

Rule of Law Report

Questions to the Anti-Corruption Select Committee (Parliament), received 28 January 2025

1. Can you provide us with an update on the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan? What activities were carried out since July 2024?

The three pillars of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2021-2025 are 1. Awareness-raising; 2. Transparency (procurement, medicine, politics); 3. Professional procedures (Police and Border Guard, Public Prosecutors Office, training and awareness-raising in justice system in general). Ministry of Justice is the coordinator of anti-corruption activities in Estonia.

Anti-Corruption Select Committee meets the Ministry of Justice several times during a parliamentary session *inter alia* on how the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan is progressing. When a new Anti-Corruption Action Plan is being drafted the Select Committee will also be involved in the discussions. Anti-Corruption Act art 9 states that the Anti-Corruption Select Committee conducts parliamentary supervision over the implementation of anti-corruption measures, discuss at its own the initiative potential incidents of corruption involving higher officials, exercise supervision over compliance with the restrictions on activities of the members of the *Riigikogu*, verify within the limits of its competence the declarations of interests, inform the *Riigikogu* and the public of the results of anti-corrupt activities in its competence and perform other duties provided by law.

Since Prosecutor General underlined to the Select Committee in autumn 2024 that areas most vulnerable to the corruption are the sectors of remarkable resources the Select Committee scheduled its plan accordingly. Thus, the Select Committee concentrated on the issues pertaining to the enhancement of transparency of management of the state assets with extra impact on management on the state-owned companies and partially state-owned companies. In 2024 the Anti-corruption Select Committee studied the efforts to privatise the state-owned flight company Nordica that was declared bankruptcy on 28 January 2025. From the knowledge gained about how Nordica was managed as well as from the special audit of the state-owned energy company Eesti Energia, studying the system of selling timber by the National Forest Management Centre and the management of the project of constructing Rail Baltic the Anti-Corruption Select Committee has learned that the management of state-owned companies can be more efficient. Thus, the Select Committee is preparing to propose some conclusions to manage state assets in a more effective and transparent way.

With regard to state budget the Select Committee proposed the ministries and the Chancellery of State and the Chancellery of the President of the Republic to revise the legal basis of supporting legal entities from their budgets. The explanatory memorandum of the State budget was amended on the basis of the explanations provided by the ministries and Chancellery of State and the Chancellery of the President of the Republic and the State budget became somewhat more transparent. However, the Select Committee will be working on the issues pertaining to enhancing the transparency of the state budget, since also the National Audit Office has pointed out that the system of drafting the state budget has to be revised.

Anti-Corruption Select Committee has been in contact with the Ministry of Justice with regard to the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan as a whole as well as pertaining to drafting the amendments to the Anti-Corruption Act. The Select Committee has made several

proposals as how to make the register of declarations of interests more informative and user-friendlier. Today the draft amendments to the Anti-Corruption Action Plan are being debated in the Parliament.

2. Are there any specific issues that need to be addressed in the upcoming period, possibly also through the new Anti-Corruption Action Plan?

Yes, the Anti-Corruption Select Committee will make some conclusions from the above-mentioned topics and definitely would address these once the new Draft Anti-Corruption Action Plan is launched. Inter alia, the transparency of the procedures of planning the State Budget will be an important topic as well as the efficient information flow between the state-owned companies and Government and Parliament.

3. What is your role with regard to the development of the new Anti-Corruption Action Plan?

The Ministry of Justice drafts the Anti-Corruption Action Plan and introduces the draft also to the Anti-Corruption Select Committee. These have always been very interesting discussions. On the basis of the daily work of the Anti-Corruption Select Committee there will be given some recommendations and proposals both with regard to the topics as well as to the implementation of the action plan.

4. How is the cooperation with other national authorities working in relation to anti-corruption?

There are good working relationships with our national authorities. Since February 2024 there took place a meeting with the head of Central Criminal Police and the head of the Corruptions Crime Office in the premises of the Central Criminal Police. Among other issues they pointed out that sport manipulations need extra attention and proper legal regulation to be tackled in an efficient way. In order to study the topic of sports manipulations there were several meetings with ministries and Estonian Foundation of Antidoping and Sports Ethics and lawyers.

In March 2024 the Anti-Corruption Select Committee met the representatives of Estonian National Electoral Committee and the State Electoral Office to discuss the transparency of elections with extra emphasis on the internet voting.

The Anti-Corruption Select Committee works in a close contact with the National Audit Office, since the beginning of 2024 there have been discussed the issues on drafting the State budget and the management of the national flight-company Nordica as well as other topics. There are also regular meetings with the Prosecutor General and the Head of the Estonian Internal Security Service.

Question to the Ministry of Justice about Riigikogu

7. Are there any plans to regulate lobbying of members of *Riigikogu*?

There have been discussed for several years on whether and how to regulate lobbying the members of Riigikogu. In spring 2022 there were held three roundtables on the transparency of lobbying in co-operation with the US Embassy in Estonia and presentations from public sector, international organisations like OECD and GRECO, PR experts and interest groups in Estonia as well as other countries. As a conclusion of the roundtables, the Anti-Corruption

Select Committee initiated the registration and reporting of the lobbying in the parliamentary factions and committees. The initiative was accepted for further proceedings in the Board of the Riigikogu, however did not gain enough support to be evolved to a registration and reporting system of lobbying.

In autumn 2023 a member of Parliament Liisa Pakosta – now the Minister of Justice and Digital Affairs reported to the Chair of the Parliament and the Anti-Corruption Select Committee, that she was contacted by the representatives of tobacco industry to discuss the views. Mrs Pakosta applied to the Chair of the Parliament and the Anti-Corruption Select Committee to establish a platform where the members of Parliament, parliamentary factions and committees could report and disclose their lobbying contacts. Anti-Corruption Select Committee collected the opinions of the factions about reporting and disclosure of lobbying activities (most of them were in favour, however they underlined that overdue bureaucracy should be avoided when establishing the reporting and disclosure system of lobbying meetings). Having discussed the experiences of reporting lobbying contacts with ministries, it has turned out that reporting and disclosure of lobbying activities has not invoked any overdue burden. The internal auditor of the Ministry of Social Affairs in December 2023 where the ministry indicated that it does not take more than half a working day to collect, elaborate and disclose the lobbying activities of the whole Ministry. In April 2024 the committee summarised the feedback from the parliamentary committees on the idea of registering and reporting of lobbying, however there was no enough majority to proceed the arrangements of registering and reporting lobbying. As of today the issue is still been discussed in the Anti-Corruption Select Committee