



International Conference

STANDING UP TO STATE CAPTURE: INNOVATIVE METHODS TO INVESTIGATE FRAUD AND CORRUPTION IN EU FUNDING FOR AGRICULTURE

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Speakers' Bio Notes



Dr. Ognian Shentov is Chairman of the Center for the Study of Democracy since the organization was founded in late 1989, and also co-founder and Chairman of the Applied Research and Communications Fund, the leading Bulgarian innovation policy and research institute established in 1991. Dr. Shentov has worked on a variety of international projects on institutional reforms in Bulgaria and other countries in transition. He has written and edited a number of publications on the issues of transition to democracy, institutional reforms and soft security threats. He is currently engaged in a national initiative on promoting good governance for sustainable growth of the energy sector – development of policy options and instruments for enhancing the implementation and delivery of green energy and achieving energy efficiency in Bulgaria. Dr. Shentov is also a Member of the Board of Trustees of the New Bulgarian University in Sofia. He has served on the steering committees and boards of a range of NGOs and public policy initiatives, such as the Centre for Economic Development, Centre for Social Practices, the Coalition 2000 anti-corruption initiative, the National Crime Prevention Commission with the Council of Ministers, etc. He has been a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics and has researched at US policy institutes and think-tanks.



Amira Szönyi is the Head of Unit B4, Agricultural and Structural Funds II of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). OLAF is an independent Commission body in charge to investigate fraud against the EU budget, corruption and serious misconduct within the European institutions, and develops anti-fraud policy for the European Commission. Unit B4 is in charge to conduct administrative investigations in relation to suspicion of fraud in relation to the European Structural and Investment Funds and Agricultural Policy in 12 Member States.

Ms Szönyi joined OLAF in 2004 in a policy unit as a coordinator. Three years after she became investigator, first she was in charge of external aid cases, later she joined one of the units in charge of Agricultural and Structural Funds.

A lawyer by training, with specialisation in comparative criminal law, she studied at the Universities of Strasbourg, Bologna and Nancy.



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Mariana Prats works as a policy analyst for the OECD, where she is focused on public integrity systems and comparative work on political finance and policy capture. She obtained her joint Ph.D. degree in Political Science from the University of Buenos Aires and the University of Paris – Sorbonne. She held many positions as professor and researcher, notably at the UBA, Mar del Plata, San Andrés and Torcuato di Tella universities in Argentina as well as Sciences Po and Brown University abroad. She served as political advisor in the Government of the Argentine Republic for the Ministry of Interior on the political reform and for the Ministry of Defense, where she was also appointed as the liaison with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She has also been working as a guest researcher at CIPPEC and the German Research Foundation.



Tihomir Bezlov is a leading expert in crime research. For the past 27 years as a Senior Analyst at CSD, he has authored numerous reports and sociological research. Mr. Bezlov has pioneered the carrying out of the crime victims' survey in Bulgaria and has contributed to its implementation in a number of national and international institutions as well as the state administration. His research and analysis of various crime and corruption-related issues (e.g. the development of a national-level index of corruption, the demand and supply of illegal drugs, the prostitution markets, human trafficking, smuggling of commercial goods) has won him both national and international recognition, and has resulted not only in numerous publications but has led to some of his research being used in court proceedings. He is also recognized as a leading political analyst and as such is a frequent commentator and quoted in all major national and international media. In this capacity, for the past 10 years he has been at the core of teams providing comprehensive and regular country risk analysis for the United Nations Development Program, Eurasia Group / Lehman Brothers, Eurasia Group/Deutsche Bank, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Control Risks Group.



Sorin Ioniță is currently the president of the Expert Forum Think Tank and a member of the Social Dialogue Group. He is an expert in Public Administration and Local Development and has cooperated as a regional consultant with the Council of Europe, UNDP on Eastern Europe and the Balkans, World Bank, European Commission. Sorin Ioniță graduated from the Polytechnic University of Bucharest and earned a Ph.D. in Political Science at the SNSPA (Bucharest). He was the founding member and director of the Think Tank Academic Society of Romania and was Oxford Fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford University, for a quarter in 1999; and Fulbright fellow in the 2000-2001 Institute of Public Policy at Georgetown University in Washington DC.



Alexander Gerganov is a Senior Analyst for the Economic Program of the Centre for the Study of Democracy. Dr. Gerganov's primary fields of specialization are corruption research, victimization studies (conventional crime), and grey economy. He focuses on methodology, statistical analysis in social research and mathematical modelling of big data and complex processes in the social sciences. He has participated in many multidisciplinary international research projects since 2005 and has been a part of CSD and Vitosha Research agency since 2009. He has contributed methodologically to the update and implementation of the Corruption Monitoring System, the Conventional crime indicators, the Grey economy indicators, and to the development of MACPI – an innovative instrument for monitoring and assessment of anti-corruption policies. He was responsible for data quality, and methodological control for the 2014 and 2016 SELDI corruption surveys, conducted in nine counties. Alexander Gerganov is also an assistant professor at the Social Survey Research Centre, part of the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.



Valentina Dimulescu is a graduate of the Faculty of Political Science, English language department (Bucharest University) and holds two graduate degrees: A Master of Arts in Political Science from the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest (Hungary) and a Master of Arts in European Integration Studies from the Centre for European Integration Studies (ZEI) in Bonn (Germany). Ms. Dimulescu is also a Fellow of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Bucharest office (KAS). Ms. Dimulescu manages SAR's activities in international research consortia and acts as Managing Editor of the Romanian Journal of Political Science. In addition, she has published articles in international academic journals on topics related to Romanian politics and European affairs. Regarding her research interests and activity, Ms. Dimulescu specializes not only in the administration of European funds issue but also in monitoring corruption cases and good governance problems in this sector. Moreover, she is interested in European policies in the energy sector, the EU anti-trust procedure, liberalization of state monopolies and competition law in network industries (electricity, gas).



Nicola Capello holds a degree in law from the Università Statale in Milan, where he also obtained a diploma from the Scuola di Specializzazione per le Professioni Legali. Nicola has completed an advanced master on the analysis, prevention, and contrast of organised crime and corruption, at the Faculty of Political Science of the Università Statale in Pisa. His primary field of interest is the study and analysis of corruption within institutional frameworks. He is at the head of the non-governmental, not for profit organisation Civico97 whose mission is to examine the effects of corruption in Italy.



Vit Simral has two Ph.Ds. and works as a researcher at the Department of Political Science at the University of Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic. He holds graduate degrees from the Masaryk University in Brno, the University of Leicester, Charles University in Prague, and the IMT Institute of Advanced Studies in Lucca, Italy. His research focuses primarily on issues related to the anti-corruption agenda, the relationship between politics and business, and labour studies. He has served on various expert governmental bodies both in the Czech Republic and at the European level. As an advisor, he has been active in several NGO projects in Brussels, Kyiv, Prague, and Vienna.



Ruslan Stefanov is Director of the Economic Program of the Centre for the Study of Democracy. Mr. Stefanov has more than 15 years of experience in delivering high-quality research and civil society solutions to governance problems in Southeast Europe and Bulgaria.

He is the coordinator of the Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI.net), the largest indigenous regional anticorruption network of 30 civil society organizations from the Western Balkans and Turkey. Ruslan is a member of the Local Research Correspondents Network on anticorruption of DG Home of the European Commission.

Ruslan has been a regular contributor to European Parliament briefings on corruption, organized crime, and the hidden economy in Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe. He has participated in the work of the UNODC Expert Group for Anti-Corruption Coordination. Ruslan is a member of the Free Enterprise and Democracy Network and the Development Institute of the Center for International Private Enterprise and a member of the Advisory Board of the Cluster for Research on the Informal Sector and Policy at the University of Sheffield.



Philip Gounev is currently a consultant; he was deputy minister at the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria (2013–2017). He previously worked as a Senior Analyst at the Centre for the Study of Democracy where he also directed the Security Program. He is an expert on sociological and criminological research, and he has managed a number of EU-wide studies on behalf of the European Commission and its agencies on organized crime, corruption, and border management. In the past, he served as managing Consultant at Matrix Knowledge Group in London, the UK where he managed a number of home affairs studies on organised crime and terrorism. He manages or participates in a number of policy development projects with law-enforcement agencies. Prior to his career in social science research, Dr. Gounev spent four years as a finance professional for leading companies in the United States. He has a Ph.D. in Sociology from the London School of Economics, and two Master degrees in International Security from Columbia University (New York, USA) and in Social Anthropology from the London School of Economics (LSE).



Attila Biro has been working as a journalist since 2004 and is one of Romania's most prominent whistle-blowers and heads the RISE Project's team of investigative journalists and award-winning researchers. He was a reporter at Hotnews.ro until 2012, where he investigated the most crucial corruption cases in Romania and was awarded by ActiveWatch for the investigation "How to be on a TV show with 5000 or 20.000 euros". He also created a series of reports from Afghanistan. In 2013, Attila documented the multimedia project "The list of living executioners" for which he was awarded during the contest SuperWritings. In 2014, Attila participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) United States - The U.S Department of State, a program for Romanian investigations journalists. In 2015, he made reports for the TV station Digi 24. Moreover, he participated in many other projects against corruption.



Amedeo de Franceschi is the head of the Carabinieri Command Office for Agri-Food Protection. He specialised in the field of Food Safety after obtaining a degree in Chemistry from the University of Roma – Sapienza and working as Lab Director of the ICQRF (Department of Central Inspectorate for fraud repression and quality safeguarding of agri-food products). He previously served as an officer at the State Forestry Corp before becoming the Director of the Special office for anti-food crime.



Andrei-Atila-Luca Chendi is the director of the Fight Against Fraud Department's control Directorate (DLAF, Romania). After graduating in Penal Science from the University Nicolae Titulescu, he worked at the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) before occupying several governmental positions for the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's control body, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Prime Minister's chancellery. Most of his activities involve the control of EU funds, the investigation on resources of EU budget, and the combat against frauds regarding agricultural funds.



Andon Tashukov is a Legal Advisor for the Anti-Fraud Coordination Service (AFCOS) at the Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), charged with defending the financial interests of the European Union. Andon Tashukov specialized in European Law and International Law and worked as a guest lecturer at the European Institute of Public Administration and took part in a number of EU-level working groups (OLAD, European Commission, Leading expert in the

Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union). He obtained his Ph.D. from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.



Brendan Quirke is currently a senior lecturer in Accounting and Financial Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. His major research interests include EU fraud and Corruption. He works as an Independent expert in Research & Innovation at the European Commission. He gained his BA in Political Theory and Institutions at the University of Liverpool and an M.Phil. for a Critical Appraisal of the Policing of EU Fraud by the Transnational Institutions at Liverpool John Moores University. He is a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Brendan Quirke has published academic articles and contributions to books on the phenomenon of EU fraud and has presented his work at a series of international conferences. He has also acted as an academic adviser on fraud to the UK Home Office and the United Nations Development Programme for Eastern Europe.



Atanas Rusev works on key projects of the Security Program of the Centre for the Study of Democracy related to organised crime and criminal markets. At present, he manages a project on the utilisation of confiscated criminal assets. Since 2003 he has also coordinated and worked on several research projects regarding drug use. Dr. Rusev is an author of reports on profile and risks of injecting drug use, discriminative practices against drug users and access to drug treatment in Bulgaria. From 2004 to 2010, he managed various health prevention projects related to drug use, financed by the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the European Commission. During 2008-2010 he worked as an external consultant to the National Centre for Drug Addictions and the National Programme for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, run by the Ministry of Health.



Ágnes Czibik works as Managing Director at the Government Transparency Institute in Budapest. Ágnes Czibik graduated in Public Policy Analysis and Applied Statistics before working as a research manager and analyst. She has been coordinating field-work in public procurement and corruption related research projects since 2012. She also was a member of a research team which collects Hungarian public procurement data and develops corruption risk indicators.



Silviu Ioan Popa has been the Secretary General of the National Integrity Agency (ANI, Romania) since 2016 and, as such, coordinates the implementation of national anti-corruption strategies. He previously worked as an Advisor to the President of the National Integrity Agency. He carried out his Post-graduate studies in National Security at the “Mihai Viteazul” National Intelligence Academy. His areas of expertise also encompass corruption deeds in coordinated structures, Communication Strategies and Public Relations, as well as Network Security. Throughout both his career and education, he participated in many international seminars and conferences related to anti-corruption and good governance.



Dimitar Dimitrov has been working in the State Fund Agriculture since 2010. And has been Director of Anti-Fraud Directorate since 2017. Previously, he worked at the Patent Office in the field of counteracting infringements of industrial property rights. He has graduated the University of National and World Economy with a degree in Accounting and Control, and has a Law

degree from Veliko Tarnovo University. He holds a postgraduate qualification in the field of industrial property at the Technical University of Sofia and has an MBA in Business and Administrative Information Technologies and Communications at UNIBIT. He is registered as an internal auditor for the public sector.



Radu Nicolae is an Anti-Corruption Expert at the Syene Centre for Education, Bucharest, after occupying the position of anti-corruption program manager at the Centre for Legal Resources (Romanian Independent Foundation). He holds a PhD in Political Sciences and teaches courses in the field of anti-corruption at the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest. He also worked as a researcher at the Centre for the Study of Democracy during which his research investigated the racketeering in both the Agricultural sector and Hospitality Industry. His area of expertise includes Public Policy, Public Integrity, Business ethics and anti-corruption policies.



Francesca Torti obtained a degree in Economics at the University of Pavia and a Ph.D. in Statistics at the University of Milan Bicocca, awarded by the Italian Statistical Society as the best Ph.D. thesis for the years 2009-2010. She further pursued her academic experience at the University of Parma and Milano Bicocca, where she carried out research in robust statistics, in particular for regression and clustering. She is currently employed at the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, where she works in the domain of trade data analysis and anti-fraud. For the benefit of this last activity, she got the Italian habilitation on tax consultancy.



Kamen Iliev is the General Manager of TAKT-IKI Ltd. Bulgaria and the director of EARSC. He has 25 years' experience holding different positions in the aerospace and defence sectors, including research, development and management areas for the academy, state and business organisations. His career led him to be the director of the Centre for National Security and Defence Research, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the General Manager of Eurosense Bulgaria, Chief of the Science and Technological Department of the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence. Kamen Iliev specialised in Remote Sensing and GIS, image processing and CCD sensors development, project, and general management as well as business development and procurement.



Dan Nica works as an Irregularities Officer in the Control and Anti-Fraud Directorate at the Agency for Rural Investment Financing (AFIR), Romania. After obtaining his Master's degree in European Public Administration, he served as counsellor at the Agentia Domeniilor Statului.



Sergio Gomez de Rozas is the Head of the Internal Audit Unit at the Spanish Agricultural Guarantee Fund. He has experience in auditing national-managed aid schemes related to Agricultural Funds and is specialised into Internal Control System Monitoring and Fraud Prevention. He obtained a Veterinary Degree from UCM-Madrid in 2000 and is a member of the National Veterinary Body.



Christopher Brewster is a Senior Scientist in the Data Science group of TNO (the Netherlands) and holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science and a B.A. in Theoretical Linguistics. He has more than 15 years of experience working as a computer scientist and his research interests focus on the application of ICT to food and agriculture, including Semantic web technologies, open and linked Data, big data and the application of blockchain technologies to the food supply chain. He has been working on both EC H2020 projects and the development of national research projects, as well as on European Projects such as FISpace

and Smart Agrigood.



Tomáš Pošepný works as a Senior Extraction Manager in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge. He completed his master's degree in computer science from Charles University in Prague. He gained a comprehensive knowledge of the field of Public Procurement during his research on procurement data publication, transparency, and validation. Furthermore, he obtained advanced work experience in Software Development process while working on projects for major Czech banks and insurance companies. Before joining the Digiwhist project, Tomáš also worked as a

corporate performance management consultant on financial planning and reporting projects.



Paul C. Johannes is a lawyer specialized in the field of IT and Data Protection Law, including copyright issues, competition law, social media, e-government and IT contract law. He is also a researcher at the University of Kassel where he works as a teacher in the fields of Business Law and Public Law, with a focus on Technology and Environmental Protection Law. He is involved with the project group for constitutionally compatible technology design and the Research centre for information technology design.



Bozhidar Bozhanov is the Founder and CEO of LogSentinel, a start-up company developing a secure audit trail service based on secure data structure offered by the blockchain technology, as well as offering GDPR consultancy and Information Security services. Bozhidar has served as e-government and information security adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister and has significant experience as a senior developer, solution architect and project lead in international IT projects. He holds a degree in Computer Science obtained at the University of London.



Anton Kojouharov is an analyst on criminological and sociological research. His current work focuses on financial crime, corruption, money laundering, and fraud. Prior to joining CSD, he has worked for three years as an expert in Crown Agents' "Programme for the Modernisation of the Bulgarian Financial Administration" with a remit in an institutional capacity building in AML and financial fraud, inter-agency intelligence and information exchange, and corruption risk management. Mr. Kojouharov has also had experience in the private sector as an Information Security and Risk Manager with an emphasis

on online and mobile payment platforms. He holds a BA in Political Science and a BA in International Affairs from the University of Nevada, Reno.