

Interim findings

Civil society against corruption in Ukraine

The research project ‘Civil society against corruption in Ukraine: political rules, advocacy strategies and impact’ explores the success and failure of anti-corruption activism in Ukraine. Civic activism has continued since the Maidan Revolution in 2014 and is perceived as crucial for fighting corruption. This study examines the spectrum of anti-corruption activism, including professional and informal types of activism, nationwide and local activism, and activism by small and large organizations. This is achieved through case studies from geographically-diverse regions in Ukraine with a significant degree of anti-corruption activism. The following are the interim findings and policy messages from the project.

Interim findings

- The majority of anti-corruption CSOs in Ukraine outside Kyiv have a similar organizational form: they are formally-registered NGOs, established in the past five years, with a staff and active volunteer base of fewer than ten persons.
- Ukrainian anti-corruption CSOs also share a generally antagonistic relationship towards local and regional authorities. They usually fulfill a representational role in that they monitor the government and businesses and defend the public good, despite generally lacking a mandate and popular base. In a small subset of regions of Ukraine where the authorities have greater political will to counteract corruption, CSOs can additionally fulfill a cooperative role by working with authorities.
- Ukrainian anti-corruption CSOs are diverse in their strategies and approaches. Many are engaged in monitoring and different forms of awareness-raising, while other CSOs attempt more assertive strategies such as direct action (including demonstrations and physical confrontation) and fighting court battles. They are roughly equally divided between those that do receive foreign funding and those that do not.
- Few anti-corruption CSOs outside Kyiv are clearly effective. CSOs receiving foreign funding tend to be weakly rooted in society (popular support problem), limiting their effectiveness, while those CSOs with stronger grass-roots support tend to lack the capacity to obtain funding (capacity problem), equally limiting their effectiveness. The activities of anti-corruption CSOs receiving foreign funding also often suffers from a lack of sustainability: without grass-roots support, their activities are often terminated as soon as they stop receiving foreign funding.
- The small number of Ukrainian anti-corruption CSOs that are comparatively effective are generally those that have either solved the capacity problem by obtaining substantial or longer-term foreign funding and solved the popular support problem by relying on real grass-roots support.

Policy messages

- International donors should invest in becoming familiar with local and regional (political) contexts and base funding decisions on their knowledge of those contexts: for instance, where there is visible political will among certain regional authorities to fight corruption, donors should support CSOs aiming to fulfill a cooperative role. Where political will is missing, support should focus on the representational and possibly educational role of anti-corruption CSOs.
- Given the negative impact of limited financial resources on the effectiveness of anti-corruption CSOs, donors should consider prioritizing substantial, multi-year grants (including institutional grants) over smaller and short-term grants.

- In addition to a shortage of financial resources, the most common reason observed for the ineffectiveness of anti-corruption CSO in Ukraine is a lack of human resources, skills, and knowledge. Donors can contribute to mitigating these shortcomings by stimulating effective coalition-building among anti-corruption CSOs and through the creation of relationships between regional anti-corruption CSOs and their higher-capacity counterparts from Kyiv.

Knowledge products

- INCLUDE. (2018) Anti-corruption activism in Ukraine: a prisoner's dilemma. INCLUDE Opinion, 10 September 2019. <http://includeplatform.net/anti-corruption-activism-ukraine-prisoners-dilemma/>
- Raam Op Rusland. (2018). In Oekraïne worden ook successen geboekt in strijd tegen corruptie. *Raam Op Rusland*, 26 November 2018. <https://www.raamoprusland.nl/dossiers/oekraïne/1144-in-oekraïne-worden-ook-successen-geboekt-in-strijd-tegen-corruptie>

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Web link

<http://includeplatform.net/new-roles-csos-inclusive-development/civil-society-corruption-ukraine/>