

Boris Divjak's interview with Nezavisne Novine

President of BiH Branch of Transparency International

GREATEST CORRUPTION IN CUSTOMS AND ENTITIES' GOVERNMENTS

Boris Divjak, president of Transparency International, an organization which is active in BiH for the last six months and is based in Banja Luka, says for Nezavisne novine (NN) that this organization points out, to the authorities, problems and sectors in which lack of transparency is obvious: judiciary, privatization, municipal administration. The final aim of this is to point out, to entities' governments, presence of criminal and corruption in society.

NN: To what extent are institutions of BiH, or of its entities, corrupt? Or in other words, what is your assessment – which is the level of corruption and criminal in BiH?

Divjak: Regional study of Bulgarian Center for democratic research shows that BiH, together with other countries in the region of South-eastern Europe, is ranked at the very top of corruption list. World Bank's data for BiH shows that average bribes in judiciary amounts around 200 to 460 KM, bribes for getting a telephone line is 288 KM, bribes taken by sanitary inspections around 120 KM. It is interesting that, out of all levels of authorities, the most corrupt in cantonal level in FBiH. This research draws to conclusion that corruption exists everywhere, but the FBiH if before the RS. Given the level of authorities in the RS, there are two levels of corruption while in FBiH there are three.

NN: Which are the most corrupt institutions in BiH?

Divjak: These are institutions with the highest level of discrete decision-making. Customs officers and inspections are more subject to corruption than other services. According to survey conducted by Transparency International in the RS last year, it is considered that the most corrupt is customs, immediately followed by the republic administration, the government and municipal services. Our research done in the RS matches the research done by the World Bank for BiH to September last year. As for FBiH, in terms of corruption the Government of FBiH is in a lead followed by tax services, local municipal authorities, which are at the very top of the rating list. The least corrupt are army, police and education workers.

NN: Will the public poll, which you will carry out from September, show that, with new authorities in BiH, the level of corruption decreased, increased or remained the same?

Divjak: With the information we have, and according to reactions of citizens, corruption has never been worse. I believe that the research that we will conduct would show the highest ranking of republic authorities on the list of corruption. Our assumption is that entities' bodies are still in very top of corruption. Research of Bulgarian experts showed that the International community in BiH is more corrupt than in any other country in the region, which triggered us to do analysis, which we will publish soon, on level of corruption of the International Community in BiH and on importance of this factor which prevents development of this country. The International Community should carry a part of responsibility, since it is one of key actors in BiH's development in the last six years. Our report will show that the International Community often enters the "gray zone", which is far from legal. However, they put the blame on domestic institutions and this creates problems.

NN: Do you think there is a link between entities' governments and the International Community, when it comes to criminal and

corruption in BiH?

Divjak: International crisis group, in its report, said the International Community was one of culprits for all failures in BiH. There is a link and it has gone through different phases. It is interesting that in previous compositions of governments heads of anti-corruption teams were Dodik and Bicakcic. The international Community was aware of various malversation in entities' governments, which were not publicized then and that will be another one of our conclusions in the analysis – if the International Community divided domestic politicians to politically suitable and unsuitable and if the suitable ones could get away with various deeds and why this is being tolerated. Until we engage ourselves in fight against corruption and criminal, we will be giving an alibi to the International Community to lead the game and the International Community would say that domestic institutions were not capable to take over, which would only prolong the agony leaving BiH at the European bottom.

NN: You say that corruption and criminal were present in previous governments as well. How do you assess the situation today?

Divjak: Problems are big. Delay in privatization process leads to a conclusion that it (privatization) is not suitable for some because state owned companies used to be source of funding to some political parties and this trend continues. Establishment of Board of Governors makes companies even more poor; inability of citizens, who took part in privatization, to enter the companies is evident, even though the RS made a little step forward in that direction compared to FBiH. Studies show that citizens feel that poverty is a smaller problem compared to corruption. Corruption in our governments leads directly to impoverishment of citizens. People in BiH have to become aware that all authorities are accountable to them, starting with the Prime Minister, because people finance them.

NN: Smuggling of cigarettes and high-tax goods is still present, even though the governments announced a fight against gray economy?

Divjak: Tabacco mafia is impossible to stop even in the world not to mention within one country alike BiH in which state of law doesn't function. We should look for a model in Croatia, which, even still far from an ideal, created legal frameworks and enabled such incomes.