

# POLITICAL INTEGRITY DATA SCOPING IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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# INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) doesn't bring positive news for the fight against corruption in Macedonia, although there was improvement of the position by two places. The country still occupies a low level regarding the CPI and additional efforts and actions should be taken in order to improve the fight against corruption. Macedonia was ranked 85<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries, having 40 points out of 100. The result shows lack of integrity and respect of the rule of law. Last year the focus was on corruptive scandals which uncovered the vulnerabilities of the judiciary and the other institutions that are responsible for the fight against corruption and their effective implementation of the competences that they have. The 2022 EU progress report for Macedonia states that the country is moderately prepared in the fight against corruption and actions to fight corruption by increasing support to the bodies responsible for implementing the national strategy for the prevention of corruption and to prevent conflict of interests should be undertaken in the following period.

The Government of Macedonia has been a part of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) movement since 2011: <https://ovp.gov.mk/>. The Government prepares action plans for the implementation of the pledges and obligations arising from the participation within this global movement. The latest is the 5th Action plan for the period from 2021 until 2023. Also, there is a central government data portal: <https://data.gov.mk/>, but there is no information whether the portal is regularly updated or if it contains all the foreseen information.

There is an Agency for protection of the right to free access to information of public character: <https://aspi.mk/>. The Law on access to information of public character enables access to information that are not published on the website of the institutions. The Law contains provisions for proactive publication of the information through the websites of the institutions. Request for an information can be filed for the information of public character that is not published. In majority of the cases institutions respond positively to these requests. However, the institutions also publish the information on their websites. The transparency of the institutions has been increasing through the years.

Although there is available information on the websites of the institutions, there is still need of improving transparency by a systematized approach that will enable publishing the researchable information in the long term. Resources, both human and technical are needed to ensure continuity and timely publishing of data and creating of publicly available datasets. Considering the declared political will for digital transformation and improvement of transparency, all institutions should work proactively in this area in cooperation with the CSOs.





# LIST OF DATASETS ASSESSED

This report builds on the assessment of nine datasets, conducted by TI-Macedonia, including: lobbying meetings, assets and interests of public officials, directories of public officials, government budget and spending, public procurement, political financing, voting records, and awarded concessions for exploration of mineral goods. These datasets were identified as critical tools for ensuring transparency, detecting political corruption and developing risk indicators of political integrity.

In this regard, of particular relevance in the context of North Macedonia are data on political financing, public procurement, and awarded concessions for exploration of mineral goods.

Firstly, due to risks of undue influence of vested interests on law making and on the allocation of public funds, having a political financing database with clear overview of donors, recipients, amounts of state funding, etc., is critical.

Secondly, easy overview of the public procurement notices and awarded contracts published by the relevant institutions (ministries and municipalities), as well as the analysis of changes in the fortune of politically connected companies after the government change enables a clear picture of potential favouritism of politically connected firms in the allocation of public resources.

Finally, the awarded concessions for exploration of mineral goods have a clear relevance due to economic and environmental consequences of these decisions.





## INDICATIVE LIST OF DATA SOURCES

**D1 – Directories of public officials:** containing a list of all public officials above a certain level of seniority, along with details of their role.

**D2 – Assets and interests of public officials:** containing list of assets and interests of public officials above a certain level of seniority and family members in the same household.

**D3 – Political financing:** containing data on the financial contributions received by a politician, a political party, their committees and third parties during a period of time.

**D4 – Lobbying meetings:** containing a list of registered lobbyists, details of who they are lobbying and who they are lobbying on behalf of.

**D5 – Government budget:** including national government budget at a high level (e.g. spending by sector, department, sub-department, etc.).

**D6 – Government spending:** records of actual (past) national government spending at a detailed transactional level: at the level of monthly government expenditure on specific items (usually this means individual records of spending amounts under \$1 million, or even under \$100,000).

**D7 – Public procurement:** details of the contracts issued by the national or federal government, including contract award data and not just requests for bids.

**D8 – Voting records:** containing registers on individual voters in the national legislature (including session, chamber and law category – amendment, new bill, nomination, etc.).

**D9 – Company registers:** containing a list of every company legally registered to operate within a jurisdiction. They should include information on when companies were formed and whether they are still active, as well as including details of company directors.

**D10 – Beneficial ownership:** Containing the natural person(s) who are the beneficial owner(s) of an asset ultimately, including at least companies or land registrations.

**D11 – Land and real estate registers:** including national level information on land ownership, tenure and location. This will usually be held by a land registration agency and/or national cadaster.



# ASSESSMENT RESULTS

In general, we can say that transparency is on a satisfactory level. The Law on Access to Information of Public Character is well implemented and the institutions are open for cooperation, but still there are institutions, agencies and state-owned enterprises that are lacking transparency and no data are available on their webpages. Therefore, more work is needed on creating datasets and databases which will contain data that are more structured, easier for research and analysis and are updated regularly.

The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption provide data for three datasets for the list: lobby meetings, assets and interests of public officials and list of public officials. The datasets for assets and interests of public official and list of public official are based on the Law for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interests and they are regularly updated. The format can be improved in order to have an option for downloading information as machine readable files, which will be easy for analysis. The Law on Lobbying has been in force since July 2022. There is a webpage which should show the registered lobbyist and their activities, however no data are available at this stage.

The Government, supported by USAID and IRI, launched the portal <https://open.finance.gov.mk/mk/home>, where data on the government budget and spending are available. The portal is updated and contains data that can be easily analyzed. Investigative journalists regularly use the data to show the government spending and the misuse of public funds.

Good data regarding the public procurement contracting is also made available. The web portal for procurement contains detailed information on the published procurements, the procedure and the final phase of contracting. The data are researchable, divided into sections and regularly updated.

The Assembly regularly publishes the voting data. Their webpage contains information for each of the sessions held. There are detailed data for the nature of the session, the discussion and the voting record. The data cannot be downloaded in a specific format. When analyzing, there is a need to go separately to each session to see the voting record.

The data on the political financing are not structured and are not available in one place. Different institution publish different datasets related to the financing of political parties. Political parties also publish their financial reports on their webpages. Usually the reports are published in scanned format and the data cannot be easily searched, reviewed and compared.

Awarded concessions for exploration of mineral goods are published in an excel table. There is no information on the timeliness and completeness. There is a need for more transparent approach when publishing these data.

# ASSESSMENT OF THE DATA CHARACTERISTICS

Each of the indicators measured in the eight areas of public policies was assessed with a simple YES/NO answer. A final score will result from the aggregated values for each of the questions.

- Each 'Y' value is equal to 1.
- Each 'N' value is equal to 0.

An exception to the above is the question D-Formats, the measurement of which is elaborated below under the description of the indicator (Bullet point 6).

1. **D-Exist** Does this information exist in any form, even if not publicly accessible? YES/NO/NO EVIDENCE (Please describe the evidence and if applicable include links that may point to the existence of the data.) If the answer to this question is 'NO' for any of the datasets evaluated then you don't need to continue with the rest of the 'D-' questions for that dataset, given that they won't be applicable.
2. **D-Data** Is this data available online in any form? YES/NO (Include links to the available data as evidence.) If the answer to this question is 'NO' for any of the datasets evaluated then you don't need to continue with the rest of the 'D-' questions for that dataset, given that they won't be applicable.
3. **D-Timeliness** Are the available datasets timely and updated? YES/NO (Include last update date and update frequency as evidence).
4. **D-Completeness** Does the dataset include all units/items/subjects that are required to be reported? (For example, in the case of assets and interests of officials, does the dataset include all the relevant officials, or are there missing ones.) YES/NO (If no, describe the extent of the missingness and provide any key examples. Very often this will be impossible to assess without in-depth research, so this question will be treated as a pilot).
5. **D-Granularity** Does the government release datasets at the finest level of granularity available without data aggregations? YES/NO (Describe any existing aggregation as evidence.) For example government spending can be reported at its most granular at the level of each invoice paid or aggregated by spending category or institution.
6. **D-Formats** Does the government release datasets in machine-readable and reusable formats? YES/NO If YES, is it through: a) a machine readable file or b) APIs. If NO, is it a) image/handwritten text or b) digital text? (Include the list of all available formats as evidence.) Some examples of machine-readable and reusable formats are: csv, xls, xlsx, ods, xml, shp, px and json.

**The scoring for this question is as follows: YES(a) = 1; YES(b) = 1.5; NO(a) = 0; NO(b) = 0.5.**



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7. **D-Openness** Does the government release open data that is free of charge and under an open and unrestricted licence? YES/NO (Include references to any applicable charging policy and licence as evidence.) An open licence must clearly state that anyone has permission to reuse it and does not restrict what the data can be reused for, more than attribution and share-alike. Refer to the Open Definition and the list of conformant licences for a detailed overview of what counts as an open licence.
8. **D-Accessibility** Does the government release the datasets without mandatory registration? YES/NO (Include links to any required registration process as evidence).
9. **D-Interoperability** Does the government make use of common identifiers when collecting and publishing data? YES/NO (Include references to any implemented standard as evidence. If Yes, please provide information on whether these common identifiers are shared with other key datasets).
10. **D-Metadata** Does the government ensure that the datasets include consistent core metadata including at least a descriptive title, data source, publication date and available formats? YES/NO (Include links to any existing metadata descriptions as evidence).
11. **D-Documentation** Does the government provide clear accompanying documentation for the published datasets with sufficient information to understand the source(s) and analytical limitations of the data? YES/NO (Include links to any accompanying documentation as evidence).
12. **D-Extent** Is the dataset available at the national level? YES/NO. (If NO, please include in notes the geographic area covered).

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Dataset	1. Exist	2. Data	3. Timeliness	4. Completeness	5. Granularity	6. Formats
Lobbying meetings	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	N	N(b)
Assets and interests of public officials	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N(b)
Company registers						
Beneficial ownership						
Public officials	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	N(b)
Government budget	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y(a)
Government spending	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y(a)
Public procurement	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y(a)
Political financing	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N(a)
Voting records	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N(b)
Land registers						
Awarded concessions for exploration of mineral goods	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y(a)

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7. Openness	8. Accessibility	9. Interoperability	10. Metadata	11. Document.	12. Extent	Total score
Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	5.5
Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	8.5
Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	7.5
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	10
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	10
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	10
Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	6
Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	8.5
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	7

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Government should make regular assessment of the institutions that have obligation to publish data on the Open Portal of the Government: **www.data.gov.mk** and to ensure that the portal contain updated data.
2. Availability of additional documentation: the institutions should ensure documentation that supports the data that are published on the webpages and give more in-depth overview of the adopted decisions, strategies and policies.
3. Improvement of the interoperability by establishing common identifier when collecting and publishing data by the Government and publishing of machine-readable data sets.

# ENDNOTES

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2022

(<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>)

Press release on CPI 2022 by TI-Macedonia

(<https://transparency.mk/2023/01/31/ipk-2022-za-istocna-evropa-i-centralna-azi%98a-porastot-na-bezbednosnite-riziczi-i-avtoritarizamot-se-zakana-za-napredokot-protiv-korupczi%d1%98ata/>)

EC Progress report for North Macedonia for 2022

(<https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/North%20Macedonia%20Report%202022.pdf>)

National OGP Action Plans

(<https://ovp.gov.mk/en/national-ogp-action-plan/>)

OGP Macedonia web site

(<https://ovp.gov.mk/>)

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација  
Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

321.(497.7)(047)

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