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New report: The cost of corruption across the EU

Corruption

Today, the Greens/EFA group have published a new report looking into the cost of corruption in each Member State of the EU, ahead of International Anti-Corruption Day this Sunday, December 9th. The figures, compared for the first time with the cost of ordinary products and national services, display the true cost of corruption to peoples' lives. The report calculates that with the €904 billion a year estimated to be lost to corruption across the EU, we could end world hunger, eliminate malaria, provide basic education, safe water, sanitation, healthcare and electricity and still have money left over (€360 billion).

In Czech Republic, for example, where the Prime Minister Andrej Babiš is currently embroiled in a corruption scandal, over €26.7 billion is lost each year due to corruption. That's more than 12% of GDP, double the country's healthcare budget (€12.2 billion) or 60 times bigger than the entire government budget spent on housing (€452 million).

The Greens/EFA group are calling for the EU and its Member States to take a far more proactive stance in the fight against corruption. The Greens/EFA group are calling on the European Commission to annually review anti-corruption practices in Member States, and for increasing funding for anti-corruption activities, improving the capacity of the EU's anti-fraud body (OLAF), strengthening the European Public Prosecutor's Office, protecting whistleblowers, journalists and NGOs, and ensuring far greater transparency and control over how EU funds are allocated and spent.

Ska Keller, Co-president of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament comments:

"Corruption is a problem in every EU country. Each euro that disappears into the pockets of the corrupt is lacking in housing, healthcare and education. In Romania, which takes over the reins of the European Council presidency in January, hundreds of thousands of ordinary people flooded the streets this summer to speak with one voice against the rampant corruption of Romania's ruling elite. The Romanian Government must bring about a national anti-corruption strategy and implement reforms recommended by the Venice Commission. The European Commission must distribute EU funds directly to civil society initiatives and projects if a country does not take action against corruption."

Philippe Lamberts, Co-president of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament comments:

"Corruption is Europe's dirty secret. Corruption thrives with the complicity of those in power, when authorities

look the other way or the media is controlled by one group of people and fails to do its duty. From Viktor Orbán's autocratic Hungary to organised crime and Maltese money laundering, a web of corruption spans across our continent. Inaction against these heinous crimes cannot be tolerated. From ensuring EU funds do not end up in corrupt pockets, to strengthening the rule of law and ending money laundering, a lot more must be done in the fight against corruption from both Brussels and the national capitals."

Benedek Jávor, anti-corruption spokesperson for the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament comments:

"Corruption is not only about channelling public money to private pockets, it undermines the trust of democratic institutions. Corruption means there is less money to spend on public services. Corruption takes away directly from people all the daily services they deserve to get. People will lose their hopes in the institutions of the EU, which leads to the strengthening of populism and the far right. With decisive actions, we can stop this process and we can gain back the trust of the citizens"

More:
The report finds that if the money lost annually to corruption across Europe were divided between all the people living in the EU, each person would get on average €1,772 per year. On a country level, if the money lost to corruption in Cyprus and in the Czech Republic were distributed evenly, each person could receive €2,500 every year, which rises to €3,168 per person in Greece or even €3,903 in Italy. Even in countries with relatively low levels of corruption such as Finland or Denmark, each citizen could annually receive €727 or €782 respectively.

- Read the report "The cost of corruption across the EU" here.

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- European Institutions must defend the rights of Romanian citizens
- The messy fight against corruption in Bulgaria and the need for ambition in the EU institutions
- Investigative journalists reveal a vast corruption scandal in Bulgaria involving EU funds
- European Parliament vote on the Rule of Law in Romania
- Protection of investigative journalists in Europe - Quote from Benedek Jávor
- The fight against corruption and how to win it

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