Session Title: Nordic anti-corruption strategies
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Experts:

Aarne Kinnunen
Deputy Head of Department of Criminal Policy, Ministry of Justice, Finland

Aive Pevkur
Anti-Corruption Expert and Former Board Member, Transparency International Estonia

Andrew Preston
Head, UK Government’s Joint Anti-Corruption Unit

Mark Pyman
Founder, CurbingCorruption.com

Moderated by: Marina Buch Kristensen
Board member, Transparency International Denmark and partner Nordic Consulting group (NCG)

Session coordinated by: Marina Buch Kristensen
What were the aims of the session and corruption risks?

The ‘good’ results of the Corruption Perceptions Index in the Nordic countries can be misleading. In the Nordic countries there is increasingly a recognition that such single metrics can conceal serious corruption, mismanagement and irregularities. In recent years National Integrity Studies have thus been carried out in many developed countries, which have highlighted that there is a need for Nordic countries to take greater responsibility for combating corruption both internationally and domestically. Furthermore, with the adoption of the SDGs, it has been emphasized that all countries- both developed and developing countries have a responsibility for cross border effects of their policies and setting goals and targets for reaching the SDGs in their own countries. A recent research has concluded that most developed nations are actually well aware of the need for a broader approach to anticorruption, but few have yet formalized their strategies.

(http://www.statecraft.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/EMEA_2384_Bespoke%20brochure__Countries%20Curbing%20corruption%20final%20report_V3....pdf[1]).

Of the 26 top-ranking countries in the CPI index, only two – Estonia and the UK – have a formal, published anti-corruption strategy while Finland has a draft strategy. This workshop will focus on both the process and outcome of AC-strategy. What is a good process? Who should be involved? How do we set priorities? Which are the high-risk sectors? What should a good strategy look like? The session will then move on to a discussion on the possible positive outcomes. Have any positive outcomes of anti-corruption strategies in Nordic countries been detected so far? The workshop has an interesting mix of panelists from governmental departments responsible for drawing up anti-corruption
strategies as well as civil society activists and researchers, who have been involved from the outside. It is expected that participants from Nordic as well as non-Nordic countries can get inspiration from this session for how to draw up anti-corruption strategies in their respective countries.

TI-DK is exploring the possibility of Denmark drafting an actual national anti-corruption strategy and hoped to get inspiration for how, when and with whom such a strategy could be drawn up.

Summary of panellists’ contributions & discussion points (please be as detailed as possible)

The research paper “Approach of the 26 top-ranked countries” presented in the session highlights that only 3 of the 26 countries have an anticorruption-strategy: UK, Estonia and Finland (still draft).

There were several lessons learned during the discussion from the research papers and from Estonia, Finland and the UK:

- A strategy is an important tool to help push an agenda, but it is not a substitute for political commitment. It sets out a vision of desired impact.

- Empirical analysis can help determine what initiatives can be included in the strategy. To implement and follow up on strategies it can be useful to formulate the initiatives in respect to what is realistic in practice.

- An annual report on the progress, for example to Parliament, is helpful in monitoring progresses.

- It is very important to gain public attention as this will motivate the politicians to commit and act.

Key lessons especially from the UK included the importance of 1) Establishing a cross-government unit for setting and monitoring anticorruption policy. 2. Identifying corruption-reform objectives & priorities; and connecting them with wider government objectives.
3. Being more explicit about high-risk sectors – security, economic, service sectors and building the evidence base to help inform prioritization decisions. 4. More explicit on elite-influence corruption and new forms of corruption. 5. Better addressing safety gaps. E.g. in whistleblowing, oversight, & similar. 6. Integrating private sector more tightly into government a-c strategy. 7. Encouraging corporate and civil society engagement in sector-specific reforms. 8. Raising the profile of actions at sub-national government level. 9. Being more demanding about multi-national initiatives. 10. Opening a public debate on corruption priorities. A country can cover these issues in different ways but having a strategy helps.

One of the tasks for Finland became to draft an anticorruption strategy in 2015. The ministry got a lot of feedback, which enabled them to draft a final version. They realized through the process that corruption is a structural issue and they wanted to find a way to dig it out and define how they understood corruption. The key lesson learned was that in Finland corruption is more than just bribery. In the strategy, corruption was defined as “any abuse of a position of authority for personal gain”. Another lesson learned was the importance of having a vision. In the case of Finland, the vision became “A society where corruption has no leverage and no place to hide”. The objectives of the strategy are: 1. Consolidation of structures that support anti-corruption work; 2. Increased awareness and changing of the attitudes; 3. Increased transparency; 4. Easier detection of corruption cases; 5. Development of legislation governing bribery offences, and 6. Promotion of corruption research.

Estonia has had three anticorruption strategies and good results of anti-corruption activities. In 2003 Estonia got a new government, with the slogan: a clean swipe. The new government made an agreement about corruption prevention and the first Anti-Corruption Strategy “An Honest State” 2004-2007 was approved with the Government’s protocolled decision. The coalition agreement also contained establishment of the anti-corruption committee of ministers. The objective of the first strategy was to limit opportunities for corruption, to increase intolerance of corruption, and to increase transparency. The next strategies for years

Interventions from the panel and the participants emphasized that it is important with political commitment and mechanisms across the government to ensure that the strategies are fulfilled. The factors that have promoted anti-corruption are scandals that have shocked the citizens and therefore the politicians needed to do something about anti-corruption. Media and citizens are important political drivers. Every country is different and there are different drivers. However, having a strategy is very helpful to draw out more commitment to the anti-corruption policy.

It is important to have a monitoring framework and to make an annual update to parliament so that the government can show their work and be criticized. You need a range of mechanisms that give you some long-term view.

A strategy can only be a starting point. It is necessary to build and harness political commitment, draw out evidence, find effective ways to work across government, with the private sector and with international partners, and build capacity and a series of communities.

Main outcomes of session (include the highlights and interesting questions from the floor)
Every country has its own dynamics and its national and international drivers of corruption. It is helpful to have a strategy to give direction. A strategy is also helpful in translating political will into action.

It was highlighted as problematized if Nordic countries only have an implementation plan rather than a strategy as such. However, a strategy and implementation plan are not enough. One needs commitments from a political level. One needs to think about how to strengthen the political commitment among others by involving politicians from different political parties in the development of the strategy.

It was questioned how a national strategy plan can help solve corruption in other countries e.g. countries to which development aid is extended. It was emphasized that the issue of aid and the development policies should be included in the strategy. The importance of having joint strategies and collective action that includes like-minded governments and civil society was also emphasized.

It was questioned whether a strategy with too many elements and initiatives could be overwhelming and how to avoid this. One solution is to formulate the initiatives with an eye for what is realistic and possible regarding resources and commitment. Annual reports can help keep track of the process and is also useful for planning purposes.

It is challenging to monitor and measure the impacts of the commitments. It is important to have a series of goals under each commitment so that you can work towards those.

It is also important to be very realistic when conducting the plan. To only include the elements that can be fulfilled. General acceptance of the strategy is good, because a ministry understands that if they have a specific task then it can be fulfilled.

It is important to be honest about whether a strategy worked.
The main problem or challenge according to creating a good strategy is a lack of resources and a lack of awareness. Lack of political support is also a central challenge.

Key recommendations and concrete follow-up actions

1. All countries irrespective of whether they are on top or the bottom of the CPI index are encouraged to draft a national anti-corruption strategy. The participants strongly supported the establishment of anti-corruption strategies by the five Nordic countries, as their good reputation will have a strong effect in encouraging other nations to do the same. A national anti-corruption strategy cannot substitute political will, but it can be a very helpful tool in order to translate political will into action.

2. The participants recommended that such strategies should commence with an active debate with the public. It is critical that public opinion is actively engaged in discussing the merits and priorities of the strategy. Recent events, such as in Denmark (Danske Bank, etc) and Finland (Patria scandal) are catalysts for
such debates.

3. Conduct in-depth consultation and situational analysis to understand the specific issues in a country. It is important to go deep and dig out the structural issues. The purpose could for example be to reduce poverty, inequality or maintain social trust rather than reducing corruption. Collecting solid evidence is key to selling the idea of a strategy as they have done in Estonia.

4. Use the development of the strategy to recognize the interdependence of global issues and global responsibilities (e.g. tax haven, illicit financial flows, development aid), as well as the domestic issues.

5. Encourage the debate to consider each of the individual sectors - education, construction or defense as they have done in Finland, Estonia and the UK – and to priorities actions in the high-risk sectors.

6. Encourage active prioritization of the overall themes. It could be in the form of an overarching policy document, which is then spelled out in concrete commitments. This could also be in the form of an implementation plan (an internal or external plan).

7. Ensure there is a requirement for a regular, published monitoring report. It is important to devote enough resources to spell out a realistic structure for the intended outcomes/impact. An annual report to Parliament is a good way to formalise the annual reporting.

8. Plan to have a formal anti-corruption unit or a so-called Apex implementation model like the one they have in the UK. This is not a ‘coordinating’ structure, nor a centralized structure. It is a small group at the centre that controls the key elements of policy and direction, while the anticorruption responsibility still remains in the hands of each individual ministry.

What can be done to create opportunities for scaling up the solutions
discussed in the session? And by whom?
All countries irrespective of whether they are on top or the bottom of the CPI index are encouraged to draft a national anti-corruption strategy. Specifically, action by the Nordic countries in developing national strategies would have a positive effect on other countries.

Conduct in-depth consultation and situational analysis to understand the specific issues in a country. It is important to go deep and dig out the structural issues. The purpose could for example be to reduce poverty, inequality or maintain social trust rather than reducing corruption. Collecting solid evidence is key to selling the idea of a strategy as they have done in Estonia.

The strategy should recognize the interdependence of global issues and global responsibilities and the domestic issues e.g. tax haven, illicit financial flows, development aid.

It is often useful to have a formal anti-corruption unit or a so-called Apex implementation model like the one they have in the UK. This is not a ‘coordinating’ structure, nor a centralized structure. It is a small group at the center that controls the key elements of policy and direction, while the anticorruption responsibility still remains in the hands of each individual ministry.

In many countries it is very important to think in sectors- education, construction or defense as they have done in Finland, Estonia and the UK.

Prioritization of overall themes is key. It could be in the form of an overarching policy document, which is then spelled out in concrete commitments. This could also be in the form of an implementation plan (an internal or external plan). It is helpful to include realistic initiatives in order to gain and keep a commitment to the strategy.
A monitoring report is key. It is important to devote enough resources to spell out a realistic log frame for the intended outcomes/impact.

We value your assessment following the outputs of the session, if you need to, please get feedback from the session coordinator or the moderator for this component.

What can be done to create opportunities for scaling up the solutions discussed in the session? And by whom?

All countries irrespective of whether they are on top or the bottom of the CPI index are encouraged to draft a national anti-corruption strategy if there is political will. A national anti-corruption strategy cannot substitute political will, but it can be a very helpful tool in order to translate political will into action.

Rapporteur’s name and date submitted

Emma Siemens Lorenzen and Olivia Myglegård Larsen
This Long Report needs to be submitted by 7 November