Looking into the spread of corruption, which now seems to be more and more common, there is a growing awareness that we are faced with a kind of "trivialisation of evil", a "Jabot" made up of nepotism, entente, conflicts of interests, intimidation, corruption, illegal financing, fraud, and so on. When corruption becomes a habit, it creates a cultural environment and custom on which relationships between those holding public office and pursuing private interests are built. Corruption is not an act but a personal and social state of play in which we become used to living", wrote J.M. Bergoglio in his reflections on Argentina in the 1990's.

When corruption "becomes the norm" in our personal and social life, we are all called to examine our conscience and wonder whether we are involved in corruption to some degree and whether we are truly free from it in our daily life in our personal and professional relationships.

Assuredly, if we want to root out corruption, it is not enough to resort to law and to new legal standards; regulatory responses may be right and needed, but they are clearly insufficient and will only produce significant, lasting effects if they are institutionalised and accepted at personal, family and community levels.

Our first line of action, if we want to fight effectively against this phenomenon, thus requires introducing initiatives, actions and practices to regenerate a sense of civic responsibility by establishing relationships of trust and solidarity among the people in a community. This fundamental process is necessary in order to fight against a feeling of indifference and resentment which alienates citizens from politics and civic participation.

5 Recommendations

We hope that the European Union may move forward quickly in this delicate matter, which is crucial for preventing and combating all forms of organised crime. New specific aspects seem to us to be typically needed through a coordinated approach at EU level, resolutely tackling tax havens as special places for collecting and laundering the proceeds from criminal activities and fighting against tax regulations that facilitate tax evasion by individuals or transnational companies; taking steps to promote and actively disseminate good practices as regards the management of frozen and confiscated assets from organised crime and their re-use for social purposes; supporting those numerous existing NGOs in their actions to denounce and raise awareness about these crimes and in their activities to support and assist mafia victims; countering as effectively as possible the rising spread of illegal behaviour in the environmental field in connection with mafia-type or organised criminal activities or deriving from them, such as trafficking and illegal waste management, particularly for toxic waste, or the destruction of our natural heritage.

Author

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Another coordination body which plays an active part in the fight against organised crime is the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The FATF is an intergovernmental body created in 1989 by the Members of its Secretary. It currently comprises 35 countries and jurisdictions as well as two regional organisations. Its objectives are to set standards and promote the effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. The FATF has developed a series of non-binding Recommendations that are recognized as the international standard for combating money laundering, terrorist financing, and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. It should be stressed that for the time being, several EU Member States still seem to be lacking in their responses to global challenges, and their respective authorities lack the necessary legal tools and competence.

The final statement of the G8 summit meeting in June 2013 seems to confirm the awareness of this issue at international level. It reads: ‘Our financial systems are exposed to significant risks from money laundering and terrorist financing. We fully support the FATF Standards and commit to implementing them effectively’.

2.4 At European level

The European Council also expressed its position quite clearly. The Council Conclusions of 22 May 2013 lay down that there is a need to deal with tax evasion and fraud and to fight money laundering, within the international market and vis-à-vis non-cooperative third countries and jurisdictions, in a comprehensive manner. In both cases the identification of beneficial ownership, including as regards companies, trusts and foundations, is essential.

The EU has tackled the issue of organised crime since the beginning of the 1990s through a series of initiatives which were sometimes born out of dramatic events such as the murder of Sicilian Mafia boss “Toto” Galea and Italian Mafia boss Paolo Borsellino by the Sicilian mafia, the terrorist attacks that hit several European countries or the disclosure of the “Panama Papers”. Several EU agencies have been set up to address cross-border crime in the European Union, particularly Europol and EURAC. As a result of this, it is undoubtedly Europe which has played the most significant role. As the Europol agency, Europol has two main tasks:

- collecting, analysing and disseminating information and intelligence via summary reports intended for the law enforcement community and decision-makers and aimed at reporting on developments linked to serious and organised crime and the threats it represents for European Union countries. These reports bear the English acronym “SOCP” (Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment) 13; and
- facilitating bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Member States and with Eurojust.

In addition to FATF Recommendations, we should mention the Council of Europe Convention on money laundering, and European States 14. This is not an exhaustive list of measures, it is also clear that organised crime is an ever more critical threat to security and prosperity.

Internal Security Strategy (ISS)

The Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (particularly its Article 72) entered into force at the end of 2009 at the same time as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, laid down the foundations for an EU security policy based on the state of law, respect for fundamental rights and solidarity between Member States.

After adopting the Stockholm programme (EU programme for justice and home affairs for 2008–2013), the EU adopted an internal security strategy (ISS) in 2008. Given that many challenges linked to security (cybercrime, terrorism, illegal immigration and organised crime) are cross-border and interterritorial by nature, an EU country can single-handedly address these threats, organised crime. Dissuading criminal networks is one of the objectives defined by the Strategy. These Recommendations form the basis for a coordinated response to these threats and contribute to harmonising rules at global level. First issued in 1990, they have been regularly revised (the latest update took place in 2012). The Secretariat of the FATF is located at the OECD headquarters in Paris. 15

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