

Notes from the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index for Turkey

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By: Filiz Toprak Esin & Asena Aytuğ Keser

On 23 January 2020, Transparency International announced the much-awaited results of the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index (the "CPI 2019"), which reflects the perception of country experts, non-governmental organisations and representatives of the business world of corruption in public sector. The CPI 2019 scores 180 countries and territories on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).

The results, unfortunately, did not come as too much of a surprise for Turkey as its continuous fall in the last few years' CPIs signalled a sharp fall already. Turkey scored 39 this year with a loss of 2 points compared to the last year which eventually led to a significant decrease of 10 points since 2012 and dropped to 91 from 78 at the ranking.

Similar to the last year's results, Turkey landed at the bottom of all 28 countries of the European Union. It is ranked as the second last among 36 OECD countries and fourth last among the G20 countries.

The CPI 2019 reveals that more than two-thirds of the 180 countries on the index score below 50, with an average score of just 43. It is also noteworthy that the countries having extraterritorial laws and enforcement practices such as the US, UK and France dropped in the rankings.

The CPI, by its methodology, is a reflector of a perception measured by reliable tools of several international institutions, and this is certainly what makes this study a reputable reference in the eyes of foreign investors and business world. Thus, basing on the CPI 2019 results, it would not be too much pessimism to say that Turkey would, inevitably, lose a bit of its charm for foreign investors. Considering that the instable economic environment in the last few years has already generated its own negative results, for Turkey such disgrace is not something to sit back and watch. Creating a change in this perception with effective implementation of the mechanisms to fight with corruption, on the other hand, would make a perfect boost for the economy.

What is promising is that nothing needs to be done from the scratch. Turkey is already a party to almost all international treaties concerning fight with corruption, including the UN Convention against Corruption. It is under continuous monitoring and pressure of the OECD and also the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), and urged to take necessary steps by demands and recommendations of these institutions. These yield some fruits and trigger legislative and executive actions. The government issues strategy plans in certain intervals to increase transparency and strengthen the fight with corruption. In 2019 May, the first package of the Judicial Reform was enacted, and it offers solutions to issues like transparency, objectivity and independence of judiciary. That is to say, should the CPI results and what they signal are acknowledged and taken seriously at the national level, the path to be followed has already been drawn. Obviously, Turkey has a long way to go; but closing the gap between legislation and its enforcement could be a good starting point and definitely is an easy step to take for the sake of making a change on this perception.