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Fighting Against Corruption by the European Union in North Macedonia

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As Vachudova (2009) clarified that corruption is a big obstacle to the functioning of a market economy and, it also causes to enrichment of certain elite groups in a country. For this reason, the European Union (EU) is trying to promote good governance and fight against corruption among its Member States as well as in accession countries. Corruption is one of the significant obstacles in front of the strengthening democracy and economy of Western Balkan countries. (Komsuoglu & Kurtoglu Eskisar, 2015). North Macedonia is one of them which located in Central Eastern part of the Europe. The EU is using conditionality principle to promote good governance and fight against corruption in North Macedonia. In this paper, first, I would like to give the details about the EU's principle of conditionality with regard to promotion of good governance and fighting against corruption in accession countries. Second, I would like to address situation of corruption in North Macedonia before and after the accession process. Last, I would like to criticize whether the EU has success or not in North Macedonia to reach its purpose.

How the EU promote good governance and fight against corruption in North Macedonia?

When the EU has established, all European states that have liberal democracy could join the Union through enlargement process, however, because of structurally different new members joined the Union, there has been needs for new conditions more than having only liberal democracy in the candidate countries in order to join the EU. (Anastasakis, 2008) For this purpose, Copenhagen criteria have introduced as a set of conditions for candidate countries before to apply membership to the EU. Adaptation of *acquis communautaire* is put by the EU for accession countries in order to join to the EU. (Kochenov 2008: 21 as cited in Glöpker, 2013) Among these new conditions, promotion of good governance and fighting against corruption cannot be seen directly in *acquis communautaire*. Through these conditions, the EU is moved further and persist on openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence more in accession countries which help to promote good governance and fight against corruption in accession countries.

(Risteska, 2013) For this purpose, two chapters are opened to fulfill by accession countries; 'Judiciary and Fundamental Rights' and 'Justice, Freedom and Security.' (Risteska, 2013) Therefore, these criteria has created the conditionality principle of the EU which is a process rather than only applying set of rules, especially, when promote good governance in accession countries. (Risteska, 2013) Through this principle of conditionality, the European Commission is looking accession process of a candidate country, and reports their progress annually. (Glüpker, 2013) As Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier stated that when candidate states fulfill the conditions, the EU is applying 'reinforcement by reward' strategy (2004) In 1998, allocation of financial assistance to candidate countries have become dependent on the meeting these criteria by the candidate countries determined by the Council regulation. (Glüpker, 2013) Therefore, in order to understand the EU's effectiveness on reforms in accession countries as well as in North Macedonia, conditionality principle of the EU should be examined in these areas; interpretation of documents such as Commission Reports which make pressure on candidate countries and, scope and size of financial assistances as rewards in order to fulfill conditions by accession countries. (Glüpker, 2013) On the other hand, cost of implementation of conditions have played crucial role in accession countries that affect the EU's promotion of good governance and fighting against corruption reforms besides with other conditions. (Glüpker, 2013) In Western Balkans, promotion of good and effective government has started play key role and, expected by the EU from Western Balkan candidate countries to fulfill by accession countries. (Börzel, 2009 as cited in Risteska, 2013) North Macedonia is one of the Western Balkan countries in accession process. To see whether there is a positive progress or no progress in North Macedonia in the field of good governance and anticorruption, changing dynamics of these documents that published by the Commission and size of financial assistance should be considered. Besides that, Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and Governance scores of North Macedonia would be used in order to see differences that corresponding with these developments.

What has changed in North Macedonia?

Republic of North Macedonia gained its independence from Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991 by the name of Republic of Macedonia in that time. From its establishment, one of the main strategic goals of the country has been to join the EU. (Risteska, 2013) However, in terms of criteria that given by the EU, Macedonia was not ready to join the EU. After the independence from 1991 to 1998, government party Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) had suppressed civil society, free media and political competition and also similar situation had followed when VMRO-DPMNE party came into power after 1998 (Tomić, 2019). Democratization process of Macedonia also tackled by the name issue between Greece which Greece vetoed usage of Macedonia name in all international organizations. Also, inter-ethnic tensions that arise in 2001 between Albanian groups in the country blocked the process of democratization of the country as well. (Tomić, 2019) Under these circumstances, Macedonia has very low corruption scores before the accession. (See the table 1) In 2002, Macedonia signed Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU. Starting from that point, Macedonia has made several legislative changes based on standards that given by the EU. (Tomić, 2019) However, these legislative changes did not lead to significant policy implementation that related to improvements in the area of rule of law, judiciary effectiveness and fighting against corruption. (Tomić, 2019) Macedonia applied full membership to the EU in 2004, from that time model of governance by the EU was provided, changing legislation based on *acquis communautaire* has started after 2004. (Risteska, 2013) Macedonia has gained its candidate status and visa liberalization in 2009 which can be considered as a reward by the EU. Although Macedonia has been trying to fulfill conditions since 2009, official negotiation process still was not started due to name dispute between Greece. However, a referendum held in 2018 in Macedonia and the country has changed its name from Macedonia to North Macedonia, in order to abolish the main obstacle on the way of membership. So, when the EU was starting to

try to promote good governance and fight against corruption in Macedonia after 2004, as I mentioned above, these area should be looked in order to analyze the process; Commission's annually reports, size of financial allocation and cost of implementation should be considered. Since the sign of SAA, the Commission is publishing annual reports whether Macedonia applying criteria or not and, these reports has become key conditions to strengthen good governance and fight against corruption. (Risteska, 2013) For instance, in the first Annual SAA Assessment Report, corruption has seen a serious cause fulfilling criteria given by the EU. (First Annual SAA assessment report [COM (2002)163] p.3 as cited by Risteska, 2013). At the same annual report in 2004, where Macedonia strengthened its decentralization process and, implement Ohrid Framework Agreement successfully, progression in the anticorruption policies is seen by the EU in the report. So, we can say that with observing developments annually was one of mechanism that using by the EU in order to strengthen good governance and fighting against corruption in Macedonia. As a second method of the EU is using financial instruments as a reward for fulfilling conditions. For this purpose, Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development, and Stabilization (CARDS) has introduced by the EU in 2000 in order to allocate financial assistance to

strengthen civil society capacity which is related to promote good governance in the country. Through CARDS, term of good governance has introduced also after 2005 that aimed to strengthen Justice and Home Affairs and public administration reforms. (Risteska, 2013) When Macedonia has applied full membership in 2007, The European Accession Partnership Agreement has signed and, it also increased effect of the EU's conditionality principle. After signing this agreement, the EU has introduced the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) funds in 2007 that allocated according to fulfilling conditions by Macedonia. IPA funds has more related output legitimacy, which are more related to judiciary reform, anticorruption policies and improvement of the rule of law compared to CARDS. (Risteska, 2013) Besides looking these reports and observing financial assistance, North Macedonia's profile from the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and World Bank Governance Indicator score can give idea whether these conditionality principle is successful or not. The score of Macedonia has started from 3.3 score in 1999 that relatively on the good place if we compare it next ten years' score of Macedonia. Between period of 2010-2015, the country has followed almost same score around 4.2 which was higher than in 1999. However, sudden decrease occurred in 2016, and from that time Macedonia is located again same score with 1999

	1999	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2018
Republic of North Macedonia	3.3	2.3	2.7	3.3	3.8	3.9	4.4	4.2	3.5	3.7

Table 1: Corruption Perception Index (CPI) scores for North Macedonia. With 0 corresponding to lowest rank, and 10 to highest rank.

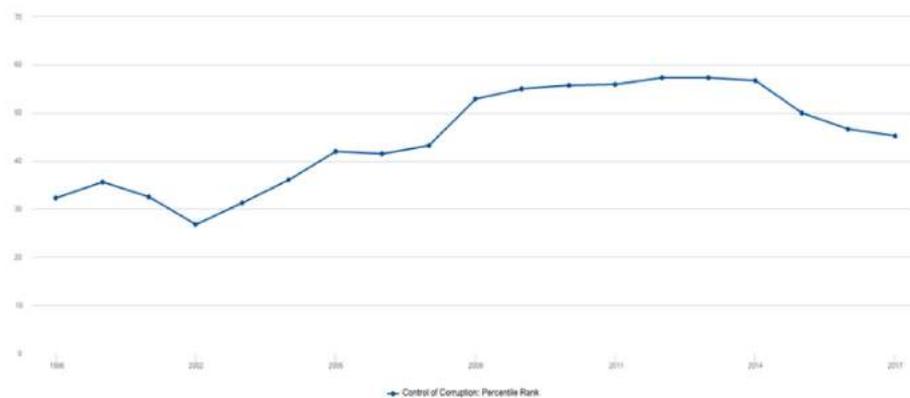


Table 2: Worldbank Government Indicators (Control of Corruption) with 0 corresponding to lowest rank, and 100 to highest rank.



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Success or Failure?

As we can see that before the accession process, North Macedonia was not able to have a successful democratization process. Macedonia has turned its democratization process when it turned towards the EU. When Macedonia signed SAA in 2001 and started to increase its relations with the EU, two tables showed that possible improvements that occurred in the area of corruption from starting the year of 2001. When we look at the development in the area of fighting against corruption in progress reports of Macedonia, there is some progress related to corruption-related issues. (Glüpker, 2013) Looking at the size of material assistance, Macedonia has received CARDS and IPA funds increasingly from the Commission. When CARDS was introduced, it started from almost 15 million Euros in 2000 and ended with almost 55 million Euros in 2006, also IPA has started with 60 million Euros which is started in 2007 and reached approximately 90 million Euros in 2010 per year. (Glüpker, 2013) While these funds are not directly related to the promotion of good governance and fighting against corruption, when

we look at when the amount of money started to increase to Macedonia, the country's score in CPI score started to increase positively like in the period after 2006. (Glüpker, 2013). In the area of good governance and corruption-related reforms, there is also a democratic cost of implementation. Glüpker clarified this situation, parties' orientation, whether reformist or not, can play an important role to implement reforms related to corruption and good governance. She explains that because of changing party orientation in Macedonia, after 2001 ethnic crisis, put nationalist party to more reformist idea. It also creates understanding with opposition party which was already Western-oriented reformist. It decreased the cost of implementation in Macedonia which led to have some success in the period after 2004. (Glüpker, 2013) In addition to these, the process of accession has an indirect effect to establish the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) which was created to fight against corruption in 2002. (Tomić, 2019) This step also shows that the EU's effect of encouraging countries to combat against corruption.

Which reasons make reforms as a success or failure?

When North Macedonia's relation with the EU is accelerated from 2001 until 2014, it has positive effect on promotion good governance and fighting against corruption in the country. This can be explained by the relation between corruption and increasing financial assistance which strengthening civil society capacity, public administration reforms which can increase good governance and decrease corruption rates in that country. In terms of cost of implementation, in 2006, VMRO-DPMNE shows its willingness to make EU-based reforms, they gained public support easily and, it reduced democratic cost of implementation of reforms that make the process more smoothly. (Glüpker, 2013) Also, commission reports is putting countries in a pressure and, it can lead to make reforms in order take these financial assistance from the EU. However, when we looked at the reforms in a long-term, we can see negative developments after 2014 and 2015. Because, governments that have diplomatic relations with the EU make all the acts of governments legitimate in a country and, it creates new elitist power which can use allocations of the EU against opposition party. (Wunsch & Richter, 2009) According to Wunsch and Richter (2009), parties can gain support from public because of their willingness to join the EU, and we can see the same situation of gaining power by VMRO-DPMNE party from 2006 to 2016, almost ten year they controlled the country. This negative improvements can also be explained long-standing candidate status of Macedonia. Because of the name issue with Greece, since its independence, Macedonia has faced international block, it can create tiredness to continue reforms in the country. It was one of the main obstacles before accession of the country, and it was derailed the way of fulfilling all the conditions that given by the EU to gain membership status. (Tomić, 2019) SCPC has not also too much success because of its budget allocated by state budgeted and, Tomić (2019) clarified that it creates dependency to the ruling parties.

Conclusion

The EU is using conditionality principle in Macedonia to promote good governance and fighting against corruption in the country. In order

to understand the EU's efforts and effects in this purpose, recent history about democratization process and situation in corruption of Macedonia has given in the article. Before the accession process, Macedonia has suppressed clientelist party structure almost ten years after their independence. With the ethnic tension, situation became worst and the country got the worst scores about corruption in that years. However, when the country started to increase its relations with the EU, through new conditions and financial assistance, situation related to corruption was becoming well after the relations. Also, when financial assistance started to increase, Macedonia also faced relatively better conditions about on corruption and good governance. However, as I mentioned above, long-standing dispute with Greece was great barrier to make better relations with the EU for Macedonia. For this reason, nationalist and autocratic party ruled the state almost ten years in contrast to positive reforms about good governance and fighting against corruption.

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