

“Journalists for Integrity”

Thoughts for Discussion

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Corruption has become a major issue of public debate during the last years. The situation in which corruption was a low risk- high profit undertaking seems to be changing. Political leaders and also businesses face a public outcry when caught in corrupt deals, sometimes followed by a loss of image, power or profit. Journalists have played a major role in focusing the public's attention on particular cases of corruption and illustrating the overall impact of corruption in all our societies.

The role of investigative journalism certainly needs further strengthening and encouragement as an important element of awareness raising against corruption. However, there is a need for approaches which go beyond the investigation of actual corruption cases. Efforts of civil society, reform-willing governments or single institutions and businesses need to find much more reflection in media publications in order to convince the public that corruption can be fought and that there are people and organisations who started this fight at various fronts. Very often no alternative is presented, leading to even more apathy and cynicism when reading all the corruption reports.

It is proposed to form a pool of committed journalists – Journalists for Integrity - who would be a partner for civil society organisations like National Chapters of TI on the national and international level, but also other organisations and institutions joining the fight against corruption. It is proposed to start with such an initiative in Asia, where important civil society initiatives are working. The following is a list of suggestions inviting discussion.

Objective:

To promote public awareness about the anti-corruption fight and existing tools and structures, thereby broadening the basis for public pressure and changing attitudes .

Possible Tasks:

- To follow closely the corruption discussion; use prominent cases for analysis of the reasons and what would be necessary to prevent it,
- Report about “positive examples” (people refusing to pay bribes, whistleblowers, a political leader trying to work honestly, etc.),
- Report about important initiatives on local, national and international levels (being the first address for press releases or other information) in order to win public support for them,
- Advice the partners on PR issues, how to work with the media,
- Support the establishment of “complaints” pages in the media; try to get the governmental institutions to react,
- monitor promises made by a government with regard to anti-corruption programmes (in close co-operation with the civil society and other partners) and give regular reports,
- Support initiatives demanding access of the public to information,

- Provide support and solidarity where colleagues get into problems due to their anti-corruption work,
- Support/ develop initiatives for reducing/ preventing corruption within the media (Codes, etc.),

Organisational options:

- Few journalists in a country interact individually or form a loose network co-operating with the relevant organisations, for instance a national chapter of TI (this maybe a first step leading to a working group within the professional association),
- A working group within the existing Journalists Associations of a country could be formed
- These efforts could be promoted by international networking as well – forwarding good examples to colleagues in the region,
- TI Secretariat may be used at the beginning as the clearing house where messages for international use could be sent to and would be distributed to those journalists belonging to the “pool”.