

Detecting corruption - unthinkable without active action of society and the ability to respond appropriately

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The latest Eurobarometer data on the attitude of [general public](#) and [businesses](#) towards corruption in Latvia and in the European Union (EU) has been published in July. Sandijs Vectēvs, Acting Deputy Director for the Strategy and Policy Planning of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB), comments on the citizens' attitude towards the corruption in Latvia.

“Attitude of general public towards corruption is shaped not only by the work of law enforcement agencies. There are other circumstances also having impact, such as incompetent people being hired through kinship or friendship. The preferential treatment of friends and family members at state and local government institutions are the most prevalent forms of corruption in Latvia – note the respondents of Eurobarometer survey conducted in the spring of 2024.

Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasize that detecting corruption is not possible without an active involvement and vigilance of the society. Corruption is a covert crime, therefore whistleblowers are very essential in bringing it out of the shadow into light. Comparing an average Eurobarometer data of the EU and Latvia, people in Latvia more likely tend to have an attitude of “unwilling to betray their close ones or so called ours”, contributing to particularly high corruption risks in areas such as public procurement. In practice one can notice that there are few reporting cases from those directly involved in procurement processes, such as committee members, consultants, and accountants. This tradition needs to be changed, and the so-called Stockholm syndrome ought to be overcome. Corrupt officials and businessmen who give or are willing to give bribes are not “ours”. We need to think on how to motivate those involved in the procurement process to report corruption.

Although approximately a third of the population of Latvia believes it is pointless to report or difficult to prove bribery, let me remind you that corruption loves silence. Therefore, I urge citizens to report promptly any suspected involvement of public officials or businessmen in corruption and to entrust the KNAB to apply all of its powers and competencies to bring corrupted persons to justice.

It is worth of emphasising that KNAB has observed a growing maturity and integrity of society in Latvia. The changes are obvious if we compare the level of public perception today and 20 years ago. People's tolerance towards corruption is decreasing. The majority would reject accepting any benefits, whether in the form of money, gifts, or any other means, in exchange for faster provision of services provided by public sector. In this respect Eurobarometer scores for Latvia are nearly identical to those of other EU countries. We need to be more courageous and take more decisive steps to reduce corruption risks and increase public awareness in order to reach meaningful results,” said Sandijs Vectēvs, commenting the latest Eurobarometer data.

The Eurobarometer is one of the surveys that measure the attitudes of citizens and businesses in the EU Member States, including Latvia, towards corruption and its manifestations. The Eurobarometer is also carried out on a wide range of other political or social issues.

Read more about the Eurobarometer survey here: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3217>

<https://www.knab.gov.lv/en/article/detecting-corruption-unthinkable-without-active-action-society-and-ability-respond-appropriately>