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Corruption and the unofficial economy in transition countries

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Economic security is the basis of the national security system of each sovereign State, and corruption and the shadow economy are the basis for the criminalization of economic relations. This article describes how corruption and the unofficial economy are implemented in transition countries such as Russian Federation and Albania. Information about this problem in the government sphere of these countries is also provided.

Keywords: corruption, the unofficial economy, transition countries.

In recent years, the fight against corruption has become a key point of the programs of many governments and international development organizations. Given the complexity and depth of political and economic changes in transition economies (including the complete displacement of the established principles of the political process and the ruling interests of the administrative command system by new political structures and institutions governed by market incentives), it is extremely important that politicians are aware of the causes of corruption.

Corruption is one of the global and large-scale problems not only in Russia, but also in the entire civilized society. Almost all spheres of life are subject to corruption due to its various manifestations in different forms and types [3].

In accordance with Russian legislation, corruption is defined as abuse of official position, giving a bribe, receiving a bribe, abuse of authority, commercial bribery or other illegal use by an individual of his official position contrary to the legitimate interests of society and the state in order to obtain benefits in the form of money, valuables, other property or services of a proprietary nature, other property rights for himself or for third parties or illegal provision of such benefits to the specified person by other individuals [6].

According to the international non-profit organization Transparency International (recognized as a foreign agent on the territory of the Russian Federation), which makes a rating of states by the level of corruption, in 2021 the Russian Federation took 136th place out of 180, scoring 29 points out of 100. On the same line with Russia are countries such as Angola, Liberia and Mali. How the level of corruption in Russia changed from 2012 to 2021 is shown in image 1 [5].

Score changes 2012 - 2021

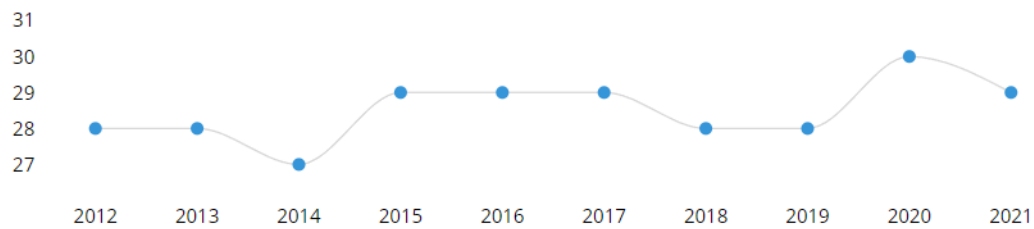


Image 1. Statistics on the level of corruption in Russia from 2012 to 2021

Corruption perception levels are compiled based on expert assessments of independent organizations around the world. The lower the score, the more corrupt the country. A year earlier, Russia ranked 129th with 30 points, which means that the country has a very high level of corruption. And given that in 2021 the Russian Federation dropped in the ranking by as much as 7 points, a negative trend is observed in the state.

It's no secret that corruption in the post-Soviet countries is a dynamically growing sector of the unofficial economy. Its socio-economic essence is manifested in the deformation of feelings, beliefs, justice of people, distributive and organizational and managerial relations.

The problems of the unofficial economy research are relevant today both in Russia and around the world. The unofficial economy is a certain economic activity that is carried out on the territory of the state for the purpose of tax evasion and is not officially recorded. Therefore, its development has a negative impact on the socio-economic situation.

One of the ways to implement the shadow economy is «gray» import, when goods are imported at reduced duties due to an incorrectly completed declaration. So, in 2021, it became known how the state inspector of the Bronka customs post of the North-Western Customs Administration Alexander Zharin entered false information into the system more than 50 times about sending Belarusian-made cigarettes abroad, which were eventually sold in Russia without paying excise taxes and VAT, which caused damage to the treasury in the amount of 2 billion rubles. As the court established, Zharin received a bribe in the amount of 178.5 thousand dollars from Gennady Rogachevsky, head of the trade unions of the Baltic Customs. In March 2021, the court sentenced Alexander Zharin to 7 years in a strict regime colony in the case of taking a bribe and forgery [3].

Similar problems with corruption and the shadow economy are found not only in the post-Soviet countries. For example, one of the countries of the Balkan peninsula, Albania, ranks 110th in the ranking of states in terms of corruption. The dynamics of corruption in this country from 2012 to 2021 can be seen in image 2 [4].

Score changes 2012 - 2021

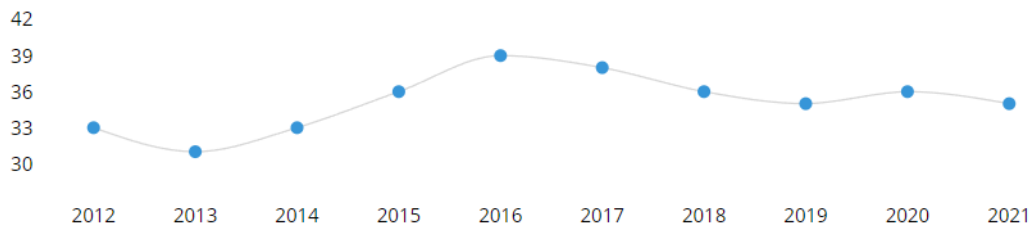


Image 2. Statistics on the level of corruption in Albania from 2012 to 2021

Although Albania scored 35 out of 100 points in 2021, which is higher than the Russian Federation, this does not mean that the country does not have serious problems with corruption. For this reason, 78% Albanian citizens said that political parties are corrupted and 76% shared the same opinion when asked about the legal system, while another 75% said that the customs are seized by corruption, according to the annual survey «Balkan Barometer». For 74% this problem is also seen in public health care. 71% of the respondents referred to the parliament as «a corrupted institution» [2].

As for the unofficial economy in Albania, then in a list of 110 countries (according to the Basel Index is an independent annual ranking, and mean of evaluation, on the dangers posed by money laundering and terrorist funding) Albania ranked 72, with an overall score of 5.72 points (0 = low risk to 10 = high risk), dropping 28 spots from last year [1]. Investing in the construction sector is the main avenue through which criminals, seeking to legalize their activities, launder their «dirty money» in Albania. Representatives from the Bank of Albania confirm that country poses a greater risk when it comes to money laundering practices. Albania is currently classified as a gray-list country, regarding this sort of criminal activity.

To sum up, studies conducted by foreign scientists allow us to conclude that the phenomena of corruption are typical not only for transition countries, but also for both developed and least developed countries. Corruption and the unofficial economy are serious problems for the whole world. The shadow sector of the economy exacerbates the existing problem of corruption in Russian and Albanian society, which is a global factor in destabilizing the economic security of these countries. To solve this problem, it is important to stabilize the current situation as soon as possible and direct the economic development of Russia and Albania in a progressive direction by improving legislation in the field of combating corruption and the shadow economy, as well as introducing certain measures that will help improve the living standards of citizens.

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