



December 2023

## SUPPORTING INCREMENTAL CHANGES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

### Independent Evaluation of the OSCE's Anti-Corruption Assistance 2011–2021

This report provides an assessment of the OSCE's anti-corruption assistance in the period 2011–2021, with a focus on two countries supported by the OSCE: Serbia and Kyrgyzstan. The report also provides cross-cutting findings of the OSCE's anti-corruption work as a whole, and recommendations and considerations for different OSCE executive structures providing anti-corruption assistance.

#### > OSCE's anti-corruption assistance

Corruption poses a threat to security and stability, diminishes the rule of law, and impedes efforts to advance democracy and effective state development. The Ministerial Council of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in its Decision No. 11/04 *On Combatting Corruption*, refers to corruption as 'representing one of the major impediments to the prosperity and sustainable development of the participating States that undermines their stability and security and threatens the OSCE's shared values'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 11/04 on Combating Corruption, accessed on 26 December 2022, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/4/23047.pdf>.

The OSCE has been providing anti-corruption assistance to participating States by building comprehensive corruption prevention mechanisms, institutions, legislative frameworks, capacities and, more recently, digital tools. In the period 2011–2021, the OSCE implemented 163 Unified Budget (UB) and Extra-budgetary (ExB) projects that in whole or in part, provided anti-corruption assistance to beneficiaries in South-Eastern Europe (6), Central Asia (5), Eastern Europe (2) and South Caucasus (1).<sup>2</sup> The total expenditures amount to some €10.55 million spent by 14 OSCE field operations and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) of the Secretariat.

## > About the evaluation

To assess the OSCE's anti-corruption assistance on criteria of value-added, comparative advantage, effectiveness, gender mainstreaming and sustainability, the evaluation used a mixed-methods approach. The work of two OSCE field operations with the largest anti-corruption expenditures, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek (POiB) (€1.9 million) and the OSCE Mission to Serbia (OMiS) (€2.7 million), were studied in-depth for this evaluation, while desk research, an internal survey, key informant interviews and an internal and external document review generated crosscutting findings on the anti-corruption assistance provided by the Organization at large.



## KEY FINDINGS

Over the years, the OSCE has developed trusted partnerships with the assisted countries and acquired in-depth knowledge and expertise that it has generously shared with beneficiaries and beyond to build anti-corruption systems, institutional capacity, legislative frameworks, tools and skills. The evaluation demonstrates that the OSCE's anti-corruption assistance yielded some concrete results, such as:

- ✓ Improved legal frameworks and institutional capacity in various countries to prevent and fight corruption. The OSCE supported the drafting and implementation of anti-corruption laws, strategies and action plans, as well as the development and/or strengthening of capacities of anti-corruption agencies, prosecutors, judges and other stakeholders.
- ✓ Increased awareness and participation of civil society and media in anti-corruption efforts. The OSCE supported training, advocacy, monitoring and reporting activities of civil society organizations and journalists, as well as the facilitation of dialogue and co-operation between state and non-state actors.
- ✓ Enhanced regional and international co-operation in anti-corruption efforts. The OSCE supported the organization and participation in regional and international conferences,

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<sup>2</sup> Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. All references to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

workshops, seminars and study visits, as well as promoting the implementation of international anti-corruption standards and conventions.

- ✓ Enhanced capacities to address specific corruption challenges, such as corruption in the security sector, public procurement, armed forces, border management etc. The OSCE supported the development and implementation of various tools, methodologies, guidelines and best practices.

The report concludes that the OSCE has made valuable contributions to the fight against corruption in the OSCE region. The OSCE's anti-corruption assistance is highly appreciated by beneficiaries and has the potential to contribute to meaningful anti-corruption outcomes at the national level. For instance, the two case study countries analysed in this evaluation, Serbia and Kyrgyzstan, were removed from the FATF's grey-list during the evaluation period, with support from the OSCE. At the same time, the evaluation also demonstrates that the OSCE has limited leverage to reduce and improve the control of corruption at the national level, and limited resources to implement anti-corruption activities.

The OSCE's **value-added** is found in its long-term and cross-dimensional support for the development of anti-corruption capacities and in acting as a mediator between international organizations and government authorities, thereby amplifying the impact of other international organizations working on anti-corruption issues and contributing to security-co-operation objectives. For instance, POiB played an important role in supporting government authorities of Kyrgyzstan to make contact with other international organizations (e.g., GRECO) and to understand and comply with their recommendations (OECD ACN). OMiS engaged with multiple stakeholders in Serbia, including government institutions, law enforcement bodies, prosecution, judiciary, civil society and the media to strengthen anti-corruption capacities and provide a platform for dialogue on difficult topics among various involved stakeholders.

The OSCE's **comparative advantage** is found in the longevity of the OSCE's support and trust between the OSCE and beneficiary institutions. In Kyrgyzstan, PoIB is currently the only organization that supports the government in the area of anti-corruption. In Serbia, OMiS is a longstanding partner that is perceived as more flexible and adaptable when compared to other international organizations.

The evaluation revealed mixed **sustainability** prospects for the OSCE's anti-corruption efforts. Support for digital tools and legislative reform are more likely to result in sustainable gains. For instance, support for the digitalization of public services in Kyrgyzstan helps to reduce corruption risks by increasing transparency, efficiency and accountability in government processes. The Kyrgyzstan case also demonstrates that projects that are fully owned by state authorities, are regulated through adopted legislation, manuals and methodologies, and have dedicated institutions, are more likely to remain sustainable. Other initiatives, such as capacity development or institutional changes, require local ownership and political will to create a systemic change in the long run. As demonstrated in the case of Serbia, the dependence on international assistance (including by the OSCE) in this area is sometimes excessive, and can disincentivize governments to take ownership.

The evaluation found that there is room for improvement in **co-ordination** between the Secretariat and the OSCE field operations. Despite examples of effective collaboration among the various OSCE executive structures, differences in mandates, reporting lines, 'turf' issues, political sensitivities, and distribution of resources and responsibilities pose challenges to cross-dimensional and cross-departmental collaboration. Another area for improvement is the integration of gender in the OSCE's anti-corruption work. Even though the evaluation found that there is recognition of the importance of integrating gender in the OSCE's anti-corruption work, how to do so effectively remains a challenge, and

most beneficiaries interviewed for this evaluation did not see gender as the most relevant issue to tackle in anti-corruption efforts.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

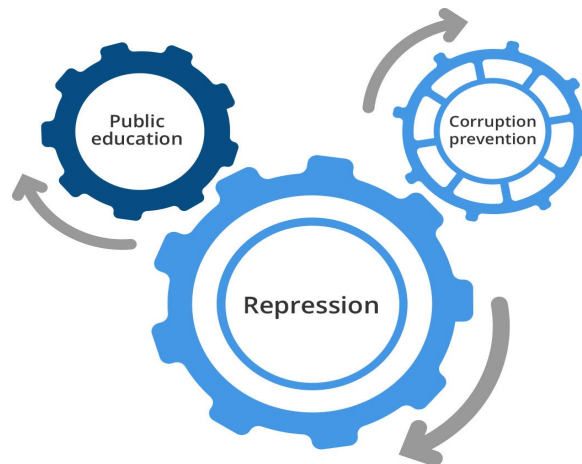
The report concludes that the OSCE can use its comparative advantage further by better co-ordinating its support with other international organizations that have different mandates and tools to push for changes. The OSCE can improve the effectiveness of its support by applying a more strategic and co-ordinated approach, further mainstreaming gender, improving monitoring and evaluation, and creating the preconditions for sustainability. The report includes specific recommendations for the OCEEA and the two field operations that were evaluated in-depth for this evaluation.

The **OCEEA** can further institutionalize the external co-ordination of anti-corruption activities and enhance its internal co-ordination by more structurally sharing information between the different executive structures and developing the OSCE's capacities. The OCEEA can also provide more guidance on the OSCE's approach towards providing anti-corruption assistance, leveraging the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, and promoting and assisting with the integration of gender into its anti-corruption assistance.

**OMIS and POiB**, on their part, are also recommended to develop and share their strategic approach internally and externally, and to leverage their long-standing and trusted partnerships with government and local stakeholders by creating conditions for, and consistently following up on, the full achievement and sustainability of results. This would require, among others, agreeing with beneficiaries on exit strategies or handover plans. OMIS is also recommended to improve the internal co-ordination of anti-corruption assistance and to provide a platform for co-ordination and collaboration among different stakeholders that provide anti-corruption support in Serbia.



## > Good practices and considerations



The report also includes **good practices and considerations** for OSCE field operations that implement anti-corruption projects and programmes that were not studied in detail for this evaluation. Good practices, illustrated for instance in the case study of OMiS, include following a long-term and holistic approach, including supporting both preventative and repressive frameworks, institutions and capacities, as well as raising awareness and facilitating a dialogue among the different stakeholders involved. Some OSCE field operations are well placed to bring together and co-ordinate the actions of various national (and international) stakeholders and provide a local platform for dialogue and co-ordination. The case studies also demonstrate that field operations are more seen as a partner than a funder, which provides an opportunity to act as a 'critical' friend. To implement anti-corruption activities, field operations are encouraged to find the right balance between international and local experts, and should be cautious when hiring local experts from the public sector to avoid any potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest. Finally, given the various challenges involved in reducing and controlling corruption at the national level, it is advisable for field operations to share their approaches and knowledge internally and externally, especially with the various international review mechanisms.

