

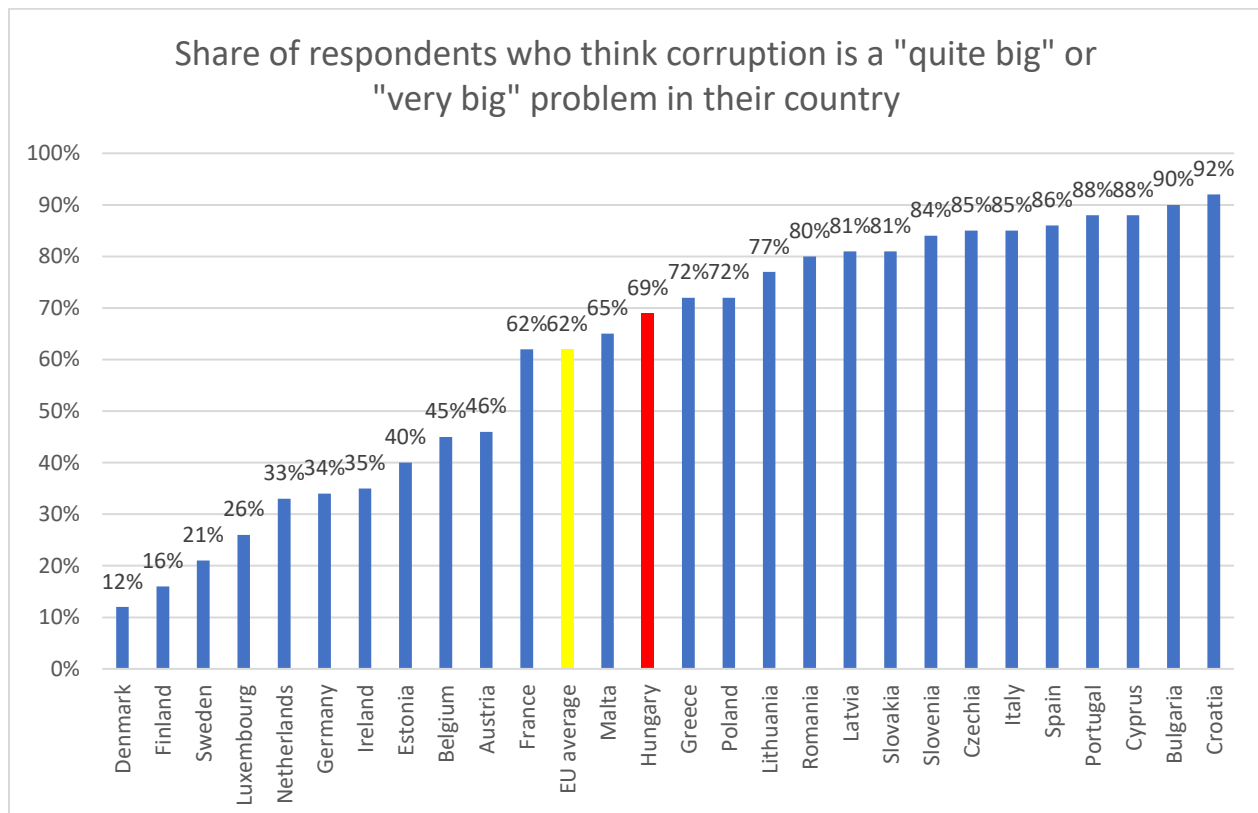
Budapest, 15 June 2021

## Press release

### Hungarian society greatly divided over perceptions of corruption

**While 69% of Hungarians consider governmental corruption a serious problem and over half of them are dissatisfied with the Hungarian government’s approach to this phenomenon, 48% of those surveyed are worried about the consequences of reporting corruption – as revealed by Transparency International’s Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) survey, which examined the population’s attitudes towards corruption in all 27 member states of the European Union. The survey data regarding Hungary also shows that informal payments were the most common type of bribery in the country in 2020, which means that its complete elimination could take several more years, despite a significant tightening in legislation.**

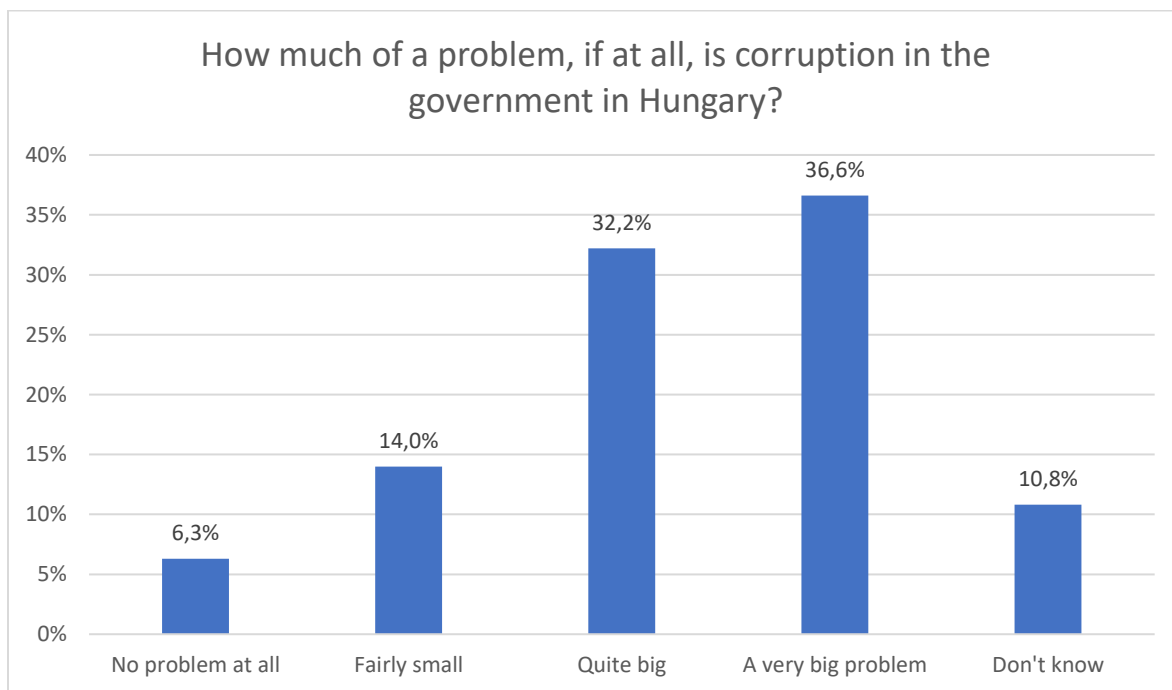
The vast majority (69%) of Hungarians continue to regard governmental corruption as a “quite big” or a “very big” problem, according to the latest data of the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) from 2020. This rate is higher than the EU average (62%), but the survey also shows that residents in the core western countries are significantly less likely to perceive corruption as a serious problem, with this rate often considerably exceeding the average in the southern and eastern member states.



Numerous results within the survey suggest that while Hungarians are aware of the seriousness of the state of corruption, many fear the possible consequences of reporting instances of corruption and have more trust in the European Union’s institutions rather than in the Hungarian government.

*Politicians considered corrupt*

According to the survey, 40% of Hungarians believe that corruption in Hungary has increased in the past year, with only 15% believing it to have decreased. The government’s actions regarding the pandemic were seen as transparent by 45% and as not transparent by 39% of the respondents, which suggests a strong division within society.

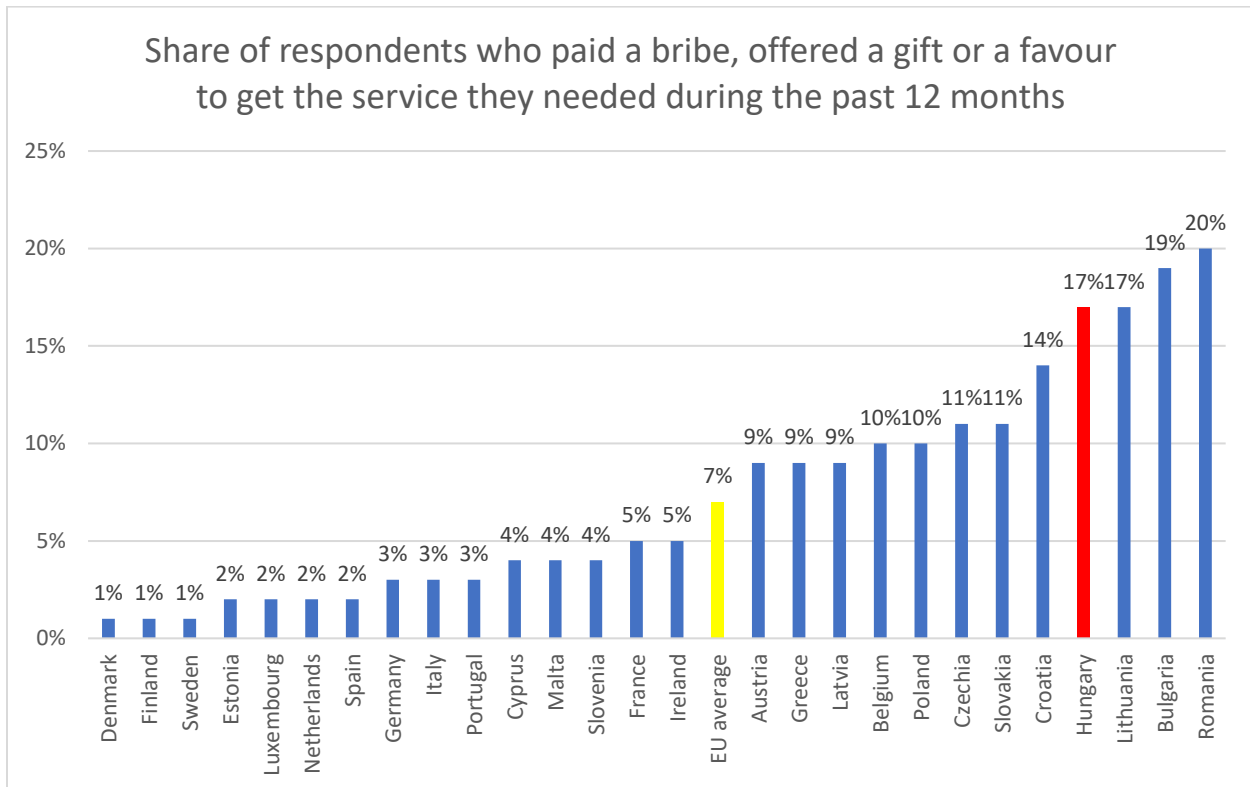


Hungarians deem members of the parliament most likely to be involved in acts of corruption, but the “prime minister and representatives of his office” are not far behind in this section of the survey. The Global Corruption Barometer also shows that the absolute majority of Hungarians (53%) think that the government fulfils the task of combatting corruption “poorly” or “very poorly” (i.e., it tolerates or even encourages corruption), while only slightly over a third of the respondents (34%) believe that the government is dealing with this problem “well” or “very well”. According to 54% of Hungarians, the Hungarian government’s priority is not the public interest, but the private interests of a few major players – which, like in many other European countries, is a very high rate.

*Cutting back on informal payments will be difficult*

The data shows that gratuity payments remain common in Hungary. In the year prior to the survey, 18% of the respondents who have had experiences with public healthcare admitted to paying gratuities; this is the highest rate when it comes to different forms of bribery. The average “bribery

rate” exceeds Hungary’s in Bulgaria and Romania only, while the Lithuanian result is identical to Hungary’s.



This data indicates that while the criminalization of gratuities will definitely reduce the instances of this type of low-level corruption, its complete elimination cannot be expected very soon due to it being highly embedded into society. In addition, many also use their personal connections to facilitate administrative processes: 43% of the respondents said that they had benefited from personal contacts when using certain public services or when dealing with public administration – the fourth highest rate in the European Union.



It is worth noting that according to the results, the proportion of those who believe that citizens have a reason to worry about the consequences of reporting cases of corruption is also extremely high, at 48%. The latter data – in addition to the effects of political divisions and attempts of intimidation by public authorities – suggests that current whistleblower protection regulations do not guarantee adequate safety, and therefore [additional measures are necessary](#) in order to ensure the protection of whistleblowers.

“The latest information provided by the Global Corruption Barometer illustrates that Hungarians are extremely divided in their perceptions of state corruption. A vicious cycle of division, mistrust, apathy and corruption has developed, which can only be broken by more transparent and inclusive institutions that serve public interest instead of private interests and those in power,” says József Péter Martin, Executive Director at Transparency International Hungary, in relation to the recent survey.

*Transparency International’s detailed analysis of the survey data can be found at [this address](#).*

### **Methodology**

*Transparency International’s Global Corruption Barometer is an international survey assessing citizens’ experiences of corruption. Commissioned by Transparency International, the 2020 Global Corruption Barometer surveyed a total of 40,600 respondents in the 27 member states of the European Union with telephone (CATI) interview conducted by the polling firm Kantar.*

*The Hungarian data was collected by surveying 901 people, and the sample is representative of the total adult population (of those over 18 years of age) in Hungary. Data collection in Hungary was carried out between 13 October and 5 November 2020.*