

Defining Vulnerabilities to Corruption

VCA Findings
Municipal Reform Agendas
The Role of CSOs in Implementation

Sofiya Petkova

Pablo Yanguas



February 17, 2023
Sofia, Bulgaria

Outline:

- Defining vulnerabilities to corruption
- **The IRI Program in Bulgaria**
- Highlights from VCA findings
- Municipal Anticorruption Reform Agendas
- The Role of CSOs in implementation



Vulnerabilities to Corruption

IRI's Approach



Approach: **Vulnerabilities** to Corruption

Concept	Vulnerability
TRANSPARENCY	<i>Opaque decision-making processes make it easier for corrupt interests to shape policies.</i>
CIVIC PARTICIPATION	<i>Citizen distrust and disconnect make it easier for leaders to be influenced by private interests.</i>
INTEGRITY MECHANISMS	<i>The lack of accountability and punishment makes it more tempting to engage in corrupt behavior.</i>



Some important distinctions

**Mitigating
vulnerabilities**

VS

**Uprooting
corruption**

Prevention

Punishment

Reform

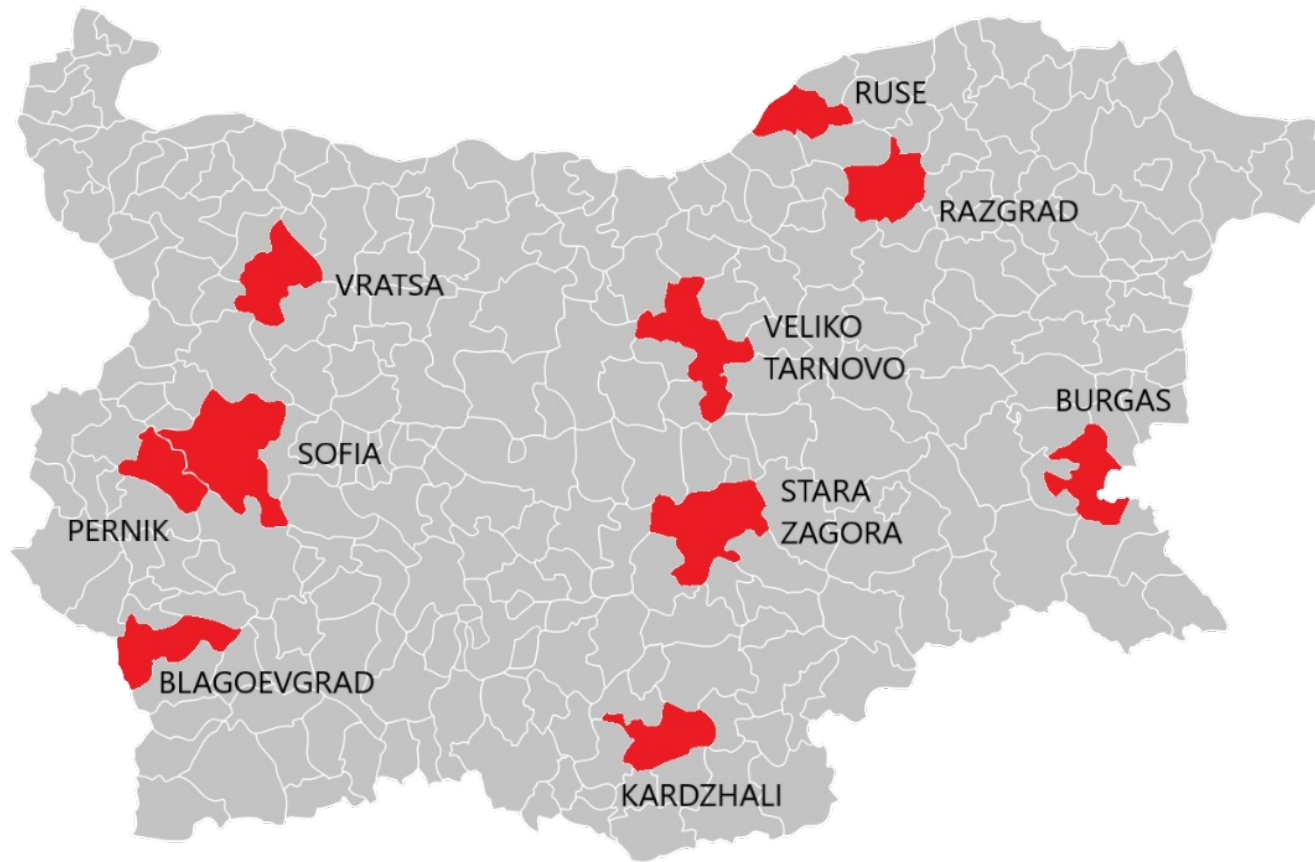
Judicial action



IRI's Program in Bulgaria

Combatting Municipal Vulnerabilities to Corruption





The Program

Scope

- Implemented in 10 municipalities

Aims:

- To identify municipal vulnerabilities to corruption
- To generate solutions based on government and nongovernment input at the municipal level
- To help introduce good practices through reform agendas

Program Stages





Municipal working groups in Sofia, Ruse, Vratsa, and Razgrad hold validation sessions on the first draft of the VCA reports.



The VCA Process

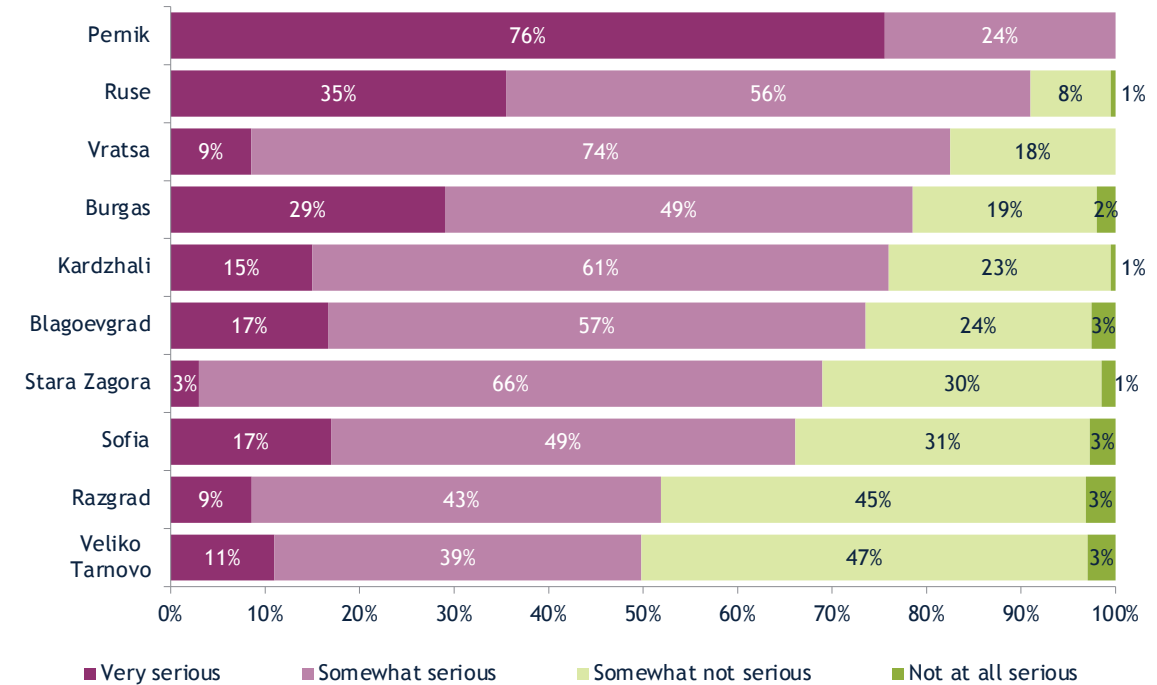
- 115 interviews
- 10 municipal working groups (WGs) set up
- 10 VCA reports drafted
- 10 validation sessions held with WGs on VCA reports
- Report published on July 18, 2022
- Setting the starting point for reforms: identifying vulnerabilities to corruption

Municipal Polls

- 10 municipal polls
- Results published in EN and BG
- Measuring **citizen perceptions** of corruption and transparency to help focus the reform agendas.
- Presentations of VCA reports and poll results at municipal level: mayors, working groups, townhall events.



Do you believe that corruption in your municipality is a serious problem or not?

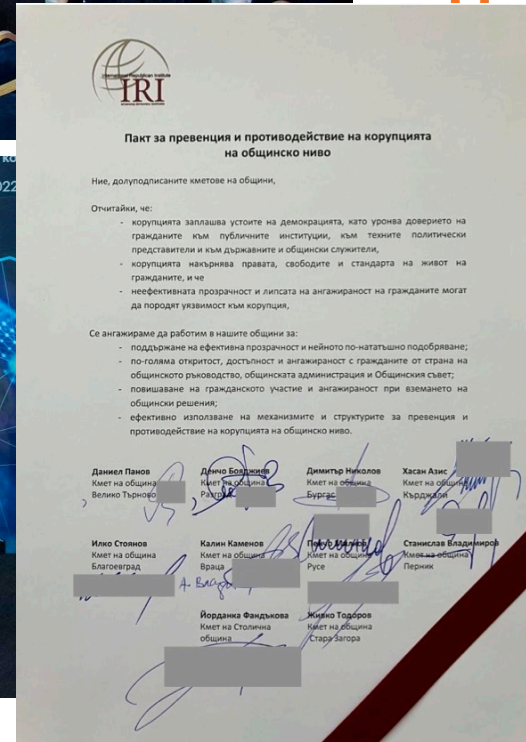


Perceptions of corruption as a problem at the municipal level



The National Anticorruption conference

- Signing the Municipal Anticorruption Pact
- Sharing international peer experience
- Introducing international networks
- Sharing best practices in transparency and citizen participation
- Breakout sessions with members of municipal working groups





The Anticorruption Reform Agendas

- Design and adoption by WGs with consensus
- Reform agendas submitted to mayors in December 2022
- **Official Adoption by Municipal Councils**
- Implementation
- IRI to provide support with reform implementation
- Working Groups to continue meeting to monitor and support implementation

VCA Findings

How Vulnerabilities Make Corruption Harder to Prevent



1. Corruption prevention mechanisms not used

PROBLEM

- Little evidence of use of mechanisms that exist in compliance with national legislation
- Disconnect between the salience of corruption at the national and municipal levels

VULNERABILITY

- Knowledge gaps undermine deterrence
- Enforcement gaps undermine trust

RECOMMENDATION

- Bolster communication and reporting on corruption and anti-corruption

2. Transparency practiced without ease of use

PROBLEM

- Commitment to transparency and compliance with requirements
- One-sided approach to – sometimes incomplete and inaccessible – information release

VULNERABILITY

- Appearance of openness without actual means of accountability
- Perceived opaqueness lowers trust in government, invites corruption

RECOMMENDATION

- Reorient public information practice towards citizens' needs and ease-of-use

3. Informal channels used to bypass administrations

PROBLEM

- Mayors interact with citizens often and directly, leading to high-profile problem-solving
- Administrations can be distant and cumbersome, councils unapproachable
- Citizens turn to the mayor to “get things done”

VULNERABILITY

- Focus on the mayor creates inefficiency, discriminatory access
- It takes attention away from council members and public servants

RECOMMENDATION

- Strengthen formal communications channels
- Strengthen councils’ constituency support

4. Citizen disengagement from participation platforms

PROBLEM

- Municipalities are required to consult citizens on budgets and significant policies; some go further than that
- Few citizens attend public discussions, which are deemed too formalistic and performative

VULNERABILITY

- Continued citizen disengagement undermines accountability
- Lack of civic monitoring weakens corruption prevention

RECOMMENDATION

- Develop ordinances with clear processes and requirements for public consultation
- Adopt open-source participatory platforms

5. No substantive policy role by civil society

PROBLEM

- Municipalities work with some local associations, on occasion evolving into partnerships
- Engagement is inconsistent and selective
- There is some distrust of independent NGOs

VULNERABILITY

- Alienated civil society groups limit citizens' ability to monitor and interrogate leaders

RECOMMENDATION

- Develop more structured policy dialogues where NGOs can provide technical support and carry out oversight

The Anticorruption Reform Agendas

- State of adoption by Municipal Council decisions
- Content



Реформите 1

Община	Реформи Краткосрочни:	Средно- и дългосрочни:
<i>Стара Загора</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Кампания за повишаване на информираността и насърчаване ползването на е-услугите на общината от гражданите;- Подобряване на координацията и взаимодействието между общината и организациите на гражданското общество.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Укрепване на ролята и повишаване на активността на обществения посредник;- Укрепване на процеса на обществени консултации чрез приемане на общинска наредба и ориентиране на процеса към реални и конкретни резултати;- Възприемане на процес на гражданско участие в бюджетирането;- Въвеждане на дигитална платформа за гражданско участие.
<i>Разград</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Актуализиране на общинския уебсайт от гледна точка на потребителския опит	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Разработване на институционална комуникационна стратегия;- Въвеждане функцията на обществен посредник в Община Разград.

Реформите 2

Община	Реформи Краткосрочни:	Средно- и дългосрочни:
<i>Кърджали</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Провеждане на кампании за гражданско образование;- Провеждане на редовни срещи с гражданите от местните общности;- Обновяване на интернет базираните комуникационни канали, вкл. официалната интернет страница на Община Кърджали от гледна точка на потребителския опит.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Укрепване на процеса на обществени консултации с оглед по-добро включване на социално-икономическите партньори, съсловните и браншови организации и НПО.
<i>Бургас</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Създаване на Механизъм за комуникация между местните власти и гражданските организации;- Провеждане на кампания за повишаване на осведомеността относно корупцията и нейното предотвратяване;- Подобрения в общинския уебсайт от гледна точка на потребителския опит.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Въвеждане на Единен комуникационен център за сигнали от гражданите.

Реформите 3

Община	Реформи Краткосрочни:	Средно- и дългосрочни:
<i>Столична община</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Въвеждане на Система за управление за борба с подкупването (СУБП), в съответствие със стандарт ISO 37001:2016.- Разработване на подробни регистри на общинските активи и разходи.- Провеждане на кампании за гражданско образование.- Разработване на институционална комуникационна стратегия.- Провеждане на редовни срещи с гражданите в местните общности.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Реорганизиране на общинския официален електронен портал от гледна точка на потребителския опит.- Възприемане на нов подход за 1. по-ранно консултиране с гражданите относно инвестиционните приоритети в общинския бюджет и 2. разширяване на процеса на гражданско участие в бюджетирането.

The Role of CSOs in Implementation

Advocates and Partners



Implications of VCA findings for CSOs

Finding	What CSOs can do
<i>1. Corruption prevention mechanisms not used</i>	Educate the public. Track complaints and procedures. Follow-up on allegations.
<i>2. Transparency practiced without ease of use</i>	Explain to public servants what transparency means. Offer communications expertise. Play the role of "translator".
<i>3. Informal channels used to bypass administrations</i>	Ask leaders to strengthen communications process. Explain to citizens how to use formal channels.
<i>4. Citizen disengagement from participation platforms</i>	Reach out to citizens to understand their motives. Explain to leaders why engagement matters. Connect CSO activities with public participation.
<i>5. No substantive policy role by civil society</i>	Coordinate with other CSOs in the same sector. Establish links with relevant public servants. Produce options and recommendations.

How vulnerabilities affect CSOs

Vulnerabilities	Implications for CSOs
TRANSPARENCY	<i>More difficult to hold leaders to account for what they do, why they do it, and how they do it</i>
CIVIC PARTICIPATION	<i>More difficult to mobilize direct and indirect citizen pressure for leaders to promote integrity and fight corruption</i>
INTEGRITY MECHANISMS	<i>More difficult to know about transgressions and to persuade citizens that mobilization will lead to tangible results</i>

One voice, multiple roles

*Raise
awareness*

Advocate

REFORM

*Technical
support*

*Monitor
implementation*



Trade-offs and challenges

External vs Internal

Conciliatory vs Confrontational

Public pressure vs Technical influence

Partnership vs Protest

Questions and reactions



THANK YOU!



IRI.org



@IRIGlobal



sofiya@iri.org
pyanguas@iri.org