

Questions for the preparation of the 2022 Rule of Law Report

Ministry of Regional Development

1. **We understand there used to be a 'Strategy for the Fight against Fraud and Corruption with the EU Funds 2014-2020'. Is it expected to draft a new strategy in relation to the new Multiannual Financial Framework?**
 - Based on the experience of the 2007-2013 programming period, when we had a number of serious cases of fraud and corruption and that resulted into so-called „Big action plan“, where we set up a number of anti-fraud measures. Based on this experience we had to set up a robust and comprehensive system for the 2014-2020 programming period.
 - As you probably know, this system is based on the Strategy for Fighting the Corruption as the main tool, which is further developed, respectively its goals and tools, into methodological documents within a unified methodological environment, which sets specific steps and tools that forms an environment resistant to fraud and corruption.
 - Since there were no cases of serious fraud in the first years of implementation to identify bottlenecks in this area, several evaluations were carried out that focused on specific elements within the methodological documents, where some elements were assessed as not properly set up, however, as appropriate and necessary to maintain a fraud-proof environment.
 - Therefore, we also decided to evaluate the strategy itself and its concept. Evaluation was carried out by Transparency International and we aimed to verify whether it is necessary to modify the strategy in the future.
 - The result pleased us, because the Evaluation concluded that:
 - The measures outlined in the Strategy cover all major risks identified in projects funded by the EU.
 - Positively was evaluated strategy's emphasis on strengthening a culture of fraudulent behavior and zero fraud tolerance.
 - And as a main conclusion, the measures are reflected in the methodological guidelines within the unified methodological environment and all major risk areas are fully covered.
 - Therefore, we want to continue with this setup and the Strategy will remain the main and overarching element for setting anti-corruption elements and anti-fraud environment.
 - As in the previous programming period, the individual elements of the Strategy are elaborated and developed in methodological documents and further transferred to the procedures of managing authorities. Of course, if we identify problematic elements and areas in the future, for example from audits, evaluations or as an output from the controls of managing authorities, the methodological documents could be modified and extended to include these elements.
 - We are currently verifying the correct setting of the anti-corruption and anti-fraud elements within the framework of national methodologies for the 2021-2027 programming period by evaluating the anti-corruption resistance of the methods of the

Unified national framework. This evaluation is prepared by the association ASTRA, of which Transparency International is the integral part.

2. *We understand there are a number investigations and audits at national and European level into the use of EU funds. Are any measures planned at the governmental level to address issues in relation to potential corruption with/of EU funds?*

- This question is a not only for the Ministry for Regional Development, but also for other horizontal bodies, that are responsible for partial methodological areas into which any findings are reflected. System of sharing information from audit and controls is based on working groups, where information on audit findings are shared and Audit authority also participates in these meetings and is involved on any methodological proposals.
- We would also like to point out that within the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Finance - AFCOS (<https://www.mfcr.cz/cs/zahranicni-sektor/ochrana-financnich-zajmu/financni-zajmy-eu/narodni-strategie-ochrany>), which prepares and regularly updates the National Strategy for the Protection of the EU's Financial Interests and the related action plan, is the entity responsible for protecting the EU's financial interests and combating fraud and preparing related Strategy. If you have any further questions in this area, we recommend contacting the Ministry of Finance - AFCOS.