

Input of Transparency Germany to the International Debate on Corruption

Initiative of the Dicastery for Promotion Integral Human Development in collaboration with
the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences

15th June, 2017 in Rome

I. Presentation of Transparency International

Transparency International¹ is a global movement that wants a world free of corruption. We give voice to the victims and witnesses of corruption. We work together with governments, businesses, citizens and church to stop the abuse of power, bribery and secret deals. Transparency generally defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. Through chapters in more than 100 countries and an International Secretariat in Berlin, we are leading the fight against corruption to turn our vision into reality. Transparency International publishes yearly different world wide corruption indexes to rank corruption between countries and to survey the development of corruption worldwide.

Transparency Germany² was asked by the German Bishops Conference to participate in this International Debate on Corruption. We appreciate this opportunity to strengthen the collaboration with the Catholic Church.

Transparency Germany set up a special working group in 2004 to take activities towards corruption prevention and the fight against corruption in international church development cooperation worldwide. This ecumenical working group cooperates very closely with churches, missions, congregations and dioceses. We strongly believe church development organizations should play an exemplary role in a sustained fight against. In 2007 this working group presented an internationally acclaimed position paper on structural, historical and church specific causes for corruption in development cooperation. English and Italian versions are also available³. In subsequent years, we organized three conferences and facilitated numerous workshops on a variety of topics to identify areas and essential elements in the fight against corruption. The first step in this process was to break the silence and encourage church development organizations to put corruption prevention and the fight against corruption on their agenda. Building on this we have developed a set of instruments for church development organizations to prevent and fight corruption. Over the past few years the focal point of our activities is sensitizing and educating the leadership of church development organizations on issues such as corruption risks, institutional integrity and personal integrity.

¹ www.transparency.org

² www.transparency.de

³ <https://www.transparency.de/Entwicklungszusammenarbeit.1171.0.html>

II. Proposal towards a culture against corruption

The document drafted by the task force “Identity and Objectives”, describes already the complex nature of corruption. Corruption does concern not only individuals, communities and organizations of very different background but in short the entire world. From the draft document we understood that your impetus is to establish a culture against corruption. To this we would like to contribute as follows with three explicit recommendations:

1. Identify and formulate a specific Christian approach
2. Encourage networking and the creation of alliances between different religions, denominations and with civil society on the whole
3. Increase further the credibility of the Catholic Church as influential ally in the fight against corruption.

1. Identify and formulate a specific Christian approach

The Christian message, starting from the Old and New Testament up to the Development of the Social Doctrine knows of the irrefutable link between justice and decent life for all. They thus condemn corruption. This insight spelled out in the scriptures has to come to life also in the specific contribution of the church in the fight against corruption.

Bishop Overbeck from the Diocese of Essen, Germany has explained the specific contribution of the church in an interview as follows: “Priest, Theologians, Teachers, Administrators in the parishes or dioceses, members of orders and fraternities, of religious communities, of Christian development organisations and charities, all need to speak out against corruption and to denounce it as a misdeed against God and humanity. “

Thus it is essential raising awareness among clericals and laity likewise for the problematic nature of corruption through the development of concrete concepts for pastoral and religious education based on the rich tradition and teaching in the scriptures. Further they should be encouraged in developing instruments and actions of anti-corruption measures in all the diverse fields of church work. Justice and Peace Commissions have already experience in this field.

Example: Catholic Schools as Model for Awareness Rising against Corruption

The subject Corruption should be an explicit part of the curricula of catholic schools and the anti-corruption measures are practiced in every day school routine.

- *Schools have known and proven complain mechanisms which make it possible for students to denounce sexual or financial abuse without needing to fear negative consequences.*
- *Students can experience Christian values and see that abuse and misuse also that of their teachers and superiors will not be tolerated.*
- *Parents and students get to know and are able to participate in the administration of the schools, particularly in the use of funds.*

Impact: Schools are models for an anti-corruption culture which will enable all students, parents and teachers to perceive the damaging results of corruption in other areas and help them to stand up against corruption. They will be strengthened in their faith and experience this empowerment positively. Being able to shape their environment actively themselves will also empower them to participate positively as members of the civil society

2. Encourage networking and the creation of alliances between different religions, denominations and with civil society on the whole

Due to structural enmeshment of corruption in the globalized economy and its worldwide proliferation the fight against corruption needs expertise and broad alliances, the more so as there is no supranational or universal institution which is able to regulate and to control the international streams of trade and finance and the organized transnational crime connected to this. The more the different Christian denominations work together in their fight against global corruption the more they can achieve. Prof. Karl Rennstich showed in his publication⁴ that all major religion condemn corruption and therefore are possible allies for anti-corruption programs. Many civil society initiatives and public authorities pursue already anti-corruption policies and anti-corruption and accountability form part of the Global Development Goals.

The power and influence of the Catholic Church as a worldwide Organization should be joined to the experience and the actions of other denominations, religions and civil society initiatives. There is a wide range of common actions imaginable, an exchange of experts similar to this one here in Rome or common statements or other forms of political advocacy.

Example: A conference of the major religions against corruption

With the support of international Organizations like Transparency International, Globethics⁵, etc. the task force could organize such a joint conference against corruption with participants from major religions.

Impact: The interreligious exchange strengthens the awareness and the common responsibility for justice and well being of the entire humanity. The impact of a common statement of all major religions against corruption cannot be overstated.

3. Increase further the credibility of the Catholic Church as influential ally in the fight against corruption.

The independence of the Catholic Church from state and society and the reference to the principles laid down in the scriptures have weight when the Church takes a firm stand to foster justice and human dignity. The success of such efforts however depends on the credibility of the Church itself. In the case of anti-corruption the actions and policies of the church with regard to capital and power will be scrutinized. The credibility bestowed on the church will depend on the handling of funds, money and power as well as the accountability mechanisms of the Church. Anti-corruption mechanisms which have proved their value elsewhere should be adopted and further strengthened.

This can be done in strengthening the transparency with regard to financial resources and related decisions within the Catholic Church so that Church members are aware of their use and handling. To make this even more effective, experts from the laity can be nominated to partake in the decision making as well as the establishment of functional supervisory boards. The supervisory bodies are a valuable support for decision makers and help to cope with sometimes excessive demands on individuals. The members however of such supervisory bodies have to be experts in their fields and able to act independently. This has not always been the case in the past, as in the current praxis often those who are to be supervised have nominated their own supervisory board to control them. The credibility of the Church will depend on her willingness to accept critical assessments in her own administration and even to value critical feedback. Constructive feedback pointing to wrong practice and misuse should no longer be seen as a contradiction to loyalty.

⁴ Karl W. Rennstich: Korruption und Religion, Hampp, Mehring 2005

⁵ Globethics is starting to form a consortium on ethics in higher education from 21st to 23rd June, 2017

Example: The actual Reform process in the Catholic Church in Germany

Following the request of the German Episcopal Synod the German Dioceses have started to publish their wealth. In order to be able to enumerate their property the Dioceses had to start to draw up a balance sheet. The expertise and independence of supervisory bodies is now also being discussed among canonists and auditors.⁶ In the days following this conference here a congress of the central committee of Catholics in Germany will take place together with representatives of the official Church with the aim to strengthen the responsibilities of the laity in the use of Church funds. Similar processes could be encouraged also in other countries.

Impact: the identification of Church members with their Church will be strengthened if the Church deals transparently with the funds bestowed and involves her members actively into decision making. This will also contribute to the overall image of the Church as credible and as a model for setting standards against corruption.

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