Corruption



Threat assessment: The occurrence of large-scale corruption in Estonia is considered unlikely. Compared with the previous assessment, the threat evaluation has not changed.

The Supreme Court of Estonia has noted in its rulings that corruption is one of the most difficult crimes to detect, as unlawful agreements are usually made in secret. Such crimes generally lack victims in the conventional sense, which means there are usually no individuals willing to report them to the authorities. Direct evidence may be absent, and therefore, investigations into corruption offences often must rely primarily on indirect evidence.

Corruption creates inequality and reproduces poverty through the government's distorted spending. It also goes hand in hand with political and economic instability. As a result of corruption, economic growth declines because a corrupt economic environment does not encourage investment. Corrupt organisations fail to function and to fulfil the purposes for which they were established – for example, a corrupt judge does not administer justice, a corrupt police officer neither prevents nor halts offences, and a corrupt politician does not act in the interests of the state, but instead pursues personal business or other private interests. A corrupt business environment also affects the consumer, who faces fewer or more expensive choices.

Professional decisions influenced by private interests can significantly increase implementation costs. By bypassing or rejecting competitive tenders and favouring a person with whom one is connected, the result is that the same money buys fewer public services. If corruption casts doubt on whether foreign aid allocated to the state is being used appropriately, this may affect the leaders of allied countries and international organisations. It could lead to decisions to reclaim funds already provided and to refrain from offering support in the future.

The spread of corruption as dishonesty undermines the credibility of the state among its citizens, weakens social cohesion, and thereby reduces the country's resilience against external threats, including military aggression. If corruption becomes widely perceived as the norm and people come to believe that it is impossible to deal with the state honestly and that power is wielded arbitrarily, bribery and influence-peddling will flourish at every level.

THREATS

- Estonia's economic environment is still under recessionary pressure, meaning that in 2025 an increase in property crimes as well as tax and bankruptcy offences committed by companies can be expected. The economic situation also increases the risk of corruption offences, as entrepreneurs may have a greater incentive to secure a guaranteed turnover.

- In Transparency International's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, Estonia, with 76 points, shares 13th place with Uruguay. Over the past ten years, Estonia's score has improved by six points, but in recent years progress has stalled. The Corruption Perceptions Index shows that most countries have made no progress in combating corruption over more than a decade, or have not achieved any success at all, and more than two-thirds of countries scored below 50 out of 100.

- Transparency International has highlighted the link between corruption and the climate crisis. Due to a combination of factors, the often highly ambitious measures needed to slow climate change are not adopted at the political level, with the narrow business interests of specific groups being prioritised over the common good. Therefore, maintaining a low level of corruption in society clearly contributes to long-term plans aimed at ensuring environmental sustainability.

ACTIONS

- GRECO – the Group of States Against Corruption – is an anti-corruption association of states operating under the Council of Europe. GRECO's objective is to assess the readiness of member states to combat corruption and, through its evaluation procedure, to provide countries with recommendations for anti-corruption measures. Estonia has successfully completed the five evaluation rounds carried out so far. The sixth evaluation round, beginning in 2025, will assess anti-corruption activities in local governments.

Last updated on 11.11.2025