

Anti-Corruption Policy under the Conditions of Overcoming the Consequences of the Coronavirus Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Deterioration of the epidemiological situation in the country marked the beginning of rethinking of modern models towards combating corruption risks. Mankind has faced with an extremely serious problem that affects the economic system of the state, intensifies corruption processes and confuses the search for new ways to prevent abuse of officials. The academic paper has considered the basic challenges faced by the world community during the coronavirus pandemic. The destructive consequences of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic have been determined and the directions of improvement and formation of anti-corruption policy under modern conditions have been offered. Particular attention has been paid to the development of current legislation, program and strategic documents, protection of whistleblowers, the need to involve the public in the discussion of key issues in combating corruption, establishment of the principles of integrity, openness and transparency in topical anti-corruption measures in order to overcome the most difficult challenges of nowadays. The need to give priority to the main spheres of public life has been distinguished, where the most significant abuses are possible (health care, public procurement, public administration). Anti-corruption policy under the conditions of counteracting COVID-19 should be formed in accordance with the basic corruption challenges and taking into account current, progressive practices in order to address the issue of eliminating the consequences of illegal activities.

Keywords: Corruption risks, anti-corruption measures, epidemiological situation, coronavirus (COVID-19).

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INTRODUCTION

Combating corruption practices is one of the strategic directions of the state policy, an important tool for ensuring the economic development of the state. The importance of anti-corruption policy is growing significantly in the context of crises and challenges caused by the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

Corruption as a negative phenomenon of nowadays leads to the decline of state building, the devastation of state funds and, as a consequence, does not allow restoring the stable development of the country during the difficult epidemiological situation, and providing the necessary assistance to patients and medical workers.

Unfortunately, the onset of the force majeure outlined opens up opportunities for the implementation of corruption schemes in the field of procurement, personnel policy, business environment, etc. Attempts of officials and high-ranking officials to impose their own (mostly speculative) mechanisms of overcoming the effects of the pandemic (on the supply of medical equipment, appointments, provision of the population) force seeking and applying tough anti-crisis programs and innovations in order to prevent the increase of risks of corruption and urgent solution of existing problems.

Considering the need to create a clear algorithm for solving urgent problems, it is extremely important to investigate the main anti-corruption measures and programs designed to minimize the consequences of the economic decline caused by the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given that the exacerbation of the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020, currently this phenomenon is insufficiently studied, especially in the context of creating anti-corruption tools to overcome the effects of COVID-19.

At the same time, interest in creating effective anti-corruption mechanisms and conducting scientific research on best practices for overcoming the economic recession is growing rapidly. In order to form a relevant and sound position, we have used sources, including of analytical and programmatic nature, which reveal some aspects of creating a strategy to address corruption issue during and after the pandemic.

The basic sources are as follows:

- analytical materials compiled by the international organization Transparency International, which

explain the consequences of corruption in the context of overcoming the coronavirus pandemic;

- viewpoints set out in a study by the International Civil Society Organization (World Justice project) on corruption risks under the conditions of COVID-19 [1].
- studies of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, revealing topical aspects of economic recovery through the use of internal control tools, investigations of illegal corruption.
- domestic and foreign policy documents, legislation and developments related to economic development, avoidance of negative consequences of coronavirus by creating anti-corruption mechanisms and implementation of current practices.

It should be noted that the formation of a comprehensive program of anti-corruption measures, which will reflect current trends in domestic and foreign initiatives in order to overcome the crisis issues and aimed at eliminating the effects of the virus has not been conducted yet, which necessitates a full and comprehensive analysis of selected issues.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During studying the subject matters of the anti-corruption program in order to overcome the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, the current indicators and conclusions of the investigations, revealing the features of the impact of the virus on the state of economic processes of the state, have been taken into account [2].

Research methods of the issue outlined include general scientific and special methods of scientific knowledge, namely:

- formal-legal, which is used to analyze the provisions of regulations and analytical materials on certain issues;
- logical-semantic, which has made it possible to clarify the essence of the concept of "anti-corruption policy" and its meaning under the conditions of the pandemic;
- method of systematic analysis, which has made it possible to summarize the research materials and establish links between the spread of acute respiratory infection and the emergence of new corruption schemes and patterns of behavior in the activities of authorized entities and particular officials;
- comparative and legal method, which has been actively used when comparing various methods of forming a unified approach to understanding the phenomenon under study in a complex epidemiological situation;
- modeling method that has contributed to investigation of practical aspects of implementing an effective and at the same time rigid model of anti-corruption policy under the conditions of the pandemic.

We believe that the implementation of modern anti-corruption policy requires a comprehensive and full consideration of the existing economic, epidemiological situation, the position of the world community and international organizations; therefore, within the framework of the study, various methods of analysis and assessment of the information received have been used and applied [3].

Presentation of the research results

The emergence of new challenges in the economic system of the state in connection with the spread of coronavirus infection forces searching for new effective methods in order to combat the negative manifestations of corruption. The era of uncertainty and economic decline during the pandemic has only deepened the destructive processes both within the Ukrainian state and on the world stage [4]. Within the framework of our investigation, anti-corruption policy should be understood as a set of measures aimed at combating manifestations of corruption; multidimensional complex combination of effective steps taken by anti-corruption subjects in order to eliminate the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

The content and directions of anti-corruption measures should be formed in accordance with the threats and challenges that have arisen since the beginning of the spread of the disease. The corruption component greatly affects the healthcare sector, which is the most vulnerable in today's conditions.

The most pressing challenges caused by coronavirus infection include the following aspects.

1. Lack of a clear program of action to overcome the corruption component during the pandemic.

It should be noted that the issue of reducing the level of corruption in the context of the pandemic does not have widespread support among the world community. Most countries neither consider nor outline strategic steps in order to combat corruption during the pandemic. In the absence of a specific list of measures to be taken by the authorities and administrations in the face of today's new challenges, it is difficult to make optimistic predictions about reducing corruption.

Rule-making work in the context of anti-corruption policy should not be limited to the adoption of a separate program document, but should take into account the specifics of the work of anti-corruption bodies, central and local authorities, the main corruption risks [5].

2. Activation of fraudulent, profiteering and other illegal schemes of money laundering.

The supply of medicines, the formation of coronavirus control funds, the introduction of new methods of detecting or counteracting new threats to life and health of the population have become the basis for various abuses and violations that need to be addressed immediately.

3. Imperfection of the public procurement system.

The realities of the use of public procurement instruments, in particular, medical equipment, goods and services, demonstrate a significant number of violations and abuses that significantly affect the economic situation of the state and the supply of necessary medicines to patients. Purchasing at deliberately inflated prices, non-compliance with the principles of competition, abuse of office, violation of the procedure for the acquisition of goods, works and services (in particular, on accepting or rejecting offers), submission of false information – these are the actions that indicate a corruption component and lead to deep crisis phenomena, financial losses and unlawful decision making.

4. Low level of transparency in the actions of the authorities.

Decision-making under the conditions of coronavirus requires openness and unambiguity in the selection of key steps for the approval of anti-corruption measures,

defining the powers of anti-corruption bodies. Lack of sufficient information on abuses during the pandemic undermines trust towards the state and the local authorities.

5. Insufficient consideration of public interests in the context of formation and implementation of anti-corruption policy.

Taking into consideration the importance of curbing corruption within modern conditions, it is impossible to address pressing issues of corruption prevention without the community involvement and without taking into account the interests of the population. Formality in the process of conducting public discussions and the lack of an adequate mechanism for exercising public control jeopardize the possibility of introducing an effective anti-corruption policy. Discussion of the main steps in order to determine the models of deterring illegal activities in the official sphere will allow for a more thorough and comprehensive study of the external and internal features of the organization of illegal mechanisms and forming effective means of protection.

6. Lack of effective mechanisms to protect persons who report acts of corruption (whistleblowers). Despite the consolidation of responsibility for the illegal dismissal of those who have reported about corruption actions, currently the issue of protecting the reputation and legitimate interests of whistleblowers remains unresolved. In addition to illegal dismissal, there are a number of other risks that may affect the state of guaranteeing the rights of this group of persons (for example, transfer to another position, deterioration of working conditions, bullying, etc.) [6].

Establishing a mechanism for cooperation with the population and promoting a legitimate, conscious position of citizenship is no less important than other forms of anti-crisis measures to combat corruption.

The list of problems that are exacerbated within the conditions of the pandemic is not exhaustive. Issues of ensuring compliance with anti-corruption legislation in the medical sphere, resolving conflicts of interest, preventing bribery, etc. are also subject to review and consideration. The wide range of challenges facing states nowadays requires the approval not only of the national model of anti-corruption measures, but also of effective local acts, organizational and administrative documents [7].

United Nations Organization's policy documents indicate that corruption during the pandemic is gaining momentum and is observed not only in the provision of health services, but also in the system of public administration, in general. The corruption component deprives people of access to vital resources, medical equipment and tools needed to treat patients.

This is confirmed by studies conducted by the World Bank, which show that 80% of funding for medical services does not reach local health facilities [8].

Anti-corruption policy under the conditions of exacerbation of diseases, caused by a new virus, should direct efforts and means to monitor compliance with legislation, especially in the field of health care, forasmuch as abuses in this sphere are the most significant ones and negatively affect the health and well-being of the population [9]. According to the representatives' viewpoints of the Utstein Resource Center for Combating Corruption, the governments of the states do not take sufficient measures to determine the basics of anti-corruption policy, forasmuch as the programs of measures, they have been implementing, do not pay enough attention to cooperation between different authorities, enterprises, institutions and organizations in the matter. Health workers receive less than due at least 29% of funding [10]. Minimization of risks under the conditions of the pandemic is the result of fruitful work of anti-corruption subjects on: 1) the creation of a working group on combating corruption; 2) determination of key corruption risks and the most vulnerable areas; 3) approval of the principles of transparency, accountability, unity, honesty and mutual control.

It goes without saying that conducting diagnostics should precede the application of national mechanisms for overcoming the crisis phenomena. It is possible to introduce an adequate system to restrict corruption only through the clear application of the system of interaction, the mechanism of checks and balances, the implementation of the rule of law, where the authorities report on the funds used and take into account the public opinion [11].

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has focused on key steps taken by states to combat corruption risks under the conditions of coronavirus, highlighting such necessary directions as: 1) enhancing integrity and accountability; 2) clear distribution of funds by priorities; 3) ensuring transparency in decision-making 5) avoiding conflicts of interest 6) preventing bribery 7) clear fixation of procurement procedures. The draft of anti-corruption strategy of Ukraine for 2020-2024 does not contain any position on the impact of the spread of coronavirus on the state of corruption prevention. The basic program document, which defines the principles and ways to combat corruption challenges of nowadays, does not outline the main directions of overcoming abuses of power or official position in such current difficult conditions [12]. The miscalculations outlined in the construction of policy documents are typical for other countries, which do not take into account the complex state of affairs, taking place in the field of counteracting the negative effects of coronavirus.

The construction of a modern model of countering coronavirus should take place in a planned manner. Let's reflect the basic stages of overcoming corruption and forming an effective corruption policy with the help of a table.1.

Table 1. Stages of overcoming corruption risks during the pandemic

Stage	Stage description	Expected outcomes
Diagnostic	Identification of the main corruption risks during the pandemic. Conducting surveys, experiments and other forms of establishing the circumstances and ways of spreading corruption under the conditions of complex epidemiological situation.	Formation of potential and real threats related to corruption in various spheres of life. Identification of illegal directions of using the coronavirus crisis for own benefit.

Analytical	Determining the degree and level of corruption risks, their manifestation in the most vulnerable spheres of public life. Elaboration of national mechanisms for overcoming the identified risks; formulation of necessary measures to overcome (minimize) the studied problems.	Revealing of real corruption schemes that have the most significant impact on the economic system of the state. Identification of existing mechanisms for overcoming certain threats; a clear list of necessary actions towards reducing the number of corruption cases.
Implementing	Purposeful use of existing mechanisms to combat corruption (elimination of causes, elimination of distribution channels, prosecution). Interaction with the public on detecting corruption and overcoming its consequences.	Significant reduction of corruption offenses during the pandemic. Obtaining up-to-date information on current corruption tools and responding to existing challenges.
Control	Conducting the necessary monitoring of the process of eliminating corruption-causing factors; formation of statistics and reporting.	Vision of clear indicators that demonstrate the effectiveness of the measures taken and determine the next steps towards combating corruption during the coronavirus pandemic.

The current anti-corruption model for overcoming the economic consequences of the virus should include the following aspects:

1. Current legislative support. The formation of a clear regulatory framework involves fruitful rule-making actions in order to create an appropriate legal environment for anti-corruption. Along with this, the issue of determining the directions of interaction between the authorities and the delimitation of jurisdictions between them, achieving significant changes in the system establishment for assessing corruption risks and adapting constructive options for solving problems is of paramount importance [13]. Anti-corruption policy should be planned, coordinated and have clear legislative support. In order to detail and outline specific ways to ensure the security of the state from crises phenomena, the coronavirus pandemic, in particular, it is necessary to approve an anti-corruption strategy, which should include ways to increase the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures in priority areas of anti-corruption, necessary levers of influence on certain areas of the corruption environment, where there is a real threat of implementation of corruption schemes [14].

Legal and regulatory framework of the anti-corruption process in a pandemic should:

- define concepts, signs, ways of spreading of corruption risks during the crisis caused by coronavirus;
- contain step-by-step recommendations for eliminating the manifestations of corruption, the algorithm of actions of authorities and some public officials;
- establish effective elements of control over the activities of anti-corruption and law enforcement authorities in modern conditions.

2. Ensuring maximum transparency, accountability and integrity of the authorities.

The current conditions in the system of public administration keep out of full prevention of the emergence of corruption risks and obtaining the necessary support from the population. It must be acknowledged that most promising anti-corruption programs do not have a progressive effect due to low assessment by the public. Positive experience in implementing a mechanism to overcome the coronavirus crisis in the framework of corruption prevention shows that overcoming corruption directly depends on the conscious behavior of people towards reducing corruption. The confidence of the population under the conditions of the pandemic is crucial in achieving the effect from legislative actions. Taking this

into account, a clear reporting model is needed on key steps in combating corruption, namely: procurement of goods and services, appointments, funding of health care facilities at both the state and local levels [15].

3. Algorithms for resolving conflicts of interest.

Without doubt, the existence of a conflict of interest is considered a continuation of the use of illegal schemes and patterns of behavior under the conditions of the pandemic. Decisions taken in times of deep crisis should be objective and impartial, which is not possible in case of a real conflict of interests existence. Employees, faced with contradictions regarding the implementations of interests (conflict of interests), should be guided by the existing rules of overcoming this phenomenon. Anti-corruption policy in the fight against conflicts of interests should be built both through the use of prohibition methods (establishing responsibility for non-notification or decision-making in the context of the conflict of interests), and by conducting information work (in particular, informing and consulting on the elimination of the grounds, preconditions, causes and manifestations of the conflict), establishing a procedure for resolving service difficulties (providing options for resolving the official situation and applying adequate mechanisms established by legislation) [16]. Decisions approved under the conditions of coronavirus require careful, thorough preparation with respect to the position on the absence of conflict of interests in resolving official issues in a complex epidemiological situation [17].

4. Providing the necessary protection to persons who report the fact of committing acts of corruption (whistleblowers).

The growing need to obtain up-to-date information on the commission of corruption under the conditions of the pandemic is caused by the emergence of new schemes of embezzlement, methods of influencing officials, the intensification of fraud, etc. Oftentimes, the role of conscious citizens is crucial, and, therefore, it is necessary to create appropriate conditions to ensure the rights of persons who provide information about the illegal actions of officials, managers, public servants. Anti-corruption activities in the context of whistleblower s' protection should include:

- creation of algorithms that provide the possibility of secure and easily accessible information (anonymous communication channels, etc.);
- preventing the application of measures of influence and responsibility to persons who facilitate the detection of corruption crimes;

- the procedure for providing protection against illegal decisions of the management of bodies, enterprises, institutions, organizations with which the whistleblower has an employment relationship;
- encouraging the legal behavior of citizens who have reported about corruption.

5. Implementation of current control, monitoring and audit systems [18].

The use of control mechanisms in order to achieve high quality implementation of elements of combating corruption is a key direction of monitoring the effectiveness of government programs, laws and internal documents. The essence of anti-corruption control measures in the context of COVID-19 can be revealed as follows:

1. Establishment of control mechanisms by the civil society, that is, involvement of the public in the discussion, adoption and monitoring of the implementation of major economic and political decisions.

2. Accretion of powers of anti-corruption bodies and providing them with step-by-step instructions on working under the conditions of the pandemic (strengthening supervision of compliance with anti-corruption legislation in the medical sphere, control of financial transactions for procurement, supply of medicines, etc.).

3. Introduction of a strict system for assessing compliance with anti-corruption legislation in departments of bodies, institutions, organizations with the submission of relevant reports.

In modern realities, the system of anti-corruption measures should take into account numerous aspects of the economic situation and react to corruption risks, respond not only to existing problems, but also to modified forms of corruption that affect the health sector [19].

DISCUSSION

The conducted review of key positions to be taken into account when developing an anti-corruption program shows the urgency of continuing work in order to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable areas of life from corruption actions. Currently, problematic issues have been formed that should be resolved in order to prevent the fall of the economy, making illegal decisions, combating systemic abuse, violation of the legal framework of public administration [20]. Further steps in the field of combating corruption require clear outlining of the basic corruption risks, identification of problematic areas of regulatory support, taking into account the degree of protection of the most vulnerable areas (medicine, public administration, public procurement, etc.). It is necessary to take into account the best practices proposed by the world community and adapt them in accordance with national legislation [21]. Successful implementation of the anti-corruption strategy involves consideration of interests of the civil society, creating conditions for the introduction of effective elements of cooperation between anti-corruption bodies, building an environment unfavorable for fraud and the use of the official position by the servants. The proposed steps to overcome the coronavirus crisis will have a positive effect on the protection of priority areas of state development from abuse and speculative actions, provided that they are regulated and implemented by all subjects of legal relations in this area [22]. The current situation requires

comprehensive application and improvement of existing anti-corruption mechanisms in accordance with the requirements of the pandemic [23].

CONCLUSION

The conducted review of the key challenges to the anti-corruption system under the conditions of the coronavirus crisis has shown that there are a number of pressing issues that need to be addressed as a matter of priority, taking into account the complexity of the epidemiological situation. Deterioration of the economic situation in the state, due to the corruption component, has the effect of reducing the welfare of the population and the state of protection of the rights, freedoms and interests of citizens. The basic challenges faced by the world community are caused by: the lack of clear regulations and algorithms for overcoming the effects of viral infection in the context of combating corruption; lack of interaction, mutual control and mutual restraint between authorities and management, anti-corruption bodies, local authorities; disregarding the interests of the civil society, reducing the level of trust and understanding; imperfection of reporting mechanisms and transparency in the actions of anti-corruption bodies and other authorities of national or local level; lack of integrity, openness and legality in the actions of higher authorities and some public officials. The formation of anti-corruption policy is impossible without a significant outlining particular corruption risks and the adoption of fair and justified steps in order to eliminate the negative consequences of abuse in the age of coronavirus. The framework of anti-corruption policy should be formed in accordance with the main threats and challenges that have currently emerged and include elements of control, supervision and monitoring of the activities of the most vulnerable spheres of life under the conditions of the pandemic (health care, public administration, public procurement); it should provide the necessary protection to whistleblowers, develop national legislation in order to identify and overcome the adverse effects of the pandemic, ensure integrity, openness and transparency in the activities of the authorities in Ukraine. Thus, the issue of forming an effective and efficient anti-corruption policy requires consistent and decisive steps for improving the existing model of combating corruption, establishing strict forms of control over abuses by officials in accordance with the current epidemiological situation and key corruption risks that have developed under the conditions of a difficult economic and epidemiological situation.

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