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## How to make the European Semester a better tool for fighting corruption?

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After the scrapping of the EU Anti-Corruption Report this year, the European Semester, the EU's annual process of macroeconomic surveillance of member states, was supposed to step in as its replacement and therefore the main vehicle for achieving EU anti-corruption reforms. The preparation for next year's European Semester have already begun. EU member states are first submitting their draft budgetary plans to the Commission last week. Next month, the Commission will publish its Annual Growth Survey, which starts the economic governance process for 2018. Now is the time for the EU to ensure that the European Semester can serve as an effective tool in the fight against corruption in the future.

In its current form, the European Semester is an inadequate substitute for the Anti-Corruption Report because the analysis underlying the recommendations given to the Member States is not transparent enough and the recommendations themselves tend to be arbitrary. The process also fails to acknowledge that corruption is a problem in all EU Member States. Moreover, as we argued [before](#), the Commission has made the valuable first step of recognising that corruption is crucial for economic growth, but the second step has to be ensuring that the recommendations are actually implemented. Despite the numerous recommendations year on year, nothing is being done, especially in the area of tackling corruption.

This policy position outlines recommendations on how the European Semester process can deliver better anti-corruption results through two sets of factors:

### Risk assessment

The scrapping of the Anti-Corruption Report means that there is currently no comprehensive baseline risk assessment which would serve as a credible basis for country-specific recommendations. Consequently, it is often not clear why corruption is mentioned as a problem only in certain country reports, and why only a handful of these countries go on to receive specific corruption-related recommendations.

To address this, assessments of key corruption risks in Member States should be conducted every 2-3 years. Baseline anti-corruption indicators should be established in order to allow Member States and the Commission to better monitor the progress of anti-corruption and other reforms. Lastly, the methodology behind the reports and recommendations should be formulated through consultation with member states and other stakeholders.

## Implementation

In order to address the low rates of implementation of country recommendations, notably in the area of anti-corruption reforms, the policy recommendations should be better targeted, more actionable and must be based on an inclusive consultation process with a wider range of stakeholders.

The Commission should therefore consult with civil society and other social partners before translating corruption risks into recommendations on a routine basis. As a first, an open consultation with civil society and other partners should follow the publication of the Annual Growth Survey this November. The Commission should also systematically track the progress on and set deadlines for the implementation of country-specific recommendations in order to make the economic governance process credible and effective. Finally, the results of the consultations and the stakeholders consulted should be disclosed in country reports in order to ensure full transparency of the process.

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