizen and student who receives this article.

Civil Society and Corruption

Civil society is the totality of civil society and the totality of organizations, social institutions that function to oppose power in appropriate cases regardless of the system. Civil society consists of citizens, various groups, non-governmental organizations that are established by it and that function for the common good, to oppose political actions to the detriment of citizens and to make decisions that have to do with various social issues.⁶

A state cannot exist without civil society. Civil society includes citizens, students, organizations and any other association with a specific purpose and independent of the state.

Corruption as a world is derived from Latin and means misconduct but in the definition means abuse of office, position and official or power for personal interests. Otherwise known as taking bribes to perform certain tasks using the function or post.⁷

Corruption is a criminal offense because it is used for various purposes illegally in violation of legal provisions. Corruption is studied from the legal, political and economic point of view, which are elaborated in the following work.

Negative consequences of corruption in society

To know the ways to fight corruption, society must first have the right information on the negative consequences of corruption. Unfortunately for the reasons that characterize the western Balkans, society tries in most cases to find ways to possess corruption, let's say they have adapted to living with it. According to recent reports on the Western Balkans, only 1% of NGOs act directly to fight corruption. The fight against corruption requires honesty, mass unification and information.

Negative consequences of corruption are;

1. The consequences in the economic field

- corrupt businesses share this profit and as a result investment are low.

⁶ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/what-is-civil-society/>

⁷ <https://www.botasot.info/kultura/994904/ceshte-korrupsioni/>

- there is no free competition.
 - quality services are lacking.
 - the informal economy prevails.
 - wages are low and employees are forced to take bribes.
2. In terms of governance
- corruption directly kills democracy.
 - the consequences of the corrupt chain avoids the proper attention of officials to concrete problems.
 - there is a lack of fair elections and stable institutions.
3. The consequences in civil society
- through corruption, personal rather than public interest, is placed at the center.
 - people in the absence of services, institutions, income etc, experience disappointment and tend to leave the country.
 - lack of security.⁸

Prevention of corruption, a topic in education.

The societies of the Western Balkans, the problem with democracy, unstable institutions, low development, corruption etc., have traces from the past and of course the culture and mentality want their time to change. As in the case in European countries, the younger generations are educated on a democratic basic, on respect for human right, on love for the state and educated to denounce any abusive and corrupt case. In the Western Balkans, educational institutions from primary schools to universities, must play a key role in educating students and young people to deny wrongdoing, to denounce any corruption case and to fight for their rights.⁹

An informed youth means a youth with power to control and decide on their right and the future of the state. Officials and any civil servant cannot use their position, in cases where young people are educated and possess information. Educating students brings about the cultivation of a new culture, broadens society's horizons toward its capabilities, power, rights and recognizes corruption. This helps them to take over the solutions and establish the security of the state. Civil

⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806ec1a3>

⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806ec1a3>

society educated to fight corruption is capable of thinking critically, taking initiatives, rising up against abuse and deciding on its future.¹⁰

For example, in Albania, the first and largest student protest in history in 1990, overthrew the communist regime, but it is worth mentioning that of 2020 for the conditions of education. Similar protests have followed in Northern Macedonia. Civil Society in Montenegro has several times organized mass protests against corruption which have been finalized with the “agreement of the future”. In Kosovo according to the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation since 2001, the number of registered non-governmental organizations has increased from 130 to 3000, although not necessarily the number of organizations corresponds to the number of anticorruption organizations and initiatives. In Kosovo more than any other country in the region, the rise of civil society has significantly influenced¹¹ the process of democracy. In Serbia, civil society has been organized in recent years by the current situation in the region, but it does not stand as insurgent society given the same problems it is going through.

What is observed in the Western Balkans is the same feature of civil society which tends to rise up against the government only in cases where the situation has degraded, when it is led by someone or when it itself is politicized. Civil societies do not stand up to prevent but raise their voices at the last moment, perhaps when a peaceful protest does not work. It is therefore imperative that the younger generation begin to be educated on the phenomenon of corruption, which is the main killer of democracy and welfare.

School, universities and any other educational institutions should prepare a society for their state and this can be achieved by drafting special curricula.

Role of the media in the fight against corruption

The media is one of the main actors in the reporting and transparency of corruption. Free media seeks, investigates, announces corruption cases from private and state entities. Through its activity, the media exposes the freedom of expression and thought, pushing the citizens to be informed about everything that happens. The media have uncovered

¹⁰ United Nations Convention against Corruption

¹¹ Albanian Corruption Assessment Report, Albanian Center For Economic Research, Tirana

various cases of corruption and violations around the world. In the case of the Western Balkans, media played a very important role for communist countries in integrating into democracy. Media is otherwise known as “the fourth pillar of democracy”. Some of the functions of the functions of the media related to corruption are:

- Monitoring corruption,
- Promoting integrity,
- Engaging and mobilizing citizens to fight corruption.¹²

Western Balkans suffer traces of communist history where senior officials still function according to this ideology and the media has a very important task to investigate the functioning of the state so that citizens are informed about what is happening in the system. In addition to investigate media, today more social is used to expose corruption. Social networks are widely used, they spread any such violations and not just cases of corruption. This form of media has significantly challenged the main traditional and investigative media, but the mind in general, serves more than ever for the transparency on what happens in society. This does not exclude the case of corrupt media.¹³

A politicized, corrupt media and partisan television are normal in the Western Balkans. The fierce and competitive market that characterizes the Balkans forced a part of the media, investigative and social, to get involved in corruption scandals.

Another reason is the lack of training of journalists and persons responsible for this field, the low economic level, the chain of corruption pushes journalists towards corruption. Investigating corrupt media is difficult to do as they are embedded in the corrupt state system and corrupt media exist everywhere. Civil society and the media come together to carry out their tasks in the fight against corruption. The Western Balkans have in recent years given great importance to media development and its role in monitoring corruption. Mainly in the Western Balkans, the fight against this phenomenon requires the cooperation of the media, non-governmental organizations, civil society in general and institutions, especially in countries such as Albania, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia to have secure EU membership.

¹² “The image of the public media and media Trust in Albania”, Rrapo Zguri

¹³ <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/anti-corruption/module-10/key-issues/the-role-of-the-media-in-fighting-corruption.html>

Conclusion

If we were to talk about civil society in general, or the role of civil society in the world, a few articles would not suffice because civil society was born with the state its contribution to the history of political and economic development has been enormous. I choose to treat the civil society of the Western Balkans, because the concept of civil society and its role, we can say that started much later, mainly after the fall the communist regime.

The existence of civil society means democracy, stable institutions, free elections, welfare. In this case we got corruption, because it is the most well-known and pervasive problem in the entire Balkans. Corruption in the Western Balkans is the only cause that has brought about the lack of a real policy and the dissatisfaction of the peoples of these countries. The fight against corruption has erupted mainly after the obligation of the Western Balkan countries to join the EU.

During this time, civil society has developed a lot in its role and has begun to be informed about the damage of corruption and the need to eradicate it. On the other hand, the many dissatisfactions, disappointment, insecurity, low economic level have influenced the civil society to rise up and not accept it with the existence of corruption. In addition, social and investigative media serve to inform the public, to uncover and denounce corruption. Another way of mobilizing civil society is by investing in educating young people to recognize corruption and denounce its cases, because only then can we build a strong and unshakable society. What the citizens of the Western Balkans need to understand is the fact that the state is theirs, they can choose for their leaders, for their rights, not to admit any violation or action to their detriment. They should and have already begun to understand that they are Civil Society.

Reviewers:

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