

Transparency International EU

The global coalition against corruption

Strengthening EU Collaboration to Uncover and Resist Emerging Corruption (SECURE)

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What's at stake?

Corruption remains a serious problem across the EU and its neighbouring countries. In recent years, several major scandals – such as the **Azerbaijani and Russian laundromats, the Uber Files and Qatargate** – have exposed weaknesses in Member States' integrity frameworks as well as loopholes that allow EU funds to be misused and illicit funds to be laundered across the Union. Such vulnerabilities can open the door to undue influence from big money and foreign actors, undermining democratic decision-making.

Partly due to incoherent anti-corruption frameworks, uneven enforcement capacities, and unaccountable financial and professional services, EU countries have become attractive destinations for laundering illicit funds from other nations. Corrupt actors, networks and their proceeds can cross borders with ease, bypassing weak national oversight and enforcement systems. Moreover, the same weaknesses that allow dirty money to circulate in an ever-more globalised economy are often exploited by authoritarian regimes to exert illicit influence on the social, economic and political affairs of democracies.

Offences impacting the financial interests of EU Member States and the Union are not sufficiently investigated and prosecuted at the national level. Complex, transnational corruption cases require specialised expertise, extensive cooperation, and technological tools, which may be lacking in certain jurisdictions. Even the most willing authorities face challenges to access innovative tools and data and cooperate across borders. The 2023 Eurobarometer on corruption reveals that almost **seven in 10 individuals surveyed across the Union** agree that high-level corruption cases are not pursued sufficiently.

The European Union has developed a comprehensive toolbox to safeguard the rule of law and combat corruption across its Member States. This toolbox includes a mix of legal, financial, and institutional mechanisms designed to monitor, prevent, and address violations. However, the effectiveness of the EU's Rule of Law toolbox and anti-corruption mechanisms has been mixed.

While some tools have shown success in addressing violations and promoting reforms, others face significant limitations due to political resistance, enforcement challenges, and the complexity of cross-border issues.

What we're doing about it

SECURE will be implemented by the Transparency International Secretariat, in consortium with Transcrime and Crime & Tech at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan, and national chapters across eight European countries, as well as Transparency International EU. Additionally, the project will also collaborate with anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies in France and Italy. Building on the results and lessons learned from previous and current initiatives by partners, SECURE aims to strengthen EU Member States' capacities to detect, investigate, and prosecute corruption, while enhancing the adoption and enforcement of corruption preventive measures.

Our approach

SECURE will employ a multidisciplinary approach that combines evidence generation, the development of innovative tools, multistakeholder advocacy, and capacity strengthening to support efforts to combat corruption in the EU. Specifically, the project aims to:

- Support the assessment of Rule of Law across EU Member States by identifying gaps in the Rule of Law reports as well as challenges to the implementation of recommendations
- Develop indicators to translate the recommendations included in the EU Rule of Law reports into measurable objectives and to support comparisons of data across countries and over time
- Improve the mapping of emerging corruption risks through the design of specific indicators to monitor and detect these specific risks across EU Member States and different/various economic sectors

- Present Rule of Law and emerging corruption risk indicators in an interactive dashboard to raise awareness and promote accountability. Additionally, develop AI-based tools to improve investigations at the national and EU levels
- Engage national ministries, authorities, and institutions as well as EU-level and regional actors to promote and support the adoption of anti-corruption recommendations
- Provide targeted training and support the adoption of digital tools to empower public authorities to effectively investigate and prosecute corruption cases, including transnational ones
- Identify and collate evidence of corruption to be submitted to relevant authorities at the national and EU levels

This entry was posted on Monday, September 22nd, 2025 at 2:55 pm