



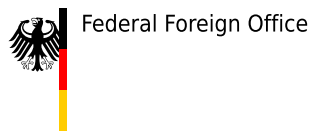
Youth and corruption

Attitudes, experiences and proposals for change

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Research report based on a survey of high school and university students



This analysis was developed within the framework of the project “*Young People in the Republic of North Macedonia: A Key Link in Building a Corruption-Free Society*,” supported by the ZIVIK Funding Programme with funds from the German Federal Foreign Office. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the ZIVIK Programme, the German Federal Foreign Office, or any of the project partners.

Skopje, 2025
Prepared by: Analitika Think Tank

Executive summary

This report presents the perceptions, experiences and attitudes of young people in North Macedonia regarding corruption. The research was conducted with 629 young people (ages 16–26) from Skopje, Strumica and Gostivar, through an online survey, focus groups and interviews. The main goal was to determine how young people recognize corruption, whether they are ready to oppose it and what mechanisms would facilitate their engagement.

Key findings:

Young people do not reduce corruption only to bribery, but understand it as a systemic phenomenon: abuse of power, nepotism, dishonesty.

- ◇ *Institutions with the lowest trust: judiciary, political parties, administration, education.*
- ◇ *More than half of young people (54%) have personally or indirectly encountered corruption in education.*
- ◇ *Buying diplomas (30%) and bribing for grades (24.3%) are the most frequently cited examples of corruption in schools and colleges.*
- ◇ *69.6% of young people say that corruption demotivates them and destroys their faith in work and knowledge.*
- ◇ *Education rarely addresses the issue of corruption – 70% believe that the topic is poorly or not at all represented in teaching.*
- ◇ *Education is the third most mentioned area (after employment and politics) where young people recognize exposure to corruption for women (37.2%) and men (33.1%).*
- ◇ *A feeling of apathy and disappointment dominates – yet, 51% would report corruption if a reliable and secure mechanism existed.*
- ◇ *Girls are more sensitive to corrupt practices and have a more pronounced ethical orientation.*
- ◇ *Young people propose solutions such as civic education, digital tools, and innovative ways of engagement*

Key recommendations:

- ◇ *Institutionalizing anti-corruption education from primary to higher education levels, with content on ethics, responsibility and integrity in the curricula.*
- ◇ *Investing in interactive and innovative educational materials that encourage critical thinking and active citizenship.*

- ◇ *Strengthening the capacities and integrity of teaching staff through training and mentoring support.*
- ◇ *Establishing functional mechanisms for anonymous reporting and action on cases of corruption in schools.*
- ◇ *Active involvement of students, parents and youth councils in anti-corruption activities.*
- ◇ *Partnerships between schools, SCPC and civil society organizations to implement peer education and public campaigns.*
- ◇ *Development and promotion of digital tools (applications, games, videos) for informal learning and youth mobilization.*
- ◇ *Supporting young people to become ambassadors of integrity and active actors in creating change*

Although young people face distrust and disappointment, they are not indifferent. Institutions, civil society organizations, and donors need to recognize young people as active actors and allies in the fight against corruption.

1. Introduction

Corruption is one of the most serious and deeply rooted systemic problems in North Macedonia. It directly undermines the rule of law, accountable and transparent governance, human rights, the quality of life of citizens, and, more broadly, democracy itself.

According to the latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2024 by Transparency International, the country has seen a drop in ranking in just one year, from 76th place in 2023 to 88th place in 2024, out of a total of 180 countries. The European Commission's 2024 report, however, assesses that North Macedonia has not made progress in the fight against corruption, despite the fact that this issue has been formally a priority of all governments so far. The main recommendations of the European Commission (EC) on the fight against corruption, which are repeated year after year, mainly focus on harmonizing the legislation with EU standards, improving the implementation of the national strategy for the prevention of corruption and conflict of interest, as well as fully implementing the recommendations of GRECO - the Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe.

Citizens feel the problem of corruption and face it in their everyday lives – in employment, in education, in healthcare, in contact with public institutions at the local and national level, i.e. wherever the state needs to deliver public services to them. Often, corruption is an “entry ticket” to the realization of a legally guaranteed right, and even a prerequisite for survival.

This situation also has a negative impact on young people, who increasingly feel isolated and disappointed with the system. Limited opportunities, nepotism and clientelism, as well as the awareness that knowledge and effort are not enough for success and progress, cause apathy, passivity and, ultimately, emigration of young people.

Similar trends are observed in other Western Balkan countries. Research by FES and other organizations in 2023–2024 shows that young people in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Bulgaria and North Macedonia perceive corruption as a widespread problem in education, employment and politics. The use of informal practices, such as the use of connections, bribery or fraud, is high and increasing over time.

Within the framework of the „ Youth Study Southeast Europe 2024 „, among many topics, attention was also paid to corruption, with young people assessing education as a seriously affected sector with practices such as paying for grades and diplomas. These findings are in line with the perceptions revealed in the survey conducted as part of our report.

These similarities highlight the fact that the fight against corruption in education and youth policies is not only a national, but also a regional challenge, requiring the sharing of good practices, international support, and a common approach to reforms.

In this regard, it is particularly important to analyze how young people in our country perceive corruption, what experiences they face and to what extent they are prepared to oppose this phenomenon. In order to understand the attitudes, experiences and perceptions of young people about corruption, as well as their readiness for resistance, activism or change, we conducted an anonymous online survey among people aged 16 to 26 (mainly high school students and university students), from Skopje, Gostivar and Strumica.

The research aims to identify key points of dissatisfaction, as well as potential avenues for activating, motivating and encouraging young people in the fight against corruption, through various educational, institutional and civic mechanisms and policies.

Definition of corruption

There are numerous definitions of corruption in theory, legislation and international documents. While Transparency International defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”, the United Nations sees corruption as a complex socio-economic phenomenon that involves the abuse of public office for private gain, (directly or indirectly). That is why the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) does not offer a single definition of corruption. It focuses on identifying specific acts of corruption, which each member state should declare as criminal offences. This approach is in fact a response to the challenge of establishing a comprehensive definition of corruption, due to its diverse manifestations, both at the national, regional and global levels.

In national legislation, the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest defines corruption as “abuse of function, public authority, official duty or position to obtain benefit, directly or through an intermediary, for oneself or for another.” The Criminal Code, although it does not provide a general definition, contains a series of acts that describe corrupt practices: accepting and giving bribes, abuse of official position, trading in influence, etc.

Typically, in many legal systems, instead of providing a general definition of corruption, legislation focuses on describing specific actions that constitute corrupt practices and provides for appropriate sanctions for them

Key international instruments for fighting corruption

Among the most significant documents for fighting corruption are:

a) [UN Convention against Corruption \(UNCAC\)](#)

The United Nations (UN) Convention against Corruption, adopted in October 2003 by UN General Assembly Resolution 58/4, is the only binding global anti-corruption international instrument. North Macedonia signed it in August 2005 and ratified it in April 2007.

The UN Convention against Corruption is a leading global treaty that commits governments to combat corruption through prevention, criminalization, international cooperation and technical assistance.

b) [Group of States against Corruption – GRECO](#)

Group of States against Corruption – GRECO was established in 1999 by the Council of Europe with the aim of improving the capacity of member states to fight corruption by monitoring their compliance with the Council of Europe’s anti-corruption standards. The level of compliance is determined through an evaluation process that identifies shortcomings in national anti-corruption policies and encourages legislative and institutional reforms. Membership in GRECO is not limited to Council of Europe member states.

North Macedonia has been a member of GRECO since 2000 and participates in all activities of this international organization, with which it has continuous cooperation and communication

National legal framework for the prevention of corruption

The Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest, adopted in 2019, is a key legal instrument for establishing mechanisms for the prosecution, prevention and suppression of corruption. It is specific in that it integrates the issues of corruption and conflict of interest, and establishes measures for their prevention in the performance of public functions, decision-making of public interest, official authorizations and political activities. The law also prescribes activities for the prevention of conflict of interest, as well as procedures for reporting and acting upon reports to the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC).

The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption is an autonomous and independent body whose basic function is to prevent, detect and suppress corruption and conflicts of interest in the public sector. Established as a key anti-corruption mechanism, the SCPC, among other things, has the authority to conduct anti-corruption review of laws, to act on reports from citizens and institutions, to monitor the financing of political parties and election campaigns, to conduct checks on the property status and conflicts of interest of officials, to initiate proceedings before competent authorities, etc. The Commission also has an educational role, i.e. it conducts activities to raise public awareness about corruption.

The main document for anti-corruption policies is the National Strategy for the Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2021–2025, prepared by the SCPC and adopted by the Parliament. The strategy aims to reduce the level of corruption and strengthen integrity, transparency and accountability in all sectors, as well as increase public trust in institutions involved in the fight against corruption.

In addition to the basic law, the anti-corruption framework in North Macedonia also includes a number of other laws, such as the Criminal Code, the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers, the Law on Lobbying, the Law on Public Procurement, etc. These laws are aimed at preventing, detecting and sanctioning corruption, and are aligned with European principles and directives that regulate relevant areas.

The European Commission assesses the national institutional and legal framework for the fight against corruption as partially positive, especially in the area of prevention measures. However, in order to achieve a more effective fight against corruption, the EC constantly emphasizes the need for full and consistent implementation of existing laws and mechanisms, as well as their further improvement and alignment with European standards.

2. Research objective and methodology

2.1 Research objective

The aim of the research was to analyze the knowledge, attitudes, experiences and perceptions of young people aged 16 to 26 from Skopje, Gostivar and Strumica regarding corruption. The research aimed to answer the following aspects:

- a) To identify the most common points of contact of young people with corrupt practices in everyday life (e.g. in education, healthcare, public services, etc.), including assessing their ability to recognize and understand corruption;
- b) To analyze young people's trust in public institutions and their perception of their capacity to prevent corruption, as well as the level of awareness of existing reporting mechanisms;
- c) To examine the readiness and motivation of young people for individual or collective action against corruption (through activism, reporting, resistance, etc.);
- d) To assess their awareness of the gender dimension of corruption and the different forms and consequences it has on women and men;
- e) To formulate specific recommendations to relevant institutions and organizations, with the aim of increasing the participation of young people in anti-corruption processes.

2.2. Research Methodology

For the purposes of the research, the anonymous online survey method was used, conducted through the Google Forms platform.

The survey questionnaire ¹ consisted of two parts:

Demographic data of the respondents (gender, age, place of residence, status and ethnicity);

1 See Chapter 8. Annexes, 8.1 Youth and Corruption Survey Questionnaire

A thematic block with a total of 20 questions, organized into three categories:

- a) Recognition, perception and personal experience with corruption;
- b) The gender dimension of corruption;
- c) Attitudes towards the fight against corruption and opportunities for civic engagement.

The questions were closed-ended, with pre-selected answers, but the respondents were always given the opportunity to provide their own comments or alternative answers. Depending on the content, some of the questions allowed for a single answer, while others allowed multiple choice (two or three answers at a time).

The target group was young people aged 16 to 26, mainly high school students and university students, from Skopje, Gostivar and Strumica. The questionnaire was distributed through social networks, educational groups and youth channels, in order to reach a broader and more diverse sample.

The research does not claim to be nationally representative, but rather serves as an indicative tool for identifying key trends, perceptions, and opportunities for intervention among young people in selected environments.

All responses were voluntary and anonymous, with full respect for the principles of privacy and research ethics. The survey was conducted between April 15 and May 15, 2025, and included a total of 629 respondents.

The data was processed quantitatively and qualitatively, with additional analysis of open-ended responses, in order to provide a deeper understanding of young people's attitudes and experiences regarding corruption.

Based on the findings, a set of recommendations has been developed for relevant institutions and the civil society sector, with the aim of more effectively involving and activating young people in the fight against corruption.

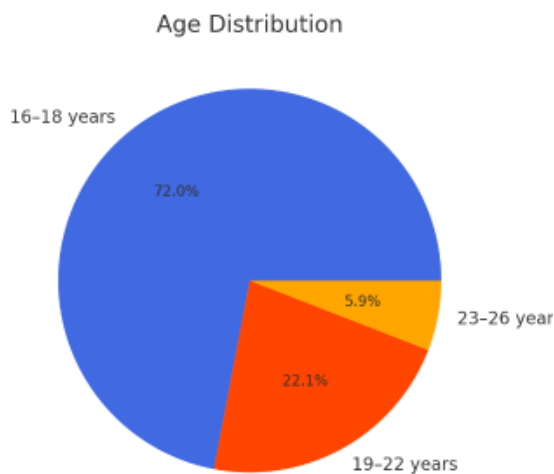
3. Project context and support

The research was conducted within the framework of the project „Young People in the Republic of North Macedonia: A Key Link in Building a Corruption-Free Society“, supported by the ZIVIK Funding Program, through funds provided by the German Federal Foreign Office. This project aims to hear the voices of young people, to encourage their capacities and to offer them a platform for active participation and change.

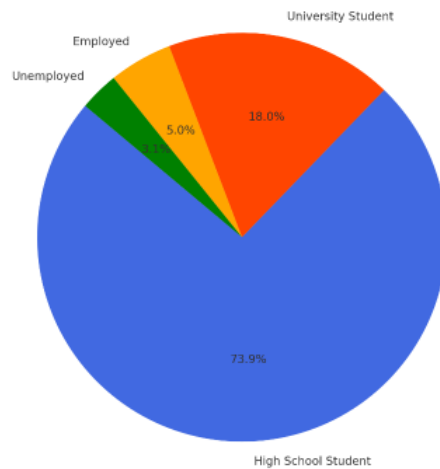
4. Analysis of the survey results

4.1 Basic demographic characteristics

A total of 629 young people completed the survey, of which 55.3% were girls and 42.1% were boys.

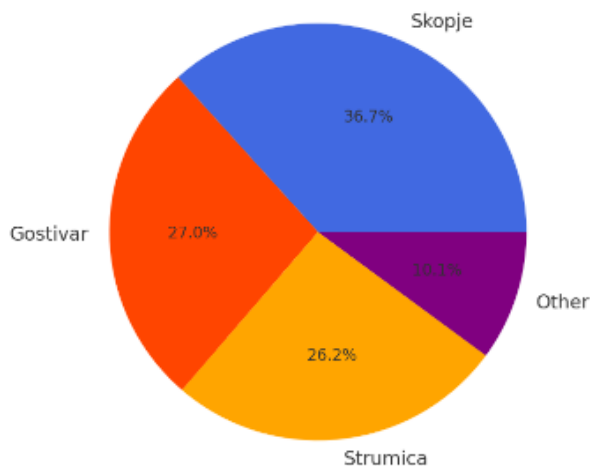


The majority of respondents (72%) are between the ages of 16 and 18, with 73.9% being high school students and 18% being college students.



In terms of place of residence, 36.7% are from Skopje, 27% from Gostivar, 26.2% from Strumica, while the rest stated that they live in other parts of the country. .

Place of Residence



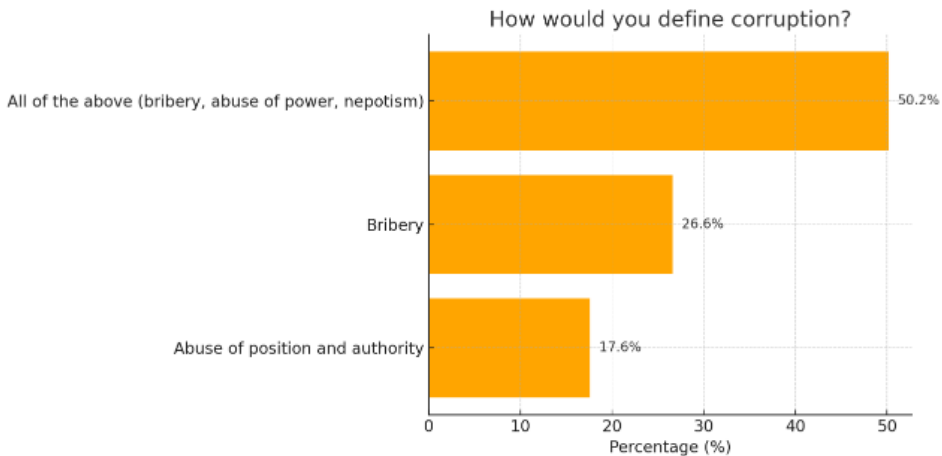
The question about ethnicity was optional. Of those who responded, 69.9% declared themselves Macedonians, 16.2% Albanians, 6.7% Turks, 2.4% Roma, and the rest belonged to other ethnic communities or did not declare themselves.

4.2 Recognition, perception and experience with corruption

The part of the questionnaire that related to recognition, perception and experience with corruption included a total of eight questions.

When asked „**How would you define corruption?**“, respondents had the opportunity to choose from four offered answers – bribery, abuse of power, favoritism/nepotism, all of the above, none of the above – as well as to enter their own explanation.

Almost half of young people (50.2%) define corruption as a combination of several forms: bribery, abuse of power and nepotism. For 26.6%, corruption is mainly reduced to bribery, while 17.6% associate it with the abuse of position and authority. In open-ended comments, several respondents describe corruption as “theft of our money and lives”, which is a particularly strong expression of personal and generational dissatisfaction.

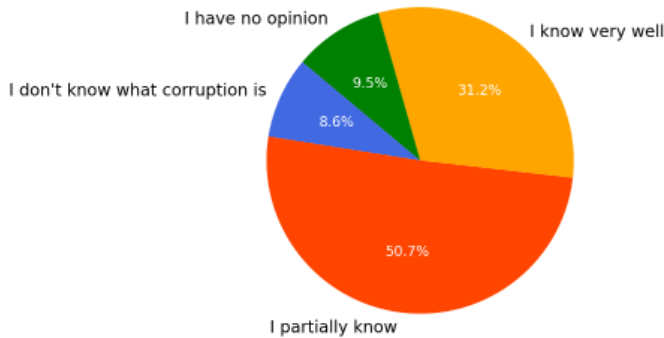


These results indicate that young people have a broad and multifaceted perception of corruption – it is not identified solely with bribery, but is seen as a structural social problem that erodes fairness, integrity and trust in institutions. Particularly striking is the emotional formulation in the comments, that corruption is “theft of our money and lives”, which reflects deep frustration and a sense of personal involvement. This suggests that young people experience corruption not only as a political or institutional challenge, but also as a direct threat to their life potential and social future.

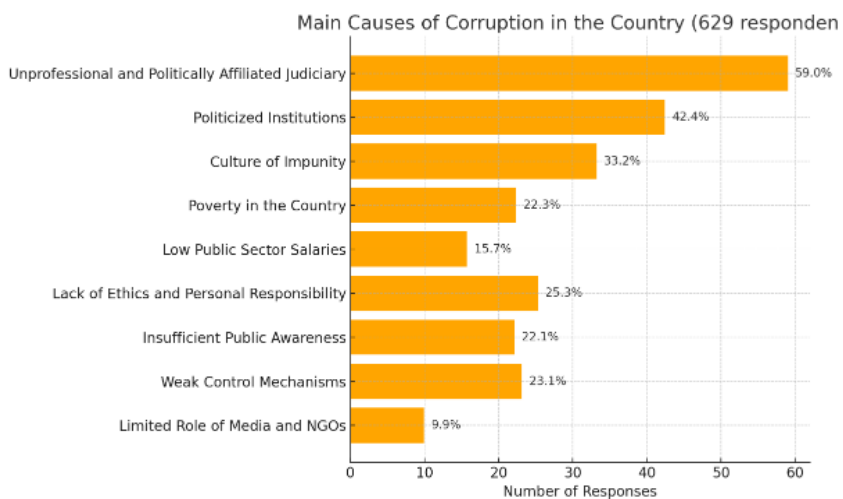
Interestingly, the majority of respondents chose an option that encompasses all forms of corruption. This can be interpreted as a sign that young people do not make sharp distinctions between different corrupt practices – but rather perceive them as interconnected and part of a broader systemic problem. Such a general definition may also indicate a sense of normalized corruption, i.e. a perception that all these phenomena are equally present and part of everyday life. This can be a good basis for further anti-corruption education and activism.

When it comes to **recognizing corruption**, half of the respondents (50.7%) stated that they partially know and can recognize it, while almost a third (31.2%) believe that they recognize it very well. In contrast, 8.6% stated that they do not know and cannot recognize corruption, and 9.5% have no opinion on this issue. These results indicate that most young people have at least a basic ability to recognize corruption, but there is still a significant percentage (almost 1 in 5) who are either not sure, or believe that they cannot recognize it. This indicates room for improvement in educational content, especially in the area of specific examples and real-life situations.

How much do you think you know about corruption and how to recognize it?

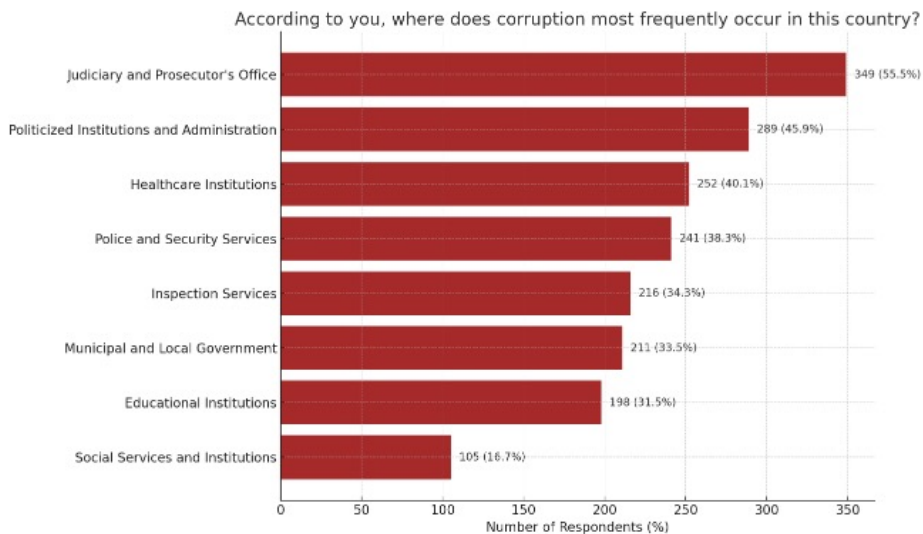


When asked what **the main causes of corruption**, in the country are, respondents could choose up to two answers from the list provided (unprofessional and party-controlled judiciary, politicized institutions and administration, culture of impunity - no one is held accountable for corruption, poverty, low salaries in the public sector, lack of ethics and personal responsibility among office holders, insufficient awareness of citizens about the consequences of corruption, weak mechanisms of state control and limited role of the media and the civil society sector). Respondents also had the opportunity to provide additional comments themselves.



For 59% of those surveyed, the main reason for corruption is the unprofessional and party-controlled judiciary, followed by politicized institutions and administration (42.4%). It is particularly worrying that one third of young people point to the culture of impunity as a key reason, and 25.3% single out the absence of ethical and personal responsibility among office holders. Furthermore, 23.1% point to weak state control mechanisms, 22.3% cite poverty, and 22.1% – insufficient awareness of citizens. For 15.7%, low salaries in the public sector are a key reason, and almost 10% point to the limited influence of the media and the civil society sector.

The results clearly indicate that young people see corruption as a systemic, “top-down” problem, deeply rooted in institutional weaknesses. Structural factors are most often pointed out – a captive judiciary, partisan administration, political pressures – that create an environment in which corruption is not only possible, but also expected. It is particularly significant that corruption is experienced as a reflection of dysfunctional institutions, and not just as a consequence of individual moral decline and/or financial incentives.

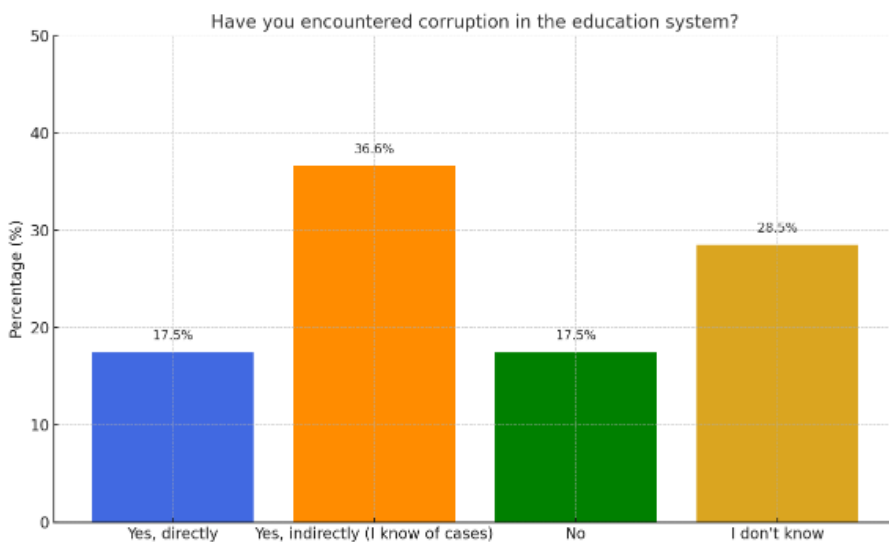


The responses of young people on **where corruption most often occurs in the country are in this direction**. More than half of the respondents (55.5%) point to the judiciary and the prosecution as institutions where corruption is most prevalent. This is followed by politicized institutions and administration (45.9%), healthcare institutions (40%) and the police and security services (38.3%). Furthermore, 34.3% mention inspection services, 33.5% – municipalities, 31.5% – educational institutions, while 16.7% pointed to social services

These results point to an unequivocal recognition of key government officials and public services as hotbeds of corruption. Instead of being perceived as pillars of justice and protectors of the public interest, the judiciary and prosecution are seen as epicenters of corrupt practices. The high percentage of responses for healthcare institutions, the police and educational institutions indicates that young people experience corruption not as a distant or abstract problem, but as present in their everyday lives – in hospitals, at administrative

counters, in classrooms and when in contact with the police. In other words, precisely where they should receive public services, support and protection, they most often face injustice and inequality.

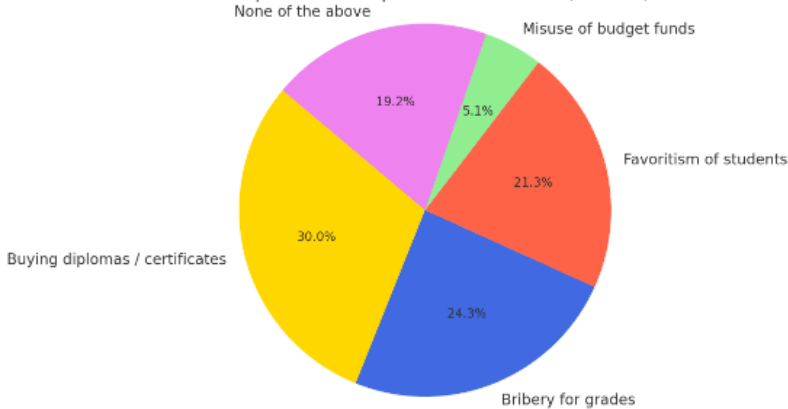
When asked whether they had **encountered corruption in the education system** (schools, faculties, etc.), as many as 54.1% of respondents answered that they had direct (17.5%) or indirect (36.6%) experience. Only 17.5% answered that they had never encountered corruption, while 28.5% stated that they did not know or had no opinion on the issue. These results indicate a high perception of corruption among young people in the education sector, as well as a damaged trust in educational institutions. The presence of a significant percentage of respondents without a clearly defined opinion further confirms the need to strengthen anti-corruption education, but also to build a culture of ethics, transparency and integrity in schools and faculties.



When asked whether they had **witnessed or heard of specific examples of corruption in education**, almost a third of young people (30%) cited the purchase of diplomas and certificates as the most frequently mentioned example. This was followed by: bribery to obtain grades (24.3%), favoritism of pupils or students (21.3%) and misuse of budget funds by schools or faculties (5.1%). Interestingly, 19.2% of respondents stated that they had not encountered any of the examples listed.

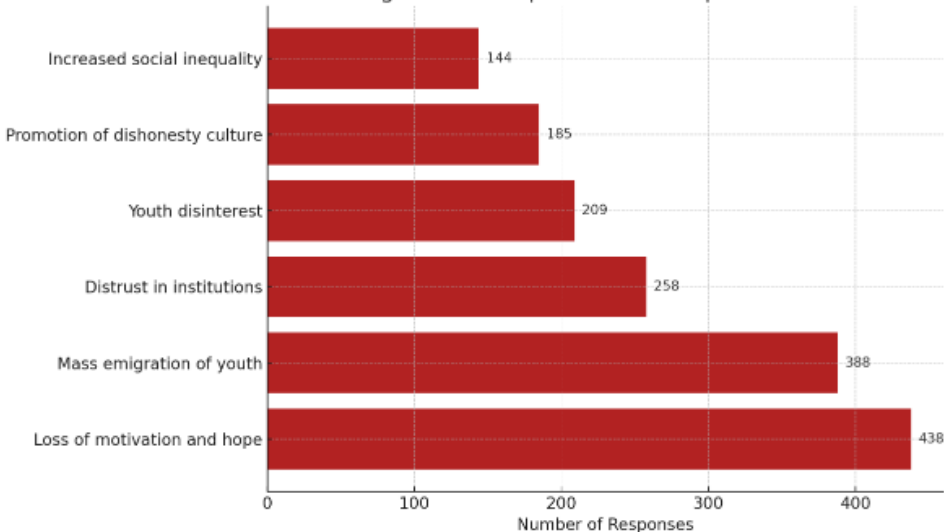
These findings show that young people often have direct or indirect experience with specific corrupt practices in the education sector. The presence of such a high perception of serious abuses, such as diploma buying, indicates a deeply impaired integrity in some educational institutions and the need for urgent institutional action, especially in the areas of transparency, accountability and monitoring of operations.

Examples of Corruption in Education (N=629)



In terms of **the most negative consequences of corruption on young people** (with the possibility of choosing up to three answers), as many as 69.6% of respondents point to the loss of motivation and hope that education and work pay off. Additionally, 61.7% believe that corruption leads to mass emigration, and 41% associate it with distrust in institutions. Furthermore, 33.2% highlight the lack of interest in social engagement, while 29.4% point to a culture of silence and acceptance of injustice. For 22.9%, corruption results in increased social inequality and socio-economic exclusion..

Negative Consequences of Corruption on Youth



Young people unequivocally locate corruption at the very core of the educational and institutional system. The fact that almost a third of respondents single out the purchase of diplomas as the most typical form of corruption, and a quarter point to bribery for grades, clearly shows that they not only recognize the injustice, but are also aware that such a twisted system discourages those who invest effort and knowledge.

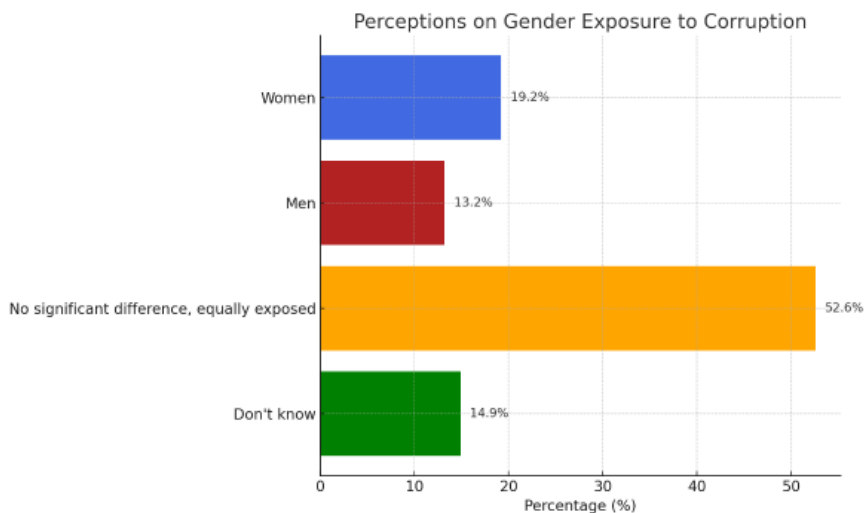
According to them, the consequences are not abstract, but real and measurable: demotivation, emigration, passivized and silenced citizens who become accustomed to living with injustice, erosion of the quality of education, „employment by connections“ instead of merit, and generations who learn that integrity does not pay, but corruption does.

In addition, young people indicate that corruption as a topic is rarely addressed in formal education. Almost 40% of respondents believe that it is not studied at all, and an additional 29.3% assess it as insufficiently represented. Only 15% of young people believe that corruption-related issues are adequately included in the curriculum.

4.3 Corruption and gender equality

The questionnaire also included a set of questions related to the relationship between corruption and gender equality. The aim was to examine young people’s attitudes and perceptions regarding whether corruption is perceived as a gender-neutral phenomenon, or whether there are perceived differences in its impact on women and men.

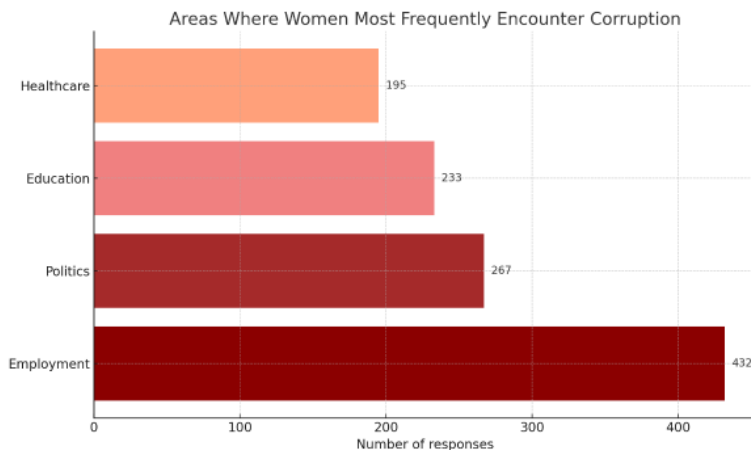
To the question „**Do you think that women or men are more exposed to corruption ?**“ 52.6% of respondents answered that corruption affects both sexes equally. On the other hand, 19.2% believe that women are more exposed, while 13.2% believe that this applies to men. The rest of the respondents did not give a precise answer or did not know how to assess it.



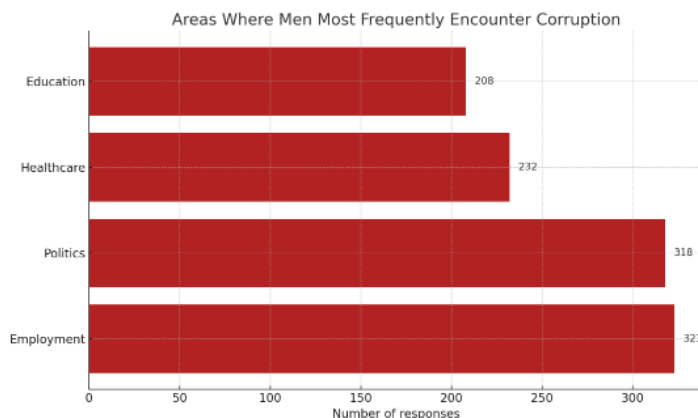
These results indicate that the majority of young people perceive corruption as a universal problem, without a pronounced gender dimension. However, the presence of a significant

percentage who believe that women are more affected opens up space for further analysis of gender aspects of access to public services, political and institutional participation, as well as the risks of corruption related to the vulnerability of certain categories of women (e.g., young, unemployed, single mothers, etc.)

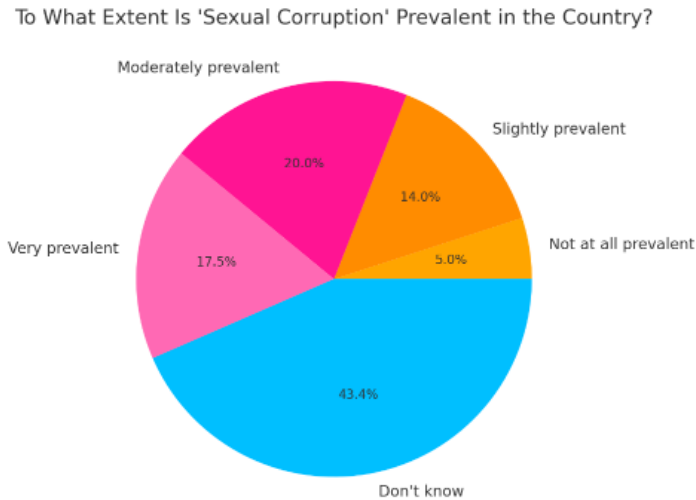
Employment is by far the most frequently cited area in which **women face corruption**, according to 68.8% of respondents. Politics follows with 42.6%, while education (37.2%) and healthcare (31.2%) are also perceived as significant sectors where women are exposed to corrupt practices. This suggests that young people recognize gender vulnerability, especially in employment and decision-making processes, where the influence of clientelism and party affiliation is particularly pronounced.



When it comes **to men**, employment (51.4%) and politics (50.6%) are almost tied as the areas where they most often **encounter corruption**. Followed by healthcare (36.9%) and education (33.1%). These results indicate that among both men and women, there is a strong sense that corruption is most prevalent precisely in areas where important decisions are made – such as employment and politics – which further emphasizes the perception of unequal access and opportunities in society.



Regarding **the prevalence of „sexual corruption“** in the country, 43.4% of respondents do not know how to answer, while 17.5% assessed it as very present, 20% as moderately present, and 14% as slightly prevalent.



The results of the survey show that young people generally perceive corruption as a gender-neutral phenomenon. More than half believe that it affects both women and men equally, while a significant proportion do not know how to answer the question about the prevalence of sexual corruption. However, the majority recognize certain social areas, such as employment, politics, education and health, in which women and men can be affected differently. This indicates the existence of basic knowledge among young people that corruption does not affect everyone identically and that the gender dimension is important.

Although a significant portion of young people (43.4%) do not know how to answer the question about the prevalence of sexual corruption, there is relevant external data that sheds light on this phenomenon. Numerous relevant studies and analyses show that women and men face different forms of corruption and have different access to resources and opportunities. According to data from [an OSCE survey](#) published in 2022, women in North Macedonia are more exposed to sexual corruption, especially in the fields of higher education and public administration. This form of corruption – known as “sexual corruption” – involves requesting or accepting sexual favors in exchange for public services or benefits. The same research shows that women have less access to power and decision-making, which makes them more vulnerable to such practices, especially in societies with pronounced gender inequalities.

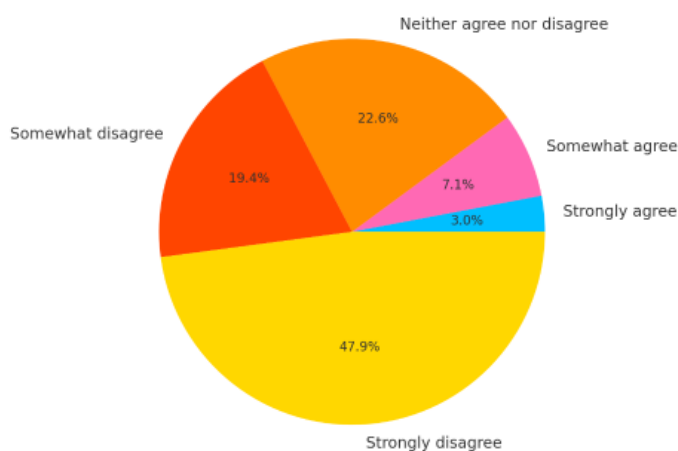
These findings also point to the need to analyze corruption from a gender perspective. This is important not only from an equity perspective, but also to design more effective prevention and protection mechanisms – which will address the specific risks faced by different social groups.

4.4 Views on the fight against corruption

The third part of the questionnaire aimed to examine the attitudes of high school and university students regarding the fight against corruption and their role in dealing with this serious social problem.

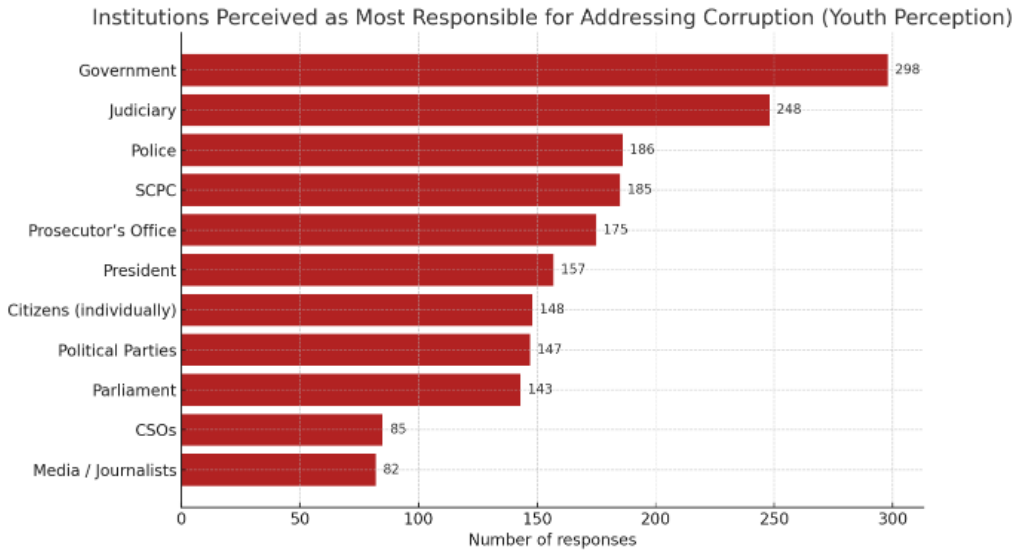
Almost half of the respondents (47.5%) strongly disagree with the statement that the institutions in the country are actively fighting corruption, while 19.2% mostly disagree. As many as 22.4% take a neutral position, and only 8% completely agree that the institutions are taking active steps in this fight. These findings indicate a pronounced distrust among young people in the commitment and efficiency of the institutions in the fight against corruption.

Agreement with the Statement:
"Institutional Efforts in the Country Are Active in Fighting Corruption"



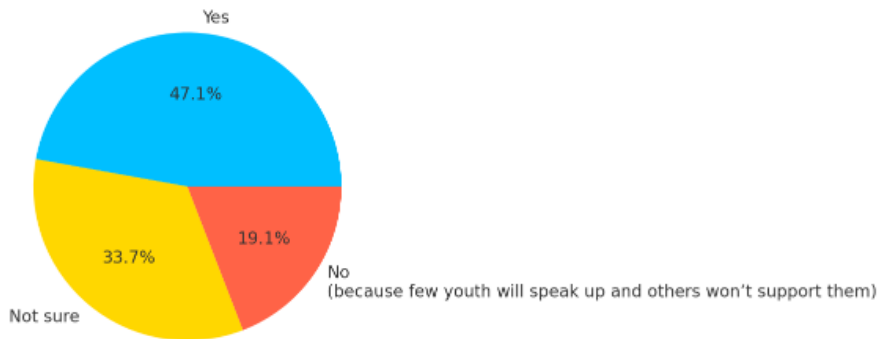
When asked **which institutions they consider most responsible for dealing with corruption**, 47% of respondents point to the Government, followed by the judiciary with 39.4%. The police are mentioned by 29.6% of young people, and almost the same number (29.4%) point to the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC). The prosecution is identified as a key institution by 27.8% of young people, and 25% believe that the president of the country also has a responsibility in this area. Young people recognize themselves as part of the solution – 23.5% answered that citizens have a role in the fight against corruption, followed by the Parliament (22.7%), civil society organizations (13.5%) and the media (12.9%).

Particularly significant is the fact that only 23.4% of young people recognize political parties as responsible actors in the fight against corruption. Although parties have real power – through personnel decisions, policy creation and decision-making – they are not perceived as solution providers, but as part of the problem itself. This indicates a deep distrust and perception of systemic partisanship of institutions, which in the eyes of young people represents a serious obstacle to a real and independent fight against corruption.



Almost half of the respondents (47.1%) believe that **young people can influence the fight against corruption**, 33.7% are not sure, while 19.1% responded negatively. This indicates that despite some skepticism, there is significant potential for youth engagement – especially if they are offered the right tools, platforms and support for active participation.

Do you think young people can influence the fight against corruption?

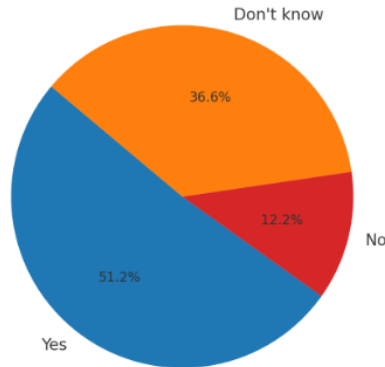


The results show that over half of the respondents (51%) expressed their willingness **to engage in anti-corruption activities**, such as activism, volunteering, campaigns and education. This is an extremely significant indicator of the existence of a critical mass of young people who are ready to act, if they are given the space, support and appropriate motivation.

Additionally, 36.4% responded that they were not sure, indicating that there is a large number of young people who could be involved, but do not yet have sufficient information, confidence or incentive to engage. This group represents an important target for future programs, as with well-designed and legitimate initiatives, they can be activated.

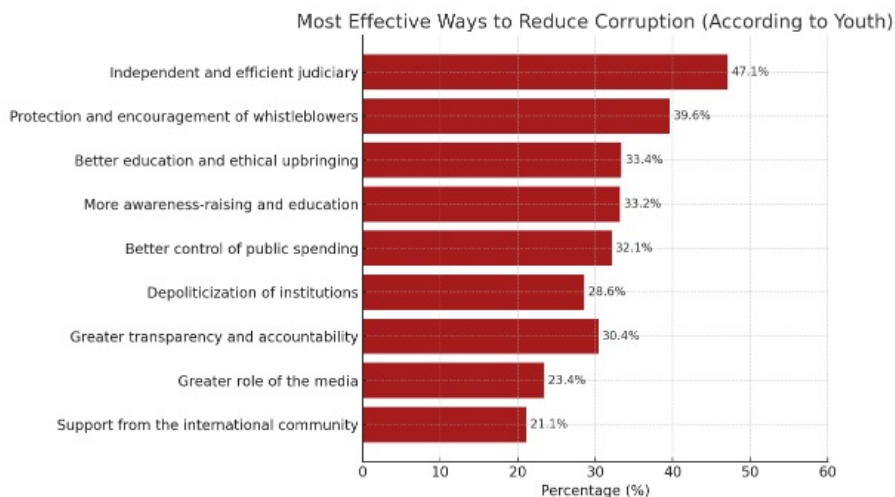
On the other hand, only 12.1% categorically stated that they would not participate, indicating that resistance to participation is relatively low.

Would you participate in activities to fight corruption (activism, volunteering, campaigns, education, etc.)?

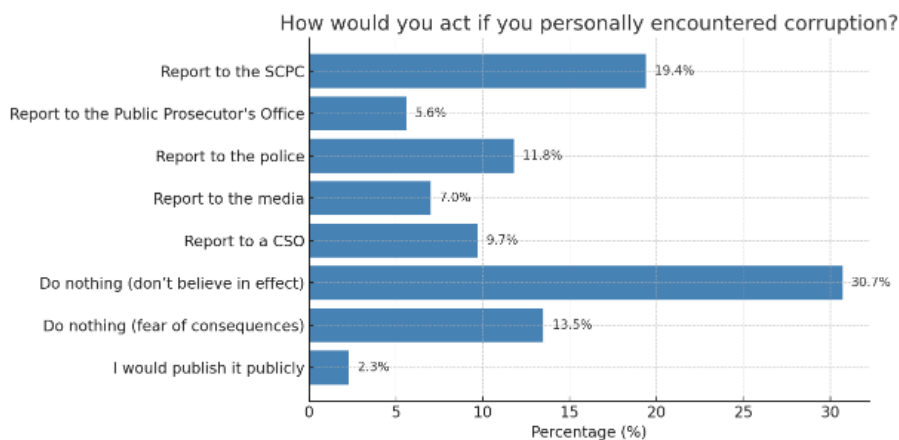


The answers to the question about **the most effective ways to reduce corruption** indicate a clear perception among young people that tackling corruption requires a systemic approach based on institutional reforms, legal certainty and value transformation of society. The fact that the majority of respondents (47.1%) indicated the independence and efficiency of the judiciary as the most important mechanism for reducing corruption indicates distrust in the judicial system and the expectation that it should play a central role in sanctioning corrupt behavior. The answer about protecting and encouraging whistleblowers (39.6%) clearly signals that there is a desire among young people to get involved in the fight against corruption, but also that fear of consequences and distrust in reporting mechanisms are real obstacles. This finding also confirms the data that a very small proportion of young people would report corruption to institutions. Almost a third (33.2%) of respondents believe that raising public awareness and civic education are key to preventing corruption, while a similar percentage (33.4%) also highlight formal education and ethical upbringing. This shows that young people do not see the fight against corruption solely as a legal or institutional battle, but as a process that requires long-term value change and educational engagement. Interestingly, the media and the international community receive significantly lower percentages (23.4% and 21.1%), indicating that young people do not see them as key actors, but rather focus on the internal reform of state institutions.

In conclusion, the responses received reflect a mature perception among young people that anti-corruption efforts should be focused on strengthening the independence of the judiciary, protecting whistleblowers, and transforming values through education and awareness, rather than solely on repressive measures. These views represent a strong basis for developing policies that will strengthen the role of young people in the fight against corruption.



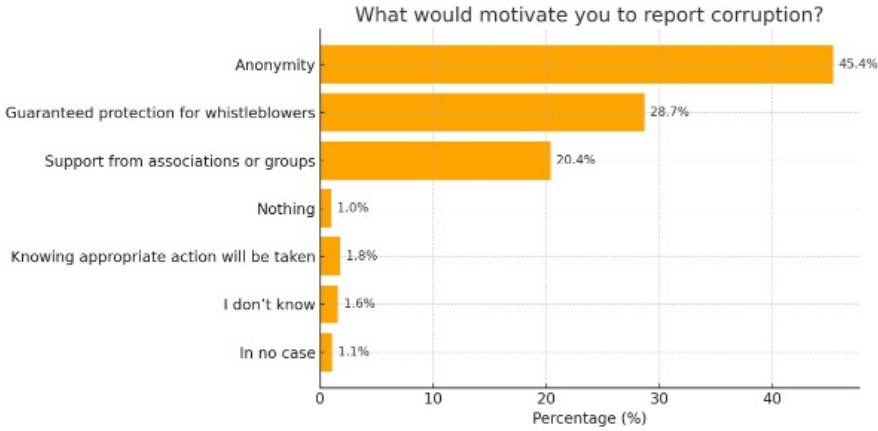
If they were personally confronted with corruption, 30.7% of young people said they would not take any action because they do not believe that reporting would have any effect, and an additional 13.5% would not report due to fear of consequences. Only 19.4% would report to the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, 11.8% to the police, 9.7% to a civil society organization, 7% to the media, and only 5.6% to the prosecutor's office. These data indicate a deep distrust in institutions and a perception of inefficiency and risk of reporting, which is a serious obstacle to the functioning of anti-corruption mechanisms.



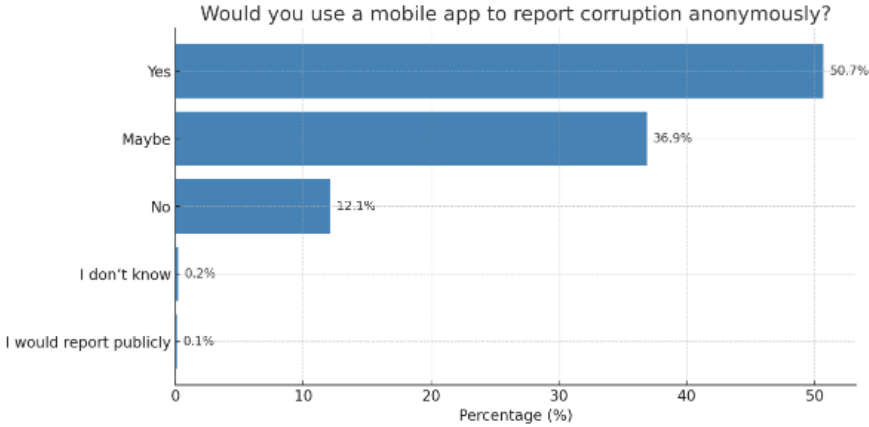
When asked **what would motivate them to report corruption**, the majority of respondents (46.6%) answered that it was the possibility of anonymous reporting, 28.5% mentioned protection provided to whistleblowers, and 21.1% support from civil society organizations or youth groups.

These data indicate a deep distrust in institutions and a perception that existing reporting

mechanisms are ineffective and potentially risky. To encourage youth activism in the fight against corruption, it is necessary to strengthen mechanisms to protect whistleblowers, guarantee their anonymity, and create a safe, confidential, and encouraging environment for reporting.



On the final survey question, half of the young people surveyed (50.7%) said they would use **a mobile application to anonymously report corruption**, while an additional 36.9% said they might use it. Only 12.1% said they would not.



This result clearly indicates that young people recognize digital tools as a potentially safe and reliable opportunity for reporting and civic activism. The anonymity, accessibility, and simplicity of digital solutions may be key factors in overcoming mistrust and fear of reporting corruption through traditional institutional channels.

5. Summary of key findings

The results of the survey show that young people are highly aware of the existence and prevalence of corruption in society. Their understanding goes beyond the classic definition of corruption as bribery or abuse of office – they perceive it as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses various forms of institutional and individual deviant behavior.

Young people accurately identify the systemic causes and main hotbeds of corruption. They most often cite institutional weaknesses, politicization and dysfunctionality of the judiciary and prosecution, as well as the inefficiency of public services. In addition, they believe that impunity and the absence of personal responsibility among public office holders create an environment in which corruption can persist and spread unhindered.

Particularly worrying are the findings related to corruption in education. Most respondents have already had direct or indirect experience with corrupt practices in schools and universities – such as buying diplomas (30%), bribing for grades (24.3%), and favoritism (21.3%). This suggests that young people are exposed from an early age to an education system that, instead of building values such as knowledge, hard work, integrity, and fairness – normalizes corruption.

As a result of such experiences, many young people lose motivation, become demotivated, lack trust in institutions and consider emigration. Corruption, in other words, not only violates institutional integrity, but also negatively affects personal development, civic activity and social trust.

A significant portion of young people believe that the topic of corruption is either completely absent or insufficiently represented in the curricula. This indicates that the education system is neglecting its role in preventing and building anti-corruption values.

The survey shows that young people generally perceive corruption as gender neutral, but recognize gender differences in certain areas – especially in employment processes, where women are perceived as more exposed (68.8%). The ambiguity and lack of response to questions related to sexual corruption indicate insufficient information, but also the existence of stigma and sensitivity.

In relation to the institutions responsible for fighting corruption, young people express a high level of distrust. Only 8% fully agree that the institutions are actively fighting corruption. The government, the judiciary and the police are recognized as responsible, while political parties – despite their real power – are not perceived as part of the solution, but on the contrary, as key actors in generating systemic corruption. It is particularly indicative that only 23.4% believe that political parties are responsible for dealing with corruption, while 29.4% point to the SCPC as a relevant institution. However, only 19.4% of young people would report corruption to this institution, which indicates a lack of trust and a need for greater visibility and accessibility of the SCPC among the young population.

The research also identifies potential for civic mobilization. Almost half (47.1%) of young people believe that they can contribute to the fight against corruption, and 51% would engage

in concrete activities if they were provided with space, support and reliable mechanisms. Moreover, the solutions they propose – an independent judiciary (47.1%), whistleblower protection (39.6%), de-partisanship (28.6%), institutional transparency and ethics education – indicate awareness of the need for a systemic and value-based approach.

In terms of reporting, young people have a high level of distrust and fear. 30.7% would not report because they believe it has no effect, and 13.5% due to fear of consequences. Anonymity appears as the most preferred protection mechanism (46.6%), and support from youth organizations and civic groups (21.1%) would help encourage them. This finding highlights the need for functional, reliable and accessible reporting mechanisms.

Half of respondents (50.7%) said they would use a mobile app to anonymously report, while an additional 36.9% said they might use one. This high percentage indicates that young people recognize the digital space as an opportunity for activism and reporting – especially when they feel insufficiently protected by traditional institutional mechanisms.

These findings collectively indicate that young people recognize corruption as one of the key problems of society, but in order to activate their potential in the fight against it, it is necessary to build new and trusted channels of support, institutional accountability, and safe forms of engagement

6. Recommendations

The survey results clearly highlight the need for a systemic and integrated approach to the fight against corruption, with young people as key and active actors in this process. In order to encourage real mobilization and motivation among the young population, it is necessary to significantly strengthen and support both formal and informal anti-corruption education. Such education should enable the acquisition of knowledge, values and concrete tools for recognizing, preventing and reporting corrupt practices. This approach requires coordinated, long-term and concerted steps by policymakers, educational institutions and the civil society sector. In this regard, we recommend:

The Government, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for the Development of Education should:

- Promote and institutionalize anti-corruption education and integrity building at all levels of formal education – from primary to higher education. Topics related to corruption, ethics and accountability should be integrated throughout the curriculum, not just in specific subjects;
- ensure regular evaluation of the effectiveness of existing anti-corruption content, in order to measure their impact on the knowledge, attitudes and behavior of pupils and students;
- invest in the development of innovative, interactive and practical educational content that will deepen understanding of corruption and encourage critical thinking, personal responsibility and active citizenship;

- establish ongoing cooperation with the SCPC, civil society organizations and experts in the development and implementation of anti-corruption educational programs;
- Strengthen the capacity and integrity of teaching staff through training, mentoring support and available resources. This will enable higher quality teaching, better understanding of corruption-related topics and resilience of schools to corrupt influences;
- establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track the effects of anti-corruption education through regular surveys and reports;
- establish binding integrity indicators for the supervision of educational institutions.

Educational institutions (primary and secondary schools) must:

- be proactive in implementing anti-corruption content through modern, interactive and student-oriented working methods;
- organize regular workshops, simulations and debates to deepen knowledge and encourage critical thinking;
- establish effective systems for the prevention of corrupt practices, including functional mechanisms for anonymous reporting of corruption cases;
- develop an internal protocol for handling reports of corruption, available to students and parents;
- produce an annual report on corruption risks with the input of students;
- form school integrity teams, composed of teachers, professional staff and students, who will work on identifying, preventing and resolving corruption risks (e.g. nepotism, favoritism, bribery for grades), as well as promoting ethical behavior;
- involve parents through participation in thematic workshops, public debates and campaigns on ethics and integrity;
- support and encourage initiatives by students to independently create educational projects, campaigns and public events on the topic of anti-corruption;
- establish long-term partnerships with the SCPC and civil society organizations to co-design and implement additional activities, peer education and public campaigns for resistance to corruption

The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC), civil society organizations and youth initiatives to:

- develop and provide tools, resources and activities for informal anti-corruption education (including mobile applications, digital games, quizzes and video materials), which will be accessible, inclusive and attractive to young people;
- organize public campaigns, forums, debates and trainings to raise public awareness and encourage young people to actively participate in anti-corruption initiatives and peer education;

-
- build partnerships with educational institutions and educational policy makers to jointly create anti-corruption educational content that is based on real needs and adapted to the age of students;
 - establish mentoring programs with young integrity ambassadors in cooperation with schools and youth councils;
 - advance digital mechanisms for anonymous reporting, with active promotion, easy access and trust among young users.

We recommend to young people:

- actively engage in formal and informal educational programs and activities related to ethics and anti-corruption;
- to initiate and implement their own projects, campaigns and peer activities that promote transparency and civic responsibility;
- encourage their teachers, schools and local communities to support anti-corruption education and its substantive implementation;
- to report corrupt practices, demanding the establishment of safe, reliable and efficient reporting and protection mechanisms;
- participate in youth councils, student parliaments and initiatives that provide a platform for their voice in decision-making processes;
- to create and use mobile and digital tools for peer education and mobilization in the fight against corruption.

7. Closing Messages and Call to Action

5 key messages from the research

1. *Young people perceive corruption as a systemic, not an isolated problem.*
2. *Education is a major point of experience with corruption from a young age.*
3. *The majority does not believe in the effectiveness of institutions.*
4. *Anonymity and digital tools are key to encouraging reporting.*
5. *There are clear proposals from young people for systemic solutions*

What can young people do to fight corruption?

- ◇ *Get involved in youth initiatives and debates on anti-corruption*
- ◇ *Share information and encourage peers to speak up*
- ◇ *Use digital tools for anonymous reporting*
- ◇ *Initiate projects and campaigns at school or college*
- ◇ *Be an example of ethical behavior*

Final paragraph: Call to action

Young people are not indifferent – they have views, ideas and a desire for change. It is time for institutions, schools and the community to recognize and support their voice. Support must be real, accessible and reliable – and action must start now.

8. Contributions

8.1 Survey Questionnaire: Youth Perceptions of Corruption

This survey is being conducted within the framework of the project „Youth in the Republic of North Macedonia: A Key Link in Building a Corruption-Free Society“, supported through the ZIVIK Funding Program with funds provided by the German Federal Foreign Office.

The purpose of this survey is to assess the knowledge, attitudes, experiences and readiness of young people aged 16 to 26 to tackle corruption in society.

The survey is anonymous. All responses will be processed solely as aggregate data, without any individual interpretation or attribution of responses. The results will be used to develop recommendations that would help decision-makers plan future measures and activities to prevent corruption.

Your participation is voluntary, and your opinion is of great importance for improving the situation related to youth and corruption in our society

Part 1: Demographic data

Age :

- ◇ 16 – 18 years old
- ◇ 19 – 22 years old
- ◇ 23 – 26 years old

Gender:

- ◇ Male
- ◇ Female
- ◇ I don't want to say

Place of residence:

- ◇ Skopje
- ◇ Gostivar
- ◇ Strumica
- ◇ Other (specify):

Status:

- ◇ *High school student*
- ◇ *Student*
- ◇ *Employee*
- ◇ *Unemployed*
- ◇ *Other (specify):*

Ethnicity (optional answer):

- ◇ *Macedonian*
- ◇ *Albanian*
- ◇ *Turkey*
- ◇ *Roma*
- ◇ *Serbian*
- ◇ *Bosnian woman*
- ◇ *Wallachia*
- ◇ *I don't want to answer.*
- ◇ *Other (specify):*

Part 2: Recognition, perception and experience of corruption

How would you define „corruption“?

- ◇ *Bribe*
- ◇ *Abuse of power*
- ◇ *Favoritism / nepotism*
- ◇ *All of the above*
- ◇ *None of the above*
- ◇ *Other (specify):*

How much do you think you know about corruption and can you recognize it?

- ◇ *I don't know what corruption is and I can't recognize it.*
- ◇ *I know her in part and can sometimes recognize her.*
- ◇ *I know her very well and can always recognize her.*
- ◇ *I don't know/I have no opinion*

What, in your opinion, are the main reasons for corruption in the country?
(select up to 2 answers)

- ◇ *Unprofessional and party-controlled judiciary*
- ◇ *Politicized institutions and administration*
- ◇ *Culture of impunity – no one is held accountable for corruption*
- ◇ *Poverty in the country*
- ◇ *Low salaries in the public sector*
- ◇ *Lack of ethics and personal responsibility among office holders*
- ◇ *Insufficient awareness among citizens about the bad consequences of corruption*
- ◇ *Weak state control mechanisms*
- ◇ *Limited role of the media and civil society*
- ◇ *Other (specify):*

Where, in your opinion, does corruption most often occur in this country?
(select up to 3 answers)

- ◇ *Judiciary and prosecution*
- ◇ *Government and ministries*
- ◇ *Municipalities and local self-government*
- ◇ *Health institutions (hospitals, clinics, health centers)*
- ◇ *Educational institutions (schools, faculties)*
- ◇ *Police and security services*
- ◇ *Inspectorates and inspections*
- ◇ *Social services and assistance institutions*
- ◇ *Other (specify):*

Have you encountered corruption in the education system?
(school, faculty, etc.)

- ◇ *Yes, directly*
- ◇ *Yes, indirectly (I know of cases)*
- ◇ *No*
- ◇ *I don't know*

Have you witnessed or heard of any of the following examples?

- ◇ *Bribery for grades*
- ◇ *Favoring students/pupils*
- ◇ *Purchasing diplomas/certificates*
- ◇ *Misuse of budget funds at the school/faculty*
- ◇ *None of the above*

To what extent, in your opinion, is the topic of corruption represented and studied in education?

- ◇ *Not represented at all*
- ◇ *It is little represented.*
- ◇ *It is sufficiently represented.*
- ◇ *It is fully represented.*
- ◇ *I don't know*

What, in your opinion, are the most negative consequences of corruption on young people in society? (choose up to 3 answers)

- ◇ *Loss of motivation and hope that education and hard work pay off*
- ◇ *Mass emigration of young people*
- ◇ *Distrust in institutions and democracy*
- ◇ *Disinterest of young people in active participation in social life*
- ◇ *Encouraging a culture of silence and acceptance of injustice*
- ◇ *Increased social inequality and economic and social exclusion*
- ◇ *Other (specify):*

Part 3: Corruption and Gender Equality

In your opinion, are women or men more exposed to corruption?

- ◇ *Women*
- ◇ *The men*
- ◇ *There is no significant difference, they are equally exposed*
- ◇ *I don't know*

In which areas do women/girls most often face corruption?

(select up to 2 answers)

- ◇ Education
- ◇ Employment
- ◇ Healthcare
- ◇ Politics
- ◇ Other (specify):

In which areas do men/boys most often face corruption

(choose up to 2 answers)

- ◇ Education
- ◇ Employment
- ◇ Healthcare
- ◇ Politics
- ◇ Other (specify):

To what extent, in your opinion, is „sexual corruption“ widespread in this country?

- ◇ It is not widespread at all.
- ◇ It is a little widespread.
- ◇ It is moderately widespread.
- ◇ It is very widespread.
- ◇ I don't know

Part 4: Views on the fight against corruption

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: „Institutions in this country are actively fighting corruption“?

- ◇ I don't agree at all.
- ◇ I mostly disagree.
- ◇ I neither agree nor disagree.
- ◇ I mostly agree.
- ◇ I completely agree

Which of the following institutions or organizations, in your opinion, is most responsible for tackling corruption in the country? (select up to 3 answers)

- ◇ *The President of the country*
- ◇ *The Assembly*
- ◇ *The government*
- ◇ *The judiciary*
- ◇ *The prosecution*
- ◇ *Police*
- ◇ *The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC)*
- ◇ *Political parties*
- ◇ *Civil society organizations*
- ◇ *The media / journalists*
- ◇ *Citizens (individually)*
- ◇ *Other (specify):*

In your opinion, can young people influence the fight against corruption?

- ◇ *Yes*
- ◇ *No*
- ◇ *I'm not sure*

Would you engage in activities to fight corruption
(activism, volunteering, campaigns, education, etc.)?

- ◇ *Yes*
- ◇ *No*
- ◇ *I don't know*

What, in your opinion, are the most effective ways to reduce corruption?
(select up to 3 answers)

- ◇ *Independent and efficient judiciary*
- ◇ *Increased transparency and accountability of institutions*
- ◇ *Better control over public spending*
- ◇ *Increased role of the media and investigative journalism*
- ◇ *Protection and encouragement of whistleblowers*
- ◇ *De-partisanization of institutions and public administration*
- ◇ *Better education and ethical upbringing*
- ◇ *Support from the international community (EU, etc.)*
- ◇ *Enhanced education and raising awareness of citizens about corruption*
- ◇ *Other (specify):*

If you personally encountered corruption, how would you act?

- ◇ You will report to the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption
- ◇ You will report to the prosecutor's office.
- ◇ You will report to the police.
- ◇ You will report it to some media outlet.
- ◇ You will report to a civil society organization that deals with corruption.
- ◇ You won't take any action because you don't believe it will have any effect.
- ◇ You won't take any action because you're afraid of the consequences.
- ◇ Other (specify):

What would motivate you to report corruption?

- ◇ Anonymity
- ◇ Protection provided for whistleblowers
- ◇ Support from youth associations or groups
- ◇ Other (specify):

Would you use a mobile application that allows anonymous reporting of corruption?

- ◇ Yes
- ◇ No
- ◇ Maybe

9. Abbreviations, documents and links used

Abbreviations used

CPI - Corruption Perceptions Index

GRECO - Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe

UNCAC - United Nations Convention against Corruption

OH – United Nations

EC – European Commission

SCPC - State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption

OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

IDSC - Institute for Democracy „Societas Civilis“

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