

Transparency International EU

The global coalition against corruption

New research reveals inadequate anti-corruption safeguards in defence governance around the EU

Nona Ratchana Olbrich · Tuesday, November 16th, 2021

Brussels, 16 November 2021 – The 2020 [Government Defence Integrity Index \(GDI\)](#) released today by Transparency International Defence and Security shows that EU member states are exposed to a moderate risk of corruption in their defence and security governance. Despite an overall positive picture, alarming scores in certain risk areas prove the need for EU member states to increase transparency and oversight of the sector.

The GDI reveals a sector that still operates in secrecy and with often inadequate policies and procedures to mitigate high corruption risks that have life-or-death consequences. It gathers findings from 86 countries to assess the existence, effectiveness, and enforcement of institutional controls to prevent the risk of corruption across five key risk areas in defence and security governance – financial, operational, personnel, political, and procurement.

With an average score of 59/100, the 16 EU member states included in the Index have better safeguards against corruption risks than superpowers like China (28), Russia (36) and the United States (55). That is welcome news considering that 62% of countries in the GDI have high to critical levels of corruption risk. Nearly all EU states in the study were also found to have robust institutions to prevent corruption in the areas of defence policymaking, finances, and personnel management.

However, all featured EU countries present alarming scores for corruption risk in military operations – as low as 0/100 for Portugal, and 10/100 for Spain and Finland. The finding falls in line with an average global score of 16/100 in this area and is due to the fact that most countries lack anti-corruption measures like training and monitoring as a core pillar of their mission planning.

This weakness is especially worrying since some EU states are key contributors to international operations in fragile conflict areas, such as France in the Sahel. To make things worse, EU states score 18/100 on parliamentary scrutiny of arms exports. This means that Parliaments in the sampled countries can debate upcoming arms exports but might have limited or no ability to influence decision-making on this matter.

The analysis also highlights shortcomings in national rules governing defence sector lobbying (EU average score of 13/100), as well as the risk of corruption in defence procurement in EU countries including Hungary, Poland and France.

Natalie Hogg, Director of Transparency International's Defence and Security Programme, said:

“We urge all governments featured in this Index to act on these findings. They must strengthen their safeguards against corruption and remove the veil of secrecy that so often prevents meaningful oversight of the defence sector. It is critical that they embed anti-corruption at the core of all military operations to stop corruption and its devastating impact on civilians around the world.”

Michiel van Hulst, Director of Transparency International EU, added: *“If the EU is serious about its role as a geopolitical actor, it needs to prioritise transparency and oversight and work closely with civil society to prevent corruption risks across the defence sector. This needs to go hand in hand with member state governments strengthening safeguards at the national level.”*

Notes to the editor

The GDI is the only global assessment of the governance of and corruption risks in defence sectors. The GDI was previously known as the Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index (GI). The Index underwent a major update for the 2020 version, including changes to the methodology and scoring underpinning the project. This means overall country scores from this 2020 version cannot be accurately compared with country scores from previous iterations of the Index.

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