

# 15:30 – 16:30 Success stories and strategies for fighting high-level corruption



# CITIZEN MONITORING

## OF HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION CASES

# THE ROLE OF ANTI-CORRUPTION FUND FOUNDATION BULGARIA (ACF)

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- ACF has built a solid national and international reputation as an independent expert civil society organization serving the public interest.
- We reveal, investigate, and analyze corruption at all levels of government with a particular focus on high-level corruption.

# THE ROLE OF ANTI-CORRUPTION FUND FOUNDATION BULGARIA (ACF)

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- **Investigation:** Our approach is to carry out our own research on suspected corruption and conflicts of interest, and demand reaction from institutions. We systematically screen regional and national media and receive tip-offs from citizen activists and whistleblowers. We request public documents from all the relevant institutions and evaluate the cases, combining expert research and legal analysis of all available documentation. We reveal, investigate, and analyze corruption at all levels of government with a particular focus on high-level corruption.

# THE ROLE OF ANTI-CORRUPTION FUND FOUNDATION BULGARIA (ACF)

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- **Reporting:** We file reports with all public institutions that have the jurisdiction to investigate the suspected violations. We communicate the institutional reactions in our reports to the broadest audience in a bid to increase the accountability of public institutions. **Every year, we publish a monitoring report on the work of anti-corruption institutions in Bulgaria focusing on their activities on high level corruption cases.** We also produce in-depth analyses of the anti-corruption environment, in particular the criminal justice system, and provide expert-level support for government initiatives to improve anti-corruption legislation and the criminal justice system.

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- **Citizen mobilization:** We translate our investigations and corruption reports into accessible media products aiming to reach out to the broadest citizen audience and encourage citizen involvement in reporting and fighting corruption. We support local civic communities through initiatives to increase transparency, accountability, and integrity at the local level, as well as help them build their capacity for civic participation and monitoring the work of local public bodies. We work to develop a more cooperative and inclusive community of independent journalists and civic activists who share the same values of fighting against corruption.

# AIM OF ACF'S ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT ON HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION CASES

THE GOAL OF ACF'S ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT IS TO SHARE WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC, BUT IN A COMPREHENSIVE MANNER, **THE DEVELOPMENT AND OUTCOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CRIMINAL CASES ON HIGH LEVEL CORRUPTION IN BULGARIA.**

THE REPORT ALSO COVERS THE WORK OF BULGARIA'S ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION, MAINLY ON CASES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.

## WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY?

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Bulgarian anti-corruption institutions, especially the Public prosecutor's office (PPO), do not have any particular success in the fight against high level or political corruption.

But still, when reporting and analyzing their results in the fight against corruption, the Bulgarian institutions always tend to draw a different picture through providing general statistical data.

Since no public institutions report or analyze the development and outcome of the most important criminal cases on high level corruption, this must be done by an expert non-governmental organization – the ACF.



# CONTENT OF THE REPORT

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The latest published report from 2024 covers a total of 57 criminal cases on national level and 25 cases on local level of high-level corruption crimes during the period between 2014 and 2023.

- Definition of “corruption crimes”
- Criteria used for the selection of cases
- How do we find the information on the cases
- Structure of the description of the cases
- Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

# THE RESULTS OF THE FIGHT AGAINST HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF ACF'S REPORT

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The figures demonstrate that the real picture of high-level corruption in the country is actually hidden. The criminal proceedings initiated by the PPO on grounds of suspected corruption crimes do not reflect the ACTUAL level of corrupt behavior among high-ranking public officials, because, on the basis of these proceedings, it turns out that practically no corruption crimes were committed by high-level officials.

- 57 monitored cases on national level
- 4 final convictions with just 1 executed prison sentence, 2 suspended prison sentences and 1 fine
- 15 final acquittals, 13 of which are because the courts decided that the charges were initially unfounded
- 17 cases were terminated at the pre-trial phase
- 21 proceedings are pending or with unknown end results

# CHALLENGES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION INSTITUTIONS' ACTIVITIES

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- The collaboration between our organization and the public institutions is complicated
- It is very difficult for us to obtain relevant information from the institutions concerned in the report
- As a principle the PPO shares no information with us on the development of the criminal proceedings at their pre-trial phase
- The courts often do not publish even their final decisions on a case

THANK YOU



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[www.acf.bg](http://www.acf.bg)

# 15:30 – 16:30 Success stories and strategies for fighting high-level corruption

**EU Network  
Against Corruption  
Successful Corruption Cases**

**WHEN  
CORRUPTION  
MEETS  
FINANCIAL  
CRIME AND  
POLITICS**



## CORRUPTION – definition and purpose

FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE ROMANIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY	MAJOR TAX EVASION AND CORRUPTION IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM	INFLUENCE PEDDLING OF JUDGE IN IMPORTANT COMMERCIAL CASE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>bribery</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>50 million euro tax evasion</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Commercial case about transfer of goods between companies</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Influence peddling</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>More than 40 companies involved in a complex fraud scheme</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Vice president of court of appeal asks for 100 000 euro to influence judges</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Used his position to obtain benefits and tried to influence the legislative process</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Group of organized crime nature</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Two Serbian shareholders pay the price of influence</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Embezzled 12 mil euro from Chamber of Commerce and Industry</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Bribery of Prosecutor and Chief of economic police</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Complex investigation and surveillance of the money transfer</b></li> </ul>



**FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE  
ROMANIAN CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

- Was the President of the Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and of the The Court of International Commercial Arbitration **for 6 years** until his arrest for influence peddling
- A person with high connections in politics and justice

- **First criminal case > embezzlement of funds belonging to the Romanian Chamber of Commerce**
- **whilst monitoring his activity a second criminal activity emerged > he was trying to influence the legislative process via bribery**
- **While this investigation was conducted, a complaint for influence peddling was received.**



During investigation, we were able to establish that he was using the funds of the Chamber of Commerce for his own needs.

## **The second Offence - Bribery**

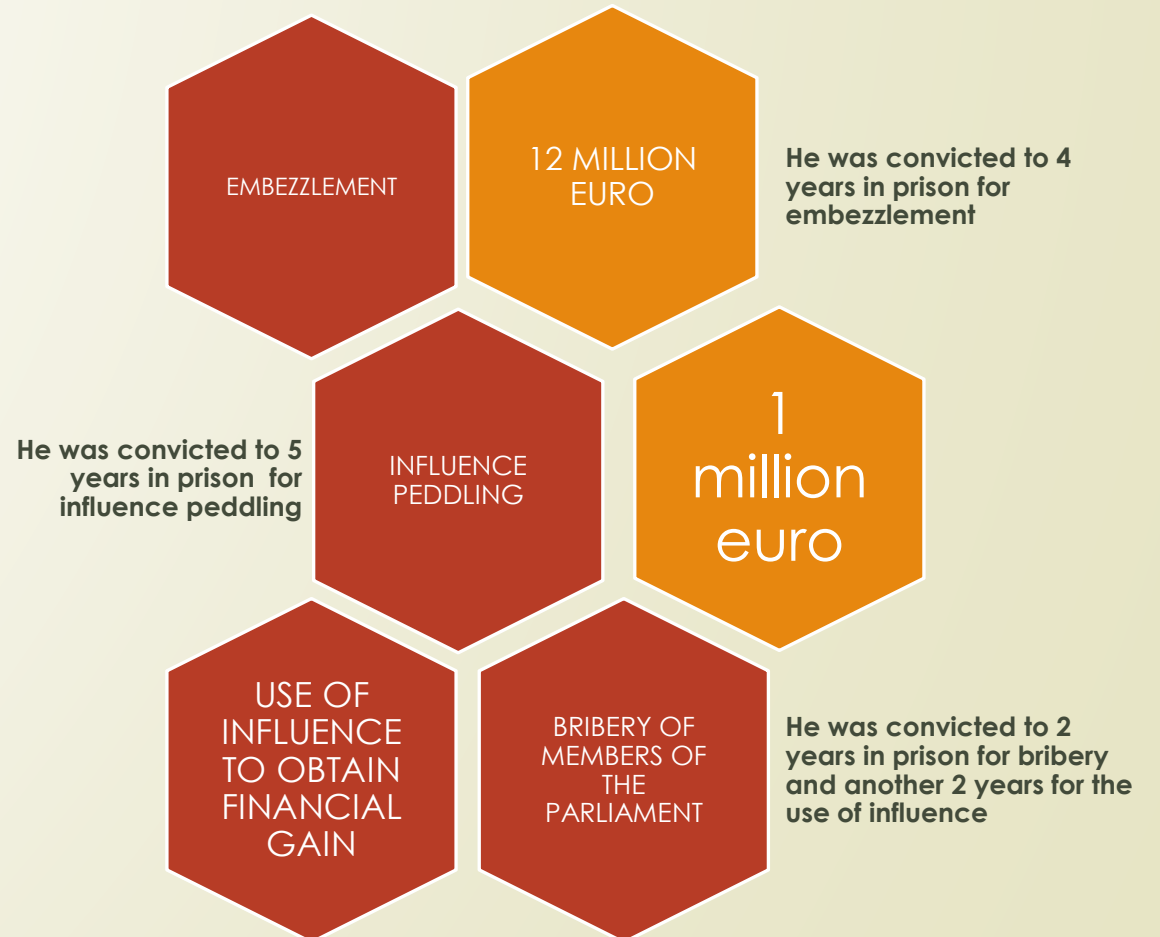
- Wiretapping > he was in fact trying to obtain the passing of a law to his favor.  
What he did
  - He contacted MPs from different political parties.
  - He asked for their support for the passing of a law to his own interest.
  - He promised them assignments as referees at The Court for International Commercial Arbitration.

## **The third Offence – Influence peddling**

- A formal complaint was filled against him for influence peddling > he had asked for 1 000 000 euro to a person in order to influence the result of a trial at the Court of International Commercial Arbitration.
- In fact, the President of Chamber of Commerce contacted the respective person and asked for money in order to influence the result of the trial. The object of the trial was 4 000 000 euro.
- We organized a monitored meeting between the two during which he received a down payment of 200 000 euro.

## FINAL RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION and THE TRIALS

- ✓ **Criminal convictions for all indictments – a total of 8 YEARS IN PRISON**
- ✓ **ASSETS SEIZED**



## MAJOR TAX EVASION SCHEME AND CORRUPTION IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

- ✓ group of individuals who owned some of the major companies in the food industry
- ✓ they all acted accordingly in order to avoid paying taxes and also reduce the prices to become market leaders
- ✓ more than 40 ghost- companies, founded by one single person, used in complex artificial schemes
- ✓ bribery and influence peddling in the justice system

### TAX EVASION

- We started with a formal complaint on tax evasion for a food manufacturer.
- In fact, all major food manufacturers in the branch were involved

### ORGANIZED CRIME

- a criminal group with leaders and specific roles were founding ghost companies in order to pass the merchandise through several acquisition chains and avoid paying taxes.
- the total estimated damage was 50 million euro in only 2 years.

### CORRUPTION

- During the investigation we were able to identify two corruption cases in the judiciary and in the economic police department.



# The Corruption cases related to the financial crimes(1)

## The Prosecutor

- ✓ While monitoring the activity of the group, we learned that one of the group leaders was in contact with a prosecutor from the Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice
- ✓ In fact, the prosecutor contacted the group leader to promise protection and ask for benefits such as money or hiring a member of her family.
- ✓ Despite being reluctant, the group leader did pay her the money
- ✓ Witnesses were able to confirm the phone transcripts.
- ✓ She was in fact arrested and prosecuted for influence peddling. She received a penalty of 4 years in prison.



# The Corruption cases related to the financial crimes (2)

## The Chief of Police

- whilst monitoring the activity of the group, we learned that one of its members was in contact with a county chief of economic police
- The chief of police had a series of suspicious meetings with a local business man.
- The respective business man was under criminal investigation for tax evasion in the grain trade.
- We put both of them under surveillance.
- We made the decision to bring in the businessman and ask for his collaboration
- We got the chief of police red handed while receiving money from the businessman. He was arrested the same day.

# The indictment and the convictions

- the chief of police was promising help to the businessman and a favorable result for his tax evasion accusations.
- **The surprise** > the chief of economic police and the businessman were in fact trading grains together.
- He was indicted for influence peddling and complicity to tax evasion. The businessman was indicted and prosecuted for tax evasion.

## Influence peddling

- 4 years in prison

## Complicity to tax evasion

- 5 years in prison

## Tax evasion

- 5 years in prison



## **INFLUENCE PEDDLING OF JUDGE IN HIGH STAKE COMMERCIAL CASE (1)**

- A trial for company insolvency during which we began to suspect of bribery at the Court of Appeal
- We started monitoring the persons involved in negotiations of the bribery
- The two shareholders of a company taking part in a commercial trial agreed to pay 60 000 euro for a solution in their favor to the vice president of the Court of Appeal.
- After surveillance of all the persons involved we were able to learn that the G.M of the company would meet the shareholders in Serbia to receive the money
- After taking the 60 000 euro he returned to meet the judge.



## INFLUENCE PEDDLING OF JUDGE IN HIGH STAKE COMMERCIAL CASE (2)

- **WHAT WE DID** > we stopped the accomplice in traffic while carrying the 60 000 euro and asked for his collaboration.
- He agreed and we were able to keep close surveillance on what happened next
- The accomplice met with the judge and his wife the same day and left the money at her office.
- The next morning a search warrant was conducted at the office and money was found and seized
- The judge was arrested for influence peddling and later convicted to **7 years in prison.**





**THANK YOU !**

**NATIONAL ANTICORRUPTION DIRECTORATE**  
**Bucharest, ROMANIA**