

Three best essays of the competition

YOUNG PEOPLE SAY NO TO CORRUPTION

By Albion Bylykbashi

Development is and will undoubtedly be the instinctive aspiration of any society, and sustainable development is and will remain the top objective of plans and strategies designed by any responsible government.

Co-existence of the consolidated rule of law, well-structured economic life and functional democracy extended to all areas of social activity is undoubtedly the main guarantee for the realization of this aspiration.

This coexistence must be defended unceasingly, with the same love, will and strength that a responsible parent protects the child from any threats to his physical and psycho-emotional wellbeing.

But to protect something, you must first have it. At what phase is Albania today: at a phase that should protect what it is, or at the stage of creation of what it must in principle protect? It looks like a pun, but is actually a rhetorical question. My answer goes without a doubt to the second alternative. Unfortunately, my country does not enjoy today the coexistence of the three above-mentioned elements and, in my view, it is mainly due to the phenomenon of corruption.

Arben is a poor Math student who graduates only thanks to paying some professors and is employed as a teacher at a secondary school. So, it is assumed that he will teach the Math concepts to Olti, a 15-year old who dreams to be an engineer. But three years of high school pass quickly and without quality teaching, Olti loses confidence in math and poor performance in this subject prevents him from pursuing his studies in engineering. Demoralisation of the boy is inevitable. Corruption successfully managed to break a young boy's dream. Unfortunately, this has happened and continues to happen in Albania.

On the other hand, a citizen trying to solve a certain problem has to come with the barriers raised unfairly against him by judges and other officials of the corrupt justice system; undoubtedly he becomes demoralized and loses faith in the so-called "rule of law" and probably starts preparing himself to win his rights in the future through a more "trendy" and effective weapon: corruption. Corruption is now injected into the citizen as the best problem-solving approach, as the only way to render justice in an unjust justice system. One more citizen "infected" with the virus of corruption. Too bad...

Corruption weakens the foundations of the rule of law, economic life and the fragile democracy of our country and feeds on a wide range of areas such as education, health, politics, sports, etc., but its worst effect is causing demoralization and hopelessness. In my view, lack of hope is the most frustrating element hampering the efforts of a society to move forward.

For many years, the line between legal practices and 'legal-corruptive' practices became almost invisible in my country, but I believe that recently, also thanks to the continuing calls by the international community, conditions are ripe for our society to reshape our approach to this phenomenon.

I am now 24 years old. I believe that I and other young people like me must bear the flag of this new approach. It is difficult to propose concrete solutions on a strategic level to increase efficiency in the fight against corruption in different areas, but I believe that this change must start from ourselves.

Everybody should reflect and reject and despise unequivocally and firmly any corrupt practice. And when someone is aware of such practices, the best course of action would be to report them to the competent authorities. There is no need for collective tears and complaints and moralism, but rather for concrete acts and actions.

I will make my efforts at the university, institutions and everywhere, because I want to give the message to the people around me that anti-virtue can be combated and value can prevail. I believe in the power of example.

A society that promotes the values of justice, competition of free ideas and free initiatives - even a society that works as one body for a better economy and future – is the society I want.

This is why I, as a youngster, say and will always say **NO TO CORRUPTION!**

Crime fawns crime, and corruption fawns corruption and injustice. It is a vicious circle that must be stopped ... **NOW!**

By Arjeta Zenelaj

Corruption is one of the most concerning phenomena for societies across the globe. Tapping on the territory of a so-called "democratic" society, this virus holds back the society not allowing it to take the train of democratic and human development.

Before analysing this topic, it sounds reasonable to give a definition of corruption, as a starting point to tackle the problem. The widely accepted definition of corruption is "abuse of duty for personal gain (corruption in the broad sense). As a narrower definition, corruption can be defined as "any misconduct of officials or responsible persons of legal entities and any activity of initiators/beneficiaries of such behaviour, committed in response to a service directly or indirectly promised, offered, demanded, accepted or expected to get for oneself or for another person." In a transition country, besides obstacles to economic and political development, corruption is contributing to the under-development of social emancipation. It is important to understand better this definition, because its understanding can be overlooked and be deformed and take other forms, because there is a public tendency to include in the concept "corruption" even phenomena that are not such.

Analysis of this behaviour by society towards this problem must consider some situations that lead to another issue: "How dependent are we from corruption?" This means that often we are its victims or initiators? Based on a 2009 survey¹, when judging the two parties involved in a corruption transaction, Albanians are more tolerant towards the "givers" rather than "takers" of bribes. A student who gives a gift to the teacher with the hope of getting a better grade is either not corrupt (35.4%) or justified (34.7%). Also a mother who pays 500 to avoid the queue for obtaining a certificate for her children is seen as not corrupt (26.3%) or largely justified (43.4%). These statistics lead to a non-satisfactory conclusion, i.e. a considerable part of society are in favour of corruption, consciously or not. The majority who are victims of corruption remain indifferent, refusing to give a solution to this problem as old as mankind itself. The main reason why this phenomenon is so widespread in society is that the causes have not eliminated completely, despite developments over time. Unemployment is high, whereas the government tries to reduce unemployment by generating new jobs in the services sector / public sector. Employees have low salaries and the majority may be considered to live under the poverty line. Civil society and the media are underdeveloped or weak and State institutions lack the transparency. These coupled with other reasons ensure the continuation of corruption. This analysis brings us to the conclusion that we should not expect that this phenomenon disappears from governments with their electoral platforms or policy, but the result can be achieved by joint action by the government and the citizens; citizens must take on a bigger role themselves to abide by the rules and obligations, and demand remedy action when their rights are violated. The first step to creating a healthy society is to increase the level of collective awareness on the causes and consequences of corruption in society. It is also indispensable that the government contributes by increasing transparency towards citizens and that initiators of corruption are punished, so that an economic stability could be achieved. So the main step for the reduction of this phenomenon is the correct enforcement of legislation by everyone; this will push also the

¹ Corruption survey (2009) <http://www.idra-al.org/cs2009/Korrupsioni%20ne%20Shqiperi%202009%20-%20Permbledhje%20e%20rezultateve.pdf>

economic, political and social development and integration of our country in the region and beyond.

Therefore indifference is not the answer! Our task as individuals is to contribute in the prosperity of our country, achieving a higher level of welfare and a healthier future for the generations to follow. To conclude, I prefer to quote the writer and philosopher Ukshin Hoti: "Albania is undone, make it right, make it right or die".

By Ketj Gjipali

The first thought coming to my mind about corruption is that people hardly know its full range. They often resort to it unconsciously. In fact, researcher Suzana Jašić (2015)² states that there is no an all-accepted definition of corruption. Therefore, it becomes difficult to convey the meaning of corruption from one entity to another.

Corruption is economic damage of public interest for personal gain. Consequently, it affects the whole political and legal system of a country. Jašić says that "exchange resulting from corruption leads to failure of public interest, economic damage and breach of public trust in state institutions." Our task at hand is to talk only about corruption, but its implications are multiplied by other activities - that may be quite invisible – such as the use of conflict of interest and even State capture.

Corruption effects are borne by individuals in their everyday life. Even participation in an essay contest on this topic raises suspicion. Suspicion triggers discontent about the final decision – even if fair – and we as marketers know that a dissatisfied person will tell at least ten people, whereas satisfaction is shared only with three other people. Although change is felt, one must consider the consequences of living for so long "in the grey"? Many suffer a worm of conscience for not tipping a doctor for doing a good job – not that he asks for it. It shows that old habits die hard and leave a mark.

However, new habits replace old ones and the process has started. Often, the first tools suggested are the laws and rules, but laws use force, whereas action plans awareness-raising. Probably, we have come to a point that awareness-raising alone cannot do the trick for us, but force is also a short-lived strategy. The important thing is to educate and induce anti-corruption culture from childhood, since the first book of "Civic Education". Let us not forget that parents themselves learn so many things from their children.

So, the means to fight this phenomenon include force and awareness-raising. They both can create the right synergy for citizens to comprehend that corruption is even the purchase of medicaments at the drug-store exclusively suggested by the doctor. Yeah, such behaviour opens up possibilities for unfair competition in the market making use of the conflict of interest.

Finally, the overall equation is that corruption seeks to make a monopoly of decision-making, by expanding the scope of unfair influence and eliminating transparency. Increased use of communication technology and social networks is injecting small doses of transparency on both sides of the equation. This is progressively denaturing the equation and creating a new one with an "accepted margin" of the lack of transparency drawing close to zero.

² Jašić, Suzana, Lecture on Good Governance, October 2015.