Anti-Corruption Strategies and Fighting Corruption in Central and Eastern Europe

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Abstract

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This study investigates why and how countries fight corruption. It focuses on the latest anti-corruption strategies (ACS) across 15 Central and Eastern European countries. It builds the first quantitative measurement of ACS comprehensiveness by taking into account 12 ACS areas of which 9 are specific policy areas and 3 represent their specific application across the three branches of government. The 9 policy areas include overall anti-corruption strategy, anti-corruption policy, political party finance, asset monitoring, conflict of interests, freedom of information, public procurement, financial control and audit, and immunity. ACS variation is measured at three significant points in time for the region (1995, 2002, and 2003). I find great variation in ACS from quite comprehensive in the Baltics to far less comprehensive in Ukraine and Macedonia. Nevertheless, over time there has been a dramatic increase in the comprehensiveness of ACS although different countries have prioritized differently the anti-corruption reform areas. The study also investigates the factors that account for their variation. The factors investigated can be categorized as the level of corruption, political and economic factors as well as international organizations’ anti-corruption norms and standards. The political factors investigated are the level of democratization, regime type, frequency of government turnover, political affiliation of cabinets, and political fragmentation in both
cabinet and parliament. The economic factors taken into account here are the level of GDP and its annual change, the level of unemployment, and foreign direct investment. This study unequivocally finds evidence that increased political competition taking the form of increased turnover in government and increased party fragmentation in parliament has been beneficial for ACS comprehensiveness. One explanation is that increased political competition forces politicians to start fighting corruption to ensure their stay in power as anti-corruption issues are high on the public agenda. It also finds evidence on the role of increased level of unemployment and membership into the Council of Europe by 1995 and candidate country status to the European Union by 2002.