

THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN BUILDING
AND DEVELOPING ANTICORRUPTION POLICIES*

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Universities play a crucial role in the fight against corruption.

First and foremost, lecturers instil a culture of legality through their teaching.

Secondly, they train future civil servants and executives within the public administration, who will be called to put into practice the principles of transparency, impartiality, and fairness learned in their studies.

Lastly, universities can set an excellent example as public institutions by applying anti-corruption best practices.

As an example of why human capital is so essential for anti-corruption strategies, suffice it to recall that the most talented do not always put their expertise to use for ‘good’. As an interesting study from 2021, “Does the Mafia Hire Good Accountants?” has shown, criminal groups can hire some of the highest-qualified people for their illegal activities. So, it is not only vital to create skills but also to spread values such as a sense of belonging and respect for rules in order to educate the virtuous citizens of tomorrow day after day.

The University of Salerno, which I represent, has launched several initiatives in this regard. It has successfully set up and run one of the first Anti-Corruption Schools at the national level. It has also supported an inter-university research project coordinated by myself titled “Public Administration: simplifying decision-making processes, improving performance”, at the end of which we drafted a proposal to reform the law on abuse of office, which was then amended in 2020.

In addition to the preventive aspect, an adequate anti-corruption strategy requires a real catalogue of recognised offences that can deter unlawful conduct without leading to excessive caution among public officials when performing their duties. This is a well-known phenomenon: the existence of too many possible offences leads to so-called defensive bureaucracy; hence, targeted and precise measures must be introduced.

These include the addition of Article 322-*bis* to the Criminal Code. In response to EU criminalisation requirements, this provision has made the Italian law also applicable to European and international public officials. The idea of corruption as an exclusively domestic phenomenon has thus been superseded, and it has been decided to tackle it from the global and supranational perspectives, as indeed it must be.

There is still much to be done, but we are on the right track.

Thank you all for your attention.

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