

HOW CAN SOCIETIES CONTROL CORRUPTION? THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

EVENT SUMMARY

On March 8, 2016, the Wilson Center's Global Europe Program hosted a discussion on the successes and challenges of combating corruption in Europe with the **Alina Mungiu-Pippidi**, Professor at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. The event was moderated by **Eliot Sorel**, Senior Advisor for the Ion Ratiu Democracy Award. The discussion focused on Europe's efforts to spread values such as rule of law, democracy and good governance in its member states and neighborhood countries.

On March 8, 2016, the Global Europe Program hosted a discussion with **Alina Mungiu-Pippidi**, a Professor of Democracy Studies at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, Germany, and chair of both the European Research Centre for Anti-Corruption and State Building, and the Policy Pillar of the EU five-year research project ANTICORRP. Mungiu-Pippidi's recently published book *The Quest for Good Governance: How Societies Develop Control of Corruption*, was the focus of her talk. The discussion and subsequent question and answer session were moderated by **Eliot Sorel**, Senior Advisor to the Ion Ratiu Democracy Award at the Wilson Center.

Mungiu-Pippidi began with her definition of a society that lacks corruption as one in which positions and power within both the public and private sectors are awarded based on merit, rather than through personal connections or coercion. Ensuring that nations take measures to combat the latter is crucial, as the level of corruption in a country relates directly to its inability to govern effectively, maintain trust among the governed, and retain innovative thinkers. Additionally, Mungiu-Pippidi argued, the prevalence of corruption in a national European government inhibits a country's integration in the EU. Though scholars typically assume that joining the bloc will help states become less corrupt, the cases of Greece, Italy, and Spain prove otherwise. Thus, the European Union's ability to promote liberal democratic norms does not necessarily translate into their implementation within individual member states.

People's perceptions of national governments and the popular view of the European Union are directly linked, Mungiu-Pippidi noted. With few exceptions, a lack of trust in states correlates to a lack of confidence in the EU. Citizens use specific measurements to gauge how corrupt governments are. The use of bribes is not as widespread a barometer as the use of networks to attain goals. Mungiu-Pippidi pointed out that Western Europeans tend to believe that they are being treated more equally under their systems than those living in Post-Soviet states, Mediterranean nations, Balkan countries, or new and non-EU members.

There have, however, been improvements regarding favoritism as a path to success. For example, in Romania, particularism in competition for contracting fell from 57% in 2007 to 39% in 2013. Mungiu-Pippidi believes this is not necessarily a "success story," but demonstrates that improvement is possible.

Remarkably, laws specifically designed to combat corruption – regarding, for example, party finance regulation, financial disclosure, freedom of information, immunity, and electoral legislation – have little to no impact. Rather, a balance between discretion by those in power and constraints such as an autonomous judiciary, independent media, reduced bureaucratic red tape, reduced trade barriers, fiscal transparency, and an engaged, demanding, easily mobilized public, is more likely to ensure the government is fair and responsive to the governed – and, therefore, less corrupt.

Drafted by Jamie Sheasley, Global Europe Program