

Transparency International EU

The global coalition against corruption

EU institutions fail to agree on strong Anti-Corruption Directive

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Tuesday, December 9th, 2025

On Tuesday, EU Parliament and Council negotiators reached a provisional agreement on the EU's first-ever Directive to harmonise criminal laws to fight corruption. It is intended to strengthen efforts to prevent, prosecute and punish offences across the bloc.

The EU had the chance to set a strong standard and show that corruption, in all its forms, would no longer be tolerated. Instead, we see a compromise that leaves too many gaps unaddressed.

The Directive had been years in the making and should have been a breakthrough in anti-corruption legislation. But this outcome shows how far some governments are still willing to go to dilute ambition. What's left is a framework lacking the backbone to deliver real accountability – it fails to address grand corruption, empower victims, and leaves corporate accountability full of escape hatches. It avoids setting clear, mandatory rules on the funding of political parties, electoral campaigns, and lobbying.

Ultimately, there is nothing included that changes the calculation of risk for any corrupt public official, businessperson or company. It merely reinforces a status quo that has failed to address high-level corruption across the EU. Those involved have failed to understand the very real concerns of citizens, and this can only damage their belief in the very institutions meant to protect them.

To truly close the loopholes that enable corruption, EU member states must now view the Directive as a springboard and go beyond its minimum standards, not treat it as a ceiling. Citizens across the EU want action against corruption, not ambiguity.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, December 9th, 2025 at 5:12 pm