

LIGHT



CORRUPTION BAROMETER

March 2024

DARK

This infographic is produced within the framework of the project: EU4 Rule of Law: Citizen Engagement for Public Integrity (CEPI) in the Western Balkans and Turkey supported by the European Union. The statements in this infographic do not represent the statements of the European Union and the Government of Switzerland



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“DARK” OCCURRENCES FOR MARCH 2024



THE USA HAS PUT STEVCHO JAKIMOVSKI AND KATICA JANEVA ON A BLACKLIST FOR CORRUPTION

The US State Department has blacklisted former special prosecutor Katica Janeva and the mayor of the Municipality of Karposh and presidential candidate in the upcoming elections, Stevcho Jakimovski. Regarding the designation, the State Department states that both individuals, through their actions, have undermined the rule of law and public trust in democratic institutions.

ABUSE: OLAF DEMANDS MACEDONIA TO RETURN 2.2 MILLION EUROS MISUSED THROUGH THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAM FROM 2016 TO 2018



The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) demands the return of 2.2 million euros from North Macedonia, misused through the Erasmus+ program from 2016 to 2018. The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sports and Culture of the European Commission sent a notification to the National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility on November 30, 2023, requesting the return of funds, and the decision became final in March. The case is under investigation by the Public Prosecution Office for prosecuting organized crime and corruption, but due to the ongoing preliminary proceedings more details cannot be disclosed.

GRECO CRITICIZES IMPUNITY AMONG PROSECUTORS, AS WELL AS THE ORIGIN OF ASSETS OF JUDGES AND MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT



The influence of politics on the judiciary, impunity of prosecutors, and the limited powers of the Anti-Corruption Commission to delve deeply into the properties of judges, prosecutors and the members of the Parliament are noted in the latest report on Macedonia by GRECO, the group of states combating corruption in the Council of Europe. GRECO notes that Macedonia has not yet implemented the recommendation to strengthen the independence of the judiciary from political influence, nor has it revoked the membership of the Minister of Justice in the Judicial Council ex officio.

SERIES OF IRREGULARITIES BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DETERMINED BY THE STATE AUDITOR IN THE REPORT ON CONDITIONS IN STUDENT DORMITORIES AND STUDENT STANDARDS

The State Auditor in the report on conditions in student dormitories and student standards has identified a series of irregularities by the Ministry of Education. The report covers the period from 2019 to 2022, with observations mainly concerning the poor standards for students, decreased number of students, and weaknesses in the allocation of student scholarships.



REPORT BY THE STATE AUDIT OFFICE FOR PUBLIC ENTERPRISES FOR STATE ROADS

With the conducted audit, we expressed an adverse opinion on the reality and objectivity of the financial statements for the year 2022 and their compliance with statutory regulations, guidelines, and established policies.

State Audit Office



THE OMBUDSMAN WARNS, THE LAW STIPULATES, BUT THERE IS NO STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR EXECUTORS

The executors refuse to apply the changes to the Law on Obligations and Execution regarding the expiration of debt and continue to collect from citizens even in cases where the changes provide that no action should be taken if within 5 years after the enforceability of the enforcement document no proposal for execution is submitted to the enforcement agent, or if there is a request for execution and it is not executed within 10 years, announced the Ombudsman Naser Ziberi. The Ministry of Justice does not respond to the Ombudsman's observations, and the courts largely rule in favor of the debt collectors once citizen debtors initiate proceedings.

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CASES OF DENATIONALIZATION ARE NOT RESOLVED

More than 4,000 cases have been pending for years, and in the last year, the number of complaints has been huge, accuses the Deputy Minister of Finance, Petrova. Why the Commissions are not functioning and how many cases have been resolved, she did not receive a response from the Minister of Finance. It is suspected that the unpaid fees since last January, or the whole year and 2 months, are one of the reasons, but also the inadequate training of the individuals appointed to decide in these commissions. Now the institution is facing lawsuits from them and paying high costs and interest.



TENDERS WITHOUT COMPETITION AND NUMEROUS SUSPICIONS OF CORRUPTION – HOW ARE PUBLIC FUNDS SPENT?!

Non-transparent procedures, lack of competition, and numerous suspicions of uncontrolled corruption. Analyses of conducted procurement procedures show that every third tender in the period from January to June last year was awarded in a process involving only one company. These data are part of the latest Report from the regular monitoring of public procurement, by the Center for Civic Communications. They note that contracts worth a total of 283 million euros were awarded in a process involving only one company.

AUTHORITIES SHOULD NOT HIDE FROM UNESCO THE UNCONTROLLED CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE NATIONAL PARK "GALICHICA" AND IN THE OHRID REGION, DEMANDS THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

Civil organizations from the Ohrid-Struga Region complain about the lack of transparency of Macedonian institutions and insufficient involvement in providing reports on the state of protection of the Ohrid Region, which are sent to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in response to the remarks of the reactive missions visiting this region. They say they should be actively involved to share the real facts that correspond to the situations on the ground. Nderim Položani from the non-governmental organization "Cup Struga" says that the state has no communication with the non-governmental sector, although this is according to UNESCO's recommendations.



“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES FOR MARCH 2024

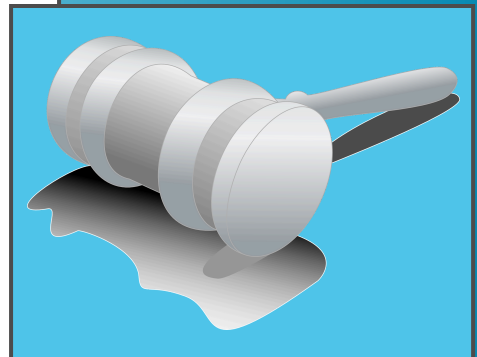
CRIMINAL CHARGES FILED AGAINST 26 INDIVIDUALS FOR ABUSES IN THE DELIVERY OF HEATING OIL TO INSTITUTIONS IN ŠTIP



The Štip Regional Unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office has filed criminal charges against 26 individuals for "Abuse of official position and authority," "Forgery of documents," and "Negligent work." It is alleged that between 2021 and 2023, on 35 occasions, they delivered significantly smaller quantities of heating oil than the amount invoiced and collected from kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Štip, causing damage to the Municipality's Budget in the amount of 18,403,386 denars.

NEW CHARGES FILED AGAINST RAMIZ MERKO, UNLAWFULLY APPOINTED ACTING DIRECTOR OF A SCHOOL

The Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Struga has filed charges against Mayor Ramiz Merko. According to the Prosecutor's Office, Merko is accused of unlawfully appointing an acting director of a primary school in the village of Labuništa two years ago. The Prosecutor's Office states that a criminal indictment has been filed against Merko, and the case will proceed under an expedited procedure for the criminal offense of "Negligent performance of duty" under Article 353(1) of the Criminal Code.

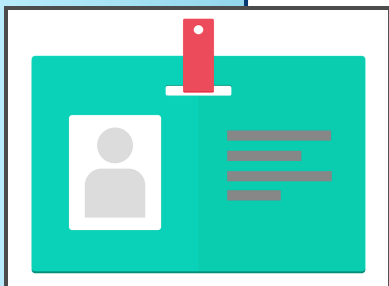


UNLAWFUL CONTRACTS CONCLUDED AND OVER A MILLION DENARS PAID - FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE PENSION FUND FACES CORRUPTION CHARGES

The Corruption Unit at the Bureau of Public Security has filed criminal charges against the former director of the Macedonian Pension Fund, D.B. (45), with the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Skopje, on suspicion of "Abuse of official position and authority," as stated by the Ministry of Interior.



CRIMINAL CHARGE FOR EMPLOYEE OF "NATIONAL FORESTS": FALSIFIED OFFICIAL DOCUMENT



The Economic and Computer Crime Unit of the Skopje Regional Unit filed a criminal charge against C.G. (63) from Skopje on suspicion of committing the criminal offense of "Falsification of an official document" under Article 361 of the Criminal Code. The accused, employed as a transportation clerk at the Public Enterprise "National Forests" - Regional Forestry Management Karadzica - Skopje, issued a delivery note for loaded firewood onto a "Tam" cargo vehicle with Skopje license plates for a quantity of four cubic meters on July 3, 2023.

HE LEFT A BRIBE OF 50 EUROS FOR A POLICE OFFICER AT BLACE CUSTOMS, WHO THEN ARRESTED HIM

Bribery, arrest, and direct presentation before the prosecutor, who now seeks detention for the briber, occurred at the Blace Border Crossing when the owner of a transport company left a 50 euro banknote on the table for a police officer. After a bus driver with Kosovar national plates was rejected entry into Macedonia because he did not have the appropriate certificate for a professional bus driver, the suspect arrived at the border crossing, identified himself as the owner of the transport company, and requested to speak to the shift manager to let him pass.

