**EPAC / EACN**

# EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING SITUATION REPORTS ON CORRUPTION

# FORE WORD

Corruption is a persistent challenge that undermines trust in institutions, disrupts economic stability and weakens the foundations of fair governance. Recognizing the importance of structured and data-driven approaches to fighting corruption, the EPAC/EACN Working Group on „Effective Approaches to Developing Situational Reports on Corruption" (Corruption SITREP) has been set up.

Led by the Austrian Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAK), this initiative aims to provide anti-corruption agencies with a standardized framework for situational reporting. By fostering collaboration, sharing best practices and leveraging data analysis, the working group seeks to enhance transparency and facilitate informed decision-making.

This publication is intended to serve as both a resource and a roadmap, reflecting the collective expertise and dedication of our participants. It outlines key methodologies, established reporting standards and offers a structured approach to monitoring corruption trends. By equipping agencies with these tools, we are reinforcing our commitment to accountability, integrity and good governance.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the contributors and participants for their invaluable insights and unwavering dedication to this cause. It is through our collective efforts that we can strengthen anti-corruption measures and build more resilient societies.

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# I.  INTRODUCTION

Situation reports are a fundamental tool for assessing and addressing corruption. They provide a structured overview of corruption-related developments, trends and risks, enabling policymakers, law enforcement agencies and oversight bodies to make informed decisions. A well-structured situation report can enhance transparency, facilitate preventive measures, and may also support the prosecution of corruption offenses in general. However, the effectiveness and reliability of such reports depend on several crucial factors, including the availability and quality of data, the analysis methodology used, and the extent of institutional cooperation at both the national and international levels.

Various approaches to creating corruption-related situation reports currently exist across jurisdictions, reflecting the growing importance of such reports. Differences in legal frameworks, institutional capacities and data collection methodologies result in significant variations in the scope, depth and comparability of these reports, if they are available at all. While some countries have comprehensive reporting mechanisms in place, in others, corruption-related data remains fragmented or is analysed insufficiently. This lack of standardization poses a considerable challenge to cross-border cooperation in combating corruption, limiting the ability to draw meaningful conclusions on a European scale.

This publication aims to examine the current state of corruption-related situation reporting. It will do this by identifying existing challenges, highlighting best practices and addressing key questions that should be answered in order to establish a tailor-made reporting framework that can be used widely. Central questions to be explored include: Which sources of information should be included to ensure a comprehensive and accurate assessment? How can the reliability, consistency and comparability of data be ensured across different jurisdictions? To what extent do legal and institutional factors influence the quality of situation reports? What is the structure and preparation process for informative situation? What are useful prerequisites and requirements for creating a situation report?

These questions, among many others, have been addressed by the EPAC/EACN Working Group on Situation Reports, which aims to collect and systematically analyse various approaches to developing corruption-related situation reports. The working group also aims to contribute to the formulation of structured guidelines for the creation of high-quality, reliable, actionable corruption-related situation reports. While the findings are primarily intended for EPAC/EACN members, they may also serve as a resource for policymakers, regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies and anti-corruption organisations, supporting the development of more effective monitoring and prevention strategies.

With over 40 participants from various countries and organizations, the working group is helping to build and strengthen an informal network within the existing EPAC/EACN structures, facilitating the exchange of views on a wide range of subjects related to situation reports.

## I. | 1  WHAT ARE SITUATION REPORTS?

Situation reports are structured analytical documents that provide a comprehensive overview of the state of corruption within a specific country, region, sector or institution. Designed to support evidence-based policymaking, institutional learning and targeted anti-corruption interventions, they present information on the prevalence, patterns, and dynamics of corruption in a clear and accessible way. By synthesizing quantitative and qualitative data, these reports are essential for monitoring corruption risks, informing reforms and guiding multi-stakeholder engagement in integrity-building processes.

A well-developed corruption situation report is more than a compilation of facts; it is a diagnostic instrument that seeks answers to questions such as what types of corruption can be identified, how many corruption-related cases there are, why corruption occurs, where it is most prevalent, whether there are geographical differences and how specific corruption phenomena can be effectively addressed. The structure of such reports typically includes several key components, each of which plays a critical role in the utility and comprehensiveness of the assessment. These core components include data and statistics, qualitative analysis, and integration.

### I. | 1.1  Elements of Situation Reports

#### A.  Data and Statistics

Any situation report should be based on a robust body of good data. Quantitative indicators provide an objective view of the extent and nature of corruption, allowing trends to be analysed and comparisons to be made over time or across jurisdictions. Typical statistical content includes:

- the number of reported corruption cases within a given time frame
- conviction rates and enforcement outcomes
- sector-specific prevalence rates (e.g., public procurement, the judiciary and law enforcement)
- results from perception surveys (e.g., the Corruption Perceptions Index and the Global Corruption Barometer).

Other data, such as administrative and judicial data, can also be included.

These statistics help to quantify the problem and provide a factual basis for identifying hotspots and institutional vulnerabilities. When disaggregated by sector, region or type of offense, such data can be used to inform precise policy targeting and risk prioritization.

#### B.  Qualitative Analysis

Although quantitative data provides measurable insights, it often lacks the depth of explanation required to understand the underlying causes and systemic enablers of corruption. Therefore, a comprehensive situation report should also include a rigorous qualitative analysis. This component provides contextual interpretation by exploring:

- the root causes of corruption (e.g. greed, dependence and power) as well as enablers of corruption (e.g. weak oversight, political patronage, legal loopholes)
- institutional factors contributing to impunity or enforcement gaps
- the quality and effectiveness of existing anti-corruption mechanisms
- cultural and socio-political factors influencing corruption tolerance and reporting behaviour.

Qualitative analysis is typically derived from expert interviews, focus groups, stakeholder consultations, and document reviews. This analytical layer is indispensable for developing a nuanced understanding of corruption dynamics that numbers alone cannot capture.

#### C.  Integration

A robust interpretation process combines quantitative and qualitative insights to provide an all-encompassing view of corruption. This integrative approach enables:

- **identifying Causal Relationships:** By examining both numerical data and narrative information, analysts can discern not only what is happening, but also why.
- **uncovering Hidden Trends:** Qualitative insights can explain discrepancies between data sources and reveal emerging patterns that raw numbers alone might obscure.
- **adapting to local realities:** Corruption is deeply influenced by local socio-political, cultural and legal contexts. Effective reports must therefore be tailored to reflect the unique characteristics of the jurisdiction under study.

#### D.  Recommendations

The set of recommendations based on the empirical and analytical findings is potentially the most action-oriented component of a situation report. These recommendations can provide a roadmap for institutional and policy reform, and they typically include proposals for:

- strengthening legal frameworks (e.g., anti-bribery laws and asset declaration systems)
- enhancing institutional capacities (e.g., better resourcing of anti-corruption agencies and judicial training)
- enhancing organisational capacities (e.g., operational work, resource planning and targeted prevention work)
- improving oversight and accountability mechanisms (e.g., public procurement transparency and audit systems)
- promoting civic engagement and whistle-blower protection
- leveraging digital tools for corruption detection and reporting.

Recommendations should be tailored to the specific context and based on the findings presented in the report. They should also be formulated in a way that facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of implementation progress.

**Case Studies**

Incorporating illustrative case studies into situation reports adds both depth and credibility. These detailed examinations of specific corruption incidents or systemic patterns help to contextualize broader trends and offer tangible examples of how corruption manifests in practice. Case studies can cover:

- High-profile corruption cases
- Sectoral vulnerabilities such as health procurement fraud or judicial bribery
- Regional disparities in corruption prevalence and institutional response
- Institutional learning from successful anti-corruption interventions

Case studies enhance the communicative power of the report by translating abstract data into practical consequences. They also serve as learning tools, highlighting both challenges and best practices in anti-corruption efforts.

**I. | 1.2  Importance of Situation Reports**

As an essential component of a modern governance and anti-corruption framework, the significance of situation reports (SITREPs) further extends beyond the domestic sphere, offering a basis for European/international cooperation and benchmarking.

**1.  Early Detection of Corruption Cases**
SITREPs may assist in identifying corruption activities at an early stage, preventing further damage to public institutions and private enterprises. Regular reporting allows anti-corruption units to detect irregularities and patterns indicative of fraudulent activities.

**2.  Enhancing Investigations**
Situation reports provide detailed documentation that can help to support investigations. Law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies may rely on SITREPs to track corruption networks, identify key suspects, and collect necessary evidence.

**3.  Supporting Policy Development**
Governments and organizations may use SITREPs to develop and refine anti-corruption policies. The insights derived from these reports may help in formulating laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines to mitigate corruption risks.

**4.  Strengthening Transparency and Accountabilit**y
Regular dissemination of corruption-related SITREPs fosters a culture of transparency. These reports may also serve as public records that create awareness and promote knowledge and understanding.

**5.  Facilitating International Cooperation**
Corruption often transcends national borders. SITREPs contribute to international anti-corruption efforts by sharing intelligence and aligning strategies among different jurisdictions and international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

In sum, corruption situation reports serve as a critical instrument for strengthening democratic governance, informing strategic interventions, and mobilizing public and international support for anti-corruption efforts. Their importance lies not only in the presentation of relevant data but also in their capacity to translate that data into actionable insights, institutional accountability, and societal engagement.

# II. ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES OF SITUATION REPORTS

Situation reports offer many benefits, including supporting evidence-based decision-making, enhancing public trust and engagement, and strengthening international collaboration. However, the complex and often covert nature of corruption, coupled with institutional, political and technical constraints, makes it sometimes difficult to produce high-quality, reliable and actionable reports. This may result in significant challenges when creating situation reports, such as limited (access to) data limitations and political sensitivity.

## II. | 1 ADVANTAGES OF SITUATION REPORTS

### II. | 1.1 Evidence-Based Decision-Making

One of the most compelling advantages of corruption situation reports is their contribution to evidence-based policymaking. Rather than relying on anecdotal observations or politically driven narratives, decision-makers are provided with structured data and analytical findings to inform strategic planning and resource allocation.

By integrating multiple data sources, such as conviction rates for corruption offenses, perception indices, whistle-blower reports and financial oversight data, these reports can provide a comprehensive overview of systemic weaknesses and corruption risks. This enables policymakers to transition from reactive responses to proactive strategies that target the root causes of corruption rather than merely its symptoms.

Evidence-based approaches are essential for maximising the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of anti-corruption reforms. Well-designed indicators, in particular, can help to identify capacity gaps, institutional bottlenecks and the sectors that are most vulnerable to abuse.

### II. | 1.2 Benchmarking and Monitoring

Situation reports are powerful tools for monitoring progress and benchmarking performance over time. By applying standardized indicators and assessment frameworks, these reports enable the evaluation of whether anti-corruption interventions are achieving their intended outcomes.

Benchmarking helps national authorities not only to track their own improvements, but also to make comparisons across regions and institutions. This comparative function enhances transparency and comparability across jurisdictions, thereby improving governance standards.

Furthermore, regular updates to situation reports enable policymakers and oversight bodies to detect trends, measure policy effectiveness and adjust ongoing initiatives in a timely manner. The World Bank[1] and Transparency International[2], for example, highlight the importance of continuous monitoring in maintaining momentum for reform and ensuring institutional accountability.

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1   World Bank, *Sanctions System Annual Report, 2024.*

2   Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2023: Highlights and Insights – Corruption and Injustice, 2023.*

**II. | 1.3  Public Trust and Engagement**

Transparency and openness are fundamental to public trust. By publishing reports on corruption, governments and institutions demonstrate their commitment to accountability and integrity. This can, in turn, foster civic engagement and empower citizens to participate more actively in governance processes.

Situation reports written in clear, accessible language with clear data visualizations can be powerful instruments for civic education and awareness-raising. Civil society organizations and investigative journalists often rely on situation reports to conduct independent oversight, advocate for reforms and hold wrongdoers to account. When citizens see their concerns reflected in official assessments, they are more likely to support and contribute to anti-corruption efforts.

**II. | 1.4  International Collaboration**

Situation reports facilitate international cooperation by providing comparable data and shared analytical frameworks. Such reports are used by international organizations, donor agencies and transnational bodies to assess reform needs, design technical assistance programmes and ensure alignment with global anti-corruption standards, such as those outlined in the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)[3].

Furthermore, internationally recognized benchmarks, such as the Corruption Perceptions Index, the OECD[4] Integrity Indicators and UNODC's statistical frameworks, provide a "common language" for evaluation governance performance. When national reports align with these frameworks, they contribute to global knowledge-sharing and policy harmonization.

**II. | 2  CHALLENGES WITH REGARD TO SITUATION REPORTS**

**II. | 2.1  Data Limitations**

One of the main challenges in developing effective situation reports is the limited availability and reliability of data. Corruption tends to be a discreet and complex issue that may not be fully reflected in official records. It can also go underreported due to concerns about retaliation, limited protections for whistle-blowers, and a certain degree of social acceptance of certain practices.

Several data sources rely on perceptions, which can lead to some variation between reported experiences and actual events. Indices such as the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) offer valuable insights into how corruption is perceived across countries and over time, providing a useful comparative perspective. However, perception-based indicators may not always capture the full scope or specific details of institutional misconduct. Additionally, administrative and judicial records may be incomplete, inconsistently maintained, or lack detailed breakdowns by region, sector, or type of corruption.

Many countries, particularly those with limited administrative capacity, face significant obstacles in producing reliable corruption-related data, due to gaps in institutional expertise, a lack of resources, and inconsistent data systems.[5]

**II. | 2.2  Sensitivity**

Another major obstacle to creating situation reports is their sensitive nature. Corruption assessments may reveal uncomfortable truths about institutional weaknesses, political patronage and high-profile misconduct, for example.

The credibility of situation reports is critical for ensuring their integrity. In environments where political interference is prevalent, maintaining objectivity and analytical rigor is especially challenging.

**II. | 2.3  Resource Intensive**

Developing comprehensive and high-quality situation reports requires significant financial, human, and technical resources. Data collection, verification, statistical analysis, stakeholder consultations, and report drafting all require specialized expertise and institutional infrastructure.

**II. | 2.4  Methodological Challenges**

To ensure accuracy, comparability and relevance, corruption situation reports must navigate a range of methodological challenges. These include selecting appropriate indicators, standardizing definitions, integrating mixed methods, and designing robust analytical frameworks - all of which are challenging tasks.

A key concern is striking the right balance between aggregate indices and context-specific indicators. While global measures offer broad comparability, they may lack the granularity required for local policy relevance. Conversely, highly contextualized indicators may be difficult to compare over time or across different geographical areas.

Furthermore, challenges arise in triangulating data from different sources, ensuring data quality control, and avoiding biases in survey instruments or expert assessments. Methodological rigour is essential to ensure that reports reflect corruption realities and provide actionable insights.

While corruption situation reports offer substantial benefits, the challenges surrounding their development cannot be underestimated. It is crucial to address issues related to data limitations, sensitivity, resource constraints and methodological complexity in order to produce credible and impactful reports.

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3   Further information about UNCAC: https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/uncac/learn-about-uncac.html.

4   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

5   OECD, Public Integrity Indicators, 2025; UNDP, User's Guide to Measuring Corruption and Anti-Corruption, 2015.

## III. EXISTING MECHANISMS/METHODS

Several methods and indices are commonly used to measure/describe corruption, providing valuable data for situation reports.

### III. | 1 UNCAC

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is an international convention of the United Nations that came into force on December 14, 2005, and aims to prevent and combat corruption worldwide. It includes measures for criminal prosecution, prevention, the return of stolen assets (asset recovery) and support for international cooperation in the fight against corruption. The most important instrument of the UNCAC is the review mechanism, in which countries evaluate each other's implementation of the convention.

### III. | 2 EU ROL

In 2019 the European Commission presented the proposal for a rule of law cycle aimed at promoting and enforcing the rule of law in the EU. A central element is the EU Rule of Law Report, which has been published annually since 2020 and assesses the rule of law situation in the member states. Among other aspects, it examines the independence of the judiciary and the framework for combating corruption, media pluralism and the separation of powers.

### III. | 3 OECD PUBLIC INTEGRITY INDICATORS

The OECD Public Integrity Indicators are inter alia used to assess integrity frameworks and anti-corruption initiatives and to identify best practices. The data collected helps decision-makers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of national anti-corruption and public integrity systems in order to specifically address challenges. The indicators are particularly innovative in terms of visual processing, as they allow direct comparison with a large number of countries and the OECD average.

### III. | 4 CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX (CPI)

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is an index that scores and ranks countries by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, based on the assessment of experts and business executives. The index is published annually by the non-governmental organisation Transparency International since 1995. It takes into account 13 different surveys and assessments from 12 different institutions such as the World Bank or the World Economic Forum.

### III. | 5 EUROBAROMETER

The Eurobarometer is a regularly conducted survey instrument by the European Commission designed to capture public opinion across EU member states. In the context of measuring corruption, the Eurobarometer provides valuable insights into how citizens and businesses perceive corruption in their country, how widespread they believe it to be, and how much trust they place in government efforts to combat it. It offers comparable data across member states and allows for an assessment of the effectiveness of both national and EU-level anti-corruption strategies.

## III. | 6  UNODC INDICATORS

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) developed a comprehensive framework with 145 indicators to measure corruption and assess anti-corruption efforts. Created through global consultations with input from over 200 experts across 81 Member States, this framework evaluates various aspects of corruption using both direct measures (like bribery prevalence) and indirect ones (such as perceptions and risks). It covers types of corruption (e.g. bribery, embezzlement), preventive strategies (e.g. judicial independence), and state responses (both legal and practical). The framework distinguishes between perception-based, risk-based, and response indicators, allowing for adaptation at national, subnational, and sectoral levels. It also includes a gender perspective, recognizing that corruption affects different social groups in distinct ways. The goal is to generate reliable, detailed data to inform effective and inclusive anti-corruption policies. Key corruption offences — bribery, embezzlement, and money laundering — are analysed through multiple indicators, highlighting both the legal framework and real-world implementation, thus revealing possible gaps, and offering a clearer understanding of corruption's scope and context.[6]
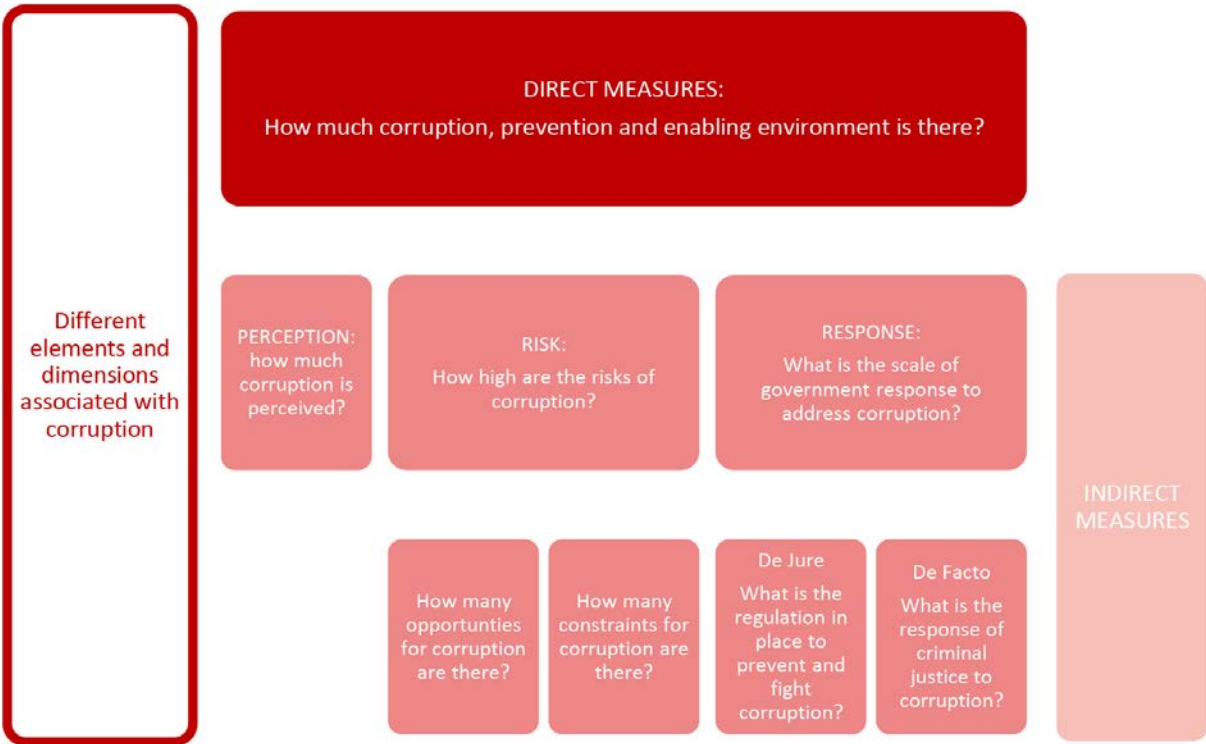


*Figure 1: Dimensions of the statistical framework to measure corruption (UNODC, Statistical framework to measure corruption; Source: UNODC_Statistical_Framework_to_measure_corruption.pdf)*

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6    UNODC, Statistical Framework for Measuring Corruption, 2018, pp. 2-9.

## III. | 7  COMPLEMENTARITY OF APPROACHES

Although measuring corruption and situational reporting serve different purposes, they are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are best understood as complementary tools. Quantitative indices can provide benchmarks and cross-national comparisons, while situational reports offer deeper insights into the specific drivers, risks, and manifestations of corruption within a given environment.

Together, these approaches contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of corruption and support evidence-based policymaking. Both corruption measurement tools and situational reports are indispensable components of modern anti-corruption efforts. Recognizing their respective strengths and limitations is essential for developing an effective anti-corruption strategy. While indices provide a useful picture of perceived corruption levels, situational reports supply the contextual depth necessary for targeted reform.

# IV.  TYPES AND FORMATS OF SITUATION REPORTS

Depending on their purpose and target group, situation reports can be classified into different types, such as strategic, tactical, and operational reports. Additionally, the way information is presented plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of such reports. Various visualization techniques, including flowcharts, heat maps, and dashboards, enhance clarity and aid decision-making.

## IV. | 1  TYPES OF SITUATION REPORTS

A **crime situation report** provides key stakeholders with a structured overview of a specific type of crime — in this case, **corruption**. It should be **comprehensive, data-driven, and descriptive**, combining statistics with meaningful interpretation to contextualize findings. While data and figures form the foundation, **analysis and interpretation** are equally critical for understanding trends and implications.

There are three primary types of crime situation reports, depending on the **purpose and target group:**

- **Strategic reports** focus on long-term trends and policy development.
- **Operational reports** analyse specific corruption areas and emerging threats.
- **Tactical reports** provide real-time intelligence for immediate law enforcement actions.

The distinction between these categories is not always clear-cut, as the stakeholder's needs ultimately determine the most appropriate form of analysis.

### IV. | 1.1  Strategic Situation Reports

**Purpose:**
A **strategic situation report** provides a **mid- to long-term** assessment of corruption. It supports policy development, **resource allocation, and corruption prevention strategies**.

**Contents:**
- **Crime statistics and trends over time** (5–10 years is considered best practice).
- **Socioeconomic and political factors** influencing corruption (enablers, push/pull factors, etc.).
- **Risk and threat assessments**, forecasts, and recommendations for legislative and preventive measures.

**Stakeholders:**
- High-ranking law enforcement officials.
- Government agencies and policymakers.
- International organizations and research institutions.
- The general public (for transparency and awareness).

**IV. | 1.2 Operational Situation Reports**

**Purpose:**
An **operational report** focuses on **specific areas of corruption**, such as **bribery, procurement fraud, or public tendering**. It provides a **short- to mid-term** assessment of developments in these areas and examines connections between **national and international actors**.

**Contents:**
- Working methods of offenders and criminal networks.
- **Cross-border activities** and international links between suspects.
- **Emerging threats** and Modi operandi.

**Stakeholders:**
- National and regional **law enforcement agencies**.
- **Prosecutors and judicial authorities.**

**IV. | 1.3 Tactical Situation Reports**

**Purpose:**
A tactical report is short-term and case-specific, **providing intelligence for** immediate law enforcement action.

**Contents:**
- **Real-time intelligence** on criminal groups and suspects.
- **Details of ongoing investigations and case evidence.**
- **Threat levels and risks** for law enforcement operations.
- **Recommendations for arrests, surveillance, and interventions.**

**Stakeholders:**
- **Local police units and task forces.**
- **Special investigation teams (e.g., anti-corruption squads).**
- **Prosecutors handling specific cases.**

**IV. | 1.4 International Standardization of Crime Situation Reports**

Although distinctions between **strategic, operational, and tactical** reports exist, in an **international context, a strategic report** with elements of an operational analysis (e.g., recent developments and emerging corruption phenomena) is often the most effective format for comparison and collaboration.

| SITREP Type | Purpose | Contents | Stakeholders |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Strategic** | Long-term crime analysis, policy planning | Trends, risk factors, legislative recommendations | Government, policymakers, high-level law enforcement, researchers |
| **Operational** | Mid-term crime trends, coordination | Emerging threats, criminal networks, modi operandi | National/regional law enforcement, prosecutors |
| **Tactical** | Short-term, case-specific action | Real-time intelligence, suspect details, tactical response | Local police, special units, prosecutors |

**IV. | 2 PRESENTATION FORMATS OF SITUATION REPORTS**

**IV. | 2.1 Written Reports**

The most traditional and formal method of presenting a corruption situation report is through a comprehensive written document. This format allows for detailed analysis and in-depth discussion of corruption findings, supporting evidence, and recommendations. Written reports typically include:

- **Executive Summary:** A brief overview of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- **Introduction:** Contextualization of the corruption issue, its significance, and the scope of the report.
- **Methodology:** Explanation of how data was collected and analysed, including the sources of information (e.g., surveys, interviews, legal documents, case studies).
- **Findings and Analysis:** A detailed presentation of the corruption situation, including statistical data, case studies, and qualitative analysis of corruption patterns and trends.

**IV. | 2.2  Infographics and Visualizations**

Corruption situation reports are increasingly incorporating infographics and visualizations to present complex data in a clear and visually appealing way. These tools are particularly useful for conveying statistical data, trends, and comparisons across different regions or sectors. Infographics can include:

- **Charts and Graphs:** Bar charts, pie charts, and line graphs can illustrate data such as corruption perceptions, levels of public trust, or the frequency of corrupt incidents across different time periods or countries.
- **Heat Maps:** These maps visually represent the intensity or prevalence of corruption in different geographic regions, highlighting areas of concern.
- **Timelines:** A timeline can effectively present the evolution of corruption issues over time, showing key events, policy changes, or interventions that have impacted the corruption landscape.
- **Flowcharts**: Used to depict the flow of corrupt activities within specific sectors (e.g., public procurement or healthcare), illustrating how corruption networks operate.

Infographics are an effective way to distil complex information into key insights and are particularly useful for engaging broader audiences, such as the general public, media, and non-expert stakeholders. They can enhance the accessibility of corruption reports and provide a clear picture of the situation.

**IV. | 2.3  Interactive Dashboards and Online Platforms**

For dynamic and real-time reporting, interactive dashboards and online platforms offer an innovative way to present corruption situation reports. These platforms allow users to interact with the data, explore different dimensions of corruption issues, and access the information most relevant to their interests. Interactive dashboards can feature:

- **Real-time Data:** Dashboards that provide continuously updated data on corruption metrics, such as the number of corruption-related incidents reported, legal actions taken, or the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.
- **Customizable Filters:** Users can filter data by country, sector, period, or type of corruption to create personalized views and generate tailored insights.
- **Case Studies and Reports:** Users can access detailed reports, case studies, and other documentation that provide deeper insights into specific corruption issues.
- **Interactive Maps and Visualizations:** Maps and graphs that allow users to visually explore corruption data in an interactive manner.

Interactive dashboards are valuable for providing stakeholders with an engaging and user-friendly way to access and analyse corruption-related data. They are particularly effective for institutions or organizations that need to share and track corruption trends over time, such as international organizations, anti-corruption agencies, and think tanks.

**IV. | 3  CONTENTS OF SITUATION REPORTS**

**IV. | 3.1  Annual Reports**

Annual reports on corruption typically provide a summary of corruption trends, initiatives, and activities over a one-year period. These reports are often produced by national anti-corruption agencies, NGOs, or international bodies, and they aim to provide an up-to-date overview of the state of corruption in a particular jurisdiction. Annual reports are useful for tracking the progress of anti-corruption initiatives, highlighting emerging challenges, and assessing whether government and civil society efforts have been successful in curbing corruption.

While national reports provide a comprehensive assessment of the situation, annual reports allow for timely updates and the monitoring of recent developments. These reports often include metrics on corruption trends, such as arrests or convictions for corrupt activities, changes in public perceptions of corruption, and updates on national and international policy reforms.

**IV. | 3.2  Regional Reports**

Regional reports focus on corruption within a specific geographic area or group of countries. These reports provide a comparative analysis of corruption trends and patterns across countries or regions, facilitating regional cooperation in the fight against corruption. Regional reports are often published by international organizations like UNODC[7] or the World Bank[8], with the aim of identifying cross-border corruption issues and proposing collective solutions.

Such reports can identify common systemic issues, such as transnational bribery, money laundering, and the role of multinational corporations in fostering corruption. They also provide valuable information for regional policy development, helping to shape anti-corruption initiatives tailored to specific regional challenges. A regional approach allows for a broader view of corruption, highlighting trends and best practices that may be beneficial across different national contexts.

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7   *Further information on regional reports from UNODC: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports-by-region.html.*

8   *Further information on regional reports from the World Bank: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/development/publication/world-bank-regional-economic-updates.*

**IV. | 3.3  National Reports**

National reports on corruption focus on providing a comprehensive analysis of the corruption situation within a specific country. These reports generally aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the national legal framework, government institutions, and the capacity of enforcement bodies to prevent and respond to corruption. They often combine both quantitative and qualitative data, including the assessment of national anti-corruption laws, the behaviour of public officials, and the role of the private sector in perpetuating corrupt practices.

These reports are typically produced by governmental bodies, independent anti-corruption commissions, or non-governmental organizations. The report may include assessments of transparency, accountability, political will, and the degree of citizen participation in the anti-corruption process. National reports are crucial for identifying key corruption risks, setting priorities for anti-corruption reforms, and monitoring progress over time.

**IV. | 3.4  Sectoral Reports**

Sectoral reports examine corruption within specific sectors, such as healthcare, education, law enforcement, or public procurement. These reports provide a detailed understanding of the corruption vulnerabilities that are unique to each sector. By focusing on one area at a time, sectoral reports allow for in-depth analysis of systemic corruption, identifying the mechanisms through which corruption occurs and the specific actors involved. Sectoral reports are essential for developing targeted anti-corruption strategies that address the challenges faced by each sector.

**IV. | 3.5  Thematic Reports**

Thematic reports focus on specific topics or issues within the broader anti-corruption field. These reports examine drivers of corruption, such as political corruption, the influence of organized crime, or the impact of economic inequality. Thematic reports are particularly valuable for addressing emerging or less-understood issues that are not easily captured by broader national or sectoral assessments.

These reports are often interdisciplinary, drawing from political science, economics, sociology, and law, to offer a more holistic view of corruption's impact in specific areas. A flowchart is a particularly suitable form of presentation for thematic reports, as it can be used to show the flow of certain corruption activities in specific areas.

# V.   ANALYSIS CYCLE

The creation of effective SITREPs requires a structured and systematic approach. This process, often referred to as the analysis cycle, ensures that SITREPs are based on accurate data, thorough evaluation, and clear presentation. The analysis cycle consists of key stages, including data collection, analysis, and dissemination.



*Figure 2 – Intelligence Cycle FBI (Source: Intelligence Cycle Graphic — FBI)*

## V. | 1  DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Our survey responses indicate that organizations use various data sources for crime situation reports:

- In-house and external surveys
- Opinion polls
- Structured data from law enforcement, judiciary, statistical agencies, and research institutes

A bottom-up approach[9] is crucial in creating an effective SITREP. The level of detail in the available data directly influences the accuracy of the final analysis. Anonymized operational data from police and judicial investigations can provide deeper insights into criminal methods, helping to contextualize statistical findings. At the same time, survey data can offer valuable indicators of public perception and sentiment regarding corruption.

By combining different data sources, a comprehensive picture of the situation emerges. The information is then structured according to the layered (onion-skin) principle[10], where each stakeholder receives a tailored, high-quality, and targeted analysis relevant to their specific needs. This ensures that decision-makers at different levels can act based on the most relevant and precise insights derived from the overall analysis.

## V. | 2  ANALYSIS METHODS AND TOOLS

From previous discussions and webinars two main approaches to analyse crime data for situation reports can be identified:

1. Academic research methods
2. The intelligence analysis cycle, commonly used by law enforcement agencies for strategic reports.

Both methods follow a structured, step-by-step process, and the quality of analysis depends on:

- The research questions posed
- The analytical methods applied

For international comparability, standardized indicators — such as those provided by UNODC on measuring corruption — can be useful.

- Additional methodologies include:
- Social Network Analysis (SNA) – primarily for operational and tactical reports.
- Threat and Risk Assessment Tools – e.g., Sleipnir[11], a tool for prioritizing criminal threats.
- Link Analysis – to uncover relationships between actors and events.

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## V. | 3  RESUME

A well-structured SITREP should combine data, trends, and contextual analysis to support decision-making. While the scope and content of reports depend on their purpose, a strategic approach with operational refinements is often the best practice for international collaboration.

As Europol has emphasized, corruption is not solely a national issue. While there are regional and national differences, corruption often has transnational dimensions, particularly in the context of organized crime. Addressing corruption effectively requires coordinated international efforts, using standardized indicators, intelligence-sharing and cross-border collaboration between law enforcement, policymakers and research institutions.

To ensure comparability in international crime situation reports, it is essential to use standardized indicators and methodologies. Frameworks such as UNODC's corruption measurement tools provide consistent benchmarks for assessing corruption across different regions. Furthermore, using a bottom-up approach that integrates operational law enforcement data with survey insights ensures a highly detailed and accurate representation of corruption trends. By applying the layered (onion-skin) principle, stakeholders receive precisely tailored information, enabling more effective decision-making and coordinated anti-corruption measures.

## V. | 4  CRIMINOLOGY AND PHENOMENA

A criminological issue refers to the scientific study and analysis of facts and circumstances related to crime and law enforcement. A criminological issue can relate to various aspects, such as:

- The analysis of crimes and their impact on victims and society
- The study of crime patterns and trends
- The investigation of causes and factors that lead to crime
- The evaluation of prevention and intervention strategies
- The investigation of law enforcement and justice systems

Criminological issues are often used in a variety of contexts, such as law enforcement, justice, social work, policy and research. They are used to make informed decisions, develop strategies and take action to combat crime and promote public safety.

**Classification of Corruption Phenomena (BAK):**

Since the titles of criminal offences often reveal little about the underlying nature of corruption cases, individual offences can be categorized according to a set of identified corruption phenomena. These phenomena represent more detailed descriptions of corrupt behaviour, characterized by specific demographic and contextual features. This approach allows for a more precise criminological classification—for example, cases involving irregularities in public tenders or in public sector recruitment.

# VI. STATISTICAL APPROACHES IN CREATING SITUATION REPORTS

The measurement of corruption relies on several core data collection methods, each with its advantages and limitations. These include surveys, judicial statistics, expert assessments, and proxy indicators. Together, these approaches provide a more comprehensive understanding of corruption but also present challenges in terms of reliability, comparability, and interpretability.
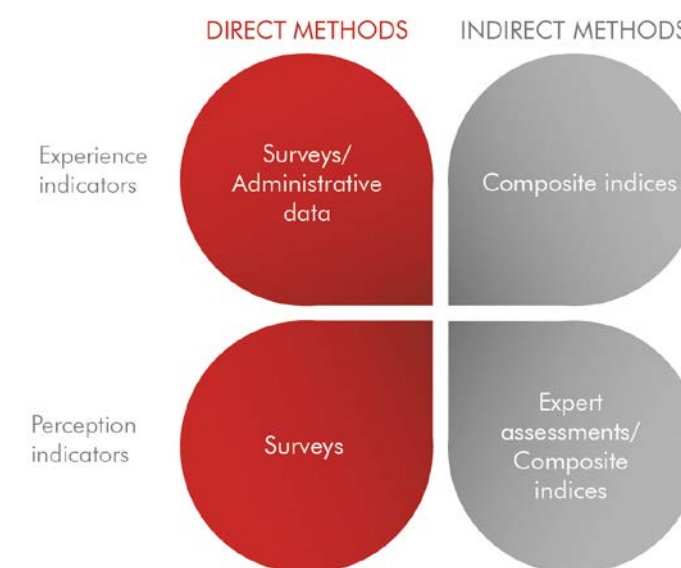


*Figure 3 - Main approaches to measuring corruption (UNODC, Manual on Corruption Surveys; Source: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crime-statistics/CorruptionManual_2018_web.pdf)*

## VI. | 1  SURVEYS

with corrupt practices, particularly when accessing public services. Nationally representative surveys, often stratified by sector or institution, aim to quantify the prevalence of corruption within different levels of public administration.

Over time, survey methodologies have evolved. While early questionnaires predominantly focused on bribery, modern surveys increasingly include questions on nepotism, state capture, and the misuse of public funds. Public opinion surveys, such as the World Values Survey and the Asian Barometer, also explore perceptions of corruption control, assessing the perceived effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and the likelihood of accountability for corrupt behaviour.

Experience-based surveys are generally considered more reliable than perception-based surveys, although they remain susceptible to respondent bias, including recall errors and reluctance to disclose sensitive information. The World Bank and UNODC recommend surveying three key populations: households, business representatives, and civil servants. However, business surveys often face challenges related to sample representativeness and response bias, as well as financial and political sensitivities, particularly in countries where the boundaries between the public and private sectors are blurred.[12]

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12  IACA, Global Programme on Measuring Corruption – Phase I: Synthesis Brief, 2024, p. 10.

## VI. | 2  JUDICIAL STATISTICS

Official judicial statistics provide data on various stages of the legal process, including the number of investigations initiated, cases prosecuted, and convictions secured. Such data are generally perceived as more objective than surveys but do not necessarily reflect the full extent of corruption, as enforcement depends on factors such as institutional capacity, political will, and resource allocation.

High prosecution and conviction rates can indicate strong enforcement efforts but may also signal the selective use of anti-corruption laws for political purposes. Furthermore, variations in national legal frameworks and enforcement capacities complicate cross-country comparisons.[13]

## VI. | 3  EXPERT ASSESSMENTS

Many widely used corruption indices rely on expert assessments to evaluate governance quality. Notable examples include Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). These indices aggregate multiple expert evaluations to produce a composite measure of corruption. While expert assessments are generally considered less susceptible to individual bias than public opinion surveys, they remain inherently subjective and can be influenced by the composition of expert panels and ideological biases.

One challenge in expert-based assessments is the lack of standardized evaluation criteria across different countries. Some initiatives attempt to correct for expert bias by applying statistical models that assume coder biases remain stable over time. Similarly, the OECD Public Integrity Indicators use structured questionnaires completed by governments, with responses validated by an OECD team to ensure consistency. However, such assessments often reflect formal institutional frameworks rather than actual implementation, potentially leading to an overestimation of anti-corruption effectiveness.[14]

## VI. | 4  PROXY INDICATORS

A newer approach to corruption measurement involves the use of proxy indicators derived from administrative data. These indicators identify irregular patterns in areas such as public procurement, public appointments, company ownership, or asset declarations. They rely on an underlying theoretical model of corruption to identify indicators that may signal corrupt practices.

Despite the increasing availability of such administrative data due to digitalization and transparency initiatives, its quality varies significantly. Many countries still rely on paper-based procurement systems, and even where digital records exist, data sets are often incomplete and require extensive cleaning before meaningful analysis can be conducted.[15]

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13  Ibid.

14  Ibid., p. 11.

15  Ibid.

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

VII.

# VII. ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Ahead of this working group, a questionnaire to gather insights into how organizations within our network approach situation reporting on corruption was circulated between the participants of the working group. In total, 25 responses were received, which are analysed in more detail in the tables below.

Most organizations reported using **multiple sources** to inform their reports. These sources include data from international bodies such as the European Union, UNODC, Transparency International, and the OECD. In addition, some organizations draw on findings from in-house surveys and research conducted by academic institutions.

The questionnaire responses indicate that key elements — such as motives, trends, affected economic sectors, as well as demographic factors like age, gender, nationality, educational background, and profession — are generally well covered in existing reports. Both public and private sector corruption are frequently addressed.

While definitions of corruption vary slightly across organizations, there is a broad consensus in understanding it as the **abuse of entrusted power for personal benefit or to provide undue advantage to others.**

Particularly insightful were the responses related to **corruption phenomena.** These were grouped into general and specific categories. Some responses referred to overarching concepts such as abuse of power, while others offered more detailed descriptions, including the misuse of information or documents, misappropriation of public funds, and irregularities in public procurement and tendering processes.

Overall, the responses provide valuable insight into current reporting practices and serve as a strong basis for fostering a shared understanding and closer cooperation within the network.

## VII. | 1 ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS IN DETAIL

*Which kind of data do you use for your statistics/analysis?*

| National Data | |
|---|---|
| **Attribute** | **Sum** |
| Q01 Official police data | 15 |
| Q02 Official judicial data | 13 |
| Q03 Other authorities (offici institutions e.g. national intelligence services statistics) | 17 |
| Q04 International Organisations and NGOs (please select if applicable) | 8 |
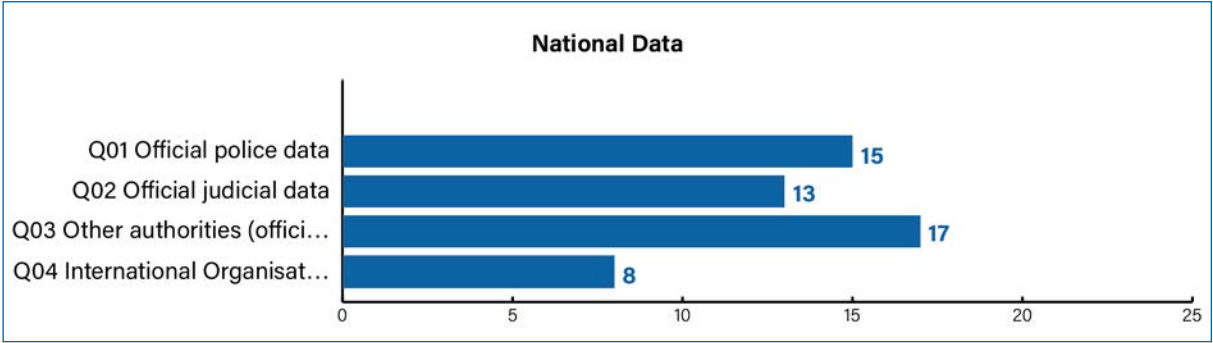


*The graphics will be adapted in the final publication; "Sum" refers to number of responses from total of 25*

The most used source is data from other authorities (17 responses), followed by official police data (15), judicial data (13), and international organisations/NGOs (8). This indicates a diverse use of data sources, with a strong reliance on national institutional data and some complementary input from international or non-governmental organizations.

| International Organisations and NGOs | |
|---|---|
| **Attribute** | **Sum** |
| Q04a EU-Reports | 7 |
| Q04b UNODC Inidcators | 3 |
| Q04c Transparency International | 7 |
| Q04d OECD | 6 |
| Q04e Others | 4 |
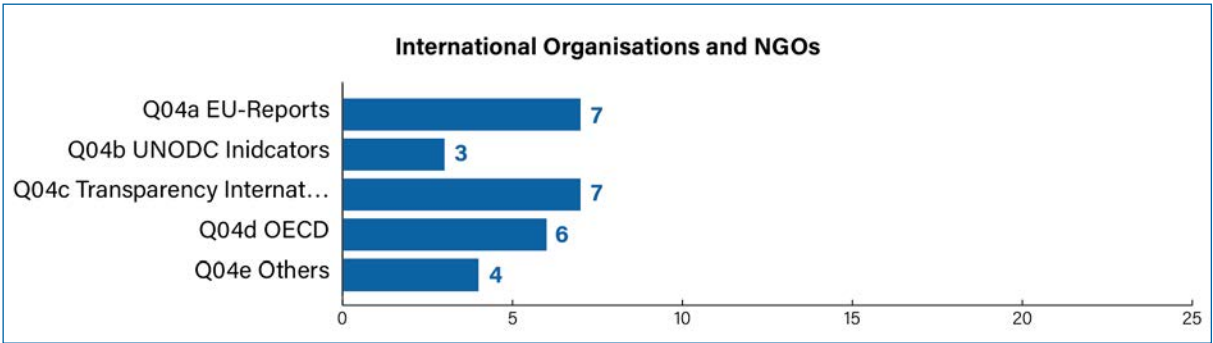


The results show that while national authorities remain the primary source of data for most organizations, international and NGO sources also play a significant complementary role. The most frequently referenced international sources are EU Reports and Transparency International, each cited by 7 respondents, followed by the OECD with 6 mentions.

*Do you implement survey data (e.g. from public surveys, surveys in private companies or companies owned by state, public services)?*

The responses to this question provided insight into how survey data is incorporated into statistical and analytical work. To preserve the anonymity of participants, only a summarized overview of the findings is presented.

A total of 12 organizations reported using survey or opinion poll data in their analyses. The data sources vary: some organizations conduct their own surveys, targeting public employees or representative samples of the general population. Others rely on data collected by external research institutes or polling organizations. In some cases, in-house surveys are conducted exclusively within law enforcement agencies, focusing on internal perspectives and experiences.

This diversity in approach highlights the value of survey data as a complementary tool for understanding perceptions, behaviours, and trends related to corruption.

*Apart from recording criminal offenses, what insights can be gained from your data?*

| Apart from recording criminal offenses, what insights can be gained from your data? | |
|---|---|
| **Attribute** | **Sum** |
| Q06a Motives for corruption | 15 |
| Q06b Trends | 21 |
| Q06c Economic sectors | 13 |
| Q07 Hotspots on demographic issues | 8 |



Apart from recording criminal offenses, what insights can be gained from your data?
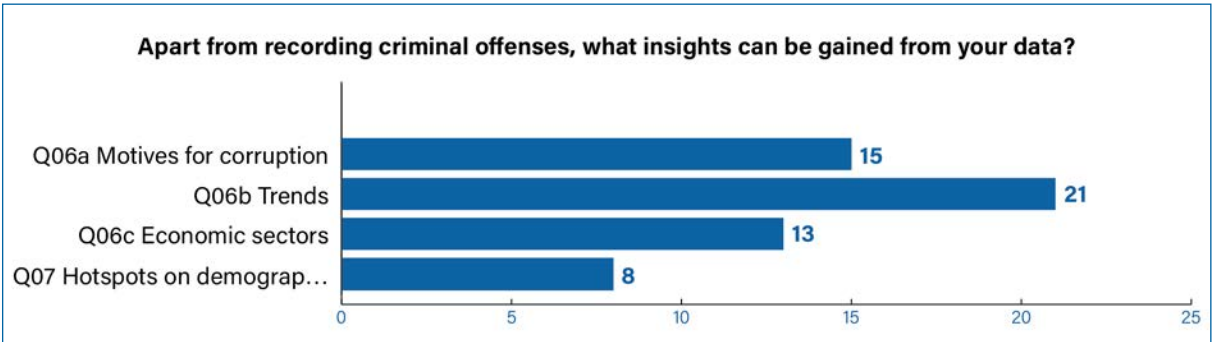
| Hotspots on demographic issues | |
|---|---|
| **Attribute** | **Sum** |
| Q07c Profession | 9 |
| Q07d Eductional Background | 6 |
| Q07c Nationality | 4 |
| Q07b Gender | 8 |
| Q07a Age | 9 |



Hotspots on demographic issues
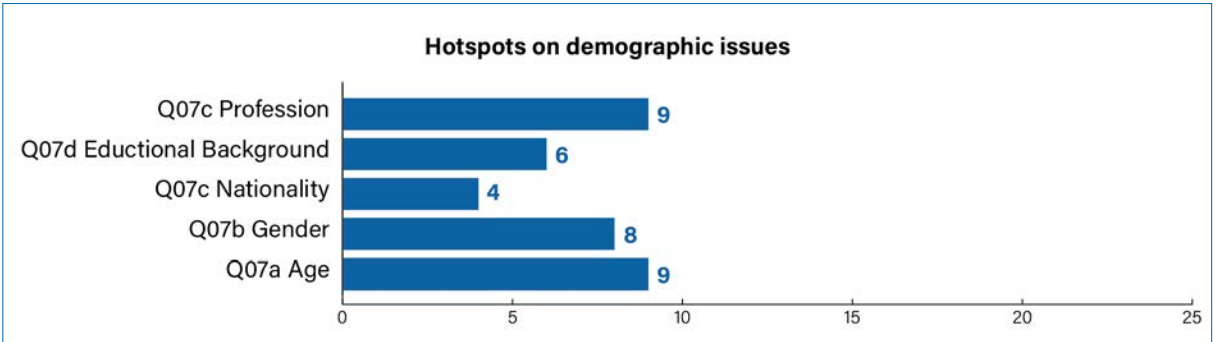
The survey results reveal that participants focus primarily on understanding trends (21 mentions) and the motives for corruption (15 mentions) when analysing corruption-related data, followed by economic sectors (13 mentions) and demographic hotspots (8 mentions). When examining demographic issues, the most frequently cited factors include profession (9 mentions), gender and age (both 8 mentions), with educational background (6 mentions) and nationality (4 mentions) receiving fewer responses. This suggests that organizations place a significant emphasis on identifying broader trends and motivations behind corruption, with some attention given to specific demographic characteristics.

*Do you have a definition for "corruption phenomena"? – If yes, please elaborate:*

The concept of "corruption phenomena" is generally understood as the misuse of public or private power for personal gain, encompassing actions such as bribery, abuse of office, and the misappropriation of resources. Legal definitions may vary, but they commonly focus on the illicit acquisition of material benefits through the abuse of power. Corruption is viewed as both an ethical and institutional issue, undermining governance and social trust.

Different perspectives highlight key aspects:
▪ Some organizations focus on corruption within public office, where officials use their position for unlawful benefits.
▪ Others extend the definition to include misconduct within the private sector, such as bribery in business or fraudulent tendering practices.
▪ Several definitions align with national criminal codes and international conventions, addressing both active and passive corruption.

While some organizations offer precise definitions, others recognize corruption as a broader pattern of dishonest behaviour. This includes abuse of authority, financial fraud, nepotism, and unethical decision-making.

The following key points were highlighted by the responses to the questionnaire, reflecting various understandings and perspectives on corruption:

- Corruption is the misuse of power for personal or financial gain, often through bribery and abuse of public services.
- Legal definitions vary, but most recognize corruption as an institutional issue that weakens governance and trust.
- Corruption extends beyond public administration, affecting businesses and organizations through unethical behaviour.

*If you would have to classify corruption phenomena, which of the following options would be applicable (multiple answers possible):*

| Classification of Corruption by Sectors | |
|---|---|
| **Attribute** | **Sum** |
| Q08c Cross sectoral (links between public and private sector) | 20 |
| Q08b Private Sector | 12 |
| Q08a Public Sector | 21 |



Classification of Corruption by Sectors
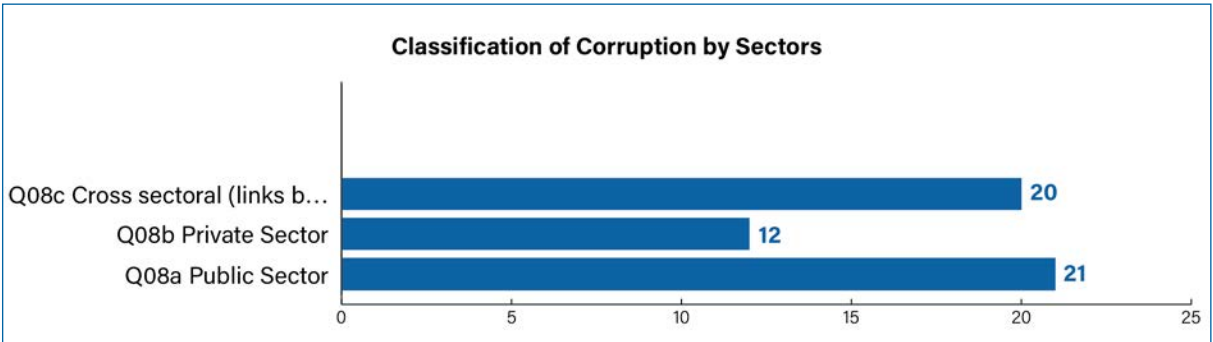
The survey results show that corruption is most classified as cross-sectoral, with 20 mentions, indicating a strong recognition of corruption involving both the public and private sectors. The public sector was identified as another significant area, receiving 21 mentions, reflecting the prevalence of corruption within government institutions. The private sector, while also acknowledged, received fewer responses, with 12 mentions, suggesting that while corruption is recognized in businesses and private organizations, it is seen as less prominent compared to the public sector and cross-sectoral corruption.

*Please name the five most important corruption phenomena in your country, based on the data you use, and the definition provided above*

The five most important corruption phenomena identified, based on the data and definition provided, include the abuse of power, corruption by public officials (including law enforcement and the judiciary), the exchange of valuables for personal gain, corruption in public procurement and tendering, and the misuse of public funds (including EU funds). These broad categories are followed by abuses involving information and documents, which are also considered significant.

From a sectoral perspective, corruption within police forces stands out as the most prevalent, with public healthcare corruption following closely behind. However, it is important to note that the significance of these findings is somewhat limited, as only 29 relevant cases were available for categorization.

| Category | Sum |
|---|---|
| Abuse of power | 21 |
| Corruption by public officials incl. LEAs, justice | 20 |
| Giving and receiving valuables/Personal benefits | 13 |
| Public aprocurement and public tendering | 9 |
| Misuse of public funds (incl. EU Funds) | 8 |
| Abuse of Information and Documents | 7 |
| Money Laundering | 5 |
| Corruption in politics | 1 |
| Corruption in sports | 1 |
| Corruption in economy | 1 |
| violation of integrity rules | 1 |
| Corruption by state owned institutions | 1 |
| Corruption in private Sector | 1 |
| Manipulation of elections | 1 |
| Illegal allocation of positions | 1 |

| Sector | Sum |
|---|---|
| Police | 13 |
| Public health care | 4 |
| Public/private | 4 |
| Politics | 3 |
| Justice | 3 |
| Military | 1 |
| Customs | 1 |

VIII.

## VIII. BEST PRACTICES EXAMPLES

Creating effective situation reports requires adherence to best practices to ensure accuracy, relevance, and impact.

By analysing approaches from various jurisdictions, valuable lessons can be drawn on data collection methods, reporting structures, visualization techniques, and inter-agency collaboration. In the following, best practices from various participants of the working group present their approaches on different aspects for the creation of situation reports.

### VIII. | 1 SPECIAL INVESTIGATION SERVICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA: A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH IN ANTI-CORRUPTION

The Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania (STT) is country's leading anti-corruption authority, mandated with the detection, investigation, and prevention of corruption-related offences. It operates independently and is accountable to both the President and the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania. STT's activities are grounded in transparency and evidence, with regular reporting to national institutions and the public to support systemic improvements and enhance institutional integrity.

As highlighted in various international evaluations, the STT exemplifies good practice in embedding analytical insights into anti-corruption policy and practice. Its strategic reporting functions are grounded in a robust data ecosystem that supports proactive, data-driven detection of corruption risks and enhances systemic resilience.

**Key components of the STT's data-driven approach in anti-corruption:**

- **Integration of investigative and crime statistics data.** The STT harnesses internal data from criminal intelligence and pre-trial investigations – including offence typologies, offender profiles, sectoral patterns, and the status and outcomes of court proceedings in corruption-related cases investigated by the STT – enriched by national and international crime statistics. These datasets inform trend analyses that contribute to guiding policy and investigative priorities and strategies.

- **Big Data and Risk Analytics.** Through analytical anti-corruption intelligence and access to extensive data repositories, the STT applies sector-specific data mining (both automated and manual / analyst-driven) and advanced analytical tools to proactively identify and assess corruption risks. This data-driven approach enables the detection of systemic sectoral vulnerabilities (e.g., in healthcare, public procurement, infrastructure, the environment, and other high-risk areas) before they escalate into criminal conduct or financial harm. Big data analytics support both preventive measures and targeted enforcement efforts.

- **Legal proofing and institutional risk assessment.** The STT undertakes systematic anti-corruption assessments of both draft and existing legislation, applying legal proofing tools to enhance transparency, accountability, and integrity within legal frameworks. In parallel, corruption risk analyses are conducted on public sector processes and regulatory practices to identify procedural vulnerabilities. These reviews support the improvement of legal norms and institutional safeguards, often leading to concrete legislative amendments and more resilient governance systems.

- **Diagnostic research.** The STT enhances understanding of the corruption landscape in Lithuania through a mix of commissioned research, in-house methodological development, and analysis of external studies. It leads major national diagnostic efforts—most notably the annual "Lithuanian Map of Corruption", a flagship population-based survey conducted for over two decades. This survey tracks long-term trends in perceived corruption, personal experiences of corruption, and anti-corruption potential among citizens, civil servants, and business representatives. In parallel, the STT designs its own tools and indicators to measure corruption, and systematically reviews findings on the subject matter from international and domestic expert assessments. These combined research activities generate critical evidence to track changes in the corruption landscape, evaluate anti-corruption policies, guide preventive action, and inform public engagement strategies.

## VIII. | 2 ROMANIAN MINISTRY OF JUSTICE: STRATEGIC EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES TO CORRUPTION PREVENTION - INSIGHTS FROM ROMANIAN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

As part of its sustained efforts to enhance anti-corruption public policy, the Ministry of Justice has adopted a strategic direction anchored in systematic empirical research, aimed at unveiling the underlying causes and subtle mechanisms that shape corruption-related behaviour—beyond surface-level narratives or general perceptions. Accordingly, in 2015 and 2020, two applied research projects were conducted, placing at the core of analysis the lived experiences of individuals convicted of corruption-related offenses.

What distinguishes these initiatives is their interdisciplinary methodology and integrated perspective on the phenomenon, combining quantitative and qualitative tools to capture the complexity of the issue. The research targeted individuals serving custodial sentences as well as those under probation supervision. Developed in close collaboration with institutions within the penitentiary and probation systems, the methodology included standardized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted both in detention facilities and probation offices.

The objective extended far beyond data collection, aiming to develop a deeper understanding of the motivations, justifications, and organizational environments in which corrupt acts were committed.

The theoretical framework was informed by Per-Olof H. Wikström's situational action theory, which emphasizes the dynamic interplay between individual motivations (such as needs, aspirations, or temptations), the internalized moral filter (values and norms), and personal self-control, all of which are shaped and expressed within contexts that can either enable or deter deviant behaviour. Within this conceptual model, the research explored both the micro (individual) and meso (organizational) levels, examining how institutional culture may function either as a risk factor or as a protective barrier against corruption.

The findings revealed a nuanced profile of convicted individuals—typically occupying leadership positions, with higher education and above-average income levels. Contrary to popular belief, these individuals were not economically marginalized but rather exposed to and influenced by systemic dysfunctions, organizational pressures, and rationalization mechanisms that facilitated the normalization of deviant conduct. In many instances, corruption was not perceived as a profoundly unethical act, but rather as a tolerated or even legitimized deviation within permissive institutional cultures.

Moreover, the research identified systemic vulnerabilities such as the absence of effective internal controls, tacit tolerance of unethical behaviour, and a prevailing perception of inequitable enforcement of sanctions. From the perspective of the interviewees, responsibility for corrupt actions was often externalized—assigned to structural constraints, institutional dynamics, or broader systemic failures.

Methodologically, the project employed a tripartite research design: qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, and a sociological component focused on the perceptions of personnel in the central public administration. All instruments were carefully calibrated to ensure methodological rigor, consistency, and ethical standards adapted to the sensitive contexts of penitentiary and probation environments.

The criminological survey explored personal values, perceptions regarding the causes of corruption, attitudes toward legality, and relevant professional experiences, while the interviews facilitated a more nuanced exploration of the moral and cognitive universe of the respondents. Topics included career paths, motivations for engaging in corruption, moral justifications, perceptions of risk and punishment, and the personal and professional impact of conviction.

A significant contribution was brought by the qualitative component, which revealed complex rationalization strategies such as "everyone does it," "the system is to blame," or "I had no choice." These discourses reflect a form of moral neutralization that hinders accountability and highlights the perception of individuals as victims of institutional circumstances rather than autonomous agents of illicit behaviour.

The respondents' perspectives on the justice system ranged from perceptions of fairness to concerns regarding impartiality and proportionality of sanctions. These diverging views portray a multifaceted reality where institutional trust, organizational norms, and personal values interact in shaping individual conduct.

The study's conclusions underscore the need for an integrated, evidence-based approach to corruption prevention, adapted to Romania's institutional specificities. Key strategic directions include reforming integrity mechanisms at the institutional level, promoting legal and moral education, enhancing decision-making transparency, strengthening internal controls, and developing empirically grounded public policy.

Respondents also identified several priority measures: clarifying anti-corruption legislation (78%), encouraging reporting by the business sector and civil society (65%), fostering civic education (76%), digitalizing public services (63%), and implementing workplace-based integrity training (53%). These proposals have been reflected in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, through specific actions such as Measure 5.2.1 (review and update of relevant legislation) and Measure 5.2.6 (development of a digital awareness and prevention platform), addressing the need for normative clarity and institutional accessibility. These findings directly support Strategic Objective No. 2 of the Strategy—'Reducing the impact of corruption on citizens by enhancing anti-corruption education and ensuring effective protection

for whistle-blowers'—thereby reinforcing the functional link between field research and public policy development.

The sociological dimension of the study highlights a tension between declared values and institutional realities: while integrity is nominally upheld, it is often undermined by ambiguous practices, insufficient accountability, and normalized tolerance for ethical breaches. The prevailing belief that systemic factors—not individuals—bear primary responsibility, coupled with widespread justification of misconduct as circumstantial or unavoidable, reflects a pattern of cognitive disengagement that undermines genuine prevention efforts.

Against this backdrop, the study calls for a holistic and coherent response that integrates legislative reforms, ethics-centered education, professionalization of institutional management, and enhanced transparency—underpinned by a robust, continuously updated empirical foundation.

Five years after the 2020 study, an evaluation of corruption trends offers critical insight into the effectiveness of institutional responses. According to reports by the National Anticorruption Directorate, there has been a 13.11% decrease in the number of individuals definitively convicted in corruption cases between 2020 and 2024. This trend may be interpreted, at least in part, as a reflection of the strategic reforms implemented through the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, which emphasized both enhanced judicial responsiveness and systemic preventive measures.

The 2020–2024 period was marked by a series of systemic challenges—including the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic disruptions, as well as geopolitical instability. Despite this complex environment, statistical data suggest a downward trajectory in corruption-related convictions, which may serve as an indicator of institutional resilience and the relative effectiveness of adopted measures.

In light of these developments, the Ministry of Justice is considering the launch of a new empirical research initiative covering the entire 2020–2024 period, encompassing both the pandemic and post-crisis contexts. This study will seek to identify behavioural typologies emerging under extended conditions of vulnerability and provide substantive input for updating Romania's strategic anti-corruption framework, with a focus on strengthening administrative capacity, decision-making transparency, and institutional accountability.

This comprehensive initiative reflects the Ministry's long-term commitment to evidence-informed governance and the professionalization of anti-corruption efforts. More than a research undertaking, it constitutes a strategic endeavor aimed at understanding and transforming institutional realities, where corruption is not merely a legal infraction but the symptom of deeper structural imbalances—imbalances that can be effectively addressed through well-designed, empirically validated, and context-sensitive interventions.

The Anti-Fraud Office of Catalonia is an independent regional institution which mission is to foster transparency and integrity and to prevent and investigate possible cases of irregularities, fraud and corruption of public sector administrations and public sector employees in Catalonia. The Office was created by Law 14/2008, of 5 November, started to operate in the last quarter of 2009, and became fully operational in 2010.

The main goal of the Anti-Fraud Office is ensuring that the action of public authorities and their representatives is coherent with the values of integrity, honesty, transparency, legality, neutrality, impartiality and objectivity.

In carrying out its activity for that purpose, the Office has been collecting data over the years. Two categories of data have been collected regularly and systematically:

- Data about the perception of corruption in Catalonia, collected through the biennial barometer Corruption in Catalonia: citizens' perceptions and attitudes[16].
- Data about the complaints and the investigation activity carried out by the Office since 2010[17].

The barometer Corruption in Catalonia: citizens' perceptions and attitudes, issued biennially —8 editions (2010 – 2024) have been published so far— is one of the oldest and longest lasting in Spain. In fact, it is a survey among a sample of citizens of Catalonia —in contrast to others, which also include experts or other subjects and entities— with a very stable structure —the questions have been almost the same since 2010, with only minor modifications— and only a significant modification in its methodology —from telephone to online survey— in 2022. Its implementation has been subcontracted by the Office to the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, which is the reference public entity of Catalonia for public opinion studies. The analytical approach is therefore a sociological one.

The main objectives of the barometer are the following:

- First, to gather data on the corruption phenomenon in Catalonia, clustered by gender, age, educational level and political ideology, which allow a time analysis —focusing on the evolution of perceptions and main findings through time (2010-2020 / 2022-2024)— and on which to build a data-driven and evidence-based approach in defining more effective anti-corruption policies and strategies. By way of example, this lead to give a special attention to the following areas: access to public information; prevention activity focused on youths and education; analysis of whistleblowing discouraging factors, etc.
- The barometer has also proven to be a useful tool in raising social awareness about corruption — social attitudes; acceptance levels, etc. — and fostering the Institution's visibility.

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16  The barometer has been issued biennially since 2010. All the relevant documents and most of the raw data are available at the Office's website: https://antifrau.cat/en/barometer.html.

17  These data are available at the Office's website: https://antifrau.cat/en/investigation-activity/complaints.html. There are two tabs in this page: one to access the data about complaints filled before the Office and the other one to access the data about closed investigations triggered by the complaints. A brief summary of closed investigations could also be accessed at: https://antifrau.cat/index.php/en/investigation/summary-closed-investigations.html.

The collected data, all of them related to the perception of corruption among citizenship, are the following:

- Data about the concept of corruption —definition, level of acceptance of specific behaviours, etc.—.
- Data about the overall perception of corruption's level in Catalonia.
- Focusing on citizenship, data about the perception of overall integrity level, interpersonal trust and individual possibilities to get involved in the fight against corruption.
- Data about the perceptions regarding politics and political parties.
- Focusing on public administrations, data about the overall perception in this domain, about the different organisational levels and fields of public activity, and about the public personnel (civil servants).
- Data about the perceptions regarding private companies and media.
- Data about transparency and conflicts of interest, as special interests' areas.
- And data about the fight against corruption, including knowledge and visibility of AOC and complain discouraging factors, among other.

The main available outcomes, for each barometer, are the following:

- the results report, in a presentation format
- an executive summary that includes, since 2022, a time analysis —in previous edition this was a separate document
- an infographic
- and a questionnaire, technical sheet and raw data (statistical tables, open data and anonymized microdata).

Regarding complaints and investigation activity data, there has been a significant evolution in the way such data is processed, which main steps are the following:

- In a first stage, the data was stored in many different Excel files.
- The merging of Analysis and Investigation Department of the Office in 2016-2017 lead to the integration of all available data regarding complaints (handled by Analysis Department) and investigations (carried out by Investigation Department) into a single Excel file that allowed for detailed monitoring of the whole procedure initiated by the reception of a complaint or report before the Office.
- In 2022, the Data Analysis Teams developed a Case Management System (CMS), which core is a database based on PostgreSQL. This CMS is part of the internal data platform developed in the broader framework of the Anti-Fraud Office's Data-driven intelligence strategy. Within this platform, the internal data of the CMS are enriched with external data —mainly open data or public data available to the Office—, analytical tools and additional information provided by a red flags system.

The available data about reports and investigation activity —which are, in fact, the metadata of the files opened for each report— are the following:

- Data about the file itself: source of the complaint; identity of the complainant (strictly confidential); complainant typology, gender and political party (if applicable, when the complainant belongs to one of these typologies); entity concerned and typology of entity (administration level and territorial scope); material scope or subject matter of the complaint (categorized trough a limited typology); complaint description or summary; file typology; people in charge (unit, investigator, supervisor; etc.); files accumulation, if applicable, among the most relevant criteria.
- Data about the proceeding: chronology and deadlines; stages of the procedure, among other.
- Proceeding outcomes at different stages —admission; likelihood assessment; investigation.
- Data about short-term follow up.

The visualization of these data, almost in real time —data updating takes few days— is generated with Power BI and based on two different tables: an Excel file with all data prior to 30/04/2023; and a specific table generated with a selection of data from CMS database, which includes data from 01/05/2022 up to this day. For cybersecurity reasons, there is not a direct data extraction by Power BI from CMS database.

Two future developments are envisaged:

- On the short term (2025) a Power BI visualization of barometer's data (2010-2024) is being designed and developed, which will enhance the analytical possibilities allowing a far more flexible and user tailored analysis and a far more visual and intuitive comparative analysis.
- On the long term, the final goal is to reach a global data integration at Office level, allowing a general cross examination of data about corruption perceptions, investigation activity, complainants protection activity, prevention activity, etc. for a better governance purpose.

# IX. RESULTS OF THE WORKING GROUP

## IX. | 1 CONTENT FOCUS OF THE SUBGROUPS

In the course of the on-site meeting of the working group, the individual key topics in the preparation of situation reports were developed in sub-working groups (SWG). The thematic focus and the key questions of the individual SWG relate to different points in the management reporting process.

### SWG 1: Surveys

This subgroup discussed how best to create surveys that can be used for situation reports. The aim is not only to identify possible questions, but also to address the various stakeholders and the statistical processing of the data from the survey.

### SWG 2: Data Collection

This subgroup discussed the various options for data collection and identify which data is essential for creating an ideal situation report. It is also about which tools are used to analyse the collected data.

### SWG 3: Data Interpretation

This subgroup dealt with the interpretation of the data and how it can be prepared in a management report. It is about how the data can be presented and which specific characteristics should be addressed and how these can be presented coherently. This is the next step in the process of creating a situation report after data collection and data acquisition.

### SWG 4: Analysis and Methods

This subgroup dealt with the central analytical questions of a situation report. The aim is to discuss possible analysis methods and to conclude on the best possible approaches for the creation of situation reports. In addition, specific analytical features such as specific patterns and SNA (Social Network Analysis) will be discussed, as well as whether it is possible to draw conclusions about certain trends.

### SWG 5: Output and Outreach

This subgroup dealt with the external appearance of situation reports and how they should be communicated to stakeholders (the public). This is about stakeholder management and creating the greatest possible transparency. In addition, the structuring and form of publication must also be addressed. This is the final step in the process of preparing management reports.

In the following, the results that were developed during the on-site event of the working group will be presented as a guideline. This guideline is intended to outline the various elements and process steps to be considered in the course of preparing a situation report, so that it can serve as an incentive for a standardized approach. This not only ensures transnational transparency but also enhances international comparability and cooperation.

**SWG 1: Surveys**

**1. Formulation of the purpose (aim) of the survey**
- Identification of information needed (what is the main question to be answered. It can be identification of the risks; better understanding of patterns; indicators to measure progress, etc.)
  – Clear understanding of the use
  – Action-oriented
  – Scope
- Cross-checking external information sources of information available
- Potential stakeholder of the information

**2. Identifying target groups**
Target group might be broader section of society versus focused group. For instance:

- Residents / public;
- Business representatives;
- Civil servants (in general);
- Experts from the media, academia, NGO;
- Law-enforcement officers;
- Convicted persons;
- Etc.

➜ The target groups determines / influences research design

**3. Designing the research**
- Quantitative versus qualitative approach (questionnaires (online, face-to-face, telephone, etc.) versus interviews / focus groups discussion / brain-storms and workshops)
- Language & vocabulary aligned with the one of the target groups
- Preference to anonymous surveys and confidentiality ensured in qualitative surveys / focus groups.
- Reflection of general capacity to ensure confidentiality and put efforts to prevent "data leaks", for instance, use interview summaries instead of recordings.
- Build upon existing best practices and methodologies already in use.
- Decision of social, demographic and other "feature" indicators according to the needs of the analysis
- Involving professional researches in the process.
- As concise as possible time-wise.

**4. Reaching the respondents**
- Consideration of users terms of reference / explanatory notes
- Different ways to reach according to the target group: online, in-person, telephone, etc.

**5. Things to consider**
- Budget & Resources
- Utilisation of AI tools to consult in the process
- Quantitative surveys usually are built in a way to be repeated in order to follow trends and evaluate the progress

**SWG 2 – Data Collection**

**1. The following process steps were identified by Group 2 in the data collection exercise**
- Data Identification
- Identify what data you want to collect.
- Make a plan to ensure all available data is accessed for collection.
- Identify all relevant stakeholders who may hold subject data.
- Make appropriate contacts with stakeholders to request their data and work collaboratively to achieve required results.

**2. Source all available organizational internal data from**
- Investigations
- Complaints
- Intelligence material
- Prosecutor's decisions

**3. Source relevant external data**
- Open source searches
- Media publications on corruption cases
- Social Media Networks
- NGO's e.g. Transparency International
- GRECO Evaluation Reports (if applicable)
- Whistle-blowers

**4. Surveys and Interviews**
- Consider the use of either or both to augment your data collection process
- Factor in the resource implications (financial and personnel)
- Ensure terms of reference are established before commencement of a survey or an interview process
- Decide on the data required, a thematic approach in areas of high risk or maximum impact corruption categories

5. **Data Collation and Storage**
- Collate all data in a usable format (standardized approach)
- Ensure there is no duplication involved
- Storage of Data on Excel, file share or relevant organizational database

6. **Evaluation**
- This is a particularly important process with regard to external data sources & Intelligence material
- Consider use of 4x4 or 6x6 grading if necessary
- Identify any outliers or anomalies in the data collected

➔ Present all collected data to next stage for interpretation & analysis with any explanations that may be required.

## SWG 3: Data Interpretation

1. **Define the Framework**
- What are the resources, what is the time you have for establishing the report?
- Clarify the purpose of the situation report and Identify the target audience (e.g., policymakers, law enforcement, general public).
- Formulate the key questions the report needs to answer.
- Consider how the report will be delivered (text, presentation, multimedia) - this will influence how data should be selected and presented.

2. **Collect and Receive Data**
- *Begin with internal data* – usually more structured and reliable.
- Identify and request relevant external data, especially from judicial or investigative sources with known outcomes (e.g., judgments).
- Collaborate with stakeholders and partners to access complementary external data.
- Receive both internal and, if applicable, external data from verified sources.

3. **Assess and Filter Data**
- Evaluate the reliability and usability of all incoming data, especially unstructured external sources.
- *Decide which data can be published and which must remain confidential or internal, considering legal and reputational implications.*
- Plan for progressive disclosure, allowing more sensitive data to be released when appropriate.

4. **Structure and Prepare the Data for Analysis**
- *Format and organize the data to enable clear analysis* (e.g., tables, charts, categorized cases).
- Adapt the data structure according to the intended presentation format - for example, narrative, infographic, or video.
- *Define the scope of analysis*, including relevant sectors, groups, and the type or level of offenses.
- Establish clear definitions of corruption to ensure consistent interpretation.

5. **Interpret and Contextualize the Data**
- *Identify and list corruption phenomena emerging from the data* (e.g., recurring schemes, systemic issues).
- Highlight sector-specific issues (especially in the public sector) and explain the risks or losses involved.
- *Prepare contextual explanatory texts to accompany all data points and graphics - avoid presenting raw data without explanation.*
- *Tailor insights to show positive developments, such as increased reports due to improved detection or legal reforms.*
- Find the right person to be the spokesperson beforehand - this should be a person that was involved somehow in the process and that is used to communication.

## SWG 4: Analysis and Methods

1. **Data sources**
When creating a Situational Report, different types of data and its formats is used: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Considering personal data, it should be used only for detecting the patterns, but not personal data for the report per se. As to the classified information it could be used for analysing risky patterns, however, taking into account the possible risk to jeopardize the ongoing investigation.

2. **Data methods**
- Quantitative (surveys and questionnaires, statistical analysis, big data analysis, social network analysis, GIS mapping, etc.),
- Qualitative (qualitative interviews, focus groups, document analysis, case studies, etc.),
- Mixed methods (as well as SWOT, PEST, PEA[18], risk assessment matrices, etc.)
- Can be used when designing a report due to the multidimensional nature of corruption bringing on board interdisciplinary teams.

3. **Data analysis tools**
- For quantitative data: Excel, SPSS, Stata, Tableau, Power BI, IBM Cognos Analytics, ArgGis Pro, Qlick, Gephi, Pajek, etc.
- For qualitative data: MaxQDA, AtlasTi, NVivo, Maltego, etc.
- For data organizing and analysis of big data sets: Python, R, etc.
- Analytical platforms and AI driven tools: Palantir, IBM Watson, Europol Tool Repository, etc.

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18  *SWOT – strength, weakness, opportunity, threat; PEST – political, economic, social, technical; PEA preliminary economic assessment -*

4. **Possible structure of the SITREP**
- Summary of the current situation
- General trends
- Analysis of high-risk sectors
- Action taken or underway
- Challenges and emerging trends
- Next steps and recommendations
- Presenting trends in SITREP: Visual tools are important, creating a narrative and storytelling for the trends.

5. **Recommended Literature**

"Sector-based Action on Corruption – A Guide for Organizations and Professionals" by Mark Pyman and Paul M. Heywood

6. **Last but not least…**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly being used in various organizations to support data analysis and SITREP creation. AI-powered tools can help automate tasks, identify patterns, and provide insights, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of SITREPs. As the use of AI continues to grow, it will be exciting to see how it can be leveraged to improve data analysis and decision-making in the fight against corruption.

## SWG 5: Output and Outreach

The following process steps were identified by Group 5 in respect to output and outreach of situation reports:

1. **Output**

- Make sure to make the report as comprehensible as possible:
  - Use simple language (avoidance of technical wordings; usage only where necessary)
  - Information must avoid names of entities and persons, but should include profiles and type of institutions
  - Transparency
  - Visualization (more graphics than descriptive text)

➔ These elements can be adopted for the respective stakeholders and should be tailored appropriately

- **Implement special contents for external as well as internal appearance:**
  - Case Studies/Success Stories (contextualizes systemic patterns and trends) → There needs to be a certain sensitivity when issuing high profile corruption cases
  - Provide information for academic purposes and NGO's (important for prevention and research) → Optional: Creation of a Corruption Map
  - Regional contents (visualization to show regional differences) → depends on the structure of the country of origin (federal state, regional administrative zones, etc.)
  - Trend analysis (should be brief and at least for the last 5 years)

- **Formulate Recommendations**
  - Should be tailored to the specific stakeholder and grounded in the findings
  - Formulated in a way that facilitates monitoring and evaluation
  - Avoid using terms like recommendations in the report, instead use phrases like 'Measure to be taken' to avoid reluctance from the respective authorities
  - Recommendations can also be about specific sectors/activities (everywhere where a gap can be identified)

- **Prepare an executive summary of the report**
  - Presentation of the key information of the report → reduces barriers to read the whole report
  - Can be tailored to the respective stakeholders

2. **Outreach**

- **Define key stakeholders/target group**
- **Choose platforms and ways to communicate**
  - Video Format → By presenting the report or at least parts of it in video format, it becomes more accessible to younger generations and maximizes the outreach; additionally the video can be used for posts
  - Social Media Posts
  - Newsletter (Informs on an international level and raises attention nationally)
  - Landing Page (*optional* with real-time data updated every 1-3 months, depending on the capacity of the organization) → Should present the key data and make the report accessible to the public by also implementing search functions

- **Analyse the respective information and create a communication plan**
  - Publish at least once a year
  - Should be published multilingual (at least the native language and English) → Enhances comparability and knowledge exchange
  - The report should be downloadable on various platforms (e.g. Landing Page, Social Media)
  - Should be published in various formats (in any case in PDF format)

- **Exclusion of special contents to raise awareness for specific topics; Usage of special contents for the creation of specific posts**

- **Realization of the communication strategy**

- **Evaluation, Monitoring and Feedback**
  - Social Media comments and indicators (Social Media Monitoring)
  - General Media Monitoring (use of special platforms/specialists)
  - NGO's and International Organizations

- **Optional:** Present the report to the public with the recommendations/comments of NGO's or other organizations (creates a higher level of transparency)

# X.  CONCLUSION

The work undertaken by this group is a significant step forward in establishing essential guidelines for the structured preparation of situational reports. Hopefully, this report will provide anti-corruption agencies with a useful and practical set of tools with which to monitor and prevent corrupt activities.

By setting common standards, the way is paved for increased transparency and more effective policy responses. The outcomes of this initiative will not only benefit individual agencies and contribute to a broader, coordinated effort to combat corruption on a larger scale.

As the working group concludes this phase of the working process, all participants look ahead, knowing that these findings and methodologies will continue to shape the field of anti-corruption efforts. We encourage stakeholders to implement these insights and to remain engaged in the ongoing pursuit of integrity and justice.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to everyone who participated in, supported and contributed to this publication, especially our guest lecturers from the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and the Military Representation in Brussels.

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May this publication serve as a foundation for continued progress in our shared mission to eradicate corruption and uphold ethical governance.

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# XI.

## XI. SOURCES

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# XII. ANNEX

## Anti-Corruption survey sources

**Data Sources for Anti-Corruption Surveys**

Key ongoing survey initiatives in Europe that provide valuable data on corruption:

- Special Eurobarometer 548 (Survey 3217, 2024): Survey of EU citizens to assess their attitudes towards corruption in the EU; new results published annually. – Source: European Commission (Eurobarometer) – https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3217
- Special Eurobarometer 534 (Survey 3180, 2024): Survey of businesses in EU Member States to assess their experiences of and perceptions about corruption in their operating environment; new results published annually. – Source: European Commission – https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3180
- Special Eurobarometer on the Rule of Law (Survey 3224, July 2024): Survey of EU citizens to evaluate the perceived importance of the rule of law and core EU values in Member States; new results published annually. – Source: Directorate-General for Communication, European Commission – https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3224
- European Quality of Government Index (EQI): Composite index based on surveys of EU citizens assessing quality of governance and corruption at the regional level within European countries, including questions on petty corruption; new results published periodically. – Source: University of Gothenburg, Quality of Government Institute – https://www.gu.se/en/quality-government/qog-data/data-downloads/european-quality-of-government-index
- World Justice Project – Eurovoices Survey: Survey of individuals in selected European countries to capture experiences and perceptions of rule of law, corruption, and accountability; results updated periodically. – Source: World Justice Project – https://eurovoices.worldjusticeproject.org/

**Recommended methodological resources for the design and implementation of anti-corruption surveys:**

- UNODC Manuals on Corruption Surveys: Guidance materials for designing and implementing population-based and business-based corruption surveys, including methodology, questionnaires, and analysis techniques. – Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/corruption-manuals.html
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