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Southeast European Leadership for
Development and Integrity

TACKLING CORRUPTION

ON THE ROAD TO EU ACCESSION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

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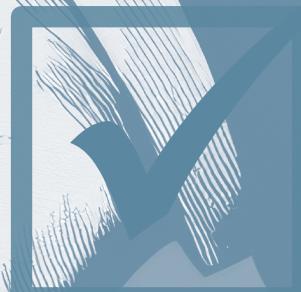
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KEY POINTS

- ▶ Despite formal alignment with EU standards, high-level corruption and state capture remain entrenched across the Western Balkans, undermining effective governance and EU accession.
- ▶ Anti-corruption strategies are often vague, poorly implemented, and driven by external pressure rather than domestic demand, with limited measurable impact.
- ▶ Specialised institutions like Albania's SPAK, and Bosnia and Herzegovina's SIPA have launched high-profile cases, but enforcement remains inconsistent due to political interference and weak coordination.
- ▶ EU financial support has been substantial – over EUR 690 million under IPA II alone – yet tangible outcomes such as convictions and reduced corruption victimisation remain scarce.
- ▶ North Macedonia and Kosovo struggle with implementation delays and fragmented oversight, while Bosnia and Herzegovina faces coordination challenges across entities and cantons.
- ▶ Hungary's obstructionism in EU decision-making has emboldened elites in the region, weakening the credibility of EU conditionality and slowing reform momentum.
- ▶ To close the gap between legislation and enforcement, EU funding should be tied to measurable anti-corruption KPIs and conditionalities, with stronger monitoring and technical support.
- ▶ Civil society engagement, whistleblower protections, and digital transparency tools must be prioritised to build public trust and accelerate genuine anti-corruption progress.



Introduction

Corruption, particularly high-level corruption, remains one of the central obstacles to the Western Balkans' EU accession path. Despite years of legal and institutional reforms, European Commission reports¹ international indices consistently show limited progress. Most countries in the region have aligned their frameworks with EU standards, yet tangible results — such as effective investigations, prosecutions, and convictions — remain elusive.

The European Commission still avoids using the term "state capture", yet it lies at the heart of the region's governance crisis. State capture sustains the appearance of due process in legislation, justice, and public administration while diverting state power for private gain. Its hidden nature and the deniability it provides to political and economic elites make it especially resilient. To dismantle these networks, the EU and national governments must first make state capture visible — identifying its structures, operations, and weaknesses.²

As repeatedly highlighted by SELDI, citizens across the Western Balkans continue to rank corruption among their most pressing concerns, despite numerous integrity reforms. This suggests that current anti-corruption policies lack consistent impact. State capture networks actively block anti-corruption bodies, manipulate administrative procedures, and align with or against political actors to preserve their influence.³

1 European Commission, *2025 Enlargement Package*, November 4, 2025

2 Center for the Study of Democracy, *State capture assessment diagnostics*, 2019.

3 SELDI, *Mind the Trap: Breaking Anticorruption Deadlock in the Western Balkans*, 2024.

State of Play: EU Accessing and Legal Framework in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans remains central to EU enlargement, though progress varies significantly across countries. Only three have opened negotiation chapters, and Montenegro is currently the only country where chapters have been provisionally closed. Over the years, the region has introduced a range of anti-corruption measures, including the establishment of specialised institutions within the executive and judiciary, expanded legal definitions of corruption, and laws addressing asset declarations, conflicts of interest, and whistleblower protection. Yet these reforms often have limited impact, as they are frequently adopted during election periods, pursue vague objectives, and are driven more by external pressures, such as EU or Council of Europe expectations, than by genuine internal demand for change.

New **anti-corruption strategies** continue to face the same problems: they are overly broad, listing numerous policy areas without setting clear priorities or measurable impact-oriented goals. These documents often lack national context and fail to reflect the specific forms corruption takes in each country. As a result, “strategy” has become an overused term, applied to any kind of planning document regardless of its focus or effectiveness.⁴

For example, Albania’s National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NCSA)⁵, adopted in 2015 and updated in 2018, aligns with EU goals but its enforcement has been uneven. The Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK)⁶, established in 2019, has pursued high-profile cases including investigations into former President Ilir Meta, yet broader systemic reforms remain inconsistently applied.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ STRATEGJIA KOMBËTARE KUNDËR KORRUPSIONIT

⁶ EEAS, “Key findings on 2022 Report on Albania”, 10 December 2022

Similarly, in Montenegro, the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (ASK) has increased the number of checked asset declarations since 2016, yet independence, accountability, and proactive enforcement remain limited. This is the case despite the adoption of a new Anti-Corruption Strategy (2024–2028) and Action Plan (2024–2025), as well as essential legislation, including the Law on Prevention of Corruption, the Law on Financing Political Entities and Election Campaigns, and the Law on Lobbying. The Special State Prosecutor’s Office leads major corruption, organized crime, and money laundering cases, including those based on Elliptic Curve Cryptography (SKY ECC) evidence, though many of these cases remain unresolved.

Across the region, persistent challenges include weak enforcement, political interference, and insufficient institutional independence. Many anti-corruption agencies face resource shortages, limited investigative powers, and fragmented coordination among oversight, prosecutorial, and law enforcement bodies. Even where legal frameworks largely align with EU standards, practical application is undermined by low political will, poor inter-agency cooperation, and an emphasis on quantitative results over substantive investigations. For instance, North Macedonia, despite having a Law on Lobbying (2022) and regulations on political party financing, has implemented only 18% of planned anti-corruption activities for 2024, leaving 50% unimplemented.⁷ It is also recommended that North Macedonia joins OECD Anti-Bribery Convention.

In September 2025, the OSCE/ODIHR opened its observation mission for the October local elections in North Macedonia. The mission report noted that several previous recommendations

⁷ MIA, “Dimitrovska: Insufficient political support, administrative obstacles main factor slowing down national anti-corruption strategy”, March 28, 2025,

remain unaddressed, particularly those related to establishing effective safeguards against the misuse of state resources and enhancing the transparency of campaign finance.⁸ While the SCPC, State Election Commission (SEC), and the State Audit Office (SAO) signed a memorandum of cooperation to tighten campaign-finance oversight, civil society welcomed the step but stressed that real-time publication of donors and spending is essential to counter the risk of undue influence and misuse of administrative advantages.

Country-specific developments highlight these broader patterns. Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a state-level *Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan (2024–2028)* in June 2024, but its effectiveness is limited by fragmentation: entities and cantons must align their strategies and secure sufficient funding, yet coordination remains weak. The state-level Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and the Coordination of the Fight against Corruption (APIK) is not fully independent nor adequately resourced, and failing to exercise its legal competence as the main coordinator and central point, and to implement all GRECO recommendations.⁹ Serbia adopted a long-delayed *National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2024–2028)* in July 2024, but inconsistent political will and limited judicial independence weaken implementation. Reforms to the *Law on Public Procurement (2023)* entered into force in January 2024 but left key corruption risks unaddressed, particularly exemptions for intergovernmental agreements. The Law on Prevention of Corruption is considered well-structured but lacks comprehensive coverage of all high-ranking public officials. Although reforms to the Law on Public

Procurement were adopted in October 2023, and entered into force in January 2024, the law was not proposed for adoption before the government's mandate ended in November 2023. The amendments failed to address key corruption risks, particularly *exemptions for intergovernmental agreements*.¹⁰ Kosovo lacks an active National Anti-Corruption Strategy since 2019; drafting of a new strategy is ongoing.¹¹ Moreover, in recent years, Kosovo's anti-corruption institutions have faced significant challenges in coordinating their activities effectively. The absence of a centralised coordination mechanism has led to inefficiencies and overlaps in responsibilities among institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA), the Council of Judges, and the Council of Prosecutors.

Table 1 provides an overview of active anti-corruption strategies and their implementation status across the region.

⁸ OSCE/ODIHR, "Local Elections, October 2025: Needs Assessment Mission Report", August 2025.

⁹ GRECO, *Publication of 5th round evaluation report on Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023*

¹⁰ European Commission, *Report on Serbia, October 30, 2024*

¹¹ UNCACoalition, *Civil society Report on the implementation of Chapter II (Prevention) & Chapter V (Asset Recovery) of the United nation convention against corruption in Kosovo*", August 28, 2024,

TABLE 1.
**Implementation of national
anti-corruption strategies**

Country	Active National Anti-Corruption Strategy	Period	Notes on Implementation
Albania	Yes	2018–(ongoing)	Updated from 2015; aligned with EU goals; implementation inconsistent as a result of insufficient resources and poor coordination
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Yes	2024–2028	New strategy adopted in June 2024 after long gap; entity and cantonal alignment still pending.
Serbia	Yes	2024–2028	Adopted in July 2024 after 6 years; weak political will and limited judicial independence hinder implementation.
North Macedonia	Yes	2021–2025	As of March 2025, implementation has been slow: out of 154 planned activities for 2024, only 18% were fully implemented, 32% were in progress, and 50% remained unimplemented. ¹²
Montenegro	Yes	2024–2028	New strategy and action plan adopted in May 2024; too early to assess impact.
Kosovo	Expired	Expired in 2019	Drafting a new strategy; implementation delayed due to weak coordination and political interference.

Source: SELDI.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo illustrate a common pattern: formal reforms exist on paper, but enforcement is weak and selective, anti-corruption agencies are under-resourced, and politi-

cal interference remains pervasive. These shared challenges reflect the broader gap between legislative ambition and tangible results, undermining progress toward transparent governance and credible EU accession.

¹² MIA, “Dimitrovska: Insufficient political support, administrative obstacles main factor slowing down national anti-corruption strategy”, March 28, 2025,

EU Financial Support for the Fight Against Corruption in the Western Balkans

The effectiveness of EU financial support in the Western Balkans can be assessed through concrete outcomes, including the number of corruption cases prosecuted, the proportion of indictments leading to effective sentences, the reductions in actual corruption victimisation, and the degree of civic engagement. While significant progress has been made in strengthening the institutional framework for anti-corruption, persistent challenges limit the impact of EU funding. Political interference, bureaucratic inefficiency, and limited capacity within civil society organisations can undermine the effective use of resources. Nevertheless, targeted initiatives demonstrate potential.

The EU has been a major contributor to anti-corruption efforts in the region, providing funding through instruments such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) to strengthen both state institutions and civil society, enhance institutional capacity, and support reform initiatives. Between 2014 and 2020, EUR 690 million under IPA II was dedicated specifically to rule of law reforms. Despite this investment, bribery remains widespread, state capture persists, and high-level corruption cases are rare.¹³ This raises critical questions about the effectiveness of future funding, including the EUR 9 billion envisaged under the *Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (2021–2027)* and the EUR 6 billion allocated through the *Growth Plan's Reform and Growth Facility (2024–2027)*.

Box 1 provides an overview of EU financial support in the Western Balkans and the achieved impact.

BOX 1: EU funding under the IPA in the Western Balkans

Albania:

Between 2018 and 2020, Albania received around EUR 68 million¹⁴ for justice sector reforms, including EUR 5 million for the *Justice for All* project and EUR 2 million for strengthening the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SPAK). CSOs benefited from initiatives such as the *Watchdog* (EUR 1 million) to monitor public spending. Under IPA, around EUR 10 million supported the implementation of the *National Anti-Corruption Strategy*, focusing on public procurement and services. The European Commission also approved a EUR 103.3 million¹⁵ package to enhance the rule of law, strengthen SPAK, the National Investigation Office, and independent justice bodies.

¹³ SELDI, *Mind the Trap: Breaking the Anticorruption Deadlock in the Western Balkans*, 2024.

¹⁴ European Commission, *Albania-financial assistance under IPA*, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/albania-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en

¹⁵ European Commission, „EU grants €103.3 million to support Albania's European path and economic recovery - European Commission”, November 12, 2020, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-grants-eu1033-million-support-albanias-european-path-and-economic-recovery-2020-11-12_en

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Under IPA III (2021-2024), BiH was allocated EUR 377.95 million, with EUR 64 million for rule of law and anti-corruption.¹⁶ The Strengthening Anti-corruption Capacities in BiH project (EUR 3.5 million, 2022-2025) focuses on institutional capacity building.¹⁷ About 70% of these funds (EUR 44.8 million) go to state institutions, including the *Support to Rule of Law* program (EUR 4.2 million, 2023-2026). As part of the EU's support for the rule of law sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, CSOs received around EUR 350,000 (2017-2023) for transparency and monitoring projects.¹⁸ EU4Justice BIH

Montenegro:

In Montenegro, the EU allocated approximately EUR 1.8 million to civil society through the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)* and EUR 7.5 million via the *Civil Society Facility in 2022-2023*, supporting accountability, transparency, and citizen oversight.¹⁹

North Macedonia:

For North Macedonia, the EU has provided financial assistance in the form of a EUR 100 million Macro-financial Assistance with the condition that they implement policy measures related to the rule of law and tackling corruption, among others.²⁰ The EU also provides funding opportunities and grants to CSOs and projects concerning the fight against corruption. Additionally, consultations and workshop events with officials from various EU institutions, established in May 2023, are offered for guidance and help.²¹ EU actions such as *The Action Against Economic Crime in the Republic of North Macedonia* also supports institutions like the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) by enhancing legal frameworks, improving anti-money laundering (AML) mechanisms and the risk assessment of virtual assets, and boosting financial investigation capabilities through trainings for public officials and risk methodologies.²²²³

16 European Commission, *IPA III Programming Framework 2021-2024*

17 EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Annual Action Programme 2023*.

18 European Commission *Progress Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina 2024*.

19 Europe House Montenegro

20 MIA, "MEPs approve up to €100 million in macro-financial assistance to North Macedonia", May 26, 2023

21 EU Support for the rule of law, May 2024

22 Council of Europe, *Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2019-2022, Action Against Economic Crime in the Republic of North Macedonia*, 2022

23 Council of Europe, *North Macedonia assessed the money laundering and financing of terrorism risks of virtual assets and virtual asset service providers*, 2025.

Serbia:

Between 2014 and 2020, Serbia received a total of EUR 1.5 billion through the IPA II program, of which approximately EUR 184 million was allocated specifically for rule of law and anti-corruption efforts. Under the new IPA III framework (2021-2027), Serbia along with other candidate countries, is expected to receive significant financial support totaling EUR 14 billion, with corruption prevention identified as a key priority. Apart from institutional support, the EU also financed civil society projects allocated for the period from 2020 to 2023. Overall, civil society organizations in Serbia receive about EUR 350,000 to carry out initiatives aimed at promoting transparency and monitoring the public sector.²⁴

Kosovo:

Between 2014 and 2020, Kosovo received EUR 602.1 million under IPA II to align with EU standards.²⁵ The *Project against Economic Crime in Kosovo (PECK III)* (2020-2025) targeted corruption, money laundering, and terrorist financing, implementing asset recovery legislation and aligning Kosovo's laws with European standards through trainings, peer learning and technical support.²⁶

Moreover, in May 2025, Montenegro received EUR 26.8 million in pre-financing under the Reform Agenda, part of the *EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans*. North Macedonia and Albania have also received their pre-financing. However, **Serbia and Kosovo** are still awaiting funds, while Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted its Reform Agenda on September 30 2025, thereby fulfilling the formal requirement to access pre-financing under the EU Growth Plan.²⁷ The *EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans* must be fully leveraged to accelerate fundamental reforms and drive sustainable growth, including by attracting foreign investment.

Strong anti-corruption safeguards should be embedded in all national-level fund disbursements, particularly in high-risk areas such as energy market integration and decarbonisation, industrial supply chains, and transport infrastructure. Given their heightened exposure to external influence, Western Balkan countries should also adopt **investment screening mechanisms**²⁸, even if not yet required for non-EU countries, to counter foreign authoritarian influence, illicit financial flows, and strategic asset capture. **Donor and partner support must go beyond funding to focus on capacity-building, technology transfer, strategic mentoring, and policy reform**, while aligning with EU security and governance priorities – including the monitoring of illicit financial flows and the prevention of sanctions evasion – to strengthen regional stability and long-term resilience. To ensure real progress, anti-corruption performance must be directly tied to EU funding through measurable KPIs and enforceable conditionalities that reflect tangible institutional change. In parallel, peer learning and targeted legal and technical support from EU member states can help underperforming countries by sharing successful models, improving enforcement strategies, and building implementation capacity – accelerating their path towards effective governance and EU integration.

²⁴ EU projects in Serbia

²⁵ European Commission, Kosovo – financial assistance under IPA

²⁶ Council of Europe, Project against Economic Crime in Kosovo (PECK III), 2020-2025.

²⁷ European Western Balkans, Montenegro receives pre-financing from the EU Growth Plan for the WB, 16 May 2025.

²⁸ Center for the Study of Democracy, *Forging the Shield. National Economic Security Policies in an Era of Global Uncertainty*, 2024.

Impact of EU Integration on Anti-Corruption Reforms

EU integration has been a key driver of anti-corruption reforms in the Western Balkans, largely driven by Chapter 23 requirements. However, these reforms have had limited practical impact, revealing a persistent gap between formal compliance and real change. Political interference continues to undermine the independence and effectiveness of judicial and anti-corruption bodies, with high-profile cases often delayed or resulting in lenient sentences. Public perception surveys, including SELDI's *Corruption Monitoring System (CMS)*, indicate widespread skepticism, with many citizens viewing reforms as formalities to satisfy EU requirements rather than genuine efforts to tackle systemic corruption and state capture.

Across the region, **specialised anti-corruption bodies** have been established, including Albania's SPAK, Bosnia and Herzegovina's specialised anti-corruption departments within prosecutor offices and the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA), Montenegro's Anti-Corruption Agency and Special State Prosecutor's Office, and comparable units in North Macedonia, Serbia, and Kosovo. These institutions have achieved tangible successes, such as convictions of high-ranking officials, including the former Prime Minister of BiH²⁹ and multiple senior officials in Albania. SPAK alone opened over 700 investigations by 2023, including around 100 high-profile cases. However, enforcement is consistently constrained by resource limitations, fragmented legal frameworks, and weak inter-agency coordination, preventing systemic change.³⁰

Skepticism remains high across all countries. In North Macedonia, 63.5% of citizens identify corruption as the country's biggest problem, up from 46.1% in 2021, while 82% expect corruption to continue in the future.³¹ In Serbia, 41% of citizens believe most public officials are corrupt.³² In Albania, SELDI CMS reported a modest 5% decrease in citizens pressured for bribes, reflecting some progress but persistent challenges in public confidence. Kosovo faces similar issues, where high-level prosecutions are limited, and convictions often result in lenient sentences, undermining public trust.^{33,34,35}

Despite formal reforms, several **structural weaknesses** remain common across the region. Asset declaration systems are often fragmented and inconsistently verified. Whistleblower protections are incomplete, and harmonisation of anti-corruption laws, particularly at subnational levels, is weak, as seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In many cases, reforms are introduced to comply with EU accession milestones rather than respond to domestic demand, reducing their effectiveness.

29 OSCE Mission to BiH Judicial Reform Assessment 2024

30 Pamfleti, SPAK alerts the authorities / 575 officials and politicians under investigation, over 1400 telephones of directors and officials under surveillance, April 4, 2024

31 ,МСМС, Извештај за процена на корупција во Северна Македонија, 2023т

32 Center for Contemporary Politics, Corruption Assessment Report on Serbia, 2023,

33 SELDI, *Mind the Trap: Breaking the Anticorruption Deadlock in the Western Balkans*, October 1, 2024

34 Council of Europe, *Anti-corruption digest Kosovo*, June 2019,

35 Freedom House, *Nation in Transit – Kosovo*, 2024

Political Dynamics Undermining EU Leverage

The EU's conditionality is further undermined by internal political dynamics. Hungarian Prime Minister's repeated use of veto power — from blocking EU financial aid to Ukraine³⁶ and sanctions such as oil embargoes against Russia³⁷, to obstructing Ukraine's accession path³⁸ — has emboldened entrenched elites in the Western Balkans. By showing that defiance of common EU positions carries few consequences, this obstructionism reinforces the logic of state capture and stalled reforms in the region.

Although the European Commission has begun shifting from a box-ticking approach to more impact-oriented conditionality - linking rule of law progress to funding through the Recovery and Resilience Facility for EU member states and even invoking Article 7 TEU to freeze funds for non-compliant member states - these measures remain cautious and uneven. Hungary's veto of the proposed EUR 50 billion macro-financial assistance to Ukraine underscores the need for deeper reform of EU decision-making.³⁹ Belgium's call to revoke Hungary's voting rights⁴⁰ and proposals to use Article 31 TEU to move from unanimity to qualified majority voting⁴¹ point to a broader recognition: if Member States themselves can flout core EU principles, the credibility of demanding results from candidate countries collapses.

Pressure from the EU and other international actors, including the United States, is often overlooked. On September 10, 2025, the United States targeted two former Montenegrin officials with corruption sanctions, signaling that external actors may step in when domestic enforcement falters. Local NGOs noted the absence of immediate domestic follow up (e.g., asset freezes, suspensions), reinforcing perceptions that accountability is outsourced to international partners.⁴²⁴³

³⁶ Deutsche Welle, EU leaders to press Hungary on Ukraine funding deal, January 31 2024.

³⁷ Deutsche Welle, Hungary risks further isolation with EU oil embargo veto, May 4 2022.

³⁸ Reuters, EU on charm offensive in Ukraine as Hungary blocks Kyiv's accession, September 30, 2025.

³⁹ Deutsche Welle, EU summit: Hungary blocks €50 billion Ukraine aid deal, December 15, 2023.

⁴⁰ Reuters, "Group of lawmakers calls on EU to strip Hungary of voting rights", July 16, 2024.

⁴¹ Politico, "It's time for more majority decision-making in EU foreign policy", June 12, 2023.

⁴² US State Department, "Designation of Two Montenegro Public Officials for Significant Corruption", September 10, 2024

⁴³ BIRN, "US Bars Montenegrin Ex-Officials for Alleged Corruption, Drug Trafficking", September 10, 2025

Policy Recommendations

The Western Balkans face entrenched corruption and state capture that threaten both democratic governance and the credibility of EU integration. Legal reforms and new institutions, while necessary, are insufficient on their own. Effective anti-corruption requires enforcement, political will, civic engagement, and a robust framework linking resources and incentives to tangible results.

Western Balkans Governments should:

- ▶ **Prioritise implementation over adoption:** Enforce anti-corruption laws and strategies actively rather than treating them as formalities.
- ▶ **Introduce measurable KPIs:** Link public sector reforms, funding, and accession progress to outcomes such as high-level convictions, asset recovery, and transparency in procurement.
- ▶ **Strengthen judicial and institutional independence:** Implement verification processes to identify and sanction corrupt officials, and safeguard anti-corruption agencies from political influence.
- ▶ **Protect whistleblowers and investigative journalism:** Ensure comprehensive legal and practical safeguards to encourage civic oversight and reporting of corruption.
- ▶ **Focus on strategic corruption and state capture:** Target corruption in high-risk sectors, including foreign-influenced investments, public contracts, and discretionary regulatory decisions.
- ▶ **Enhance transparency through digital tools:** Develop open data portals, e-procurement platforms, and real-time dashboards accessible to civil society to monitor spending and enforcement.
- ▶ **Engage civil society meaningfully:** Involve CSOs in policy development, monitoring, and reporting, building accountability from the bottom up.

EU Policymakers should:

- ▶ ***Link funding to results-based conditionalities:*** Tie EU assistance to measurable anti-corruption outcomes, judicial independence, and asset recovery, not merely formal compliance.
- ▶ ***Shift to an investment-focused approach:*** Conduct risk assessments of fund capture by political elites or foreign actors (e.g., Russia, China) prior to disbursement.
- ▶ ***Support digital and civic oversight tools:*** Strengthen reformist actors and enhance transparency through technology and open-access data platforms.
- ▶ ***Ensure Rule of Law Conditionality enforcement:*** Apply consistent scrutiny to candidate countries and EU members alike to reinforce credibility.
- ▶ ***Promote alignment with EU security and anti-money laundering standards:*** Build national capacities for financial integrity, export control, and illicit finance monitoring.

Civil Society and the International Community should:

- ▶ ***Prioritize support for reformist actors:*** Provide funding, training, and mentorship to CSOs, investigative media, and independent experts.
- ▶ ***Develop regional coordination platforms:*** Track corruption risks, monitor public contracts, and flag abusive legislation across borders.
- ▶ ***Advocate for strategic oversight of investments:*** Monitor risks of state capture or foreign influence in public funds and large-scale projects.
- ▶ ***Support capacity-building and technology transfer:*** Help candidate countries implement digital tools, risk assessments, and data-driven enforcement mechanisms.

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