

Paper title:

***The national parliaments and the fight against corruption:
Why the parliamentary scrutiny matters***

(Working-version paper)

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¹ Acknowledgments: The research leading to these results stems from the PLATO project (The Post-Crisis Legitimacy of the European Union), which has received funding from the European Union's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020 under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant Agreement No. 722581. The dissemination of results reflects only the author's view and that the Research Executive Agency or the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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Abstract

Effective anti-corruption policy implementation requires a sustainable system of checks and balances and an effective integrity institutional system that is resilient to corruptive practices. An impartial public administration act as a guardian of the integrity system. One of the key institutional integrity pillar, among others, is the Office of the Ombudsman, with a mandate also to exercise administrative scrutiny and secure the impartiality of administrative performances. National parliaments, on the other hand, have the unique normative power to exercise both vertical and horizontal accountability and to scrutinize the work of the integrity institutional pillars, thus contributing to strengthening the institutional capacities rooting out political corruption of the political systems. However, the empirical evidence on the causal interferences is limited.

The goal of the paper is to explore how the parliamentary scrutiny over the Ombudsman' annual reports (and recommendations) in the Republic of North Macedonia in the period of 2011-2014, led to fueling the political corruption in the country. The theoretical arguments are tracked in the 'new institutionalism' with roots in organizational theory (March and Olsen, 1984, Olsen, 2010) and New Public Management (NPM) and the principle-agent model. The empirical arguments are drawn from qualitative research (including experts' interviews) within a single case study. The single case study is focused on the Republic of North Macedonia and is complemented by limited process tracing method, examining the causality between the parliamentary scrutiny process and the effects in anti-corruption policy (as an outcome). The empirical evidence on the outcome is tracked in documents, reports and arguments draw from the experts' interviews.

The paper discusses how various factors and actions (not taken) can influence the competences of the parliaments to engage in scrutiny processes and analytical tractability of the problems in the anti-corruption policy field (related to the work of the integrity pillars institutions, such as the Ombudsman). It also examines the aspect of the EU monitoring approach concerning these interferences. The empirical evidence is suggesting that the systemic fight against corruption is impossible without strong institutional capacity, parliamentary scrutiny and complemented public administration reforms that aim to develop impartial bureaucracies. This analysis indicates that effective parliamentary scrutiny in an EU candidate country (with challenges in rooting out corruption from the political systems) can contribute to effective progress anti-corruption policy, thus also contributing to the effective institutional change of the role of the parliament in the democratic settings. Hence, this paper also contributes to the general discussion on the institutional role of the parliament in providing effective parliamentary oversight and contributing effective systems of checks and balances.

Key words:

National parliament, anti-corruption, scrutiny, accountability;