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MEDIA IMAGE OF CORRUPTION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Corruption has long existed as an all-around social phenomenon characterized by complexity and action that takes place “far from the public eye”. Various forms of corrupt activity, regardless of whether they are manifested in the public or private sector, threaten the values of every society. Although originally associated with the state and (its) officials with public powers, there is more and more talk about corporate corruption that manifests itself in the private sector or the area of overlap between the public and private spheres. The author’s premise is that the media plays a crucial role in combating corruption through the media discourse that shapes public perception and reality of this issue. The objective is to outline the characteristics of the media portrayal of corruption. The discussion focuses on the media’s contribution to fighting corruption and also addresses the obstacles that hinder media coverage, resulting in a distorted representation of corruption.

Keywords: corruption in the private sector, media, discourse, investigative journalism

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1. Introductory remarks

Corruption is a social phenomenon as old as society itself, human nature and man's egoistic need that cries out for "more". Over time, this socially negative activity was called corruption. Probably, with the development of corrupt activities, the process of its extermination began, as can often hear or read (this is supported by the understandings of thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Montesquieu). Nevertheless, the "extermination" of corruption, no matter how desirable and useful it is for any society, is just another utopia, so it is accordingly more appropriate to say that the fight against it has begun and its reduction to the smallest possible extent, first only morally, and then and legal principles and means. It is omnipresent phenomenon of a transnational character, which today is the subject of discussion at all social levels and in all areas, whether public and private or economic and political. It is a global concern that "undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to human rights violations, distorts markets, impairs quality of life, and enables the flourishing of organized crime, terrorism, and other threats to human security" (Matić Bošković, 2018: 74). The nature of corruption is such that corrupt activities usually involve two parties whose interests are that they and their corrupt activities remain secret and undetected, which significantly limits the detection and proof of these criminal acts. The public usually plays a significant role in elucidating these activities, where a considerable share belongs to the media¹. In addition, the media is recognized as an important entity that exercises "supervision" over the implementation of laws and other mechanisms of the fight against corruption.

The ways in which knowledge is gained about various social phenomena, which include corruption as a criminal activity, are either one's own experience in the sense of experiencing a social phenomenon or obtaining knowledge from different sources. It is in this place that the media is recognized as an important source. Through the media, citizens win knowledge from different spheres of social life, including knowledge about criminality. The amount of that knowledge, as well as the completeness, objectivity and truthfulness of the reporting depending on the topic. Not only is reporting on crime different from reporting on other social phenomena, but there are also differences in reporting on different forms of crime. Due to its nature of secrecy, which benefits both parties involved in corrupt activities, corruption is one of the topics for which the basic prerequisite for reporting is the discovery of such activities.

1 As a good example of the role of the media, one can take the intensive media coverage of a case from the 1960s that contributed to the development of awareness of organized crime in the USA (see more in: Banović, B. (2016). Organizovani kriminal kao aktuelna bezbednosna pretnja [Organized Crime as a Current Security Threat]. *Međunarodni problemi*, 68(2-3), 172-192).

The problem that arises concerns the large dark figure that exists due to the concealment of this form of criminality. Another reason for the distorted image created by the media is the unintentional or intentional (manipulative) media creation of a distorted and wrong image of corruption among public opinion. Hence, an attempt to present the media image of corruption in the private sector emerges as a relevant topic.

This paper aims at showing the media construction of corruption, more specifically the way in which the media reports on corrupt activities that take place in the private sector, between private entities or between private and public (state) entities.

The work has two parts. The first unit presents the phenomenon of corruption without dealing with it in detail, its typology, characteristics, causes and consequences. Considering the topic of the work, within the first unit, a special review was made on corruption in the private sector or so-called corporate corruption. The second and central part is dedicated to media image of corruption in the private sector, considering investigative journalism as a special type of media reporting.

2. Understanding the phenomenon of corruption: case of private sector

Jain (2001: 71) analysed the rich material and established that even then, the number of academic articles on this topic was expanding, and at that moment several international organizations decided to fight against various forms corruption². In addition, there has been a significant increase in the international political community's interest in corruption. Examples include the adoption of documents such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Convention against Bribery, the World Bank's documents like Anticorruption Initiatives, or the establishment of the United Nations Development Program – Anti-Corruption for Peaceful and Inclusive Societies.

At international level, the only legally binding universal instrument for the fight against corruption is the *United Nations Convention against Corruption*³. This document does not define corruption anywhere⁴ (although the possibility

2 About the fight against corruption in Europe see: Vega, Dulce M. Santana. (2017). The fight against corruption in Europe: lights and shadows. *CRIMEN-časopis za krivične nauke* (3) & *Revija za kriminologiju i krivično pravo*, 55(2-3), pp. 242-267.

3 United Nations. (2004). *United Nations Convention against Corruption*. The convention has been ratified in our country with *Law on Ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption*, SCG Official Journal-International Treaties, no. 12/2005.

4 Nevertheless, the Convention prescribes two forms of action that states should recognize as a criminal offense of corruption in the public and private sectors, by adopting legal and other necessary measures (see more in: United Nations. (2004). *United Nations Convention against Corruption*).

of its occurrence is recognized in both the public and the private sector), but highlights its consequences and its transnational character, which requires the involvement of all states, and in general all entities, regardless of the prevention and eradication of corruption. whether they come from the public or private sector (United Nations Convention against Corruption, 2004).

In addition to the mentioned document, the *Criminal Law Convention on Corruption*⁵ and the *Civil Law Convention on Corruption*⁶ are also important for the subject of this paper. Analysing the provisions of Law⁷ by which the first Convention was ratified, it can be seen that the definition of corruption was missed, with the fact that the actions that are considered corrupt actions are listed (Articles 2-15 of the Law on Confirmation of the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption). With the adoption of the latter Convention, a step forward was made, so from Law⁸ which ratified this convention in our country, the definition of corruption can be extracted according to which it is defined as "requesting, offering, giving or accepting, directly or indirectly, a bribe or any other undue advantage or prospect thereof, which distorts the proper performance of any duty or behaviour required of the recipient of the bribe, the undue advantage or the prospect thereof" (Article 2 of the Law on Confirmation of the Civil Law Convention on Corruption). In the national law that was adopted in the area of the fight against corruption - the Law on the Prevention of Corruption⁹, corruption is defined as "is a relationship which occurs when a public office or social status or influence are used for acquiring personal benefits for oneself or another" (Article 2 of the Law on the Prevention of Corruption). The way corruption is defined in these three documents, is not limited only to the public sector.

The World Bank's definition of corruption, which is commonly cited, describes it as the exploitation of a public position to secure personal benefits (World Bank, 1997: 102). Yet, as corruption is not only manifested in the public, but also

5 Council of Europe. (1999a). *Criminal Law Convention on Corruption* (ETS No. 173). European Union. The convention has been ratified in our country with *Law on Confirmation of Criminal Law Convention on Corruption*. SRJ Official Register-International Treaties, no. 2/2002 i SCG Official Journal-International Treaties, no. 18/2005.

6 Council of Europe. (1999b). *Civil Law Convention on Corruption* (ETS No. 174). European Union. The convention has been ratified in our country with *Law on Confirmation Civil Law Convention on Corruption*, RS Official Journal-International Treaties, no. 102/2007.

7 *Law on Confirmation of Criminal Law Convention on Corruption*. SRJ Official Register-International Treaties, no. 2/2002 i SCG Official Journal-International Treaties, no. 18/2005.

8 *Law on Confirmation Civil Law Convention on Corruption*, RS Official Journal-International Treaties, no. 102/2007.

9 *Law on Prevention of Corruption*. Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 35/2019, 88/2019, 11/2021, 94/2021 and 14/2022.

in the private sector, this explicitly set definition and similar ones (which include only public powers) can be considered too narrow. This limitation is pointed out by the Tanzi (Tanzi, 1995a according to Tanzi, 1998: 8), who offering a more neutral definition according to which "the intentional noncompliance with arm's length relationship aimed at deriving some advantage from this behaviour for oneself or for related individuals", which violates the principle of impartiality. Therefore, it is necessary to 1) break the relationship, which as a rule should be neutral - equal, and 2) obtain a benefit for oneself or another person close to one's self. The mentioned necessarily includes the intent and intention to act with the aim of obtaining benefits. An important factor that Tanzi points to is the fact that corrupt activity does not have to result in a bribe, it is enough that it fulfills the criteria of usefulness, opening the issue, still current today, of how to distinguish between a gift and a bribe and whether there should be a difference at all (1998: 9).

Jain (2001: 73) points to the problem of defining corruption as a difficulty that rises during its study, pointing out that the definition usually ends with determining what is shaped (determined) and measured¹⁰. As for many other phenomena in the field of security, there is no single and generally accepted definition, that is, the understanding of corruption. The reason for this lies primarily in its character, complexity and dynamism, as well as the fact that significant variables affect it are the time, social and political context. The number of definitions probably corresponds to the number of authors who dealt with epistemological, sociological, legalistic or any other definition of this phenomenon. Thus, although the listing of definitions from broader to narrower and specific to nation-states or even lower entities could be continued, it will be omitted. Also, at this point, the typology of corruption, or its characteristics and causes, which could certainly be talked about a lot¹¹, will be omitted, in order to focus on the presence of this phenomenon in the private sector.

As demonstrated thus far, corruption was initially linked with the state and its institutions, including fields such as politics, justice, security, administration, health, or education. However, this issue extends beyond the public sector and has been

10 Tanzi (1998: 3) believes that corruption by itself cannot be measured, but the public's perception of corruption can. Public opinion surveys appear as a key instrument for determining public attitudes towards corruption.

11 Read about the above in: Tanzi, V. (1998). *Corruption around the world: causes, consequences, scope, and cures*, WP/98/63. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund; Begović, B. (2007). *Ekonomska analiza korupcije* [Economic Analysis of Corruption]. Beograd: Centar za liberalno-demokratske studije; Ćirić, J., Reljanović, M., Nenadić, N., Jovanović, M., Dobrašinović, D. & Pejović, D. (2010). *KORUPCIJA: problemi i prevazilaženje problema* [CORRUPTION: Problems and Overcoming Problems]. Beograd: Udruženje javnih tužilaca i zamenika javnih tužilaca Srbije; Joković, M. S. (2018). Tipologije korupcije [Typologies of corruption]. *Srpska politička misao*, 62(4), pp. 267-284.

observed in the private sector as well as the interface between public and private sectors. Some activities that open the possibility of corrupt activities are public procurement procedures, investment of private capital in the state, influence on the adoption of certain regulations and even laws, use of public companies as informal and (often) uncontrolled sources of income for the realization of political (party) or personal financial interest or searching for information relevant to future investment (Milanović, 2007: 2-3). Tenders (public procurement) as one of the key areas in which the public and private sectors enter into financial interaction, represent one of the most critical economic activities in terms of the risk of irregularities and corruption (Public Procurement Office, 2022: 41) and thus are probably the most common ground for potential machinations which lead to corruption¹². These machinations usually have two directions of action - determining the price of services or determining conditions that are defined so that only an offer from a certain (pre-selected) bidder is suitable. Stojiljković (2010: 216) notes that there is no evidence that private monopolies are less corrupt than public ones. Corruption in business is much more than simple bribery. Some examples are bribery, extortion and solicitation, gifts and hospitality, fees and commissions, collusion, information and influence trading, embezzlement, favoritism, nepotism, cronyism, clientelism (UNODC, 2017). According to one study, in 2011 and 2013, "private companies" and "banks" were added as separate institutions when studying the prevalence of corruption (Wysmulek, 2017: 2601).

From the provisions related to active and passive bribery (Articles 7 and 8 of the Law on Confirmation of the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption), it is possible to derive elements whose existence is necessary in order to determine a certain action as an act of corruption in private sector. These are, that one party performs a business function; that directly or indirectly promises, offers or gives, that is, or receive or accept any undeserved benefit or otherwise promise; that the benefit or promise is intended for him or another person; and such conduct is directed toward another party that manages or works for private sector entities. In addition to the above, one always acts with intention by acting or refraining from acting, which violate the duty a person is performing.

Corruption in the private sector can be explained as a special type of corruption called corporate corruption. Brooks and associates in explaining this type

12 See more about corruption related to public procurement in: Tanjević, N., & Špiler, M. (2016). Ključni rizici za korupciju u javnim nabavkama i protiv mere u pravnom okviru Republike Srbije [Key Risks for Corruption in Public Procurement and Countermeasures in the Legal Framework of the Republic of Serbia]. *Bezbednost*, 58(2), pp. 131-150; Varinac, S. (2012). *Korupcijska mapa javnih nabavki u Republici Srbiji* [Corruption Map of Public Procurement in the Republic of Serbia]. Beograd: Organizacija za evropsku bezbednost i saradnju.

of corruption use the definitions given by other authors and on that track indicate that corporate corruption “can occur between private businesses and suppliers or service providers but can also involve illegal behaviour by corporate officials for private monetary gain” (See Brooks et al., 2013: 23).

Corporate corruption can be defined as “as the misuse of formal power by a corporate representative for personal and/or organization benefit” (Castro, Phillips, Ansari, 2020). More specifically, it is about the deliberate behaviour (action or inaction) of an individual, who, by using his function, violating organizational norms on his own behalf or on behalf of the organization in which he is engaged, with the aim of achieving benefits for himself, another or that organization. If we start from the fact that the motivation for corrupt actions can be found in human nature or something like cannot be eradicated. It remains to develop mechanisms to prevent corrupt actions. One of the mechanisms that could play a very significant role is the organizational (security) culture, which would develop awareness of the need, within that, develop ways to protect the established and adopted values of the organization.

There are several reasons why corporate corruption deserves to be recognized as a separate type of corruption. First, in the government (public) and private sectors differ the culture, management style, logic, and incentives. Second, unlike governments, corporations and private entities face competitive pressures that can affect the likelihood of corruption. Finally, corporations play a different role in corruption as they are the “supply-side” that, through their financial management system, often become a source of funds that corrupt governments or other private entities (Castro, Phillips, Ansari, 2020). In any case, corruption in the private sector not only negatively affect the entity that is threatened by corrupt activity, but also negatively affect the overall social well-being.

The dissemination of information to the public about corruption, both in the private sector and more broadly, is crucial to raise awareness of the prevalence and severe consequences of such criminal activity, and to uphold fundamental societal values. In this context, the media plays a significant role in achieving these objectives. Since 2011, in corruption research, the mass media has been recognized as another “player” that contributes to the perception of corruption, as an entity that citizens believe will deal with corruption (Wysmulek, 2017: 2601). However, in order to fulfill their role, it is necessary to fulfill preconditions such as freedom of the press and independence of the media. In this regard, free access to the media is recognized as one of the factors necessary to regulate the development of democracies (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011: 32).

3. Media image of corruption

As one of the social structures, the media “communicate” with the members of the community in which they operate, that is, they market their products - texts on the most diverse topics of social life. However, with globalization and the emergence of the “global village”, the media have gained the opportunity to market their texts to a much wider, larger global market. Like the educational social system, the media are involved in the shaping of culture, that is, the shaping of the opinions of individuals, but also of social masses. The ways in which reality is presented in the media can be defined as media discourse (O’keeffe, 2006: 1). Discourse should be seen as a process that plays a vital role in the constitution of people’s reality, and for the understanding of which it is necessary to see the text itself as a product of that process, interactions and context in which the text is embedded (Talbot, 2007: 3, 10). In the context of this paper, one can talk about the media discourse about corruption in the private sector, that is, the process of creating texts about corruption that shape the public’s perception of this phenomenon.

When reporting on corruption, the media are expected to inform citizens about corruption and its consequences so that they can act, support government programs to combat corruption, act preventively: they create an environment in which does not welcome corruption. The aforementioned activities are indeed the activities that we as citizens expect from the media, as a segment of society involved in the detection and suppression of corruption.

When investigating corruption, the goal does not have to be to prove a specific case of corruption, but can also be to indicate that “something” enables corrupt behaviour. In this way, journalists can, on the one hand, publicly point out the problem, and on the other hand, encourage the preventive action to prevent a specific case of corruption (Nedeljković Valić et al., 2015: 44). It should be noted that it is important to continue reporting during the entire court proceedings, that is, until the specific case is resolved, pointing out the mechanisms that contributed to it, and which ultimately fulfils and justifies the media’s role in reporting to the public and shaping public opinion. The use of media discourse on corruption is recognized as one of the crucial activities of the fight against corruption, which would aim to increase the pressure on politicians to support government reforms regarding this fight (Huther, Shah, 2000: 12).

Investigative journalism, as a modality of journalistic dealing with “hidden” forms of corruption, is a significant way of determining the real scale of corruption, as Ilić (2017: 232) pointed out in her work, having in mind the large dark figure of this form criminality. The dark figure should not be surprising, given that the perpetrators of this type of criminal activity (both sides) are usually not

comfortable with the disclosure of the execution. However, by studying accounting reports, data and documents obtained from their own sources. By interviewing lawyers, competitors, the police and the authorities, and all this while keeping the information strictly confidential until its publication, journalists contribute to uncovering corruption. Therefore, the authors note that something could be learned from the working procedures of the media, given that a significant part of corruption is discovered by journalists (Gottschalk, Gunnesdal, 2018: 116). What is of key importance? It is a wide set of knowledge and skills that appear as a prerequisite for media reporting, especially investigative journalism. Adequate and responsible reporting on corruption cannot be expected if the person doing it is not comprehensively prepared for such activity.

In addition to investigative journalism, there is also the talk of “civil journalism”, which opens the possibility for citizens to contribute transparency through social networks and be involved in the fight against corruption. Some experts suggest that this type of reporting offers advantages over traditional media (Jha, Sarangi, 2017: 61), particularly in situations where traditional media may be compromised by state control or influenced by those in positions of power, or where a story may be underreported (Bertot, Jaeger, Grimes, 2010). However, social networks can be used to publish different types of data on various corrupt activities, both in the public and private sectors, their use is not without potential risks. Free access to social networks opens up the possibility of their abuse in the sense of creating content that is not true. In addition, this type of media can also be censored or used for government propaganda purposes, thus limiting their ability to report relevantly on corruption. When it comes to the scope of reporting and research on corruption, the authors have different views. For instance, Nedeljković believes that the public does not have enough high-quality journalistic research on corruption, nor reporting on trials related to this topic, both due to the lack of permanent court reporters, and due to the fact that it is often reported only on those trials whose actors have a sensationalist character, while Madžar points out that “corruption as a topic is abundantly represented in local media” (Madžar, 2014: 7; Nedeljković Valić et al., 2015: 5). It should be borne in mind that the above-mentioned views refer to our areas and that they are insufficient to make any more general conclusions, both for our areas and for the world. However, the extent of the media image, without neglecting its content, is conditioned by various “obstacles” that the media face, some of which are presented in the following text. At the same time, these “obstacles” can be understood as the characteristics of the media side of corruption.

In recent years, and perhaps even decades, the media has been criticized for being in most cases “puppets of the authorities”, which instead of contributing to the transparency of the state apparatus and the private sector, often serve individuals

or groups to publish information about the corrupted parties opposed to them. This practice exists whether it is about economic or political groups, whether they operate in the public or private sector. We are witnesses that our country is not exempt from this kind of environment, which was also noted in the document entitled *Report on pressures and control of the media in Serbia*¹³, which was prepared and published in September 2011 by the Council for Combating Corruption¹⁴. Four years later, the Anti-Corruption Council identified and singled out five systemic problems of media transparency and independence in the Republic of Serbia (non-transparency of media ownership; non-transparency of funding, economic influence through the budget, tax incentives and other indirect forms of financing with public money; problems of media privatization and uncertain status of public services; censorship and self-censorship; tabloidization) emphasizing that the list of real problems probably does not end with this number (Council for Combating Corruption, 2014: 7). Due to these problems, media content is usually not the result of free, objective, professional or investigative journalism. So far, document of this type have not been published again, and if we take into account the fact that the *National Strategy for the Struggle against corruption* ceased to be in force since 2018, we can ask the question, what is being done in our country regarding the suppression of corruption, including the issue of pressure and control of the media by the powerful in the public and private sector? According to data from 2010, 44% of the adult population believe that the practice of bribery often or very often occurs in the media sector (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011: 60). It is clear that corruption has also affected the media, which must not be forgotten when considering the media image of this form of crime. The media are often owned by companies that are involved in corruption, so they are intertwined with politics and the market. Under such circumstances, corruption "consolidates the collusions between large businesses, top politicians, high-ranking public officials and journalists" creating something that can be called the "privatization of corruption" (Rayner, 2012: 264).

In addition to the influence and control of the media by the state or private entities closely related to corruption, the problems that can be observed have a somewhat different character. When they report on crime in general, violent crime is always more emphasized, while little attention is paid to the crimes of the rich and powerful (Friedrichs, 2010: 19). Ilić (2013: 232) who also starts from the

13 See more at: <http://www.antikorupcija-savet.gov.rs/izvestaji/cid1028-1681/predstavljen-izvestaj-opriscima-i-kontroli-medija-u-srbiji>.

14 Although there is a section "Media on corruption" on the Council's official website, it contains the latest news from 2015 (see at: <http://www.antikorupcija-savet.gov.rs/sr-Cyrl-CS/rekli-su/cid1040/index/> and <http://www.antikorupcija-savet.gov.rs/sr-Cyrl-CS/dogaaji/cid1042/index/>).

assumption of inadequate reporting on corruption, pointed out that corruption in media reporting is rarely linked to white-collar crime, and as a result important features of this phenomenon are neglected. Unlike the over-emphasized reporting of corruption in sectors such as education, justice and health, the media ignore various abuses in the economy and the banking sector, as a result of which the true extent of white-collar crime is not seen, pointing out to corrupt activities.

In a similar way, the media often avoids linking crime in general, and even corruption itself, to corporations. A deviant organization, according to Benediktsson, when it sees that a high level of supervision is inevitable, points to corrupt CEOs, that is, individuals. Scandals in which the offender is a corporation will not offer newspaper editors the sensationalism that the media, that is, editors, strive for. And so, on the one hand, many corporations cut off all ties with the perpetrators of illegal acts and divert attention from corporate injustices to individual ones, while on the other hand, the media remains to focus and report on the corrupt behaviour of individuals, but not corporations (Benediktsson, 2010: 2207).

When reporting on corrupt activities, journalists insert the texts into a "specific framework", making the texts less complex and unclear, and enabling citizens to understand them and engage morally and emotionally. Referring to the ideological role of the media that several scholars have observed. Breit points out that media texts play a vital role in the (re)production of corruption (2010: 4). The mentioned "specific framework" is almost always characterized by sensationalism. Therefore, the media image of corruption is greatly influenced by the desire for more sensational headlines and news content, in order not to attract the attention of the largest possible audience, thereby violating the principles of media work. In this context, often unverified information about corruption is launched, which is easily receptive to the ears of ordinary citizens (Ćirić et al., 2010: 53). Radojičić notes that economic crime and corruption attract a lot of attention from the media and the public, as well as the fact that negative phenomena are often sensationalized in the media, while positive messages and results are lost sight of. Mentioned sensationalism will be heightened and boosted when reporting on problematic organizational activities involving potentially public interest. In addition, such cases will appear in the media and be articulated as cases of corruption (Breit, 2010: 4), rather than cases without public interest.

With everything stated so far, if we were to look for factors that influence the media's reporting on corruption which in some way get through the "obstacles" mentioned in the text advertising policies, market needs or readers' interests, priorities in reporting, budget, access to information, cultural environment and organizational culture, private interests of media houses, editors or journalists, as well as political and ideological views of journalists or editors that make these persons "filters" in reporting.

4. Conclusion

Anyone who has access to the media, that is, to the content that the media puts out in public, is under the influence of a process called media discourse. We are witnessing the role that the media plays in society today, regardless of whether we agree with the way they operate or not. Every discourse has an impact on the public, so the discourse on corruption plays a vital role in constituting reality and the perception that people have about it. The media is also said to contribute to the strengthening of democracy when they act responsibly. The role played by the media in the fight against corruption in both the public and private sectors is recognized as one of the directions of action. That role consists both in raising public awareness of the existence and seriousness of the consequences of corruption, as well as in researching and reporting cases of corruption, in which investigative journalism is extremely important. Same that role includes the discovery of things that are somehow hidden from the public, into which corrupt activities fit perfectly. The media therefore play a significant role in shaping the perception of the population. In this way, citizens get basic knowledge that can help them understand, recognize and report corrupt behaviour, thereby contributing to the overall fight against corruption. However, when the media emphasize certain cases of corruption and ignore others, they significantly create a "distorted image". However, one must not ignore the fact that the media is just another segment of society that has not remained immune to this form of criminal behaviour, and therefore one should be careful with the content they publish, which is often, but not always, incomplete and unverified. In order to avoid and reduce the manipulation of public opinion, and provide citizens with significant information about corruption in both the private and public sectors, as well as about all other types of criminality, it is necessary to nurture and strengthen the freedom of the press and the independence of the media in order to achieve complete and objective reporting. Today, however, it is a big challenge if you remember that the media can often be referred to as a "corporate organization" that needs to ensure and maintain a balance between its goals and the political-economic system in which it operates.

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