

To End Corruption: New publication hopes to shed light on ways to a transparent society

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“Corruption,” writes editor Armen Aivazyan in a newly released study “frustrates the unity and the peaceful coexistence of Armenian society, shattering the whole system of national values.”

Last week, the Center for Counter-Terrorism Assistance, a Non Governmental Organization, and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights presented “An Anthology of International Anti-Corruption Experience”, a volume of selected studies concerning the fight against corruption.

The book has been prepared within the frameworks of the “Campaign Against the Legal and Social Conditions Facilitating Corruption in Armenia”. Besides the publication the project also has prepared a series of TV programs.

The volume presents to the public a number of studies on the international experience in the fight against corruption prepared by foreign scientists, who view corruption in such fields as justice, agriculture, energy sector, etc.

In January 2001 by the order of the Prime Minister of Armenia the commission regulating anti-corruption activities of the government was created. During the last several years Armenia has become a signee to a number of international agreements on anti-corruption, including GRECO, within the frameworks of the Council of Europe.

“The goal of the Anti-Corruption Strategy is to overcome corruption, to eliminate its root causes and the conditions conducive of its proliferation, to build a sound moral and psychological environment in the Republic, which, in turn, will power the attainment of sustainable democratic institutions, a civil society, and a state based on the rule of law, the enhancement of free economic competition, economic development, and poverty reduction,” reads the anti-corruption strategy and implementation action plan.

Nevertheless, according to the annual survey reports prepared by Transparency International in 2004 the Republic of Armenia holds the 82nd position among the 146 countries with a 3.1 degree level of corruption according to a 0-10 scale, where 10 corresponds to the lowest level of corruption.

As one of the editors mentions in the introduction “corruption shatters the bases of the national security of Armenia”.

Moreover, the Armenian society still considers corruption in Armenia to be “omnipresent”.

“Citizens in such countries refuse to believe that unfavorable judicial decisions are based on merit. Incompetent attorneys exacerbate the problem in masking their own shortcomings by convincing their clients that the case was lost because the other party paid a bribe to the magistrate. If the outcome is unfavorable, the attorneys’ defense is simply that the bribe was not sufficiently adequate,” mentions Mary Noel Pepys, an author to the volume.

What are those means that would make the significant decrease of the level of corruption in the republic feasible?

Absolutely different means of fight are necessary in countries where corruption is deeply rooted. Here the interaction of many factors facilitates more to the spread of corruption than to its reduction: corruption destroys economy and political system as a result of which the possible reformers will always feel the lack of resources and political support necessary to gain the public trust during their activities, writes Michael Johnston.

The aim of the publication, its producers say, is to help society find a general model for fighting against corruption and to learn what preconditions are necessary to get rid of corruption.