

An Anti-Corruption Day in a Youth Camp (Moldova)

Summary

TI-Moldova used the opportunity of a local event to provide education about corruption to young people, in the form of an Anti-Corruption Day.

TI-Moldova's Anti-Corruption Day took place at Andries Summer Camp for teenagers, in Orhei District. It included three workshops focusing on corruption within different sectors: (a) the future entrepreneurs: corruption and business; (b) the future journalists: corruption and journalism; and (c) corruption and the education system. In parallel, anti-corruption caricatures and posters were exhibited. The day ended with the presentation of 38 anti-corruption video-spots.

The summer camp was organised jointly by the local public administration and US-American Peace Corps volunteers. Costs were minimal, as TI-Moldova's research and publications were used as background material for the workshops, and the summer camp organisers provided the infrastructure.

Background

In 1991, the Republic of Moldova, situated in South East Europe, became an independent state, previously part of the Soviet Union. Since then, the country has progressed towards democratic development, rule of law and market economy. Unfortunately, corruption remains one of its main problems, undermining the social, economic and political life of the republic. According to TI's Corruption Perceptions Index 2004, Moldova scores 2.3 out of 10, indicating a high level of perceived corruption.

To fight corruption, anti-corruption legislation has to be accompanied by public awareness campaigns. The Moldovan youth is an important target group for those campaigns, who should be encouraged not to tolerate corruption. Summer camps, organised by local public authorities, provide an excellent opportunity to reach Moldovan children and youth. The purpose of these camps is to involve young people in various educational, cultural and sport events, in order to build team work and to learn new skills. The summer camps are usually organised under a certain topic (e.g., summer camp for young historians or archaeological summer camp).

The project

In July 2004, the Moldova Peace Corps and the local public administration jointly organised a one-week English summer camp, which took place near



TI-Moldova volunteers at an anti-corruption concert in May 2004

the Ivancea village, Orhei District. The camp was attended by 70 young people from 14-17 years. The selection criteria were a good knowledge of English and an interest in business and journalism.

The Peace Corps volunteers asked TI Moldova to organise an Anti-Corruption Day as part of the English summer camp. The goal of this day was to inform the youth about corruption in Moldova, including its negative impact on social, economic and political life, possible action against corruption, the experience of other countries and anti-corruption efforts taken at international level. The workshops were based on research carried out by TI-Moldova*, and three workshops of approximately 100 minutes each were held during the day: (a) corruption and business, (b) corruption and journalism, and (c) corruption and education. In the afternoon, workshops on business and journalism ethics

* Studies published by TI-Moldova:

- a. L. Carasciuc, *Small Business and Corruption: a Guide for Entrepreneurs*, TI-Moldova, 2003;
- b. L. Carasciuc, M. Ciubotaru, N. Patiuc, *Corruption and Tax Evasion: Economic Dimensions*, Moldova, 2003;
- c. V. Gasca, I. Guzun, *Investigative Journalism Fighting Corruption*, TI-Moldova, 2002
- d. L. Carasciuc, *Corruption and Quality of Governance: The Case of Moldova*, TI-Moldova, 2002;
- e. L. Carasciuc, E. Obreja, *Corruption and Access to Justice*, TI-Moldova, 2002.

were held concurrently, and the session on corruption in the education system was held in the evening, for the whole camp.

The workshops consisted of two parts: First, a PowerPoint presentation, supported by handouts, and second, a question and answer session followed by a discussion. On the following day, all students were grouped together to summarise what they had learnt, and to discuss how to apply this to their life. Possible follow-up included raising these issues in their school newspaper, and investigating how corrupt practices could be addressed in school.

The workshops

(a) Corruption and business

This workshop highlighted the threat that corruption poses for the business environment. Corruption damages the investment climate in the country and deprives youth of job opportunities by discouraging entrepreneurial initiative.

What does corruption mean for the Republic of Moldova?

- Overregulation of the private sector (33 visits of control bodies per year);
- Overburdening fiscal policy;
- Tax evasion – losses for the budget – 40%);
- Presence of a massive informal economy (55–60%);
- A low level of quality of consumer goods (80% do not reach standards);
- High level of risk in financial market (real interest rate in commercial banks 20.8% in December 2003, dollarisation rate – 50.1% in October 2003).
- Low Foreign Direct Investments per capita: 2001 - USD 40; 2002 – USD 32.3; 2003 – USD 11.9;
- Enormous external debt > 1436.9 mil. USD, 73.4% of GDP;
- Economic stagnation - GDP per capita – USD 542 in 2003;
- Increasing poverty. Daily incomes of 70% of population are lower than USD 1. Average monthly wage – about USD 53 in public sector;
- Increasing crime rate. Number of crimes per 10,000 of inhabitants in 1995 – 99.9, in 2000 – 105. Number of officially registered bribes in 2001 – 165, unofficially – approximately 1.5 million.

The discussion focused on issues related to globalisation such as international trade, income payments and receipts and flows of Foreign Direct Investment. Also considered were the effects of corruption on growth and investments and on taxing international investors; the impact of predictability of corruption on investment; and opacity issues such as accounting standards; regulatory regimes; and lack of clear, accurate, formal and transparent rules.

Presentations were given on the effects and causes of corruption

in the private sector, following which business codes of conduct and the importance of individual ethical behaviour were discussed. The discussion highlighted that ethical behaviour diminishes the risks involved in business, improves the reputation of the enterprise, raises the quality of goods, increases the number of clients and increases the sales.

(b) Corruption and journalism

The workshop commenced with examples demonstrating the power of investigative journalism:

- The 'Watergate scandal' that led to the impeachment and subsequent resignation of US president Richard Nixon in 1974; and the role of journalists from the Washington Post.
- The publication from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism *Estrada's Unexplained Wealth* of December 2000, revealing President



Estrada's wealth in estate property and business, including 66 enterprises where the President and his relatives were named as founding members, members of the administrative council or main shareholders. As a result of the publication, Estrada was forced to resign.

Following this students were introduced to the legal framework for investigative journalists. This involved reviewing important laws and regulations such as the Constitution and professional codes of conduct.¹

Finally, a lecture was given on some important rules of investigative journalism highlighting that:

- Investigative journalists must respect certain rules and principles regarding the methods of investigative journalism and the use of information sources.
- They must be familiar with the legal and ethical framework of their activity, especially the civil, administrative and criminal responsibility of the journalist.
- The journalist must not be the exclusive bearer of information; documentation of every step and re-verification of obtained data is necessary.

(c) Corruption and education

This workshop dealt with corruption in the education system and its long term consequences for society. Corruption in education lowers the quality of skills and competitiveness in the labour market. An opinion poll on the perceptions of corruption in the education sector was discussed. The poll identified the forms of informal payments made in the educational system, the reasons to pay bribes, personal experience of the interviewees and the perceived causes of corruption in education. The poll recommended the following measures to reduce corruption in education (in the sequence of their effectiveness):

- i. Increasing financial support from the Government.
- ii. Increasing the punishment for people involved in corruption.
- iii. Increasing the transparency of admissions and examinations in educational institutions.

1 Documents reviewed included the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, Criminal Code, Civil Code, Code of Administrative Offences, Law on access to information, Mass Media Law, Code of professional ethical principles of the journalist from the Republic of Moldova, and Council of Europe Recommendation (2000) 7 on the right of journalists not to divulge their sources of information.

- iv. Strengthening supervision of teaching staff.
- v. Improving the examination system (e.g. using computerised tests instead of oral exams, stipulating which fees are legal and which ones are not).
- vi. Conducting anti-corruption propaganda campaigns in schools and universities.

Students then discussed their own experiences of corrupt practices in the education system and the most frequent form of additional payments (e.g. payments for supplementary lessons). They debated on the effects of corrupt practices such as having to pay additional fees to improve grades, and the role of gifts and personal contacts when entering a university. Personal experiences using money, presents and contacts to solve a problem in universities were also discussed.

The Anti-Corruption Day was accompanied by an exhibition of anti-corruption caricatures and posters. These cartoons and posters had been collected from an annual caricaturist anti-corruption contest organised by TI-Moldova. The cartoons also appeared in a special edition of the Pardon magazine, which included anti-corruption jokes, anecdotes and epigrams.

The day closed with the presentation of 38 anti-corruption video-spots produced by TI-Moldova. The most active young participants were rewarded with T-shirts bearing anti-corruption cartoon and slogans.

Results and recommendations

The workshop on corruption in education received the most attention from participants, who were particularly interested to discuss cases of corruption in education and ways to prevent it. The participants of the Corruption and Journalism workshop expressed interest to learn more about investigative jour-

Buying Grades – A Moldovan Joke

One day a professor was giving a big test to his students. He handed out all of the test papers and went back to his desk to wait. Once the test was over, the students all handed the tests back in.

The Professor noticed that one of the students had attached a \$100 bill to his test with a note saying “A dollar per point.” The next class the professor handed the tests back out.

The student got back his test and \$64.

nalism and techniques to uncover corrupt practices. Following this request, TI-Moldova together with the Centre of Young Journalists subsequently organised a two-day workshop for school newspaper authors and editors, which took place in Chisinau, on the 30th and 31st October 2004. This workshop was held in Romanian language and covered in depth issues of corruption and investigative journalism with an emphasis on education.

When organising a similar event, it is useful to consider having a detailed structure of an Anti-Corruption Day, to allow organisers to design the event around the main message to be delivered, and to provide supporting background materials and handouts. The structure should include a clear vision of the target group, its expectations, primary interests, problems already encountered with regard to corrupt practices, and ideally incorporate a method of feedback and evaluation. Additional ideas include using interactive games to increase effectiveness, depending on the time frame and location, and trying to engage the local media through having an interesting format, such as a youth camp.

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The studies of TI-Moldova are available on the website both in Romanian and English languages.

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