

Executive summary

Under its Anti-Corruption Policy for 2019-2023, the Slovak Republic made corruption risk management a cornerstone of its strategic efforts to combat corruption and promote public integrity. This report focuses on the challenges faced in implementing corruption risk management practices from a behavioural perspective and proposes concrete avenues for increasing communication about corruption risks in the Slovak public administration.

The OECD BASIC toolkit (BASIC stands for **B**ehaviour, **A**nalysis, **S**trategy, **I**ntervention, **C**hange), a framework to apply behavioural insights in public policymaking, was applied to the Slovak Republic's risk management system. This started with a diagnostic analysis to identify key behaviours impeding effective risk management in the Slovak public administration. The lack of communication about risks was identified as one of the principal behaviours preventing a more effective risk management system. In particular, two barriers to communicating about risks are 1) the lack of understanding of the importance of not only communicating about materialised corruption cases but also communicating about potential corruption *risks*, and 2) the lack of exemplary leadership.

To increase communication about risks, the OECD, in partnership with the Slovak Republic, designed two behaviourally informed interventions to improve the understanding of a risk and appeal to exemplary leadership to increase risk communication. A crucial aspect of the OECD BASIC toolkit is to pilot the interventions with robust evaluation methods. The effects of the two interventions were tested in an anonymous online vignette randomised experiment with over 2500 participants from the Slovak public administration.

A few key insights and recommendations emerged from the analysis and experimental findings:

Make risk communication feel safe and encouraged

- Currently, employees in the Slovak public administration report not feeling safe about communicating potential risks. A culture of silence is prevalent, hindering employees, particularly older ones, from communicating potential corruption risks.
- A crucial facilitator for enabling risk communication is enabling public servants to feel safe when communicating about risks. Experimental results showed that higher feelings of safety while communicating risks could lead to higher rates of risk communication. Fostering safety is therefore vital to promote effective risk communication.

Empower leaders to set the standard through their actions

- The experimental results showed that when public servants are exposed to examples of good ethical behaviours from leaders, they tend to be more likely to communicate corruption risks. Making good leadership salient and adapting communication and people management are therefore key actions to improve the likelihood of communicating corruption risks. This can be done,

for example, through integrity training focussing on the central skills and competences needed as an integrity leader, by incentivising ethical leadership models with rewards or gamifications, and with a communication and people management that supports an open culture and ethical conduct.

- Anti-corruption Co-ordinators and cross-agency working groups could act as important institutional leaders for effective risk management. Empowering the Anti-corruption Co-ordinators to lead and support risk management in respective agencies by equipping them with relevant resources and capacity-building could enhance employees' ability to identify and mitigate risks effectively, contribute to professionalise risk management throughout the administration and strengthen the overall institutional risk management ecosystem. Equally, the Corruption Prevention Department in the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic could consider establishing cross-agency working groups bringing together representatives for risk assessment activities from different agencies to promote and support risk assessments.

Ensure the risk communication process is easy and well-understood

- Knowledge of the risk communication channels and trust in the risk management system also contribute to a higher likelihood of communicating about corruption risks. Insights from the diagnostic analysis showed that employees do not always know how to communicate potential risks, as the system for risk communication is not always clear. The experimental findings highlighted a positive relationship among knowledge on how to communicate risks and likelihood of communicating risks, trust and safety. Raising awareness of the risk communication channels could facilitate and increase risk communication.
- In addition, the findings revealed a lack of understanding of the importance of communicating integrity risks: it is not always clear to public employees that they should communicate potential corruption risks in addition to actual corruption incidences. This result emphasises the need for raising awareness of the risk management system and its functioning. The Corruption Prevention Department in the Government Office of the Slovak Republic could distribute concise guidelines or launch a web-based campaign leveraging social norms to raise awareness, improve compliance and clarify that there is an expectation for everyone to communicate risks.



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