TURKEY: OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

QUERY

Based on the January 2012 assessment you made on the corruption situation in Turkey, please provide an up-to-date analysis of the legal and institutional anti-corruption framework and its practical implementation against latest developments in the country.

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SUMMARY

Triggers by the country’s accession to full EU membership candidacy status in 1999, Turkey has made progress in terms of democratisation and economic liberalisation. However, the situation of human rights and political freedoms remains an issue of great concern.

Moreover, the country faces high levels of corruption. Accordingly, the government has taken steps to reduce corruption in the country, including the adoption of an anti-corruption action plan in 2010 and a series of commitments in June 2012 to cover incrimination and presidential candidate funding.

However, despite this limited progress, the country continues to be confronted with challenges of rampant corruption and existing anti-corruption measures are still in question. One of main criticisms is the lack of a coordinated and strategic approach to anti-corruption. There is also an absence of transparency and accountability in the political system, as embodied in the immunity regulations for high-ranking officials.

Moreover, civil society has a limited role to play in policy-making and there is no mechanism enabling citizens to monitor government commitments. The need for greater civic participation in public life was reflected in the 2013 Gezi Park protests.

CAVEAT

This answer draws on a previous U4 Helpdesk answer: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Turkey (2012).
1 BACKGROUND

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the country has experienced a series of political and social transformations, often marked by instability in domestic politics. The military has historically had a powerful role, ousting the civilian governments on four occasions between 1960 and 1997 (Freedom House 2013). The legacy of the military remains in Turkey’s legal framework, as the current constitution is still the one drafted by the order of the military following the coup in 1980 and is criticised for restricting civil liberties and political freedoms (Freedom House 2013).

Since gaining EU candidacy status in 1999, the country has undergone an extensive process of political democratisation and socio-economic modernisation. However, while its political and economic strength regionally and internationally is growing (World Bank 2013), concerns about its record on human rights and the rule of law could undermine recent reforms. The government’s restrictions on freedom of speech and the protection of minority rights, in particular with regard to the treatment of Kurds, are cited as major areas of concern (Human Rights Watch 2013). In its 2013 report, Amnesty International also raises concerns about the excessive use of force by the police and the lack of impartiality and fairness of the judiciary.

In 2011, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won its third term in office, with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan re-elected as prime minister. Although the government claims it is continuing to transform Turkey into a modern democracy, opponents argue that the party is harnessing the power of the state for its own interests (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014). A vibrant press and an increasingly aware citizenry are making louder demands for good governance and transparency. In late May 2013, protests were sparked when the government announced plans to demolish Gezi Park, a green space in the centre of Istanbul, and replace it with an Ottoman era military barracks, which was expected to house a shopping mall or hotel. By June 2013 thousands of people had taken to the streets to protest against what they perceived to be the increasingly authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Erdoğan (BBC 2013). The 2013 EU Progress Report notes that the protests highlight the need for respect of fundamental rights and greater political participation.

In December 2013, investigations into corruption and bribery led to a wave of arrests including of the sons of three government ministers, a governing party mayor, a leading contractor and a bank director (Spiegel Online 2014). At the time of writing, 91 people have been arrested and 26 people jailed pending trial. The prime minister has reacted by calling it a “smear campaign” (BBC 2014) and a judicial coup by supporters of Fethullah Gülen, a US-based Turkish cleric (Reuters 2014a). Since the investigations emerged, the government has purged a number of official bodies, banking and telecoms regulators and state TV (Reuters 2014a). Observers note that many of the people who have been fired and removed are believed to be associated with the cleric (Reuters 2014a). The case has raised concerns about the independence of the judiciary, police and media following the purge (Reuters 2014a) and is still on-going at the time of writing.

2 OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION IN TURKEY

Extent of corruption

The consensus from the literature indicates that despite a variety of anti-corruption policy initiatives, corruption remains a major problem in Turkey.

Positive trends in terms of control of corruption are noted by the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicator 2012: while Turkey scored a percentile rank of 32 on a scale of 0 to 100 in 2002, it scored 63 in 2012 (World Bank 2012). Nevertheless, taken in absolute terms, international indicators suggest that Turkey is confronted with rampant corruption. For example, Turkey ranked 53 out of 175 countries surveyed in Transparency International’s 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index. Moreover, 55 per cent of citizens in Turkey surveyed in Transparency International’s 2013 Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) believe corruption has actually increased in the two years preceding the survey (Transparency International 2013b). The majority of respondents also believe that corruption is a problem in the public sector (with an aggregated score of 4 out of 5) and 61 per cent believe that personal contacts are important to get things done when dealing with civil servants.

Companies continue to cite corruption as one of the biggest obstacles for doing business in the country, as reflected by the World Economic Forum’s 2013–2014 Global Competitiveness Report.

Nature of corruption challenges

Petty and bureaucratic corruption

Citizens’ experience of corruption in accessing public services is fairly high in Turkey. Nearly a quarter of all respondents to the GCB 2013 admitted to having
Companies surveyed in the 2012–2013 Global Competitiveness Report list inefficient government bureaucracy, selective and opaque implementation of the law, as well as frequent changes in the legal and regulatory environment as major obstacles for doing business in Turkey (World Economic Forum 2012). For example, companies surveyed within the framework of the World Bank and IFC Enterprise survey report that their senior management spent more than 27 per cent of their time each year dealing with requirements of government regulations and 18 per cent expect to make informal payments “to get things done” (World Bank and IFC 2008).

In recent years, in an effort to reduce bureaucratic corruption and improve the business environment, the Turkish government has implemented a series of reforms aimed at reducing red tape and the regulatory burden on companies. These include measures such as simplifying company establishment procedures, reducing permit requirements and creating a single company registration form. One-stop shops such as the Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey have been established to facilitate use of public services. These reforms are reflected to some extent in the country’s improved performance in the World Bank “Ease of Doing Business” ranking (World Bank 2013).

However, bureaucratic obstacles remain. The 2013 Ease of Doing Business report also noted that enforcing commercial contracts continues to require 36 procedures, taking an average of 420 days at an average cost of almost 24.9 per cent of the claim (World Bank 2013). Foreign investors claim that government transparency and regulatory reforms remain much needed in order to make Turkey more investor-friendly (US Department of State 2013).

**Political corruption**

The electoral processes in Turkey are seen as being free and fair (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2014). Global Integrity assesses election integrity to be very strong in the country with a score of 100 (Global Integrity 2010). However, there is anecdotal evidence of electoral corruption. For example, a businessman close to the prime minister and sponsor of his daughters’ studies in the US was found guilty in 2008 of offering bribes to an opposition MP in return for his vote in the 2007 presidential election (Global Integrity 2008). In addition, Turkey lacks a monitoring mechanism enabling civil society to participate in auditing and reporting on disputes in election processes. Only representatives of political parties and candidates can legally monitor the process.

Two-thirds of respondents of the GCB 2013 in Turkey perceive political parties to be corrupt. There are problems of political party financing regulations and transparency that can increase the country’s vulnerability to political corruption. For example, there is no entity or agency for monitoring party financing and provisions on donation ceilings do not conform to the recommendations of the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). The current law on political parties requires them to submit their end-of-the-year financial tables to the Constitutional Court, which does not have the expertise and capacity to effectively audit their accounts. In addition, there is neither a standard format for submission nor mechanisms in place to review and check the accuracy of the financial information provided, and civil society access to the information is also limited. There is no legislation regulating the funding of individual political candidates. Limits for donations to political parties are considered to be very low. According to civil society members, the lack of rules on gifts, hospitality and post-employment restrictions are key obstacles in monitoring the activity of politicians.

The Bertelsmann Foundation also points to conflicts of interest as an area of concern in the country (Bertelsmann Foundation 2010, 2008). While conflicts of interests are regulated in the public sector, politicians are given immunity, even on corruption-related allegations.

A consensus in the literature is that patronage is prevalent in Turkey (Adaman 2011). According to the 2012–2013 Global Competitiveness Report, business executives give the favouritism of government officials towards well-connected companies a score of 3 on a scale of 1 (always show favouritism) to 7 (never show favouritism).

The abovementioned corruption scandals uncovered in December 2013 have revealed the extent to which patronage networks are allegedly at work in Turkey’s political and economic elite. Several of Prime Minister Erdoğan’s ministers resigned after the arrest of their sons on allegations of bribery for providing building permits and public contracts (Spiegel Online 2014). The prime minister and his family are also reportedly becoming caught up in the scandal (Spiegel Online 2014). Some observers claim that this scandal has
revealed the power struggle between Prime Minister Erdoğan and the Hizmet movement of Turkish cleric Gülen (Human Rights Watch 2013). The prime minister has responded to these allegations by describing them as a conspiracy against his government (Spiegel Online 2014). Following the revelation of the investigations, he purged a number of official bodies, including firing or re-assigning some 2,000 police officers and over 100 judges and prosecutors in January 2014 (The Guardian 2014) as part of an “anti-corruption operation” (Reuters 2014). Instead, this has fuelled concerns that the prime minister is attempting to cover up the scandal and suppress the investigations (BBC 2014).

Sectors and institutions vulnerable to corruption

Empirical evidence suggests that corruption pervades many of the country’s key sectors and institutions, including the judiciary, public administration, private sector, and military (Transparency International 2011a, 2013b).

Judiciary

More than a third of the companies surveyed within the framework of the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS) indicate that the judiciary constitutes a major constraint to doing business in the country. In addition, 43 per cent of the GCB 2013 respondents consider the judiciary to be corrupt and 13 per cent of households who came into contact with the judiciary reported having paid a bribe (Transparency International 2013b).

The EU notes that the 2012–2016 Strategic Plan for the reform of the judiciary has had some success and that overall the predictability and transparency of Turkey’s judicial review body, the High Council of Judges, has improved (EU Progress Report 2013). The Strategic Plan has also promoted training of a large number of judges and prosecutors on human rights and judicial ethics. Nevertheless, at the time of writing, there was still no code of conduct in place for the judiciary.

In addition, criticisms remain regarding the role of the executive vis-à-vis the judiciary. A report from the GRECO recommends strengthening the independence of judges from the Ministry of Justice (GRECO 2009). A constitutional reform package was approved in September 2010. While this has granted it autonomy on paper, the Minister of Justice remains the president of the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors – Turkey’s top judicial oversight body – raising concern over the independence of the judiciary from the executive branch.

In the September 2012 “Sledgehammer” case, 331 serving and retired military officers were convicted of planning an alleged plot to overthrow the government. While some observers saw it as a victory against impunity for the abuses of the military, others alleged that the evidence was fabricated and it was a way to silence critics (Amnesty International 2013). According to the 2013 EU Progress Report, the flaws of the Turkish judiciary have “undermined the acceptance of the ruling by all segments of Turkish society and tainted it with allegations of political score-settling” (47). In addition, the excessive use of police force and the large number of protestors taken into custody during the Gezi Park protests have also raised concerns about due process (EU Progress Report 2013).

Following the revelations of the December 2013 corruption scandal, Prime Minister Erdoğan removed prosecutors from the case and even dismissed some of them from office (Reuters 2014b. Moreover, the prime minister has also attempted to increase his control over the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (New York Times 2014). His government has sent draft legislation to parliament that would grant the minister of justice greater authority over legal discipline, judicial investigations and the appointment of judges and prosecutors. Analysts said the legislation would severely undermine judicial independence (New York Times 2014). The legislation has since been approved by parliament (Reuters 2014b).

Public administration

According to GCB 2013 data, more than 40 per cent of Turkish households perceive public officials to be corrupt. Government accountability as well as administration and civil service are assessed as very weak in the 2008 Global Integrity scorecard and EU progress reports consistently point to weaknesses in public service regulations (EU Progress Report 2013). The Bertelsmann Foundation reports that many public sector employees are under-qualified or have inadequate capabilities (Bertelsmann Report 2014). It also mentions that citizens believe that the selection process for public sector employment is often determined by political connections rather than by merit (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014).

In particular, public procurement is singled out as one of the sectors most susceptible to corruption, with many cases involving high-level figures, relatives or persons close to senior members of the ruling AKP party. For example, in 2008, business conglomerate Çalık group, run by Prime Minister Erdoğan’s son-in-
law appeared as the sole bidder for the country’s second biggest media outlet, Sabah-ATV (Global Integrity 2008). Business executives surveyed within the framework of the 2010–2011 Global Competitiveness Report confirm the high prevalence of corruption in public procurement.

While Turkish legislation generally requires competitive bidding in the public sector, there have been several amendments to the law since it was enacted, each of them bringing new exceptions. There have also been allegations that state-owned enterprises enjoy preferential treatment in practice in procurement contracts (US Department of State 2010).

There are also corruption challenges in other areas of public administration such as revenue collection. Global Integrity (2008) reports that tax laws are not enforced uniformly and without discrimination. Companies often identify tax administration as a major constraint for doing business in the country (World Bank and IFC 2008). In 2013, the GCB showed that 15 per cent of households who had contact with tax revenue services reported having paid a bribe (Transparency International 2013b).

Private sector

Turkey has been one of the world’s fastest growing economies in recent years, with an ambitious target to become one of the ten largest economies in the world by 2023 (US Department of State 2013). However, foreign companies in several sectors claim that regulations are sometimes applied in a non-transparent manner.

While according to the GCB 2013, 50 per cent of respondents in Turkey perceive the private sector to be corrupt, there is little systematic and publicly available information on the extent, forms and manifestations of private sector corruption. Corruption is generally believed to be a major problem in interactions with public officials, especially in contract award processes (Transparency International 2013b).

Foreign bribery is also prevalent. Turkey is ranked 19 out of the 28 countries assessed by Transparency International’s 2011 Bribe Payers Index on the propensity of Turkish firms to engage in bribery when doing business abroad with a score of 7.5 on a scale of 0 (companies always bribe abroad) to 10 (companies never bribe abroad) (Transparency International 2011b).

Transparency International’s 2013 Transparency in Corporate Reporting assessment analyses the transparency of public reporting practices of 100 emerging markets’ companies. The two companies from Turkey – Koç Holding and Sabancı Holding – both scored less than 5 on a scale of 0 (least transparent) to 10 (most transparent), with the worst result being on its country-by-country reporting (in which Koç Holding scored 1 per cent and Sabancı Holding 0 per cent).

Military

The historic tensions in military-civilian relations came to a peak in the Sledgehammer case. The EU continues to raise its concerns about the civilian oversight of the military, as well as the judicial duality between the civilian and military court systems (EU Progress Report 2012).

There have been some allegations of cronyism and manipulation tied to the Turkish military and anecdotal evidence of corruption involving high-ranking officials in the military. For example, in 2004, a retired navy commander was found guilty by a military court on charges of defrauding his expense accounts, abusing his authority and failing to justify how he afforded two luxury villas in Istanbul (Bekdil 2006).

Defence procurement appears to be particularly prone to corruption due to its complexity, technicality and frequent use of “urgent requirements,” as well as a weak auditing system that makes oversight difficult. The EU Progress Report 2012 notes that the parliament has limited capacity to manage the military’s expenditure. The same report notes that the defence budget is disclosed to the public in a highly aggregated manner, with limited transparency on the details of the military’s expenditures.

3 ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGIES AND MEASURES

Overview

Turkey struggles with corruption in government and in daily life. One of the steps taken by the AKP government in its first term was the adoption of the “Action Plan on Increasing Transparency and Enhancing Good Governance in the Public Sector” in 2002. The 2003 Emergency Action Plan agreed upon between the EU and the Turkish government also includes anti-corruption measures such as strengthening specialised anti-corruption units and awareness-raising.

However, according to experts consulted within the framework of this research, the design process was relatively opaque and conducted with little to no participation of civil society actors. Civil society organisations also have little access to related information, making it difficult for them to be effectively involved in the monitoring of anti-corruption reforms as was noted in several EU Progress Reports.

While the Bertelsmann Foundation (2014) acknowledges that there has been some progress in terms of increasing transparency in the public sector, others lament the limited progress in terms of anti-corruption (Freedom House 2013). The EU continues to note that despite the various steps taken, progress in the fight against corruption has been limited (EU Progress Report 2012, 2013). One of the major points of criticism is the lack of a central body in charge of developing and evaluating anti-corruption policies. The Bertelsmann Foundation highlights the need for better coordination within the current existing system of fighting corruption through the creation of an independent body to design and monitor the implementation of anti-corruption measures (Bertelsmann Foundation 2010).

In spite of these shortcomings, the public shows relative confidence in government efforts, with 41 per cent of the GCB 2013 respondents perceiving government efforts against corruption to be effective.

Legal framework

International legal framework

Turkey has signed and ratified several international treaties and conventions related to corruption including the United Nation’s Convention Against Corruption, the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, the Council of Europe Civil Law Convention on Corruption and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Turkey is also a member of GRECO.

Criminalisation

Turkey’s Criminal Code criminalises active and passive bribery, attempted corruption, extortion, bribing a foreign official, money laundering and abuse of office. However, the GRECO 2010 evaluation report pointed to a number of legal shortcomings, including the narrow definition of bribery offences that excludes corrupt behaviour without an agreement between the parties or without a breach of duty by public officials. Accordingly, the government implemented a reform package in June 2012 amending the Criminal Code by extending the scope of bribery as an offense (EU Progress Report 2012). However, in its 2012 report, GRECO expressed its concern that the legal reforms have in fact worsened the legal structure by only applying the criminalisation of bribery to the person accepting the bribe and not to the person offering it.

Political financing

Most reports agree that Turkey needs to improve its legislation on the financing and auditing of political parties (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014, EU Progress Report 2013). Among the major shortcomings of the legislation, Global Integrity points to the lack of an effective monitoring and auditing mechanism, the lack of an entity or agency for monitoring party financing and the absence of regulation of the political financing of individual candidates (Global Integrity 2010). The 2011 amendment to the law on the Constitutional Court, authorised the court of accounts to audit technical aspects of political parties’ finances and to send its audit reports to the Constitutional Court for final decision (EU Progress Report 2012). In addition, the two biggest parties in parliament published their finances and declared their income and expenditure in detail (EU Progress Report 2012).

The Law on Presidential Elections adopted in 2012 introduced strict rules on transparency of financing for presidential candidates during elections. It also covers prohibited funding sources, donation ceilings and candidates’ obligations to disclose their assets and to submit specified financial information during the campaign period to the Supreme Election Board for examination within specified timeframes (EU Progress Report 2012). However, other GRECO recommendations have been implemented only partially or not at all. For example, there was no progress on political party financing (EU Progress Report 2013).

In addition, remaining legal loopholes continue to be a concern. The auditing of political parties remains weak and there is no legal framework for auditing election campaigns or the financing of individual candidates. Political party candidates, independent candidates and elected representatives are not subject to the regulations that apply to political parties.

Asset declaration

All elected public officials and civil servants as well as certain appointed public officials and political figures are required by law to file an asset declaration...
every five years or whenever there is a significant change in their assets (EU Progress Report 2013). The law also covers their spouses and children (World Bank 2013). However, asset declarations are not open to public. According to the EU, there is no effective verification mechanism (EU Progress Report 2013). Moreover, the contents of declarations are not released to the public when the relevant public servant is the subject of a criminal investigation (World Bank 2013).

**Whistleblower protection**

While several laws cover whistleblower protection, Global Integrity 2010 concludes that there is no culture of whistleblowing and that in practice, cultural factors, social control, as well as insufficient legal protection for whistleblowers constitute major obstacles (Global Integrity 2010). For example, by law the identity of whistleblowers cannot be made public without their consent. However, when the denunciation is valid, their identity can be made public at the request of the prosecuted person (Global Integrity 2010).

**Procurement**

According to Global Integrity (2010), Turkey’s procurement system is fairly robust and is governed by the Public Procurement Law and the Law on Procurement Contracts, which require competitive bidding for major procurement and limit the extent of sole sourcing. However, the US Department of State (2013) notes that the law gives preference to domestic bidders, Turkish citizens, and legal entities established by them. As mentioned, the public procurement law has been amended several times since its enactment to bring new exceptions to the competitive bidding rule. As it stands, it does not confirm in its entirety with the EU acquis (US Department of State 2013).

**Immunity**

A major obstacle to holding leading public officials accountable for their actions is the strong immunity granted by law to members of parliament, ministers, the prime minister, and the president. Recently, the immunity was also extended to staff of Turkey’s Telecommunications Authority and, if the draft bill passes, to National Intelligence Agency personnel (Open Democracy 2014). Cases involving these figures cannot be pursued unless the prime minister decides to pursue them. Permission is also required from the superiors of the public official to open investigations against them (Freedom House 2008). The 2013 EU Progress Report finds no further changes in this regard.

**Codes of conduct**

In 2005, the prime minister adopted an ethical code, setting ethical guidelines for the public sector and since then training has been undertaken to raise awareness among public officials about corruption. However, many public officials are not covered by the code, including academics, military personnel, parliamentarians and the judiciary (EU Progress Report 2012). Moreover, there are no regulations on gifts and hospitality, post-employment restrictions, or conflict of interest policies.

**Access to information**

Citizens have a right by law to request government information and basic government records. However, the law contains a number of provisions that limit the right to access government information. Disclosure of certain categories of information such as those that pertain to Article 16 (state confidentiality) and Article 17 (economic interests of the country) are prohibited (Global Integrity 2010). In addition, the Notice on Tariff of Fares for Access to Information from 2006 further restricts access by allowing institutions to decide whether to charge fees to provide access to information (World Bank 2013).

**Institutional framework**

Although Turkey does not have an anti-corruption agency in charge of designing and monitoring the implementation of anti-corruption measures, several institutions have an anti-corruption mandate.

**Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK)**

MASAK was established within the Ministry of Finance in 1996 to coordinate investigations on money laundering and to collect data on dubious transactions. MASAK’s functions cover five main areas: developing and regulating policies; coordination; collecting, analysing and evaluating data; supervision of obligations; and examination. As such, MASAK is not an anti-corruption unit/agency per se (Global Integrity 2010).

MASAK makes an ex-ante evaluation of complaints and suspicious operations and submits its reports to the relevant departments to take legal action. MASAK’s work is thus subordinated to other governmental agencies. Investigations can be started at the initiative of the prosecutor general and the institution does not have enforcement authority. Its
independence has been questioned and concerns have been raised over the influence exerted by the Ministry of Finance over the body (Global Integrity 2010 and 2008).

**Coordination Board for Combating Financial Crimes**

The Coordination Board for Combating Financial Crimes is composed of the representatives from relevant ministries and financial institutions and is placed under the chairmanship of the under-secretary of the Ministry of Finance. Its functions are to review the draft law on prevention of laundering proceeds, draft regulations issued by the Council of Ministers and coordinate relevant institutions and organisations for implementation (Business Anti-Corruption Portal 2014).

**The ombudsman**

In 2008, the Constitutional Court annulled the law establishing the Ombudsman Office. However, the constitutional amendments of September 2010 included the ombudsman as a constitutional institution and as part of the June 2012 reform package, the parliament passed an ombudsman bill. In November 2012, the chief ombudsman – Mehmet Nihat Ömeroğlu, a retired member of the Supreme Court of Appeals – and five ombudspersons were elected by parliament (Kurban 2012). According to Kurban (2012), the election of the chief ombudsman received strong protests due to his past judgement on a freedom of expression case regarding an Armenian journalist – one that was also criticised by the European Court of Human Rights.

The ombudsman examines and investigates administrative acts, behaviours and actions in accordance with human rights, fundamental freedoms and conformity with the law and the constitution, but cannot make inquiries on its own initiative. In addition, there are limitations to its jurisdiction, such as the actions taken by the president and the activities of the military (Kurban 2012).

**Council of Ethics for the Public Service**

The Council of Ethics for the Public Service was established in June 2004 to promote transparency in public administration, with the main function of managing and investigating complaints by individuals and companies of mismanagement and misconduct at public offices. With regard to the key functions of management and investigation of complaints, the Council of Europe considers the Council of Ethics to only have a very limited investigative capability with a lack of trained staff to fulfil its mandate as well as no power to sanction misconduct (Council of Europe 2008).

**Inspection Board of the Prime Minister**

The Inspection Board of the Prime Minister is another auditing and inspecting entity, which is directly attached to the prime minister. It advises the Corruption Investigations Committee and is responsible for investigating major corruption cases brought to its attention by the committee. It has the mandate to inspect and supervise ministries, public institutions or other public bodies under the directive of the prime minister. It can also investigate major corruption cases. The 2013 EU Progress Report notes that the board needs to be strengthened. It currently provides technical and secretarial support for the implementation of the strategy and its operational independence is not ensured.

**Turkish Court of Accounts**

The Court of Accounts is the supreme auditing authority covering public bodies. It conducts external audits of revenues, expenditures and property of public administrations, as well as audits of local governments’ finances. In December 2010, a new law on the court was adopted by parliament. According to this new law, the court no longer has the authority to conduct inspections and limit public institutions’ power of discretion. Under the changes, the court will not be able to carry out performance audits of public institutions. While all of the audit reports of the court will be open to the public, exception is made for the military forces (Global Integrity 2010). In general, while not all public financial audits are published and made accessible to the public, the Accountability Report, External Audit General Evaluation Report, General Conformity Statement, and reports on treasury operations are published online annually. Other reports of the Audit Court are published irregularly (Global Integrity 2010). Global Integrity (2008) argues that reports are usually ignored or given superficial attention by government and the parliament.

**Public Procurement Authority**

The Public Procurement Act established the Public Procurement Authority as a financially and administratively autonomous regulatory body, managed by a 10-member board. It is in charge of policy-making, supervision, providing training and operational support to contracting authorities, publishing tender notices, informing the economic
operators and awareness-raising. According to Freedom House (2008), the authority is "not in a position to ensure consistent policy in all areas related to public procurement, nor does it effectively steer the implementation of the procurement legislation."

Other stakeholders

Media

Although the right to free expression is guaranteed in the constitution, impediments to press freedom remain. A 2006 anti-terrorism law reintroduced jail sentences for journalists, which, despite a reform package in June 2012, still failed to meet concerns expressed by the EU and the Council of Europe (Freedom House 2013). A 2012 report from the Committee to Protect Journalists noted that more journalists were incarcerated in Turkey than in any other country (Committee to Protect Journalists 2012). Turkey also ranks 154 out of 179 countries on the 2013 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters without Borders 2013).

Censorship is noted as a major area of concern. Many of Turkey's media organisations are owned by large holding companies with ties to political parties, contributing to self-censorship (Freedom House 2013). Global Integrity notes that the frequent website bans are a major cause for concern. The EU Progress Report 2013 mentions that mainstream media barely reported on the Gezi Park protests and a large number of journalists were fired or forced to resign.

The December 2013 corruption scandal has also led to the Turkish government firing a dozen executives at the Telecommunications Directorate and TRT state TV (Reuters 2014). Critics claim that the purge could be to prevent further videos and pictures of the scandal being published on the internet. In January, A court decision ordering a general press ban about the recent corruption allegations has been put in place (Hürriyet 2014).

Moreover, in January 2014, several thousand people took to the streets in Turkey's biggest three cities demonstrating against a government-led draft bill to increase controls over the internet (Reuters 2014a).

Civil society

Turkey only has a moderately developed tradition of civil society and the role of civil society organisations need to be strengthened (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014). The EU accession process has had a positive impact on the environment in which civil society operates, with increased funding opportunities, capacity and skill development and reduction of regulatory barriers to civil society operations. As a result, civil society activism has increased in the last decade, with a significant increase in the number and strength of NGOs (Freedom House 2008).

There are a number of organisations dedicated to fighting corruption, including the Transparency Association (Transparency International Turkey), the Association for Combating Corruption and the Association for the Protection of Citizens' Taxes (VAVEK). There are also some associations focused on good governance such as the Corporate Governance Association of Turkey and the Corporate Social Responsibility Association of Turkey, as well as some research-oriented organisations such as the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) and the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) whose areas of research also include corruption. However, the number of rights-based and research-oriented civil society organisations remains limited.

While a new law on associations was passed in 2004 and reduces the legal restrictions on civil society operations, its implementing legislation allows the state to restrict civil society organisations that might oppose its interests (Freedom House 2010). TUSEV has also expressed its concern that Turkey still lacks a concrete political and legal framework to foster cooperation and dialogue with civil society (CIVICUS 2013). Often civil society participation in policy-making is not allowed and civil society is not seen as a major stakeholder (CIVICUS 2013). According to civil society members, the recent anti-corruption protests have been violently suppressed by the police and peaceful protestors have been detained without a court order.

According to Global Integrity, while there is no legal pressure on associations dealing with corruption-related matters, no visible progress has been made towards enabling civil society organisations to become involved in policy-making processes. The 2008 Global Integrity report mentions that anti-corruption organisations have been marginalised at times through indirect pressure such as inspections. Both the 2012 and 2013 EU Progress Reports note that the government is still not engaging effectively with civil society. The reports emphasise that civil society could support the government in updating its anti-corruption strategy and monitor its implementation.
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