# Integrity Plan Verification from the Perspective of the Experience of Service Users of the Health Care, Local Self-Government and Judicial System Public Authorities

The Law on the Anti-Corruption Agency established the obligation of introducing integrity plans (IPs) to Serbian public authorities. The ACA adopted and published Guidelines on Integrity Plan Development and Implementation in October 2010, thus initiating the process of integrity plan introduction for the Serbian public sector. According to estimates, approximately 5,000 public authorities in Serbia are legal obliged to introduce IPs. Pursuant to the Law, the oversight of the IP introduction process and the assessment of IP quality shall be carried out by the Anti-Corruption Agency. Public authorities had a deadline of March 31, 2013 for the adoption of their IPs. This was to be followed by their implementation, and the verification of quality and measures contained in the IP.

An integrity plan is the result of a public authority's self-assessment and self-evaluation, aimed at maintaining and improving its integrity, visibility, work transparency, as well as the professional ethics of its staff. As such, the IP is a document which depends on subjective assessments by working group members in each institution, which is why it is necessary to develop mechanisms which would evaluate, among other things, its objectivity and quality. Within a project whose implementation was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, the ACA projected the development and realization of oversight mechanisms which would verify the degree of objectivity, impartiality, and accuracy in the adoption of integrity plans by public authorities.

Within this project, the ACA conducted IP verifications in the **health care system, local self-government system and the judicial system by analyzing user experiences, as well as the experience of the employees of these institutions.** The basic hypothesis in conceiving the research was that stronger institutional integrity of public authorities and its employees leads to higher quality and a wider range of services provided to citizens, that is to say, it enables a logical and rational manner of providing services and accomplishing the institution's purpose of meeting citizens' needs and interests – the reasons for which it was founded in the first place. In other words, if an institution's service users – for different reasons and in varying intensity and scope – are having trouble meeting their needs and interests, it might be a sign of the institution's lack of integrity. The reasons for this may be found not only in a single, specific institution (e.g. the integrity and quality of work of staff, internal work organization, existence of clear procedures, etc.), but also in the broader regulatory framework and context, within which the institutions' competences over the citizenry are carried out, and which cannot always be controlled. Of course, the citizens are not necessarily aware of the reasons why a service was not provided to them, or was not provided well enough; therefore, the causes of lack of integrity will be analyzed using other methods, primarily by analyzing the integrity plans adopted by public authorities, and the framework within which they are meant to operate. For the time being, the emphasis of a control mechanism designed in this manner is on analyzing service users' responses in order to determine and check the objectivity of institutions' self-assessment as regards risks of corruption, regardless of where the causes of such risks are to be found.

The real value of the findings of this research, i.e. integrity plan verification, will become apparent after the ACA carries out the analyses of integrity plans, and compares the results with the research on service users. Moreover, this research has its own value, based on the fact that it

reveals in what manner and in which areas of importance there is a need for integrity strengthening from the point of view of the users of institutions' services.