



Problems of corruption and distrust in political and administrative institutions in Slovenia



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ABSTRACT

Corruption is perceived in all societies as a social pathology that causes great material and moral damage and is a threat to the society's continual development. Especially in countries with a freshly consolidated democracy, as Slovenia, the phenomena of corruption must be treated with all due attention. This article emphasises that corruption in Slovenia is publicly perceived as one of the most important and even increasing problems in society. We are also analysing one of the crucial side effects of the corruption, resulting itself in ever deeper public distrust to most significant political and administrative institutions.

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1. Introduction: corruption and trust in political and administrative institutions

Corruption continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing Europe. While the nature and scope of corruption varies from one EU member state to another, it harms the EU as a whole by reducing levels of investment, obstructing the fair operation of the Internal Market and having a negative impact on public finances. The economic costs incurred by corruption in the EU are estimated to amount to about one percent of EU GDP (Eurobarometer, 2012). According to data recorded by the United Nations, the International Chamber of Commerce, Transparency International, the UN Global Compact and the World Economic Forum, only the direct damage of corruption represents five percent of global GDP each year. Given the fact that the prevalence of corruption and the success of its limitation ranks Slovenia on the lower half of the scale of the EU states, it is possible to estimate that Slovenia (as a result of various forms of corruption in the public and private sectors) annually loses between 1.5% and 2% of GDP (ibid.).

We will follow Treisman's (2000: 399) definition of the corruption as "the misuse of public office for private gain".¹ Similar definition is offered by Banerjee et al. (2012: 6), when they define corruption as the breaking of a rule by an elected official for private gain. Under this definition, the rules define what is corrupt. As a result, the same act can be classified as corruption in one setting but not in another (ibid.). Political scandals in countries across the globe have sparked public outrage against corruption in recent years, and in dozens of countries discredited governments have been forced out of office (Treisman, 2000: 399). Corruption is commonly viewed as one of the main obstacles that post-communist countries face in attempting to consolidate democratic institutions and open, market economies (Shleifer, 1997).

There are many definitions for what constitutes corruption in a single country. When analysing Slovenian anti-corruption legislation, corruption is not treated separately from any other kind of crime. The Prevention of Corruption Act was only adopted in 2004. It defines corruption as every trespassing of the obligated treatment of official or responsible subjects in the

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¹ Transparency International similarly defines corruption as "the misuse of public power for private benefit." See Transparency International, available at <http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publications> (30 April 2012).

private or public sector, as well as the treatment of subjects that are initiators of violations, or subjects that can benefit from the violations. As in many other countries, the *Slovenian Criminal code (2008)* incriminates standard forms of corruption, such as giving and taking a bribe, abuse of an official position and authority, and corruptive acts concerning various voter manipulations. Slovenian legislation does not use the term corruption as a legal term, but uses different terms for every single crime that covers a particular type of corruption.² Although the legislation does not define the generic term of corruption, it does differentiate between active and passive corruption and points out the public/private distinction. The passive corruption is reflected in the legal definition of a particular offence as well as in the type of possible offenders. Later, the definition of corruption in Slovenia relied on the Code of Obligations, where corruption means to request, offer, give/receive, (in)direct bribes or any other undue advantage, or the prospect of affecting the proper execution of tasks or the handling of the recipient of the bribe, or an illicit benefit or promises (*Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, 2012*). One must also state that public office corruption is especially well monitored. Special attention has recently been paid to clearly defining the duties and obligations of public servants and public officials to ensure the transparency of the system.³ Efforts have been made to establish ethical practices that in the long run would prevent a conflict of interests, and to ensure the appropriate use of public funds and the highest possible level of professionalism. In recent years, quite a lot has been done in Slovenia to establish a more efficient system to combat and prevent corruption, and in June 2010 new Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (CPC) was established when the Integrity and Corruption Prevention Act was adopted. The Act expanded the mandate, functions and powers of previous Commission. It also strengthened its independence and introduced additional safeguards and objectivity in the procedure for appointment and dismissal of its leadership. Most importantly, it expanded some of the investigative and sanctioning powers of the CPC and made it not only the national focal point for prevention of corruption, but also for lobbying oversight, whistleblower protection, and integrity of public sector and expanded its reach beyond the public into the private and business sector. But effects of the CPC's work have started already to show on the highest political level in 2011, when following the report by the CPC, Minister of the Interior has to resign.

One of the effects the corruption is that it can undermine public trust in democratic institutions and weaken the accountability of political leadership. No government in the world enjoys the absolute trust of its citizens. Since the power of every government dwarfs that of any individual citizen, even the most benevolent government represents a threat to individual freedom and welfare. Still, for government to operate effectively it must enjoy a minimum of public confidence (*Mishler and Rose, 1997: 418–419*). *Gamson (1968: 42)* argues that trust in political and administrative institutions is important, because it serves as the “creator of collective power” enabling government to make decisions and commit resources without having to resort to coercion or obtain the specific approval of citizens for every decision. When trust is extensive, governments “are able to make new commitments on the basis of it and, if successful, increase support even more” (*Gamson, 1968: 45–46*), creating, in effect, a virtuous spiral. When trust is low, governments cannot govern effectively, trust is further undermined, and a vicious cycle is created (*Muller and Jukam, 1977*). Trust is especially important for democratic governments because they cannot rely on coercion to the same extent as other regimes and because trust is essential to the representative relationship (*Bianco, 1994*). In modern democracies, where citizens exercise control over government through representative institutions, it is trust which gives representatives the leeway to postpone short term constituency concerns while pursuing longer term national interests (*Mishler and Rose, 1997: 419*). For example, when inflation is severe, citizens must have sufficient trust in economic and political institutions to accept temporary economic pain in return for the promise of better economic conditions at some uncertain future date (*Weatherford, 1989*). Trust is necessary so that individuals may participate voluntarily in collective institutions, whether in political institutions or in civil society's institutions. Trust, however, is double edged. Democracy requires trust but also presupposes an active and vigilant citizenry with a healthy scepticism of government and a willingness, should the need arise, to suspend trust and assert control over government by replacing the government of the day (*Mishler and Rose, 1997: 419*).

In the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), excessive trust was never a real concern. The immediate problem is overcoming the abiding cynicism and distrust, which are the legacies of the half-century long non-democratic rule. Citizens in CEE have good reason to distrust political and social institutions. Most have lived their entire lives under authoritarian regimes, some more totalitarian than others but all inclined to subjugate individual interests to those of the Communist Party (*Clark and Wildavsky, 1990*). Communist system created a variety of civil institutions, but as *Shlapentokh (1989: 9)* has emphasized, “such organizations as the trade unions, the Young Communists' League could be regarded as pertaining to civil society, but in fact they are parts of the state apparatus”. Instead of voluntary participation, citizens in CEE were forced to make a hypocritical show of involvement or at least compliance (*Mishler and Rose, 1997: 420*). The consequence was massive alienation and distrust of the Communist regime and a lingering cynicism towards both political and civil institutions.

The new democratic regimes of CEE have not existed long, but they have existed long enough for many citizens to differentiate contemporary democratic institutions from those of the past and to form at least preliminary judgements about

² The phenomenon of corruption in Slovenian Criminal Code is described by eight offences: violation of the free voters' decisions (Article 151); accepting a bribe in elections (Article 157); illicit acceptance of gifts (Article 241); illicit donation of gifts (Article 242); taking a bribe (Article 261); giving a bribe (Article 262); donating gifts for illegal mediation (Article 264); and accepting benefits for illegal mediation (Article 263).

³ This was achieved through the Law on Public Servants, the Law on Public Officials, the Law on Incompatibility of Conducting Public Functions and any other Business Activity, and the adoption of codes of conduct.

the differences. That, by itself, can create a measure of trust or, at least, a tempering of distrust. In the short term, popular trust in government may be inherited. In the longer term, however, trust must be earned; it must be performance based. The extent of public trust in the post-communist regimes of CEE clearly is important for democratic consolidation. It also is an empirical question about which the supply of speculation greatly exceeds that of systematic research. Even less is known about the sources of trust and distrust in post-communist societies, although an understanding of underlying causes is vital for assessing the prospects for establishing civil society and consolidating stable democratic rule (Mishler and Rose, 1997: 420). As the origin this paper uses annual Corruption Perception Index, prepared by the Transparency International (2009, 2011), and then compares the Transparency International data with various national and international public opinions polls as well as institutional reports on both perceived and registered corruption to analyse recent trends in both perceived and registered corruption in Slovenia. In the second part (with the help of data from the European Social Survey and Slovenian national survey Politbarometer) paper examines the structure and determinants of public trust in the political and administrative institutions predominately in Slovenia, but also comparatively in over twenty European countries, with some from CEE. Our findings support the thesis that corruption in Slovenia is in fact publicly perceived as one of the most important and even increasing problems in society, and that the ever higher levels of corruption are closely connected with ever deeper public distrust towards most significant political and administrative institutions.

2. Corruption in Slovenia

In the last three years, the situation of corruption in Slovenia has significantly changed. In 2009, the police recorded a huge increase in crimes related to corruption, namely 231.⁴ Most (29%) of these cases were related to taking benefits from illegal intervention and to accepting bribes (Report on Police Work, 2009, 2010). In 2010 there were 71 such crimes and 86 in 2011. In 2010, 2011 the most corrupt acts were related to giving and receiving bribes (68% and 51%) (Reports on Police Work, 2011: 38 and 2012: 65).⁵ If we look at the Transparency International index, we can see that Slovenia in 2009 achieved a score of 6.6, and in 2010 (the last measurement), a score of 6.4. Despite the fact that the result of the Republic of Slovenia in the last two years is decreasing, it still stands that this result is satisfactory—especially on a global scale—while among EU members it is located slightly below average.

In sharp contrast with the estimates of the Transparency International Corruption Perception index⁶ are the estimates of the Slovenian population. In order to correctly present the perception of the extent of corruption in Slovenian society, we must present the results of the “Viewpoints on Corruption 2008”⁷ public opinion poll (Kurdija, 2009), which was conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research and Mass Communications at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana. This was the special survey on corruption in Slovenia that has been carried out every year since 2002; the data gathered by it will not only help assess the current extent of corruption, but also support further research on the phenomenon.

The survey shows the subjective responses of respondents by examining the opinions of Slovenian citizens regarding corruption. The results show that people in Slovenia believe corruption to be a very big problem in their country. This response was given by 36% of all respondents (compared to 27% in the same survey conducted in 2002); another 31% (26% in 2002) believed that corruption was a big problem. The proportion of the Slovenian population that considered corruption to be a big problem has been steadily rising since 2006. In 2009 survey, 70% of respondents agreed with this assessment, but on the other hand only 3% of them agreed with the sentence stating that corruption is (very) small problem. In 2008, 89% of the Slovenian population believed that corruption in Slovenia was a big problem, while in 2009 this proportion increased to 94% (only in four member states was the population more concerned about corruption). In 2011, this proportion was already 95% (Eurobarometer, 2012: 12).

The trend is without the slightest doubt, worrying. In addition, it is contradictory. Contradiction can be seen in at least three features or processes. First of all, it is in sharp contrast with the Transparency International data. Secondly, it is contradictory in terms of increasing purchasing power, which is hardly plausible if a society is fraught with corruption. And thirdly, there is a sharp divide between the opinions of the population on the prevalence of corruption in the Republic of Slovenia and the actual statistics on prosecutions in corruption criminal offences. The latter is—in light of the overall statistics of crime, and also in the light of notifications received from the *Commission for the Prevention of Corruption*—negligible (Annual Report, 2010, 2011: 4). Naturally, we should also take into the consideration that in corrupt societies official data is not always trustworthy (see Sarre et al., 2005), the fact that is even acknowledged by the reports of Slovenian Commission for prevention of corruption (2013).

⁴ In 2008 there were only 18 crimes related to corruption.

⁵ It should be noted here that Report of Police Work (2011, 2012) only indicates corrupt acts that were reported to the police and also investigated by the police. The report also states several corruptive acts, among them “giving bribes” and “receiving bribes” that are cited separately because of the stipulations in the Slovenian Penal Law; both were also most often reported to and investigated by the police in 2010 and 2011.

⁶ Since 1995, Transparency International (TI) publishes the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) annually ranking countries “by their perceived levels of corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys.” The CPI generally defines corruption as “the misuse of public power for private benefit.” As of 2010, the CPI ranks 178 countries “on a scale from 10 (very clean) to 0 (highly corrupt)”. See Transparency International, available at <http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publications> (30.04.12.).

⁷ The phone research was done in February 2009 on a sample of 3255 adult Slovenian citizens, of whom 911 agreed to participate in the survey. A very similar survey was carried out in 2002.

It is also interesting that in 2008, 63% (60% in 2002) of Slovenians believed that the rate of corruption had increased since 1990. Furthermore, in 2011, 74% of Slovenians believed that in the past three years the level of corruption in Slovenia had increased in total. 19% of respondents believed that the level of corruption stayed the same, and only 3% thought that the level of corruption had decreased. On the other hand, in 2011, only 7% (for comparison: in 2008, also 7%, and 20% in 2002) have actually had any personal encounter with any kind of corruptive behaviour so far; but 64% of respondents claim that their every day lives are in some way affected by general corruption in the society.

When asked how extensive corruption is in the public services, 68% (58% in 2008 and 44% in 2002) of the citizens believed that almost all civil servants and officials were committing some kind of corruptive act. The high probability (66%) of corruptive acts was also expected from the inspectors (working in the public health sector, construction, food quality, sanitary control and licensing); and in the field of public health services (59%, in 2008, 47%) – where also the biggest share of the population had some kind of personal experience with corruptive activity; and 36% in the public education sector (primary, secondary and tertiary education combined). In addition, 55% of Slovenians believed that the giving and taking of bribes, and the abuse of positions of power for personal gain, are widespread among police services and among custom services (48%), and among judicial services (65%). Furthermore, respondents in Slovenia were most likely to agree that corruption is a problem at all three institutional levels with almost everybody (97% for national institutions, 91% for local institutions, and 92% for regional institutions) sharing this view.

When asked about the institution that is expected to fight and prevent corruption, the highest percentages of respondents indicated the national government (75%), followed by the judicial system (69%), then the police (44%), and in fourth place the citizens themselves (33%).

As one can observe, public opinion regarding corruption and corruptive activities in the public sector has not improved over the last six years. We may conclude that, in the opinion of Slovenians, civil servants are corruptive and that corruption is an important problem in Slovenian society (although the average citizen has not really had any personal experience on which to base such a negative opinion). In-depth analysis shows that, according to the survey, the most corrupt sectors are the inspection service and the health sector; the least corrupt, but still with non-negligible share, is the whole public education sector.

Finally we can add that 50% of Slovenians believe that corruption is more widespread in Slovenia than in other EU member states; but on the other hand, 52% of Slovenian respondents are not informed about the level of corruption in their country.

3. Public opinion research on trust in political and administrative institutions

The public administration and the civil servants system are components of governance that can also be analysed from this so-called political point of view; citizens most commonly perceive these components as a secondary structure of the government and usually as the least respectable structure (Brezovšek, 1997: 184). Public opinion can be an important source of bureaucratic power within the public administration system, yet how public opinion affects the system of civil servants and public officials remains quite an under-researched area (Meier, 2000: 52). Some researchers even believe that public opinion has a prevailing influence on the work of civil servants. Page and Shapiro (1981) researched 357 major changes in public opinion. They compared those changes within the same timeframe for the work and outputs of the public administration and concluded that as many as 87 percent of different public policies were adapted in line with the changes in public opinion. The findings of Gray and Lowery (1988: 121) are similar. They studied tax and education policies and concluded that both had adapted themselves to public opinion. Peters and Hogwood (1985) linked public opinion and the growth of the civil servants system⁸ and proved that when public opinion expressed open support of a certain public policy the civil servants system had strengthened.

One main characteristic of public opinion is its instability; it changes frequently and often in a short time period. This characteristic is directly opposed to the characteristics of the civil servants system. For this system stability and predictability are crucial for enabling quality in administrative work over a long time period. However, it is true, that some sub-systems of the public administration can exploit public opinion support to promote their own policies. The importance of support for an individual policy is usually higher than the need to have an average high level of support for the whole public administration and the civil servants system.

In Slovenia one periodical public opinion research is the Politbarometer that has been conducted by the Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre and by the Institute for Social Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana since 1995. The survey obtains the opinions of 900 to 1000 randomly selected citizens of Slovenia aged over 18 years. The research focuses on opinions on the work of different institutions in Slovenia as well as on general assessments of the quality of life in the country. In connection to this, the main goal of the Politbarometer is to present average assessments of the satisfaction of citizens with democratic institutions, personal finances and economic conditions in the country. If we compare the surveys over the years then some changes in satisfaction can be detected. In general, one of the most common observations is that in all new democratic systems there is a high level of dissatisfaction with democracy itself. Similarly, in Slovenia more than half the citizens are not satisfied with democracy in Slovenia (see Table 1). The question remains of how much of such 'dissatisfaction' can a fragile post-socialist regime withhold before this dissatisfaction changes into a denial of the

⁸ Growth of the civil servants system mainly refers to quantitative growth and not so much to growth in the quality of the system.

Table 1
Satisfaction with democracy (in percent).

| Year | Satisfied | Unsatisfied | N.A. |
|------|-----------|-------------|------|
| 1998 | 31 | 58 | 11 |
| 1999 | 39 | 49 | 12 |
| 2000 | 40 | 48 | 12 |
| 2001 | 42 | 46 | 12 |
| 2002 | 44 | 46 | 10 |
| 2003 | 38 | 55 | 7 |
| 2004 | 41 | 51 | 8 |
| 2005 | 34 | 59 | 7 |
| 2006 | 39 | 51 | 11 |
| 2007 | 36 | 58 | 6 |
| 2008 | 39 | 55 | 6 |
| 2009 | 32 | 62 | 6 |
| 2010 | 11 | 86 | 3 |
| 2011 | 12 | 84 | 4 |

Source: Politbarometer; http://www.cjm.si/PB_rezultati (January 2012). We always used last survey conducted in each stated calendar year. The question was: "Are you generally satisfied or unsatisfied with the development of democracy in Slovenia?"

legitimacy of the new political system. On the other side, this dissatisfaction could also be connected to the outcomes of the process and not democracy itself; in this case, dissatisfaction can also be expressed through the existing mechanisms like elections etc.

As we see in Table 1 the expressed trust in democracy since 1998, when we can already speak of the normalization of conditions in the country and of the establishment of democratic values, the trust in democracy has been rising to 2002 when it reached its historical peak of 44%, then started slowly to decrease while dissatisfaction has been slowly growing, peaking in 2010 and 2011. Sometimes the distrust does not apply solely to the democratic system but the personification of democracy – the political institutions (parliament, government, political parties). Besides dissatisfaction with political institutions, another very important factor is the economic climate in the country. Since socialism the safety net of social care has more or less been deteriorating, leaving many marginalised. However, in Slovenia economic stability prevented any greater dissatisfaction with democracy all the way until 2009, when consequences of global economic crisis hit the country and safety net of social care started to crack.

General trust in the country is also reflected in the trust in major political institutions (see Table 2). There is some minor deviation in the measurements between the years, but it is not very significant all the way until 2010, when the level of trust to all five major political institutions in the country drops quite significantly. But if we observe a longer time period of this survey we can detect some differences in the level of expressed trust. In 2000 we can detect peak of trust in government, political parties and prime minister, as this was the year of parliamentary elections that followed publicly noted unsuccessful reign of right-wing government that took over when previous left-wing government broke apart in spring 2000. The drop of trust we can detect from 2007/2008 to 2011 is significant and visible at all five institutions stated in Table 2, and also in total accordance with the dissatisfaction with democracy observed earlier in the same period.

The same survey also occasionally measures trust in state administration. The results of the survey indicate it is obvious that trust in the state administration in Slovenia is more stable than trust to mainstream political institutions and that the

Table 2
Trust in political and administrative institutions in Slovenia.

| Year | Government | Prime-minister | General assembly | President of the republic | Political parties | State administration |
|------|------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1998 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 2.6 | 3.6 | 2.3 | n.a. |
| 1999 | 2.9 | 3.4 | 2.8 | 3.8 | 2.4 | n.a. |
| 2000 | 3.3 | 3.7 | 3.1 | 3.9 | 2.7 | n.a. |
| 2001 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 2.9 | 3.9 | 2.6 | n.a. |
| 2002 | 3.1 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 3.7 | 2.7 | n.a. |
| 2003 | 2.9 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 2.5 | n.a. |
| 2004 | 3.1 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 2.6 | 3.0 |
| 2005 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 2.8 | 3.5 | 2.5 | 2.9 |
| 2006 | 2.9 | 3.2 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 2.6 | n.a. |
| 2007 | 2.8 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 4.0 | 2.6 | 3.1 |
| 2008 | 3.0 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 3.4 | 2.5 | 3.0 |
| 2009 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 3.5 | 2.4 | 2.9 |
| 2010 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 3.1 | 2.0 | 2.7 |
| 2011 | 2.0 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 3.1 | 1.9 | 2.6 |

Source: Politbarometer; http://www.cjm.si/PB_rezultati (January 2012). We always used last survey conducted in each stated calendar year. Shaded windows indicate change in office. The question was: "How much do you trust the listed institutions. Assess your trust on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning no trust and 5 absolute trust."

Table 3
Trust in politicians, political parties and national parliament in Europe (1995 and 2010).

| Country | Trust in politicians (2010) | Trust in political parties (2010) | Trust in national parliament (2010) | Trust in national parliament (1995) |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Belgium | 3.86 | 3.85 | 4.46 | 5.0 |
| Bulgaria | 1.99 | 2.01 | 2.38 | – |
| Czech Rep. | 2.63 | 2.69 | 3.27 | 3.6 |
| Denmark | 5.04 | 5.17 | 5.83 | 6.2 |
| Estonia | 3.62 | 3.43 | 4.24 | 4.4 |
| Finland | 4.43 | 4.54 | 5.38 | 5.8 |
| France | 3.19 | 3.07 | 4.15 | 4.5 |
| Germany | 3.29 | 3.26 | 4.18 | 4.5 |
| Great Britain | 3.40 | 3.50 | 4.05 | 4.7 |
| Hungary | 3.12 | 3.14 | 4.22 | 5.0 |
| Israel | 2.95 | 2.95 | 3.64 | 4.7 |
| Netherlands | 5.22 | 5.23 | 5.34 | 5.2 |
| Norway | 4.96 | 4.93 | 6.03 | 5.7 |
| Poland | 2.66 | 2.55 | 3.44 | 3.5 |
| Portugal | 2.01 | 2.02 | 2.91 | 4.4 |
| Russia | 3.09 | 3.11 | 3.58 | – |
| Spain | 2.72 | 2.70 | 4.30 | 4.8 |
| Sweden | 5.04 | 5.11 | 6.28 | 5.9 |
| Switzerland | 5.01 | 4.81 | 5.81 | 5.8 |
| Slovenia | 2.25 | 2.24 | 2.98 | 4.0 |

Source: *European Social Survey*; <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org> (January 2012). The question was: “Tell me on a score from 0 to 10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions. 0 means you do not trust institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust.”

drop in trust, we observed in 2010 and 2011 is not so dramatic with state administration. The reason for this is almost certainly the merit nature of state administration, which is seen as professional and non-partisan, although sometimes unpopular due to protected status of civil servants, especially during the last years of economic crisis. We can also observe that in the middle of the first decade of 21st century, the state administration scored lower grades than the Slovenian government, primer minister and president of the republic. One can perhaps link such a low levels of trust with: (1) the inheritance of the administrative system of the former regime, making it very rigid; or (2) the slow and unproductive reform of the public administration system in general.

If we compare public trust in institutions measured in other European countries in 1995 and 2010, the conclusion is that the level of trust is much lower in CEE than the level of trust in Western Europe. The survey covered a range of questions and in *Table 3* we can see the level of trust in national parliaments, political parties and politicians in all of the observed countries. Even among CEE countries there is a significant difference in levels of trust. In Slovenia, for example, the level of trust is among the lowest in the region. This indicates that the variations in levels of trust show how different the political systems are and that the level of trust in the region is much lower than in other Western European countries; probably because of the change in the regime (Kasse, Newton and Toš, 1999).

If we compare trust levels in national parliament from data sets of 1995 and 2010, we can clearly ascertain that levels of trust have fallen quite significantly, except in Norway, Sweden and Nederland, where trust in national parliament was actually higher in 2010 than in 1995. The average level of trust was 4.63 in 1995 and 4.32 in 2010; the level of trust was measured on a scale from 1 to 10. Only two of the observed countries' parliaments scored a lower level of trust in 1995 than in Slovenia (Poland and Czech Republic) and there were again two such examples in 2010 (Bulgaria, Portugal). Besides that, we can see that the Scandinavian countries on average have a much higher level of trust, which could also be linked to their high levels of social capital that could play some role in their relatively high trust levels in general.

Public opinion surveys can sometimes be used to lend political decisions some legitimacy. Politicians and the media can use them to influence the policy-making process, to influence strategic decisions or the outcome of elections. In connection to our paper there still remains the question of whether the publishing of public opinion surveys where relatively low levels of trust in administrative and political institutions are expressed does itself influence a further drop in trust levels among citizens.

4. Concluding remarks

Corruption is a social deviation that has existed in societies since the beginning of time and it has become more transparent in the last decade. In particular, the corruption in the public sector is one of the most important problems and must be treated with all due attention in every modern state. Hence, it is necessary to raise public awareness, protect and develop the freedom of the press, develop social science research on corruption and, above all, develop modern anti-corruption tools to prevent and fight the phenomenon. As we have seen, corruption is publicly seen as one of the most important problems in Slovenia, but on the other hand most of the population has not had any personal experience with corruption or corruptive acts. But even if public impression regarding corruption is more or less incorrect, it is important to be constantly aware of the

problem and to continue improving the tools needed to prevent and fight corruption as corruption will not be easy to eradicate and all requisite (especially political) support will be needed for the country's next steps.

The phenomenon of increasing levels of corruption is closely related to the concept of public distrust in political and administrative institutions. The definite answer to the question of why distrust in political and administrative institutions is increasing in modern democratic systems remains elusive, although we can search for at least partial answer in recent drops in trust to political and administrative institutions in global economic crisis. One can also wonder if this means that trust in democratic values in general is seen not as important as it once used to be. Instead of an answer we can offer the opinion of Ronald Inglehart who claims on the basis of empirical research that societies that are increasingly critical of hierarchical authorities are at the same time more participative and claiming a more active role in the policy-making process.

Political leaders and senior civil servants are interacting with ever more active and more informed and educated citizens, who are simultaneously more critical of their actions. An alternative approach reveals that sympathy does not necessarily mean trust, but it can also be interpreted as some sort of obvious predictability, meaning that citizens do not *a priori* trust the institution but, since we can foresee its reactions and behaviour in the future, which should be consistent with those in the past, we trust the bureaucratic processes instead. The dimensions of trust between citizens and administrative and political institutions cannot only be measured through the parameter of trust – mistrust, but at best as a relationship of “inductive anticipation” (Warren, 1999). We can conclude that the legitimacy of the system increases with the level of trust in political and administrative institutions, but decreases with high levels of perceived corruption. However, is complete trust in favour of democracy or could it be that a constant ongoing critique and sober judgement of the everyday actions of administrative and political bodies is in fact in the best interests of a consolidated democracy?

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