



9.12.2016 - Corruption costs the European Union around 120 billion euro every year, according to a [study](#) by the European Commission. Although corruption levels vary between member states, no country is immune to it. Corruption remains a serious issue in Europe, even more so since the economic crisis in 2008. Today's observance of [International Anti-Corruption Day](#)

reminds us of the global cost of corruption, \$1 trillion are paid in bribes while an estimated \$2.6 trillion are stolen annually through corruption – a sum equivalent to over 5% of global GDP.

Corruption is an impediment to the achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). Building fairer societies and reducing poverty remain impossible without a more transparent economic system. Every person and sector of society needs to take action and say "no" to this global plague. Corruption strangles people. It remains the main obstacle to economic and social development, mainly in developing countries, where "funds which should be used to finance schools, hospitals and other public services end up in the hands of criminals", according to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Besides the considerable economic cost, corruption is also a reflection of weak governance that favours organised crime, human trafficking, weapons and drugs smuggling, as well as trade in endangered species. More importantly, this costly practice destroys citizens' confidence in democratic institutions as well as the rule of law, and directly causes the rise of populism in the

European Union.

"Corruption is endemic in European and Central Asian countries", highlighted José Ugaz, President of [Transparency International](#). Their recent report on the perception of corruption by European citizens showed that one third of respondents believed that corruption is one of the three main problems in their country. This perception, however, varies strongly from one country to the other: while 66% of Spanish respondents think corruption is one of the main issues in their country, only 23% think so in France.

The number of initiatives to eliminate corruption has increased in the last few years. Implemented since 2005, the [United Nations Convention against corruption](#) represents a first legal tool to fight corruption more efficiently at international level. Last year, the international community met in Qatar and adopted the [Doha Declaration](#), a strong engagement to create corruption-free societies. As for the EU, a [report](#) on corruption is published every two years to analyse corruption in the Union.

"We are deeply convinced that to live in corruption-free and inclusive peaceful societies, countries need to promote a strong legal culture", declared Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#). Therefore, UNODC implemented a set of concrete actions to support countries' efforts in taking necessary measures in line with the Doha Declaration. For instance, to prevent crime, educational activities are needed to help the next generation understand and solve problems that impede the rule of law.

All actors in society need to work on a global approach to fight corruption. The private sector has an important role to play and a zero-tolerance policy must be applied to counter corrupt practices. Policies regarding gifts, supply chains and people who report corruption should be implemented in order to promote a fair and equitable environment.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will attend the anti-corruption award ceremony on 9 December with Cheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, emir of Qatar. This ceremony highlights the importance of fighting a phenomenon that causes instability, poverty and crime.

