



“Light & Dark”

Corruption Barometer 2024

Transparency International-Macedonia

January, 2025

Transparency International Macedonia continues to carry out its regular monthly activities for monitoring cases and activities related to corrupt behavior and the fight against corruption, which we've named **"Light & Dark"**

The monitoring of these cases has received significant attention, both in the public sphere and among relevant domestic and foreign stakeholders. Over time, it has evolved into a relevant indicator for measuring corruption and assessing the government's willingness to address this issue. In this way, we all contribute to a greater awareness of this problem in society.

This Annual Report is an overview of all twelve editions of "Light & Dark" published in 2024.

In this annual edition, it is important to note that in every edition of "Light & Dark" occurrences the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption and the State Audit Office were the most active.

As institutions that actively advocate for the reduction of corruption, analyzing this barometer, we can point out that with their actions, they continue to continuously point out irregularities in the field of their actions. According to the National Integrity System¹, a survey conducted by Transparency International Macedonia, these two institutions are ranked first and second with the highest ratings. The State Audit Office publishes comprehensive reports on the operation of our institutions and points out the shortcomings in the functioning and implementation of policies and activities.

The year 2024 was an election year, and for that reason, electoral irregularities did not pass us by. The greatest attention was drawn to the proceedings between the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors. The Administrative Court issued a ruling to halt the candidate selection process during the election period. Following this, the SCPC initiated proceedings to determine the accountability of the director and the Governing Board of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors. The SCPC initiated 65 cases involving violations of the Electoral Code and the Law on the Prevention of Corruption related to the 2024 election campaign.

The Academy remained in the public eye, notably due to a search conducted on its premises and a subsequent decision by the Governing Board to hold a secret vote for the selection of a new director. Additionally, the SCPC determined that the appointment of four new members to the Governing Board of the Academy was unlawful.

A significant public reaction was sparked by the case involving Supreme Court Judge Nakje Georgiev and former Ombudsman Idzet Memeti, who reached a plea agreement with the prosecution regarding charges of bribery.

This year, too, the U.S. State Department's "Blacklist" did not fail to make an impact. The list included former high-ranking officials as well as individuals directly involved in the justice system. This serves as a key indicator of the ongoing decline in public trust in the judiciary. Fortunately, Macedonian authorities recognized signs of potential corruption and abuse of office, resulting in cases being opened against former Deputy Prime Minister Grubi and Appellate Judge Bedzeti.

Civil society organizations were also active throughout the past year, frequently addressing issues faced by citizens, proposing legal changes, and advocating for transparency and accountability in institutions.

¹ Transparency International Macedonia, 2024- National Integrity System – Assasement North Macedonia: <https://transparency.mk/wp-ontent/uploads/2024/01/national.integrity.system.assasement.2023-4.pdf>

Although overshadowed by so-called dark events, there were also clear and positive developments.

Following public reactions, the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption launched a preliminary investigation into a judge accused of falsifying grades at Tetovo University. Such investigations always spark public interest, especially as citizens await their outcomes.

Although less frequently, the Public Prosecutor's Office in Skopje initiated proceedings against the organizational director of the Toxicology Clinic, based on an SCPC initiative. The public has often criticized the fact that SCPC initiatives rarely result in formal charges.

The Association of Journalists of Macedonia filed a complaint against a judge from the Bitola court for misconduct, accusing her of confiscating phones and cameras from journalists. The media plays a crucial role in combating corruption, and their efforts are consistently met with positive public reactions.

It is worth mentioning perhaps adopting as an example for other institutions, the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Supreme Court, which opened general sessions to the public and the media. The proposed amendments are based on constitutional and legal principles of judicial transparency, the highest international legal norms incorporated into domestic legislation, the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights, the standards of the European Court of Human Rights, international documents in the field of judiciary, and the initiatives and activities of the Council for Open Judiciary.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES 2024

“DARK” OCCURRENCES JANUARY 2024

It is high time for the institutions to function properly

The Anti-Corruption Commission will supplement the initiative for the criminal offense of “Transmet” – The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption decided to amend the initiative for the criminal offense it submitted in July last year for the “Transmet” case. The Commission, as stated by member Shemsi Salai, suspects that the damage to the Republic of North Macedonia’s budget from the unsuccessful confiscation of “Transnet’s” equipment is at least 26.5 million euros. The facts indicate money laundering suspicions and other criminal activities, abuse of public procurement, unethical conduct, and misuse and exploitation of official positions and authorities by public officials. The Anti-Corruption Commission will provide an analysis to the Public Prosecutor’s Office. **The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption presented an analysis of decisions related to the construction contract for corridors 8 and 10D-** The Commission, during its 99 session, presented an analysis of decisions made during the negotiation and conclusion of the construction contract for corridors 8 and 10D with Bechtel and Enka. It decided to forward the analysis to the Public Prosecutor’s Office for further action. The analysis, after presentation, indicates corruption risk, but currently, there is nothing concrete, and relevant institutions should continue monitoring. **The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption: The director of the Film Agency persistently conceals documents on how state funds were allocated for projects** – Bojan Lazarevski paid a fine for not submitting the requested documents to the Anti-Corruption Commission. The director of the Film Agency, for whom the Commission seeks criminal responsibility, refuses to hand over the minutes specifying how state funds were allocated for projects. Since the required documents were not received, the Anti-Corruption Commission was forced to stop the investigation into conflict of interest among reviewers, financial advisors, and members of the Board of Directors.

“It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable.” — Moliere

Games without boundaries threatening judicial cases

The Judicial Council, through a tied vote, did not decided to delegate Judge Osman Shabani from the Court of Appeals to the Criminal Court – “Good luck to the cases “Talir” and “Titanic 1”. I hope they will not be allowed to expire” commented the president of the Judicial Council with a hint of revolt on the outcome of the vote at the extraordinary session for delegating Judge Osman Shabani from the Court of Appeals in Skopje to the Basic Criminal Court in Skopje to complete the work on these two high-profile court cases, facing the threat of expiration. “The Judicial Council of North Macedonia informs that at the 47th extraordinary session held on January 25, 2024, it discussed the need for the temporary assignment of Judge Osman Shabani from the Court of Appeals in Skopje to the Basic Criminal Court in Skopje. Due to the public interest nature of the case and the lack of a necessary majority with 6 votes ‘for’ and 6 votes ‘against’ no decision was made for the temporary assignment of Judge Osman Shabani from the Court of Appeals in Skopje to the Basic Criminal Court. **The promotion would have sunk the “Laskarci” case** – Judge Aleksandra Ristovska from the Criminal Court Skopje took the oath as an Appellate Judge but omitted to inform the Judicial Council that there was a verdict in the “Laskarci” case on January 25, where she was the second judge. If she is not in the judicial council and the composition changes then the case itself will return to the beginning. The president of the Judicial Council, Vesna Dameva, convened an extraordinary session to delegate Judge Ristovska now from the Court of Appeals to the Criminal Court until the verdict. Dameva said that Ristovska did not mention during the oath that the “Laskarci” case which is of sensitive importance could be jeopardized if she moves to the Court of Appeals.

Corruption still persist

The Parliament of North Macedonia undermined the judiciary in 2023, according to Transparency International – On the Corruption Perceptions Index, the Republic of North Macedonia is ranked 76th out of 180 countries with 42 index points. This is still far below the top positions on the index to join the group of countries that are somewhat successful in fighting corruption. In September 2023, the Parliament of North Macedonia significantly undermined the judiciary, according to Transparency International in its latest report on corruption perception in the public sector in 2023. “In the non-transparent and swift procedure, parliamentarians amended the Criminal Code by reducing prison sentence and shortened the statute of limitations for abuse of official position”, the report states. It emphasizes that this “will lead to the dismissal of about 200 suspicious corruption cases, many involving former high-ranking officials”. The index uses a point scale from zero, indicating a highly corrupt country, to 100, representing a non-corrupt country.”

Non-governmental organizations call for accountability

Open letter: Request for a thorough investigation of the violent incident in the Premises of M-NAV and protection of all those who indicate or report possible corruption risks – The platform of civil organizations against corruption calls on the institutions of the system to fully investigate the details surrounding the violent incident at M-NAV, which occurred on January 4, 2024. “We believe that all those who, especially in the public sector, advocate and act against partisan appointments, regardless of national affiliation in employment, should be protected. Any attack on those who have chosen to stand up for legality in employment represents a serious threat to good governance, the fight against corruption, and clientelism, and will act as a discouragement for future similar potential natives by work collectives in the public sector. The fight against corruption is everyone’s duty, and therefore initiatives coming from the public sector should be protected and encouraged.”

The trend of negative reports continues institutions reaction....

Auditors in the Ministry of Defense identify systemic weaknesses, weak financial transparency, and incomplete inventory - The State Audit Office has published the final audit reports on the Ministry of Defense, outlining key findings and systemic weaknesses. In the section on key findings, the State Audit Office notes that the value of fixed assets and material reserves in financial reports is not realistic and objective, the inventory of assets and liabilities is not fully executed, some procedures for public procurement and the implementation of some contracts are not in accordance with legal regulations, obligations to suppliers are not fully disclosed in financial reports, and the operation of the Military Medical Center is financed from the Ministry’s account.”

Who controls nepotism, cronyism and clientelism in employment?

Former director of M-NAV, Midhjet Selmani, rehired through a weekend job advertisement, this time as an accountant – Midhjet Selmani the former director and member of the Board of Directors of M-NAV, despite the guarantee given by Minister Blagoj Bocharovski to the Traffic Air Controllers Union, has been employed there, this time through an advertisement that lasted only two days in December last year. For this advertisement the former director Fahrudin Hamidi claimed that it was an error by the Employment Agency. Selmani like many other party-affiliated individuals is now employed an M-NAV as an accountant. Huge salaries are taken for the fictitious and non-essential positions created for accommodating party-affiliated individuals. **M-NAV: Family connections also come to light** – The network of family connections among employees of M-NAV with current and former ministers and politicians is expanding. Relatives of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bujar Osmani, the sister – in law of Deputy Prime Minister Artan Grubi and the grandson of the Minister of Agriculture, Ljupcho Nikolovski are employed in M-NAV, along with relatives of former ministers and deputies, as reported by “KOD” on Telma. Among the employees of M-NAV are relatives of other officials and politicians. The daughter-in-law and son of former DUI deputy, Ejup Alimi, the grandson of the director’s advisor in M-NAV, Bekim Neziri, who is one of the suspects in the air traffic control intrusion, and sources from “Kod” claim that the grandson of

the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Nazim Bushi is also employed. Nikolovski's and Nezero's relatives are employed as assistant controllers and the sister of Minister Bujar Osmani works in the operational part. Other relatives work in the administration of M-NAV.

These pieces of information have not been denied! The question of the legitimacy and legality of these employments remains.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES FEBRUARY 2024

The Kicevo-Ohrid [highway](#), the largest infrastructure investment with "decade-long" construction - Despite an additional loan of \$180 million, a 6-year extension of construction, and a 45% increase in the contract value, the section Kicevo-Ohrid remains unbuilt. Deficiencies in project documentation, unresolved land expropriations, and insufficiently secured human and technical resources by the contractor have led to prolonged construction and caused an additional drain on financial resources beyond the initially agreed, which is not in line with the prescribed legal standard for prudent action regulated by the Companies Act, as stated in the State Audit Office report.

SCPC demands [accountability](#) from the Innovation Fund, which unlawfully awarded grants, including to the grandson of Ali Ahmeti - Anticorruption activists demanded the Government hold accountable the authorities of the Innovation and Technological Development Fund, including its director Festim Halili, due to suspicions of law misuse concerning the awarded five million denars to the companies “Thor Industries” and “Everest JD”, owned by Drin Ahmeti, grandson of Ali Ahmeti. The abuses allegedly circumvented legal procedures by shortening project deadlines, a principle the Fund operated on in other cases unrelated to Drin Ahmeti.

Dzaferi [paid](#) a fine but continued to break the law - Talat Dzaferi violated the Constitution and paid a fine for incompatibility of functions. According to anticorruption activists, despite being the Speaker of the Parliament, Dzaferi simultaneously held positions in DUI party organs, particularly in the Presidency of the party's General Council. Anticorruption Commission questioned whether, despite paying the fine, Dzaferi still performs party functions, but received no response from DUI.

[Anticorruption](#) Commission will submit a case to the Prosecutor's Office against Ivica Konevski - SCPC decided to submit a case to the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Financial Police against the former Mayor of Aerodrom Municipality, Ivica Konevski, for abusing his mayoral function to change the detailed urban plan at Majchin Dom, replacing greenery with a nine-story building for personal gain - obtaining business premises of 312 square meters.

SCPC closes the "[Treska](#)" DUP case and refers it to the prosecution - The SCPC board closed the case concerning the planning of the "Treska" DUP and forwarded it to the Prosecutor's Office, citing suspicions of corruption against the firms that drafted the plan ten years ago, which the municipality adopted contrary to the general urban plan.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES 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 Jakomovski. 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** - The State Audit Office - 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.

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.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES APRIL 2024

Serious government [corruption](#) and political interference in the judiciary and prosecution noted the State Department in the report on Macedonia - Serious government corruption is one of the significant problems facing North Macedonia, as stated in the report by the American State Department on the state of human rights in the country for the year 2023. "There have been no significant changes in the human rights situation in North Macedonia over the past year." The State Department states that the government has taken limited steps to identify and punish officials who may have violated human rights. "In September, the Government adopted amendments to the Criminal Code, significantly reducing penalties for corruption-related crimes," said the State Department. "Credible reports of unpunished judicial abuses, inadequate funding, resistance to using legally prescribed technology, and a lack of personnel undermine the judiciary's effectiveness and erode public trust in the rule of law. Surveys show that the public does not trust the judiciary. Political advancements without merit and transparency occur in the courts and prosecution," said the State Department.

[Freedom House](#): Regression in the rule of law and the fight against corruption in North Macedonia - North Macedonia shows regression in the rule of law and the fight against corruption. These are the key notes in the latest report "Nations in Transit" by the organization Freedom House. The report warns of long-standing high-level corruption in North Macedonia, as well as the clash of parties over constitutional amendments needed due to Bulgaria's veto on the country's accession to the European Union. "The definitive characteristic of cyclical hybrids is a combination of genuine political pluralism and superficial institutional changes. They tend to lag behind in reforms aimed at establishing strong barriers between public service and private gain. Therefore, it is essential to promote anti-corruption mechanisms and judicial reforms in these countries, and the EU accession process plays an important role in this regard," explains the report.

[Administrative Court](#) rules - The Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors should suspend the selection process - The decision of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) instructs the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors "Pavel Shatev" to suspend the training and selection process of candidates is legally upheld. The Administrative Court ruled to confirm the decision of SCPC. The clash between the Academy and the SCPC came after a complaint was filed stating that the electoral law was being violated, and the SCPC twice decided that the selection of candidates should be suspended until the end of the electoral process, i.e., the election of the president, Members of the Parliament, and the Government.

Administrative Court [annuls](#) over 3,000 decisions on promotions and hiring - The Administrative Court annulled the decisions on hiring and promotion of over 3,000 employees in the Ministry of Finance and the public sector because the Law on Technical Government was violated, Deputy Finance Minister Elena Petrova announced. According to her, although the decisions were supposed to be approved with her signature, as envisaged by the Law on Technical Government, Minister Besimi signed them himself. Petrova emphasized that most of the procedures for hiring and promotion began before the formation of the technical government.

Citizens complain to the [Ombudsman](#) that lengthy pre-investigation proceedings in the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office Skopje lead to the statute of limitations for criminal offenses - Citizens' notes regarding the duration of pre-investigation proceedings conducted by the Basic Public Prosecutors' Offices and the lack of information, i.e., notification of the progress of the proceedings, are reasons why citizens complain to the Ombudsman. Most of the complaints from citizens are directed at the Basic Public Prosecutors' Office and fewer towards the Basic Public Prosecutors' Office for Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption in Skopje. In 2023, in the area related to the work and actions of the prosecutors' offices, 63 petitions were submitted, of which the majority, 51, were addressed to the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office Skopje. The Ombudsman's recommendation is that the Basic Public Prosecutors' Offices should act promptly and timely, take action within the 3-month deadline, and if they do not reach a

prosecutorial decision, inform the higher public prosecutor and the complainant to avoid doubt and fear that the prosecution will be time-barred.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES MAY 2024

Supreme Court judge and member of the Prosecutorial Council under investigation for [Bribery](#) – An active Supreme Court judge has been arrested for accepting a bribe and a search was also carried out in the office of a member of the Prosecutorial Council due to connections with the same case. A preliminary procedure judge at the Basic Criminal Court Skopje has ordered 30 days of detention for Supreme Court judge Nake Georgiev, after he was arrested for allegedly accepting a bribe of 10,000 euros, i.e. for the offense of receiving a reward for unlawful influence. It is suspected that Idzet Memeti, together with Nake Georgiev used his position as a member of the Prosecutorial Council to seek bribes in exchange for lenient conditions for the former mayor of Municipality of Novo Selo, Boro Stojchev, known as “Boro Marlboro”.

The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption initiates [accountability](#) proceedings against the Director and the Board of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors – The Anti-Corruption Commission has announced that it is initiating proceedings with all relevant institutions to determine the accountability of the Director and the Board of the Academy of judges and public prosecutors due to violations of the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest, as well as the Electoral Code. The responsible institutions have 60 days to review and act upon this initiative.

[Indictment](#) filed for the Distribution of Sports Vouchers against 12 individuals – The indictment proposal comes from the State Commission for Preventing Corruption, which announced last February that there were suspicions that the Director of the Agency for Youth and Sports and the members of the Central Commission for the allocation of Vouchers in 2020, 2021 and 2022 abused their official positions and unlawfully allocated funds, thereby damaging the state budget and denying the rightful recipients of these funds. **Case “Sport [Vouchers](#)” – Mojsoski, Kaevski and Dimevski will appear in court but will keep their passports** – Partial precautionary measures were imposed on the current and former directors of the Agency for Youth and Sports, Naumche Mojsoski and Darko Kaevvski, as well as the head of the Macedonian Olympic Committee, Daniel Dimevski and nine other individuals accused of abuse in the awarding of sports vouchers. The Criminal Court ordered all 12 defendants to report once a week to a designated official in the court.

[The Anti-Corruption Commission to the elected officials](#) – The position of Prime Minister and Minister is incompatible with holding other public functions – the Constitution and laws should equally apply to all citizens of the state, including the current as well as former officials, which is why individuals holding the highest state functions and public authority are called upon to respect the principles of legality and integrity, the Anti-Corruption Commission announced. Additionally, this represents an offence for which, according to the law on the prevention of corruption and conflict of interest, a misdemeanor sanction is imposed.

[State Audit Office: Inefficient Management and Administration of State – Owned Real Estate](#) – The legal framework does not create conditions, and the activities of the competent institutions do not ensure the efficient management and administration of state-owned real estate, both residential and commercial, stated the State Audit Office, which conducted a performance audit on the topic “Management of State-Owned Real Estate” to answer the question “Do the competent institutions manage and administer state-owned real estate – business and residential properties – efficiently?” According to the State Audit Office’s statement, the audit concluded that the existing legal framework, measures, and activities taken by the Government and other competent institutions do not enable efficient management and administration of state-owned real estate – business and residential properties.

Poor treatment of Prisoners and Corruption Remain Issues in Macedonian Prisons, Appeals the Council of Europe – Improvements have been made in hygiene and cell conditions in Macedonia's penal institutions, but the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty by the police remains unchanged, and corruption among prison staff persist, according to the latest report by the European Committee for Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment under the Council of Europe. The report states that conditions are further deteriorated by widespread corruption and favoritism towards certain prisoners by the staff, undermining the proper functioning of the institutions.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES JUNE 2024

Report from the Ministry of Culture: Crimes and Criminal Offenses at the Film Agency - Numerous violations of legal provisions, disregard of procedures, codes, and ethical norms, lack of selectivity in work, close ties between the Board of the Film Agency and responsible persons in the Macedonian Film Workers Society, seven years of the same individuals making decisions on the Agency for Film's finances in business dealings with the DFRM. This is only a small part of the report by the Working Group to assess the situation at the Agency formed by the Minister of Culture. The audit was conducted during April and May 2024. From this report, it can be concluded that a dozen possible criminal offenses have been committed involving abuse of official position or negligent work that has damaged the state budget. Numerous cases of nepotism and clientelism are cited.

The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption: About 80 cases have expired - **Officials neither submitted asset declarations nor paid fines** - About 80 cases opened in 2021 on their own initiative and upon review of their records, members of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) at the continuation of the sixth session decided to close and archive them due to expiration. These involve named officials mainly from the management and supervisory boards of public enterprises, healthcare institutions, clinics, correctional facilities, and other state institutions who, upon the termination of their functions, did not comply with the legally established deadline of 30 days to submit an asset declaration to SCPC. For these cases, SCPC did not initiate misdemeanor proceedings within the statutory deadline, resulting in the expiration of the offenses, which according to the Misdemeanor Law (Art. 41), "cannot be initiated or conducted if two years have passed since the date of the offense."

The State Commission for Preventing Corruption will demand accountability from Demiri - illegally dismissed directors of Toxicology and Cardio Surgery - According to anti-corruption authorities, procedures for dismissal from office were not respected for both dismissals, meaning, as SCPC states, proposals for dismissal should have been made by the Boards of Directors to the Health Councils of both clinics. Minister of Health Ilir Demiri illegally dismissed the medical director of the Toxicology Clinic, Danil Petrovski, and the director of the state Cardio Surgery, Marjan Shokarovski. The Anti-Corruption Commission has found that both decisions by Minister Demiri violated the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest, the Health Care Law, and also breached the Electoral Code, as the dismissals were made with decisions adopted on May 14 and May 27, before the conclusion of the parliamentary elections on May 30, 2024.

State Commission for Preventing Corruption: Mayor promoted his wife to advisor in his municipality - The mayor openly advertised and promoted his wife from a position as a collaborator to an advisor, thereby violating the Law on Prevention of Corruption. During its 6th session, SCPC informed that the mayor submitted the requested documentation regarding whether his wife was employed by the municipality and the entire procedure for her promotion, which was found by the Anti-Corruption Commission to have violated the law. SCPC confirmed the violation, and the mayor paid the fine, closing the case, as no further institution has jurisdiction to proceed. The Anti-Corruption Commission also reported that an official who declared a conflict of interest in the institution held two conflicting roles against the law. Upon SCPC's instructions, this individual submitted documentation proving resignation from the position as a Board member and paid the fine for the violation, closing the case.

Survey by the Chamber of Commerce: Central and local authorities demanded [bribes](#) from private businesses - Many companies have reported corruption, fearing business failure or believing that reporting would have no effect, even if they did report. These findings come from the latest results of the survey on corruption in the private business sector conducted by the Chamber of Commerce in March of this year, reflecting data from 2023. The central government ranks highest in soliciting bribes from businesses, attempting to indirectly solicit money through tenders, employment or promotion favors, donations to political parties, or gifts. Internationally, Macedonia ranks 76th in corruption rankings. "Corruption sometimes corrodes society from within, posing a national security issue as to whether we will have security or not. In short, corruption is a cancer on society. Five companies were asked for over 100,000 euros, and some were asked for 6-10% of the tender amount." - Mr. Zoran Jovanovski, advisor to the President of the Chamber of Commerce.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES JULY 2024

The prosecution is investigation two candidates from the [Academy](#) for Judges and Public Prosecutors - Files on one former and one current candidate from the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors “Pavel Shatev” are among the things seized during the search in this institution, was announced by the Prosecution for Organized Crime and Corruption. The case was opened “thanks” to the data the prosecution obtained from the phone of the suspect, Supreme Court Judge Nakje Georgiev, who is already facing charges for the criminal offence of “accepting a reward for illegal influence.” The analysis of the phone, they said, led to “insights suggesting the possible commission of another criminal offense.” As a result, the case prosecutor, in order to investigate these indications, formed a case and submitted a request to the preliminary procedure judge at the Basic Criminal Court Skopje to seized two mobile phones from an employee at the Academy for judges and Public Prosecutors, as well as a video recording and two files on one former and one current candidate of the Academy, said the Prosecution.

High [risk](#) of Corruption in many areas in North Macedonia, says New European Commission Report – The independence of the judiciary and the institutional capacity to protect it from influence remain serious concerns, notes the European Commission’s Rule of law report for North Macedonia for 2024. The level of perceived judicial independence is very low despite judicial reforms and the new strategy aimed at improving the independence, efficiency and professionalism of the judiciary. It states that a comprehensive national anti-corruption strategy has been established, but its implementation lags behind. The high risk of corruption remains widespread in many areas.

Six members of the [Parliament](#) from the new parliamentary composition did not submit a declaration of assets to the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption – According to the data from the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, six members of the Parliament have not submitted their asset declaration at all. Legal proceedings have been initiated against them, says the president of the Anti-Corruption Commission Tatjana Dimitrovska.

Deputy Minister in the technical Government issued 189 disputed [decisions](#) for employee assignments – A Deputy Minister in the technical Government issued 189 decisions for employee assignments, allegedly violating legal provisions. The Anti-Corruption Commission plans to initiate legal proceedings against the former official. The mentioned Deputy Minister is Nazim Bushi. According to Dimitrovska, from May 31 to June 23, 2024, Bushi issued 98 decisions for horizontal transfers, 68 for promotions, and 23 decisions that resulted in reduced basic salaries for employees. This period was marked by the election of a new Government.

[Auditors](#) Produce Reports, Prosecutors Open Cases - Out of 40 cases related to audit reports, for which the State Audit Office requested data from the Prosecution less than two months ago, “oncology” is the only one in the investigation phase. Some cases have been closed due to lack of grounds for criminal prosecution, while in the most cases, checks are still ongoing. While awaiting the outcome, the Prosecution claims it is reviewing all auditors’ reports. The Public Enterprise “Railways – Infrastructure” the Public

Enterprise of Maintenance and Protection of Main and Regional Roads known as “Macedonian Roads”, are currently under scrutiny by Skopje’s Prosecution. These three institutions were recently included in the reports of the State Audit Office.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES AUGUST 2024

Quod licet lovi, non licet bovi

Supreme Judge Nike Georgiev reached a plea agreement with the Prosecution, and accepted a three-year prison sentence for a bribe of 15.000 euros – Supreme judge Nike Georgiev reached a plea agreement with the Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office for the prosecution of organized crime and corruption about the case of taking a bribe from the son of the former mayor of Municipality Novo Selo, Boro Stojchev. He accepted a three-year prison sentence, as well as a ban from practicing any profession, activity, or official duty for three years. In the same case, a plea agreement was also reached by a member of the Public Prosecutor’s Council, Idzet Memeti, who received a one-year suspended prison sentence and the same ban from practicing any profession, activity, or official duty for three years.

Idzet Memeti pleaded guilty and reached a plea agreement with the Prosecution – Member of the Public Prosecutor’s Council and former Ombudsman, Idzet Memeti, pleaded guilty to receiving a reward for unlawful influence and reached a plea agreement with the Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office for the prosecution of organized crime and corruption for a suspended sentence. Memeti also received a ban from practicing his profession for the next three years. He submitted an irrevocable resignation as a member of the Public Prosecutor’s Council to the Parliament.

Reaction: The platform of civil society organizations for fighting corruption demands the restoration of the “Open Finance” portal – The platform of Civil Society Organizations for fighting Corruption strongly condemns the lack of public access to information from the Treasury and demands the immediate restoration of the “Open Finance” portal. The platform calls on the Ministry of Finance to ensure uninterrupted access, continuous and timely updating of data on the portal, and their availability in an open format, as has been the practice so far. The “Open Finance” portal, which publishes data on the transaction of all budget users of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, was last updated on June 17, 2024. According to the commitments undertaken within the Open Government Partnership and the previous practice, the data on the portal is updated twice a month, meaning that for more than two months, the portal has not been performing its function.

The service offered by TIME.MK news aggregator, where all contracts or tenders signed by state and public institutions could be monitored, no longer exists after 12 years – The Public Procurement Bureau shut it down, allegedly because it was overloading their website. According to the founder of TIME.MK, Igor Trajkovski, the reason given by the Public Procurement Bureau was that “Such access was overloading the site and preventing registered users from using it normally. They were instructed to download the data manually or redirect interested users to their website.

State Commission for Prevention of Corruption with tied hands: 826 institutions without submitted information, including 10 ministries – The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) is facing serious challenges in maintaining transparency and accountability in the 2024 election process. In its latest report, the SCPC warns that due to legal gaps in the regulatory framework, the Commission cannot initiate misdemeanor proceedings against those who do not submit the required data. What is most concerning is the fact that as many as 826 institutions have not provided the necessary information, including 10 ministries. This indicates a serious lack of transparency and can be interpreted as an attempt to conceal potential irregularities. The Electoral Code is also criticized in the report. The SCPC points out weaknesses in the legal and administrative framework, which create risks for corruption.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES SEPTEMBER 2024

The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption has [opened](#) 65 cases for violations of the Electoral Code and the Law on Prevention of Corruption in connection with the 2024 election campaign – During the election process, the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption opened a total of 65 cases. These cases result of Reports alleging violations of the Electoral Code and the Law on Prevention of Corruption, as well as cases initiated by the Commission itself and a complaint submitted by an organizer of the election campaign.

The State Audit Office found several [irregularities](#) in the financial operations of the University Clinic of Neurology – In its final report, the State Audit Office expressed an unfavorable opinion regarding the accuracy and objectivity of the financial reports for 2023 from the public healthcare institution, University Clinic of Neurology, and a reserved opinion on the compliance of financial transactions with relevant legal regulations. In some of the conducted public procurement procedures, inappropriate application of the Public Procurement Law was observed.

[Inconsistencies](#) in managing budget funds and court deposits, noted by auditors – The audit report for the financial operations of the Basic Civil Court Skopje for 2023 reveals serious systemic weaknesses and inconsistencies in managing budget funds and court deposits. According to the findings, the judicial authority does not receive the legally determined percentage of the state budget, and some financial documents are either incomplete or outdated. Additionally, the auditors uncovered a lack of reliable accounting documents for the properties housing the court, as well as a lease agreement from 1989 that has not been updated to reflect the current currency system. The audit also points to problems with court deposits, dating from the period 2005-2023, with their status not properly determined. This raises questions about the transparency and management of court funds.

[Research](#) by the Center for Civil Communications: Corruption is often present in tenders, primarily due to political interests and bribery - The analyses by the Center for Civil Communications indicate that the majority of those involved in public procurement, or 56%, believe that companies are the primary generators of corruption rather than the institutions and their employees, while 16% believe that both sides contribute to corruption. In the public procurement procedures of state institutions, corruption is often present; say those responsible for overseeing these processes. It is most prevalent as a result of political interests but also takes the form of bribery. Companies participating in tenders are seen as a larger source of corruption compared to individuals within the institutions. These findings come from the [Report on the regular monitoring of public procurement](#), published by the Center for Civil Communications.

[13](#) civil organizations demand amendments to the Urban Planning Law – The O2 initiative, along with 12 other civil organizations, submitted a proposal law to Parliament for amending the Urban Planning Law. The proposed amendments aim to increase the transparency of the process of adopting urban plans and approving urban projects, to enhance timely and broader public participation, as well as involving the Municipal Council, thereby reducing the risks of corruption.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES OCTOBER 2024

The European Commission [recommends](#) adopting a new Criminal Code after the September 2023 amendments negatively impacted the fight against corruption - The European Commission recommends adopting a new Criminal Code in line with EU law and international standards, as stated in the annual European Commission report on North Macedonia's progress. The EC notes that "the amendments to the Criminal Code from September 2023 weakened the legal framework, negatively impacting the prosecution of corruption, especially in high-level cases." In September 2023, changes were made to the Criminal Code, reducing or eliminating prison sentences for officials involved in crime. "Many ongoing cases were halted either due to expired statutes of limitations or because specific offenses, such as abuse of office in public procurement, no longer exist," states the EC report. Besides a new Criminal Code, the EC also recommends improving the implementation of the national strategy

for preventing corruption and conflicts of interest and providing human and financial resources to the Public Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime, as well as enhancing the verification of asset declarations of elected and appointed officials and overseeing election campaign financing. **In the corruption section, the report states that the country is between a certain level of preparedness and a moderate level of preparedness and has not achieved progress in preventing and combating corruption. "Corruption remains widespread in many areas and is a matter of serious concern," the report says.**

The government should be [transparent](#) regarding the Prime Minister's advisors - Several months have passed, and the government has still not published who the advisors to Prime Minister Mickoski are. The government must disclose the names, salaries, and responsibilities of the Prime Minister's advisors. Citizens and the broader public have the right to know who advises the Prime Minister in shaping policies that affect everyone. Certainly, the public's perception that not disclosing the advisors' names and salaries raises concerns of cronyism and nepotism; however, party affiliation and close relationships do not automatically imply cronyism and nepotism. When defining cronyism and nepotism, it is crucial to determine whether the only criterion for selection is party affiliation and proximity or whether the advisor's competence and success in their field are taken into account. Therefore, if the government wants to dispel any doubts and suspicions regarding the Prime Minister's advisors, it must promptly disclose the names, salaries, and areas of expertise of the selected advisors.

[Concerns](#) over secret voting decision by the Academy of Judges and Prosecutors' Board for Director selection - The Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform expressed concern about the decision by the Board of the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors to conduct the selection of the Academy's Director through secret voting, allowing for multiple candidates without providing adequate justification for the necessity of secrecy. Although the selected candidate might be the most suitable for the position, the lack of public voting, appropriate discussion, and explanation for the candidate selection decision raises questions about the legitimacy of a process that was not conducted transparently. This could further affect the already low trust in the judiciary. **[Members of the Judicial and Public Prosecutors' Councils were appointed as members of the Academy's Board](#)**, leading the Coalition "All for Fair Trials" to question whether council members on the Academy's Board can impartially decide on candidate appeals while also participating in the councils that select candidates for judges and public prosecutors, as this may represent a conflict of interest and concentration of decision-making power. The Judicial and Public Prosecutors' Councils appointed members to the Academy's Board during sessions on the 24th and 29th of this month, but instead of appointing judges and prosecutors, both councils opted to assign their own members, prompting a [reaction](#) from the Coalition.

Judge Lazar Nanev [dismissed](#) after 97 calls to a defendant in a case he was handling - The Judicial Council, in a closed session, dismissed Judge Lazar Nanev from the Kavadarci Court for making 97 phone calls over several days to a party (defendant) in a case he was personally overseeing. The Higher Public Prosecutor of Skopje, Mustafa Hajrulahi, reported Nanev to the Judicial Council last year, providing evidence of the calls made by Judge Nanev. Additionally, a prosecutor from Kavadarci reported him for exerting pressure and inappropriate behavior.

State [Audit](#) Office Issues unfavorable Report for Ministry of Culture: 318 million denars disbursed for cultural projects without clear criteria - The State Audit Office conducted an audit of the Ministry of Culture's financial statements and compliance for 2023. The final audit report highlights various issues, irregularities, and inconsistencies that led the state auditor to issue an unfavorable opinion regarding the accuracy and objectivity of the financial statements, along with a qualified opinion on compliance with legal regulations, guidelines, and established policies. **The State Audit also found [irregularities](#) in the management of inventory for medications and materials at the Oncology Department** - There is a lack of alignment between the accounting records and the actual state of medical supplies, and delays were noted in recording the receipt and issuance of medications from the pharmacy to organizational units. Additionally, the value of medications received through donations was not included in financial records, impacting the accuracy of the balance sheet. In 2023, the clinic received medications worth 33 million denars through donations, yet this data was not recorded in the financial records.

Third Prison Sentence for Gruevski [expired](#), but 20 Years Still Await - Former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski's two-year prison sentence for the "Tank" case expired on October 4 of this year. He still has a year and a half remaining for the "Violence in Centar Municipality" case, which will expire in 2027, and nine years for the "Plots on Vodno" case, expiring in 2043.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES NOVEMBER 2024

The SCPC adopted a decision that the [appointment](#) of four new members of the Management Board of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors was Illegal - The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) has determined that the appointment of four new members to the Management Board of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors was illegal. The Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors nominated members from the judicial and prosecutorial professions, but according to the SCPC, this violates the Law on Prevention of Corruption and conflict of interests and the Law on the Academy, as they should have appointed active judges and prosecutors. The unauthorized accumulation of power poses a potential conflict of interest, according to the anti-corruption body, which will request that the two councils annul the decisions through which Judicial Council members Antoaneta Dimovska and Haif Zendeli, and the President of the Prosecutorial Council, Dušica Dimitrieska, were nominated as new members of the Academy's Management Board.

The SCPC requests [disciplinary](#) action against a Judicial Council member who sought accountability for Supreme Court judges in a case involving his sister as an attorney - The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption will submit an initiative to the Judicial Council and the Judges' Association to launch disciplinary proceedings against a member of the Judicial Council for “conflict of interest” and “bias in the performance of duties.” The member initiated proceedings to establish accountability for Supreme Court judges handling a case where his sister was the attorney. The SCPC noted that the broader issue of disregard of conflicts of interest among Judicial Council members, who oversee and control the work of all judges in the country, creates opportunities for undue influence and pressure on judges handling cases involving the Council members' close relatives. This directly undermines the independence and autonomy of the judiciary, which the Judicial Council is tasked with safeguarding. According to the SCPC, the Council member acted contrary to Articles 73 and 75 of the Law on the Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest, committing a violation for which the Commission will initiate proceedings to issue a misdemeanor sanction.

The SCPC [initiates](#) proceedings against Kostadinovska-Stojchevska for using state funds for private purposes during an official trip to the UK - Former Minister of Culture Bisera Kostadinovska-Stojchevska used public funds for private purposes during her official trip to the United Kingdom from October 24th to 27th last year. This was determined by the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC), which opened a case in August this year after receiving information on the matter.

A procedure to determine responsibility for judge Pajaziti will be open, Judicial Council made decision in a closed session - The Judicial Council has decided to initiate proceedings to determine the responsibility of Judge Pajazit Pajaziti. The initiative concerns the judge's handling of the detention of Blerim Ramadani, a former KLA soldier and a citizen of Kosovo. The first initiative to establish responsibility for Judge Pajaziti was rejected by the Council due to a lack of sufficient evidence. The decision was made in a closed session without the presence of journalists.

Construction Inspector [bribed](#) to avoid issuance of a report for illegal structure - The Kumanovo Public Prosecutor's Office has ordered detention for a construction inspector from the Municipality of Kumanovo who was caught accepting a bribe. The investigation revealed that on November 1, in a restaurant in Kumanovo, the suspect, acting in her official capacity as a construction inspector in the Municipality's Construction Inspection Department, requested and accepted a gift in exchange for not performing an official duty she was required to undertake. This act allowed her to obtain significant material benefit.

“DARK” OCCURRENCES DECEMBER 2024

Grubi and Bedzeti saved Mijalkov from prison through [Corruption](#) - U.S. State Department Blacklists Former Deputy Prime Minister and DUI Official Artan Grubi and Appeals Court Judge Enver Bedzeti - According to a statement by the U.S. Department of State, both individuals were involved in "significant corruption" by accepting bribes to derail court cases against the former UBK director, Sasho Mijalkov. Mijalkov was among the first to be placed on the U.S. blacklist in 2022, also for corruption. The latest list includes members of Artan Grubi's immediate family. Under the decision, Grubi and **Bedzeti** are barred from entering the U.S., and their visas, if any, will be revoked.

No [Conflict](#) of interest for Anti-Corruption Officer in case of ANB Director The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) stated that there was no conflict of interest in the case of ANB Director Bojan Hristovski, despite questions raised about anti-corruption officer Cveta Ristovska, who handled the case. Ristovska was a faculty member at the private "Skopje" University at the time, where Hristovski's degree was challenged. After [TV Telma](#) inquired about a potential conflict of interest, the university temporarily removed and then reinstated Ristovska's photo from its faculty listing. Ristovska declared during the SCPC meeting that the case was straightforward, based on a report from the Education Inspectorate.

Eight persons suspected of [abuses](#) during public procurement in the Directorate for TIRZ - the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office Skopje, acting on a report from the Financial Police Administration, established a case and initiated proceedings against 8 persons due to reasonable suspicion that they committed a crime as co-perpetrators - Abuse of official position and authorization under Article 353 paragraph 4 in connection with paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code. In the course of the pre-investigation procedure, which the Financial Police Administration led in coordination and under the leadership of the competent public prosecutor, evidence was provided that in the time period 01.26-07.12.2022, the first suspect as an official - director of the Directorate for Technological Industrial Development Zones in Skopje, together with three officials in charge of implementing administrative control at the Public Procurement Bureau and four more people from the State commission for public procurement complaints, by not performing their official position, enabled a legal entity to obtain an illegal property benefit that exceeds a significant value of 622,981,190 denars.

State Audit Office [identifies](#) systemic weaknesses in Criminal Court The State Audit Office released its final reports on the Basic Criminal Court in Skopje. Key findings include: Lack of accurate accounting documentation for the court's old building and unregistered assets due to incomplete handovers; No records of seized funds, valuables, and other confiscated items, nor an inventory of these assets; The oversight commission failed to review deposit funds for 2023 or conduct comprehensive financial and operational audits; Absence of data on the status of judicial deposit cases completed or unresolved.

CGK: Ownership Registry data not used to [combat](#) corruption The Center for Civil Communications, the Association of Tax Advisors, and Aktivo published an analysis on the use of ownership registry data in fighting corruption in North Macedonia. Findings revealed that authorities rarely utilize this data for money laundering and terrorism financing cases and fail to apply it to broader corruption prevention efforts. The Financial Intelligence Office and other institutions reportedly have inconsistent data on such cases.

[Civil](#) Organizations demand halt to amendments to Public Procurement Law The Platform of Civil Organizations for Fighting Corruption called for the immediate suspension of proposed amendments to the Public Procurement Law, submitted to Parliament under expedited procedures on December 5, 2024. The amendments would abolish administrative oversight by the Public Procurement Bureau, a significant step backward in combating corruption. Instead of strengthening oversight in line with recommendations, the proposal removes control without justification, resembling a controversial old mechanism criticized by relevant institutions.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES 2024

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES JANUARY 2024

Five individuals are suspects in the “Oncology” case, three oncology doctors assisted in the fraud – After a 5 month preliminary investigation, the “Oncology” case moves into the investigative phase. This involves the former medical and former organizational director of the Clinic for Radiotherapy and Oncology, as well as three doctors – oncologists. Officially, names were not mentioned, but based on the period when the medical director committed the acts, the primary suspect is the former medical director of Oncology, Nino Vasev. According to the prosecution, he is charged with seven criminal offenses of ‘abuse of official position and authority’, and one criminal offense of ‘fraud in office’. The organizational director is also a suspect for ‘fraud in office’. The three doctors are suspected of the same offense but as accomplices.

The police Union filed a criminal complaint against the commander of the Police Department in Mirkovci – The Police Union claims that there are suspicions of abuse of official position and authority for personal gain, to the detriment of others (employees). The reported leader acted beyond the limits of his authority and through unprofessional actions and misuse of his function the commander acted contrary to Articles 7, 10 and 14 of the Law on Internal Affairs, announced the Police Union.

Criminal complaint against the director of a high school for ‘abuse of official position and authority’ – The Internal Affairs Department in Kochani filed a criminal complaint with the Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office in Kochani against S.Z. (35) from Kochani due to reasonable suspicion of committing the criminal offense of “Abuse of official position and authority”. The reported individual in his capacity as the acting director of the municipal high school in Kochani, in April 2023, contrary to Article 40, paragraph 1 of the Law on Public Procurement, engaged a travel agency for a school robotics team to travel to the World Robotics Championship in Morocco without conducting a public procurement procedure. He paid the agency an amount of 296.960 denars, thus enabling the unlawful financial gain for 296.960 denars.

Ohrid’s resident attempted to bribe police officers, and receives a criminal report – The Ohrid Police Department filed a criminal report against a 60-year-old Ohrid resident due to reasonable suspicion of committing the criminal offense of ‘bribery’. During a traffic control on the highway in Kichevo, police officers stopped a freight vehicle ‘Mercedes’ with Ohrid license plates, which the reported individual was driving. During this, he left money in the traffic documents for the police officers intending to avoid official measures against him.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES FEBRUARY 2024

They mediated employment in the Agency for Administration: seven people "earned" criminal charges - Seven people, one from Prilep, four from Skopje and two from Gostivar, received criminal charges from the Ministry of Internal Affairs for several crimes. As announced by this institution, they are accused of "abuse of official position and authority", "accepting a bribe", "receiving a reward for illegal influence", "giving a bribe" and "giving a reward for illegal influence".

Investigation into racketeering association: Property of "Novomatrix" frozen, owner suspected of tax evasion - Upon the request of the Organized Crime Prosecutor's Office, the Basic Criminal Court Skopje imposed temporary measures prohibiting the disposal, disposal, and encumbrance of vehicles owned by the company "Salus Plus," formerly known as "Novomatrix," whose owner is Aleksandar Naumov. The decision was registered in the Central Register, indicating that, following the request of the Public Prosecutor's Office on October 27, 2023, the Criminal Court issued a decision on October 31, 2023, to impose temporary measures - a ban on the disposal, disposal, and encumbrance of motor vehicles due to suspicion of organized crime and tax evasion.

Professional soldier supplied phones to [prisoners](#) in Idrizovo - "The suspect in penitentiary institution Idrizovo - Skopje, as a professional soldier in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia, due to the declared state of emergency in the prison area, was engaged as an external-static security guard from the guard tower on the prison wall. In doing so, he exceeded the limits of his official authority with the intention to provide and enable the use of mobile phones and communication to two convicts in the closed section, to whom, according to prison regulations, the use of mobile phones was prohibited, without the supervision of prison police.

Policeman from the border crossing "Kjafasan" took [bribe](#), colleague covered it up - The Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations, and Professional Standards at the Ministry of Interior filed criminal charges against K.M. for suspicion of receiving bribes and G.B. for suspicion of assisting the perpetrator after committing a criminal offense.

"LIGHT" OCCURRENCES 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.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES APRIL 2024

17 [prison](#) police officers arrested for involvement in prisoner escape - In an action by the Basic Public Prosecutors' Office for Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption at the Ministry of Interior, around 17 prison police officers were arrested. The Basic Public Prosecutors' Office for Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption also confirmed that the specialized department of this prosecutor's office pursued a case involving police officers and prison police officers for committed criminal offenses.

The Ministry of Interior will file [two](#) criminal charges related to the elections, the prosecution has no reports of criminal offenses - "Based on previously filed reports, the Ministry of Interior has registered 6 violations and 2 criminal charges will be filed. One for the criminal offense "Violation of the Secrecy of Voting" under Article 163 of the Criminal Code and one for "Violation of Electoral Rights" provided for and punishable under Article 159 of the Criminal Code."

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES MAY 2024

Criminal Charges Against Former Director of Fund for Pension and Disability Insurance and Two Others: They Damaged the State Budget by Over 614,000 Euros - As reported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, criminal charges have been filed against D.B. (45) from Tetovo, due to suspected criminal offenses of "Abuse of the procedure for public call, awarding a public procurement contract or public-private partnership" and "Abuse of official position and authority," as well as against R.B. (72) and A.H. (40) from Tetovo, due to suspected involvement in "Aiding" under Article 24 in connection with the criminal offense "Abuse of the procedure for public call, awarding a public procurement contract or public-private partnership" under Article 275-v and "Abuse of official position and authority" under Article 353 of the Criminal Code.

Foreigners Report Two Police Officers for Bribery – Disciplinary Action Initiated - Disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against two police officers after foreign nationals reported them for soliciting a bribe. The Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations, and Professional Standards within the Ministry of Internal Affairs acted upon a received report from a foreign national for the criminal offense of "Accepting a bribe" under Article 357 of the Criminal Code against two police officers from the Traffic Safety Unit of the Skopje Police Department.

Criminal Charges Against the Director of a High School in Delchevo - The External Office for Criminal Investigations Delchevo has filed criminal charges against D.C. (52) from Delchevo, the director of a high school, due to a suspected criminal offense of "Negligent performance of duties." The accused, without conducting a transparent procedure for the procurement of goods and services, procured from several legal entities a total amount of 905,482 denars, whereas the Law on Public Procurement stipulates that the amount of procurements executed without conducting a public procurement procedure during the year must not exceed 12,000 euros in denar equal.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES JUNE 2024

Reaction to the absence of a consultative process for amending the system Law on the Organization of State Administration Bodies - The Platform of Civil Society Organizations against Corruption reacts to the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia regarding the closed and non-consultative process with stakeholders on the Draft Law Amending the Law on the Organization of State Administration Bodies. Additionally, the formation of three new ministries and the reorganization of the state administration system without prior in-depth analysis of the justification for the proposal are unacceptable to the Platform of Civil Society Organizations against Corruption. We emphasize that this negatively affects cooperation

and trust between civil society and policy makers. With this reaction, the Platform remains consistent with its previous position from 2022 that the reorganization of state administration is an extremely important process that must be based on principles of transparency, inclusiveness, and prior preparation of citizens for the systemic changes being initiated.

Inspector from Ministry of [Interior](#) accused of document falsification and misconduct - The Internal Control Department, Forensic Investigations, and Professional Standards at the Ministry of Interior filed a criminal complaint against Z.L., an independent inspector at the Regional Border Centers South, on suspicion of "misconduct in office" and "forging documents in special cases." According to the Ministry of Interior, as the chair of the disciplinary responsibility commission at RBC South and RBC West, he failed twice to initiate disciplinary proceedings against an employee within the legal deadline. Additionally, he falsified the signature of the deputy commission member on the decision to terminate disciplinary proceedings against the employee. The Internal Control Department will recommend disciplinary and procedural action for violation of work regulations, and the accused will be suspended from duty pending the completion of the investigation.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES JULY 2024

[Criminal](#) charges against five people for “Abuse of official position and authority” and against two people for “negligent work in the service” – On July 5, 2024 the Anti-Corruption unit of the Criminal investigations sector within the Department for Suppression of Organized and Serious Crime, in cooperation with the Criminal Police Department, submitted a criminal complaint to the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Skopje against: D.D.(55), M.G.(32), M.M.(64), K.V. (58) and A.D.(29), all from Skopje, on reasonable suspicion of committing the crime “Abuse of official position and authority,” as well as Z.I.(60) and B.B. (51) both from Skopje, on reasonable suspicion of committing the crime “negligent work in the service”.

[Criminal](#) charges against the director of a state student dormitory in Bitola for abusing her position and damaging the Ministry of Education and Science’s budget – The Bitola Department of Internal Affairs submitted a criminal complaint to the Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office against 57-year-old E.S. from Bitola, on reasonable suspicion of committing four crimes: “abuse of official position and authority,” negligent work in the service,” “forgery of a document,” and “Use of a document with false content,” all from the Criminal Code, reported the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The accused, in her capacity as the responsible person, director of the state student dormitory in Bitola, abused her official position and authority and performed negligent work in the service. On multiple occasions, together with the former secretary of the dormitory, she left the country in a private vehicle while recording in the officials’ vehicle logs that she was at work or on official travel within the country. Furthermore, she conducted several official trips aboard in the official vehicle along with individuals who were not employed at the dormitory, without approval decisions from the Management Board- stated the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

To avoid a fine, they asked for a treat, police officers recorded taking a [bribe](#) – Three police officers from the police station “Centar” have been charged with accepting a bribe, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed. They are suspected that on July 4, 2024, around 11:00 PM on Dame Gruev Street in Skopje, while performing their official duties, they requested and received a gift for themselves to avoid performing an official act, i.e., to not record a traffic violation, thus tarnishing the reputation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES FOR AUGUST 2024

Criminal charges for [abuse](#) of official position against the acting director of Public utility Company “Gazi Baba 2007” – The Ministry of Internal Affairs filed criminal charges against V.M. (31) on

reasonable suspicion of committing a criminal offense under Article 353 of the Criminal Code-“Abuse of official position and authority.” In 2021, by failing to perform his official duties as the acting director of the Public Utility Company “Gazi Baba 2007” Skopje, he caused damage to the budget of the Municipality of Gazi Baba for 1,218,00 denars.

Bus driver from Tetovo detained for offering a [bribe](#) – At the Romanovce toll station heading towards Skopje, police officers from the Mobile Unit for Compensatory Measures of the Department for Border Affairs and Migration stopped a bus with Tetovo license plates, owned by a legal entity from Tetovo, driven by A.S. from Tetovo. During the control and inspection of the bus, the driver offered money to the police officer to stop the inspection and control, after which he was immediately detained on suspicion of committing a criminal offense under Article 353 of the Criminal Code. In coordination with the public prosecutor, appropriate charges will be filed against him.

Online platform for combating [corruption](#) in the urban planning process presented-Citizens can familiarize themselves with the basics of urban plans on the online platform of the O2 Initiative through informative videos, infographics and examples of specific cases of corruption in urban planning. The platform also provides examples of what, where and how to report and submit a complaint, initiative, request, or appeal, as well as the steps that can be taken afterward. On the platform, citizens can also directly report corruption and get information on how to take active measures.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES SEPTEMBER 2024

A preliminary investigation has been [opened](#) for Judge Elvedin Ferati, who altered his grades at Tetovo University – A preliminary investigation has been initiated for Judge Elvedin Ferati from the Basic Court in Tetovo after the State Educational Inspectorate discovered that he altered his grades at the State University of Tetovo by crossing them out and correcting them. The investigation is being conducted by the Skopje Public Prosecutor’s Office. “The Skopje Public Prosecutor’s Office is acting on information provided by the State Educational Inspectorate and is taking steps in the preliminary investigation to examine all circumstances,” said the Prosecutor’s Office. His case was revealed last December by the Anti-Corruption Commission as a part of a large audit that counted faculties and graduates who had been awarded diplomas with an insufficient number of credits.

Upon the [initiative](#) of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, the Skopje Public Prosecution’s Office has begun proceedings against the former organizational director of the Toxicology Clinic – The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption announced that the Skopje Public Prosecutors ‘Office, following the SCPC’s initiative for criminal prosecution, accepted the proposal, opened a case, and began proceedings based on an indictment proposal against the organizational director of the University Clinic for Toxicology. According to the indictment proposal, the accused is charged with abuse of official position and authority under Article 353, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code.

The [Supreme](#) Court, through amendments to its Rules of procedure, has opened general session to the public and media – “The proposed changes are based on the constitutional and legal principles of judicial transparency, the highest international legal norms integrated into domestic legislation, the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights, the standards of the European Court of Human Rights, international judicial documents, and the efforts and activities of the Council for Open Judiciary,” said the President of the Supreme Court, Besa Ademi, while explaining the amendments. A general session was held at the Supreme Court with the sole agenda item being a proposal to amend and supplement the Rules of Procedure of the Supreme Court of the Republic of North Macedonia.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES OCTOBER 2024

Sixteen officials suspected of accepting bribes, and two for abuse of office - Under the direction of a specialized prosecutor from the division for prosecuting crimes committed by individuals with police authority and members of the prison police, searches were conducted at 26 locations in the Strumica-Gevgelija region. Fourteen customs officials from the Customs Administration of North Macedonia, one retired customs officer, and one police officer were detained. During the searches, money received as bribes was found, totaling 50,000 euros. The Public Prosecutor’s Office issued an order to conduct an investigation against 16 individuals suspected of committing the crime of accepting bribes under Article 357, Paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code, while a shortened procedure will be conducted for two individuals reported for abuse of office under Article 353 of the Criminal Code.

Charges Filed for Embezzlement in JSP Skopje - The Basic Public Prosecutor's Office Skopje filed an indictment against three individuals accused of continuous embezzlement in the workplace under Article 354, Paragraph 5, in connection with Paragraphs 3 and 1 of the Criminal Code. The three co-defendants, as responsible employees of the Public Transport Company – Skopje, allegedly appropriated funds entrusted to them in the workplace, amounting to 23,133,245 denars, resulting in significant unlawful gain.

Criminal Charges for Abuse of Official position Filed Against 12 Police Officers and Six State Roads Employees - The Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations, and Professional Standards within the Ministry of Internal Affairs submitted criminal charges to the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for prosecuting organized crime and corruption. The charges were filed against 18 officials, including twelve police officers from the Mobile Unit for Road Traffic Safety and six employees from the toll booth at Romanovce under the Public Enterprise for State Roads, due to reasonable suspicion of abuse of office and authority under Article 353 of the Criminal Code.

Foreign national suspected of bribery at border crossing Blace, Prosecutor’s Office Requests Detention - The Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office Skopje issued an order to conduct an investigation against a Turkish citizen suspected of bribery under Article 358, Paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code. On October 30, at the “Dolno Blace” border crossing, the 50-year-old suspect allegedly offered a gift directly to an official to perform a service they should not have executed.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES NOVEMBER 2024

AJM files complaint against Bitola judge for Improper conduct toward journalists- The Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) has filed a complaint within the Skopje Basic Criminal Court and the Judges’ Association, requesting appropriate measures for the unprofessional and improper behavior of Judge Cvetanka Nikodinovska from the Basic Court in Bitola towards journalists and media workers. Judge Nikodinovska prohibited journalists from SakamDaKazham.mk and TV Telma from filming and photographing the trial of the president of a Bulgarian club at the Basic Court in Bitola, even though they had received authorization from the Supreme Court. Outside the courtroom, court staff demanded that journalists hand over their phones to judicial police officers and that the cameraman left his camera at the reception desk. While journalists were allowed to attend the hearing as citizens, their attendance was recorded in the minutes as members of the press. AJM stated, “Although the journalists had Supreme Court approval to cover the case, the judge obstructed their right to report, violating transparency principles and the public’s right to be informed.”

Criminal charges for negligence in service and dismissal of 15 high-ranking Interior Ministry Officials - The Department of Internal Control, Criminal Investigations, and Professional Standards at the Ministry of Internal Affairs has filed criminal charges within the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime and Corruption against 25 Ministry employees for suspected negligence in service under Article 353-v of the Criminal Code. The accused, served as chairpersons and members of the Commission for Reviewing and Preparing Proposals for Firearm Permits in Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo,

and Bitola from 2021 to 2024. They allegedly acted negligently by issuing positive recommendations for firearm purchase permits contrary to the provisions of the Law on Firearms.

Criminal charges against employee of National Forests for accepting bribes - The Strumica Police Department has filed criminal charges against a clerk at the "National Forests" public enterprise—Belasica branch—on suspicion of accepting bribes over the past six years from a local resident seeking logging permits. The Ministry of Interior stated that the suspect abused his official position by demanding and receiving payments, either directly or through intermediaries. After receiving the bribe, the clerk contacted another individual authorized to issue logging permits for the Ograzhden mountain and requested the issuance of the permit. On November 6, 2024, the suspect was arrested by police while accepting a payment. Searches conducted at his home and two other locations uncovered evidence connected to the alleged crimes. Following his arrest, a Strumica Basic Court judge ordered 30 days of detention.

“LIGHT” OCCURRENCES DECEMBER 2024

24 individuals cause Budget damage of over 1.5 million denars The Financial Crime Unit filed charges against S.N. (40) from Skopje and 23 others for abusing their positions and concealing criminal activities. S.N., a financial associate in the Government's General and Common Affairs Service, manipulated payroll calculations for forest police officers between November 2021 and April 2022. He inflated holiday work hours in payroll forms, despite knowing the employees did not work the claimed hours.

Indictment of the deputy VMRO-Pece Milevski from Bitola, as a director, DPMNE paid money for the performance of employees, and "Vodovod" worked with injuries - the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office from Bitola indicted Pece Milevski, former director of the Bitola Public Enterprise "Vodovod", current deputy from the ranks of VMRO-DPMNE, for abuse of official position. The indictment was submitted to the competent court for when he was acting director of the enterprise, for the continuation of the crime – Abuse of official position and authority from Article 353, item 3 in connection with paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code. "The accused, in 2022 and 2023 as acting director of a public company, overstepped the limits of his official powers and on several occasions paid additional funds for work performance to six different people employed in the company without a legal basis, despite the fact that the company was continuously operating at a loss.

Criminal charges against two former directors of the Innovation Fund - Criminal charges have been filed against two former directors of the Innovation and Technological Development Fund, Festim Halili and Kosta Petrov. In the first case, it is a project called "Green Hoyo", co-financed by the Fund, which was to collect data through IoT devices to use a smart home solution to make a more energy efficient office/house/apartment. There is a well-founded suspicion that the Fund was damaged for 4,000,000 denars, because "abuse of official position" was committed by the former director Halili. The audit of FITR's work resulted in another criminal complaint, also against the former director of the Fund - Kosta Petrov. In this case, it is a project of "Frotirka" from Delchevo financed by FITR, which was not completed, but was paid, and Petrov allegedly did not react accordingly.

Criminal charges against 12 Macedonian citizens and 1 foreigner for smuggling luxury vehicles, falsification of documents and abuse of official position - the Ministry of the Interior informed that after orders issued by a judge for preliminary proceedings and a public prosecutor in order to prove crimes related to crime with luxury motor vehicles, 10 searches were carried out on 10 people, of which seven are in Skopje, one in Dojran, one in Negotino and one in Bitola, during which six people were deprived of their freedom: K.S., N.P., M.S. and D.I. from Skopje, V.C. by Star Dojran and N.G. from Bitola. According to previously confiscated 5 vehicles and collected material evidence, the Ministry of the Interior will submit a report to the Public Prosecutor's Office against 13 persons, two of whom are former employees of the Ministry of the Interior, and one is still an employee of the Ministry of the Interior, where during the night and the morning the persons were brought before a judge at previous procedure.

Criminal charges against a police officer due to abuse of official position - the Department of Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption, Specialized Department for Prosecution of Criminal Offenses Committed by Persons with Police Powers and members of the Skopje prison police, filed a criminal complaint against D.M. due to the existence of grounds for suspicion of a committed crime "abuse of official position and authority", punishable under Article 353 of the Criminal Code. The reported, police officer, performing work tasks as a documentarian, by exceeding his official authority, in September 2023 prepared an official act with false content, abusing the signature of the head of the Tetovo Police Station.