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## **European Experience in Combating Corruption in the Police**

Around the world, honest police officers find themselves discredited by the actions of corrupt fellow colleagues. Their ability to properly serve their citizens is degraded by corrupted policing systems. There are debates as to what lies at the root of corruption, but whatever the cause, corruption is utterly unacceptable in the police, an institution that exists to protect its public and is the enforcer of the rule of law. The public needs to know that the police, as a service provider to citizens, are transparent and accountable; and when cases of police corruption are discovered it is also vital that the public see corrupt police officers being investigated and prosecuted.

A precondition for efficient operational measures is the availability of the following key elements that can be found in countries with well-developed integrity systems: 1) Ensuring the autonomy of anti-corruption institutions and units from the police forces and preventing political interference, especially in complex and serious corruption cases;

2) Checks and balances among anti-corruption institutions through several levels of mutual control;

3) Linking anti-corruption to the supervision of professional standards;

4) Linking anti-corruption efforts to the safeguarding of civil rights through the enactment of a system for independent processing of complaints;

5) Adequate resources and sufficient powers of anti-corruption departments by establishing local level structures, allowing them full access to operational information and enhancing their effectiveness by introducing a method for distinguishing between minor and serious corruption cases.

Corruption among police officers has been viewed with an increasing concern by the authorities and the public in many European states. The recommendations set, if applied appropriately, could have a positive influence on the process of modernisation of the police in the field of management, leadership, ethics, integrity and, above all, on the prevention of corruption in the long-term.

In countries with endemic corruption, integrity reforms can only be successful if anti-corruption institutions succeed in tackling internal corruption challenges.

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