

SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

THEME SSH-2007.5.1.1

Theme Title: Area 8.5.1 Participation and Citizenship in Europe



Project acronym:
ALACs

Project full title:
Promotion of Participation and Citizenship in Europe through the “Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALACs)” of Transparency International. Analysis and Enhancement of an Anti-corruption Tool to Enable Better Informed and Effective Citizen Participation in Europe

Project summary

The ALAC-project will generate better scientific knowledge and a “best practice”-model of civil society activities in the anti-corruption coalition. With the focus on the “Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALACs)” of Transparency International, the leading CSO against corruption, the research project aims at a) enhancing civil society participation, b) raising anti-corruption effectiveness and c) developing the advocacy for legal change at the national and EU level. Based on the insight that citizens’ participation and the values of integrity, accountability and transparency are crucial components of fighting corruption the project is designed to promote the ALACs both as a management tool of a ‘bottom-up’ anti-corruption work and citizens’ participation mechanism. The goal of developing an advanced ALAC-methodology as a new model for co-operation between citizens, CSOs and researchers is to meet the challenge of devising policies that raise the level of citizens’ participation and empowerment. Combining action-research and practical implementation the project – itself designed as a process of organisational learning – will have direct impact on the work of Transparency International and its partner organisations in Europe and all over the world. Furthermore the “empirical grounded theory of the practice of the anti-corruption coalition” in different EU- and EU-affiliated countries, intended by the project, will establish an innovative paradigm for scientific research as well as for the design of all kinds of civil society actors and non-governmental organisations.

Concept and project objective(s)

1. Strategic objective

The ALAC project is a unique *joint venture* founded by three types of social actors with different but corresponding interests, competencies and objectives: 1. The civil society activists from the National Chapters of Transparency International, who seek democratic development in their societies through enhanced citizen participation; 2. The Transparency

International Secretariat, which is interested in improving its organisational structure by implementing new techniques of knowledge management (including a database) in its ALAC network Europe- and worldwide; 3. The RTD performers, who aim at enhancing knowledge about the cultural conditions necessary for the implementation of anti-corruption policies by establishing an innovative *action research* approach. Conducted by practitioners, professionals and academics, this approach will result in the formulation of a pioneering and empirically-grounded theory of the practice of TI as a global anti-corruption coalition. The main objectives of the ALAC research project are therefore: 1. To understand the nature of interaction between loose coupled network practitioners and professionals from Transparency International, and 2. To analyse the cultural conditions necessary for implementing a specific management method and a mechanism to increase citizen participation in the countries participating in the project.

2. Detailed objectives to be achieved

In a knowledge-based society, there is generally a strong link between theory and practice. Efficiency and effectiveness of practical action are increasingly the result of a profound management of knowledge. In addition to their professional competence, practitioners also need the ability to reflect the conditions under which they operate. Therefore, co-operation between social scientists and nationally and globally operating civil society organisations is a practical necessity in today's knowledge-based society and global world.

Transparency International, the leading global coalition against corruption, has developed a tool to enable better-informed and more effective citizen participation in the fight against corruption: namely, the "Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC)." ALAC is a management tool that facilitates a wider engagement of a given population in the fight against corruption and for enhanced transparency and accountability. In consequence of the ethical intentions and "open" organisational structure of Transparency International, ALAC was designed as a combination of an anti-corruption management tool and a citizen participation tool. In addition to maintaining a structural balance between these two complementary leitmotifs, the ALAC as an organisational unit must also grapple with different and changing societal and cultural contexts. The complex organisational and managerial challenges that this entails demand a co-operation between professional practical actors and excellent scientific researchers.

In its capacity as a non-governmental organisation internationally renowned for its work in the fight against corruption, Transparency International decided to co-operate with the research group of the project "Crime and Culture" (Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission) at the University of Konstanz, Germany, whose members are distinguished scholars in the fields of cultural studies and the sociology of knowledge.

The intention/goal of the planned co-operative research is to increase the understanding of citizen participation and how democratic "ownership" develops. The primary focus of the research is on Europe and citizens' rights and responsibilities as they exist within the European legal framework; further thematic focuses are anti-corruption policy, citizen engagement and action. The heart of the research will be to analyse the citizen participation mechanism of Transparency International in eight countries, some of which are EU member states, others of which are countries in the Western Balkans and Caucasus with strategic EU partnerships. Pursued in the mode of *action research*, the project will also produce policy and institutional recommendations at European and national levels.

The success of this main goal – that is, the articulation of a research-based policy recommendation – will depend on the realisation of the three mediating and interconnected objectives of the ALAC research project. Each mediating objective refers to the research interests of one of the consortium members, as described below

(a). Through the *application of knowledge*, the national chapters seek to enhance legal advice and the democratic capital of citizens. From the *layman perspective* of these *activists at the front*, the project aims at increasing people's understanding of citizen participation and how democratic "ownership" develops, with a focus on Europe.

(b) As a global CSO, Transparency International intends to encourage the processes of *professionalisation and diffusion of knowledge*. From the standpoint of the *professionals* of a worldwide operating *organisation*, it was important that the research strategy devised foresee the continued involvement of the leading anti-corruption civil society practitioner, Transparency International (TI).

(c) As an RTD organisation, the University of Konstanz is interested in the *enhancing of knowledge*, i.e. the better understanding of how to integrate research and practice in the form of *action research*. Normally, research is related to practice only after certain events have occurred, and scientific knowledge is applied to practice only when research has been completed. The ALAC research project is designed as a simultaneous and reciprocal process of *social learning* between researchers and practitioners. The three collaborating partners will not give up their roles and interests as laymen, professionals and scholars, but will attain their goals by widening their scopes of knowledge, i.e. by *taking one another's perspectives into account*. During the project, scientists and TI practitioners will collaborate to analyse and reflect upon citizenship and citizen participation.

The ALACs Project is an innovative project for the establishment of an improved professional management tool in a grassroots organisation that began as a more or less spontaneous movement without strict organisational structure and leadership. The implementation of the improved ALAC as a professional management tool will have a strong impact on the style of action and the structure of organisation in the national TI chapters. Accordingly, the research project will explore both a) *how* to implement the improved management tool, and b) *what* the intended and unexpected consequences of the tool will be.

Furthermore, the project itself is an *innovative action approach*. It combines scientific research and practical work in a holistic way so that scientific examination and analysis will not be delayed until after the professional practice has already been established, but instead be involved right from the start. Science, in other words, will be used to reflect on the process of establishing a distinguished form of action precisely *while* that process is taking place.

The *final objective* of the research project is twofold: the presentation of the advanced ALAC methodology as a new model for co-operation between citizens, NGOs and researchers on the one hand, and the derivation/deduction of policy recommendations on the national and EU level on the other.

3. Operationalisation of the objectives

Citizen participation is *the* crucial component in the culture of tackling corruption because integrity, accountability and transparency must take hold socially and systemically if they are to uproot corrupt practices. TI's ALACs reject the notion that people are apathetic in the face of corruption. The centres demonstrate that people do become actively involved in the fight against corruption when they are provided with *simple, credible* and *viable* citizen participation mechanisms to do so. The ALACs provide victims and/or witnesses of corruption with practical assistance to pursue complaints and address their grievances. The ALAC is an effective citizen participation tool that links the public interest with private incentives for action on the part of the individual. The proposed project aims at building comprehensive knowledge about citizen participation in a European context.

The ALAC Project is a necessary preliminary step for the implementation of a new management tool and a new citizen participation tool. The results of the project will increase

the probability of a successful adaptation and efficient application of the ALAC approach in different European and non-European countries. The admission of a non-European country in the project (Azerbaijan) has the methodical function of a comparative and control case.

In the first phase of the research, an analytical framework on European citizen participation in the context of combating corruption will be created, and the four existing ALACs will be evaluated using this framework. The goal will be to examine how the ALAC methodology has been adapted to the distinct historical, socio-economic and cultural conditions in four separate countries. Moreover, both scientists and practitioners involved in the project will intensify their understanding of how politico-cultural differences in the exercise of citizenship are determined by different patterns of perception. This will consequently help them better determine the restrictions and possibilities of implementing the management/citizen participation tool in a concrete situation. Creating a framework of analysis and evaluation of the existing ALACs is thus a necessary precondition of successful modification and application of the management tool in those countries where it will be introduced during the project. The second phase of implementation will then be carried out as a simultaneous process of interaction between science and practice, which, as explained above, will help optimise results. In short, the project itself will be a permanent process of evaluation of citizens' participation under changing conditions.

It is envisaged:

by the RTD performers:

- to assess the concept and practice of citizen participation in Europe and in conjunction with European law.
- to analyse how citizens approach their governing institutions and how they make use of mediating civil society institutions to do so (specifically in the context of anti-corruption), as well as what their participation in civic life reveals about the norms and rules that govern their expectations and behaviours.
- to derive a framework of analysis that identifies particular conditioning factors for European citizen participation in the context of combating corruption.
- to apply this framework in an evaluative mode to four existing ALACs and to develop conditional recommendations on how to improve the ALAC mechanism.
- to study, identify and assess politico-cultural conditioning factors in the four new ALAC host environments that relate to citizen participation in the context of combating corruption.
- to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in four new ALACs and to derive further understanding of factors that affect the exercise of citizenship.
- to organise cross-fertilization meetings between researchers and practitioners, which will provide ongoing gains in knowledge about best practice in terms of citizen participation in an anti-corruption context.

by Transparency International Secretariat (TIS):

- to develop a monitoring and quality assurance framework that facilitates the comparative operational analysis of ALACs.
- to devise and test a more advanced empirical database for the collection and analysis of statistics from all eight ALAC countries, including information both on direct citizen participation and on representative citizen activities (i.e. institutional engagement, policy advocacy, etc.).
- to support the establishment of new well-functioning ALACs in Europe and the development of advocacy capacity in both existing and new ALACs (e.g. sound and professional research and policy papers that will improve TI's ability to advocate for

policy changes at that national level and to formulate anti-corruption initiatives at the EU level).

by TI National Chapters with existing ALACs (4):

- to provide situation analyses of the operations of the ALAC citizen participation mechanism in four countries.
- to provide a research interface for the project RTD performers.

by TI National Chapters with newly established ALACs (4):

- to apply recommendations, results and insights from the research conducted during the first project phase in the design of the new ALACs (informed by evidence on national factors affecting exercise of citizenship).
- to provide a research and monitoring interface for the project RTD performers.

by all partners:

- to critically review and validate the RTD performers' recommendations for improved ALAC methodology.
- to contribute to learning and dissemination of learning on the role of citizen participation in anti-corruption efforts.
- to assess citizen participation concepts and practices in Europe and in conjunction with European law.

