

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16: RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need to undertake measures seeking to accelerate the processes for SDG nationalization and implementation. The format and/or composition of coordination of SDG processes need to be revised in order to make work more effective.

Fight against money laundering

There is a need to consistently strengthen actions and capacities for the fight against money laundering all the while not falling behind ongoing international processes in the field, joining multilateral international treaties as needed as well as ensuring cooperation with law-enforcement bodies for conducting an effective investigation.

Transparency of beneficial ownership

The process of establishing a register for beneficial owners should be sped up and finalized while covering all sectors and including companies with turnovers exceeding a previously recorded threshold and ensuring efficient mechanisms for verifying data, including through cooperation with international organizations. The information on real beneficiaries should be public, free of charge and based on the principle of open sources thus enabling effective oversight.

Recovery of stolen assets

There is a need to accelerate the adoption of legislation ensuring the recovery and restoration of illegal property and the improve the institutional system, including for the purpose of managing blocked assets. International cooperation should be further developed to recover assets taken out of Armenia due to corruption. Complete transparency of confiscation, management and recovery of assets needs to be ensured in order to eliminate corruption risks.

Combating organized crime

Relevant legislation needs to be developed and corresponding regulatory structures should be formed in order to eradicate the criminal subculture while also actively promoting zero tolerance to it.

Experience and perceptions of corruption

Regular surveys should be conducted to assess public perceptions and opinion on corruption and use that data to the maximum extent during the development of public policies.

Anticorruption system and institutions

Proper and complete implementation of the anticorruption strategy as well as the strategy of judicial and legal reforms adopted in Fall of 2019 should be ensured. It is necessary to speed up the process of establishing the Specialized Anticorruption Committee, relevant department of the prosecutor's office and the anticorruption court, as well as activities aiming to develop and enforce the toolset required for the Corruption Prevention Commission. There is a need to develop very serious, comprehensive and intensive training courses for specialists of aforementioned structures in partnership with international organizations.

Evaluations of representatives of the judiciary and the system of law-enforcement carried out based on integrity standards, transparent and discernible procedures are of particular importance and urgency in order to increase public trust towards said systems. New appointments of leading personnel as well as judges and investigators should be completely public and take into account feedback received from the representatives of the public. The transparency and proper accountability of anticorruption authorities should be ensured.

Corruption in private sector

There is a need to improve legislation related to the protection of economic competition and to undertake measures to ensure the transparency and efficiency of activities of the State Commission for the Protection of Economic Competition.

Transparency of political parties and pre-election campaign financing

It is necessary to create legislative bases for making financial activities of political parties more transparent. There is a need to guarantee the independent, professional and efficient performance of the structure carrying out oversight/inspection over political parties. All legal and operational bases should be ensured in order to guarantee the publicity of finances of political parties in accordance with the format of open data and open sources, thus making it available for independent supervision and analysis by all stakeholders.

Transparency and integrity in the system of public administration

In order to ensure the transparency and accuracy of declarations of property, income and interests, it is necessary to expand the framework of publicly available data and make them available according to the principle of open data and open sources, thus enabling effective public oversight. The list of officials bound by law to declare their property, income and interests should be expanded and include persons responsible for the implementation of separate functions and

objectives legally assigned to local self-government and public administration authorities. The framework for the regulation of conflicts of interests should be expanded and cover all officials carrying out activities of public significance. It is necessary to develop and introduce relevant regulatory frameworks for the declaration of property and income of the leadership of private companies of public significance and those using natural resources. The conditions for awarding bonuses in the sector of public administration need to be regulated by law while linking it to the results of the system of performance evaluation, thus eliminating the flawed, non-transparent and risky practice of bonus payments from the public system. There is a need for a step-by-step transition to a universal system of declaring property and income for citizens.

Fiscal transparency

Active steps should be taken to make improve the accessibility and participatory nature of budgetary procedures for citizens through implementing those procedures in appropriate timeframes, quality and communication.

Public procurements and government contracts

The legislation on procurements needs to be improved through limiting opportunities for making procurements from “a single source” as well as through guaranteeing the proper operation of the e-system for procurements and its public oversight. The system of procurements should be publicly available and developed based on the open data and open source principle, thus enabling the implementation of effective oversight.

Whistleblowing and reporting mechanisms

Legislative steps need to be taken to ensure the protection of whistleblowers in the private sector. It is necessary to introduce an urgent system of protection for whistleblowers who might be subject to consequences. It is preferable to share stories of successful protection of whistleblowers in order to increase public trust towards the whistleblowing system as well as the state protection system. There is a need for proper coordination and analysis of information received from whistleblowers in order to follow up corruption-related crimes as well as to understand current problems and improve the system.

Protection of fundamental freedoms

The investigations of all cases of attacks against journalists should be properly completed resulting in the strictest punishments for those that are found guilty and improve trust towards the system. The issue of owners and transparency of financial sources of media outlets is a priority in terms of reducing the distribution of fake news and hate speech. Another pressing issue is the formation of a proper response by state authorities towards the abuse of fundamental freedoms to the benefit of the state, society, security and for the prevention of violence and other crimes.

Availability of information

The government should enhance the framework of the Law on the Freedom of Information so that it also covers private organizations (including political parties and NGO's) using public means (both financial and otherwise). Free availability of information on all legal entities and the use of natural resources (including land, water and biological resources) should be ensured for all interested representatives of the public.

Open government data

It is necessary to develop a Strategy on Open Government Data that expands the scope of proactively published data and establishes as a principle free access to non-confidential information of public interest and makes it available in accordance with the open data and open source principle, thus enabling effective public oversight and independent research.