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# INTEGRITY AS A PRINCIPLE OF ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINE AND EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to provide a scientific justification for the role of integrity as a principle of anti-corruption efforts in public administration, based on a comparative analysis of the experiences of Ukraine and European Union countries. The study examines the role of anti-corruption efforts in public administration within the framework of preventing and combating corruption. Within the scope of the study, theoretical approaches to interpreting integrity as an institutional and managerial category that combines ethical, legal, and economic components are summarized. Based on international governance quality indicators and the Corruption Perceptions Index, the relationship between anti-corruption activities and the quality of public administration is analyzed. A comparative analysis was conducted of public governance quality indicators in Ukraine and European Union countries based on six key indicators from the Worldwide Governance Indicators: accountability and the exercise of the right to vote; the effectiveness of government institutions; political stability; the quality of legislation; the rule of law; and control of corruption, as well as the Corruption Perceptions Index scores in Ukraine and European Union countries. This allowed the countries to be grouped according to common characteristics, significant differences in anti-corruption efforts to be identified, and groups of leading and lagging countries to be determined based on indicators of the quality of public administration and the prevention and combating of corruption.

Particular attention is paid to the study of economic and legal mechanisms for combating corruption in the sphere of public administration and public finance, specifically mechanisms of budgetary accountability, financial control, the activities of anti-corruption institutions, and digital tools for managing public resources. It has been established that in Ukraine, despite some positive developments, the economic and legal mechanisms for anti-corruption activities remain insufficiently effective, which negatively affects the efficiency of public administration. Based on the findings, priority areas for improving the economic and legal regulation of anti-corruption mechanisms have been identified, taking into account European experience.

**Keywords:** anti-corruption, integrity, corruption, anti-corruption activities, public administration, Corruption Perceptions Index, combating corruption, corruption prevention system, economic security, European integration

**JEL Classification:** H11, H61, D73, K42, E62

## INTRODUCTION

The current stage of public administration development in Ukraine and the member states of the European Union is characterized by increasing attention to integrity, transparency, and accountability as key prerequisites for the effective functioning of public authorities. In the context of globalization processes, digital transformation, and growing public expectations regarding the quality of public services, integrity is increasingly regarded not merely as an ethical category, but as a principle for preventing corruption, enhancing the effectiveness of managerial decision-making, and strengthening the financial stability of the state. It remains an undeniable fact that corruption constitutes

one of the most significant threats to the country's socio-economic development, economic security, and public trust in governmental institutions, as it adversely affects the formation and allocation of public finances, distorts the competitive environment, reduces the effectiveness of budgetary policy, and complicates the implementation of strategic reforms. In this context, the implementation of integrity principles within the system of public administration acquires particular importance as a preventive anti-corruption mechanism capable of ensuring the proper management of financial resources and enhancing the institutional capacity of the state.

For Ukraine, the issue of integrity in public administration is particularly relevant under current conditions, due to the implementation of the European integration agenda, the fulfilment of obligations under the Association Agreement with the European Union, and the necessity of harmonizing national anti-corruption and financial policies with European standards of good governance. The experience of European Union member states demonstrates that the systematic implementation of integrity principles, ethical standards in public service, and effective anti-corruption mechanisms contributes to greater transparency in financial processes, stronger budgetary discipline, and increased trust among investors and society as a whole.

Within this context, there is an increasing need for a scholarly understanding of integrity as a principle for corruption prevention and as a factor in the development of the financial system, taking into account a comparative analysis of the experience of Ukraine and the member states of the European Union. These circumstances underscore the relevance of the chosen research topic and highlight the need for further scientific research aimed at developing a comprehensive approach to implementing the principle of integrity in public administration as the foundation for anti-corruption efforts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues of integrity, corruption prevention, and good public governance have become the subject of active scholarly analysis in recent years at both the national and international levels. In particular, in the context of the effective functioning of public finances and the state financial system, these issues are examined by Su, Lu, Lyulyov and Pimonenko (Su et al., 2023), as well as by Dobrogorsky and Keda (Dobrogorsky & Keda, 2023). These scholars emphasize that anti-corruption strategies are integrated into public financial systems through the adaptation of European practices, which is particularly relevant for Ukraine in the context of a macroeconomic crisis and the process of European integration. They also highlight the importance of public participation in the national audit process, which has a deterrent effect on corruption within national financial mechanisms. The scholars demonstrate that civic engagement and national auditing contribute to reducing corruption and improving the quality of governance through mechanisms of transparency and accountability, which has direct implications for the financial transparency of the state and the maintenance of macroeconomic stability.

As regards the role of integrity as a fundamental element of anti-corruption policy and an instrument for enhancing the effectiveness of public administration, the majority of studies focus on defining its essence and the specific features of its implementation in various countries worldwide. One of the key aspects of contemporary research in this field is the evaluation of corruption prevention policies in public administration and the systematization of scholarly conclusions regarding their effectiveness. In this context, particular attention should be paid to the work of Tellis (Tellis, 2024), who analyzed a significant body of scholarly literature in the field of anti-corruption and identified growing trends in academic interest in this issue. The author also emphasizes the importance of studying conflicts of interest and codes of conduct for public officials within national contexts, particularly in Ukraine. This issue is also reflected in studies on integrity and anti-corruption governance as the foundation of public policy formation conducted by Ya. Maslova (Maslova, 2021), who emphasizes the importance of the effective functioning of state anti-corruption institutions, which make it possible to prevent corruption offenses in a timely manner and to develop effective measures for combating this destructive phenomenon.

The conducted analysis of scholarly sources demonstrates that many studies clearly follow a methodological approach emphasizing transparency and accountability as the two principal foundations of integrity-based governance in public authorities at all levels. Representatives of this approach include Bulgakova (Bulgakova, 2025), Syrovatskyi, Kashchuk et al. (Syrovatskyi et al., 2022), as well as Hapchych and Babii (Babii et al., 2023), who demonstrated that increasing transparency and integrity contributes to reducing administrative and financial corruption, thereby directly affecting the effectiveness of financial management within public institutions. In addition, the issues of integrity and corruption prevention are considered in a broader context, where combating this negative phenomenon is linked to the principles of integrity and ethical foundations of governance. In general, integrity is viewed as a key component of public servants' work and a significant cultural factor in anti-corruption policy, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of professional ethics and codes of conduct to ensure transparency and accountability in public administration.

At the current stage of anti-corruption efforts, internal control mechanisms in combating corruption at the local level are of considerable importance. In this regard, the observations of Shidqi and Arfiansyah (Shidqi & Arfiansyah, 2025) are particularly relevant. In their study, the authors demonstrate that internal audit and control significantly reduce corruption risks in the activities of local authorities, which constitutes an important component of effective public finance management.

Mutiah, Gamayuni and Oktavia (Mutiah, 2023) analyze the Public Integrity Index and its influence on the formation of anti-corruption policy in the context of the G20, thereby demonstrating the importance of an integrated approach to transparency, administrative integrity, and budgeting from a global perspective. The importance of transparent governance is also emphasized through practical approaches to budget management as a key element in the development of integrity and corruption prevention at both local and national levels. Analyses of the effectiveness of budgetary procedures and transparent resource allocation mechanisms indicate their positive impact on accountability and public trust.

Certain studies also focus on models of digitalization of public services and their role in reducing corruption manifestations, which is particularly relevant in the context of public administration reform and digital transformation. As noted by Mursalin and Khaeriyah (Mursalin & Khaeriyah, 2025), digital initiatives in the fields of finance and public services contribute to reducing opacity and corruption risks. Similarly, Lyezia and Kapaya (Lyezia & Kapaya, 2024) demonstrate that the combination of digital technologies, external and internal audits, and stakeholder engagement contributes to the development of a culture of transparency and integrity in the public sector. Moreover, the scholars show that accountability and transparency positively affect the financial performance of the public sector, thereby confirming their role in strengthening integrity in resource management.

In the process of summarizing scholarly sources on integrity, corruption prevention, and transparency in governance, a significant role is played by international studies examining the interrelationship between transparency, accountability, and financial integrity in the public sector. In particular, the research of Siahay (Siahay, 2023) demonstrates that public resource accounting practices compliant with IPSAS standards substantially support transparency and accountability, which in turn contributes to strengthening public trust and improving the effectiveness of public finance management mechanisms. These international scholarly works complement traditional public administration studies by emphasizing that institutional instruments of transparency, accountability, and control are closely linked to the ability to reduce corruption risks and ensure the sustainable development of the financial system. This approach resonates with conclusions regarding the importance of integrated mechanisms of integrity and accountability identified in other scholarly studies. At the same time, there remains a need for further research concerning the adaptation of these models to the specific context of Ukraine, particularly under conditions of war and the implementation of European integration aspirations, which requires a deeper comparative analysis.

At the national level in Ukraine, such studies enhance the understanding of the role of integrity in public finance and public administration. In particular, Patlakh (Patlakh, 2025) points to the necessity of developing sustainable mechanisms of institutional integrity in public administration in order to strengthen trust and ensure the stability of the financial system. It is also important to mention scholarly works that provide a comprehensive understanding of integrity as both an ethical and managerial category combining ethical, legal, and organizational aspects of governance. This approach is represented by Kyrylenko (Kyrylenko, 2023), who considers integrity as a multifaceted phenomenon manifested through the conflict between public and private interests in the professional activities of civil servants.

An analysis of academic sources shows that integrity in public administration is viewed by most researchers as the normative and ethical foundation of anti-corruption efforts, which contributes to the development of transparent and accountable mechanisms of public administration. The generalization of the results of the analyzed scholarly sources demonstrates that integrity in public administration is regarded in contemporary research as a system-forming factor of anti-corruption policy and a key prerequisite for the effective functioning of the state's financial system. International experience, particularly that of the member states of the European Union, confirms that the integration of the principles of integrity, transparency, and accountability into the economic and legal regulation of public finance contributes to reducing corruption risks, strengthening budgetary discipline, and increasing public trust in governmental institutions. At the same time, the findings of scholarly studies indicate the insufficient development of practical mechanisms for adapting European models of integrity to the national institutional conditions of Ukraine, which necessitates further comprehensive research in this field.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this article is to provide a scholarly justification for the role of integrity as a principle of anti-corruption efforts in public administration, based on a comparative analysis of the experiences of Ukraine and the countries of the European Union. Achieving the stated research objective involves addressing the following tasks:

1. To summarize theoretical approaches to interpreting integrity as a principle of anti-corruption efforts in the public administration system.
2. To examine the relationship between integrity, the quality of public governance, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies.
3. To analyze international indicators that measure the quality of governance and perceptions of corruption, as well as their use in assessing the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies.
4. Measures of public governance quality in Ukraine and European Union countries based on six key indicators from the Worldwide Governance Indicators: accountability and the exercise of the right to vote; the effectiveness of government institutions; political stability; the quality of legislation; the rule of law and control of corruption; as well as the Corruption Perceptions Index scores for Ukraine and European Union countries.
5. To identify areas for improving the institutional, legal, and organizational framework for integrity and anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine, taking into account European experience.

## METHODS

The methodological foundation of this study consists of a combination of general scientific and specialized research methods, which made it possible to comprehensively analyze the role of integrity in public administration as a principle for ensuring corruption prevention measures in Ukraine and the countries of the European Union. The study employed analysis and synthesis to systematize scholarly approaches to interpreting the categories of "integrity", "anti-corruption activities," and "public administration".

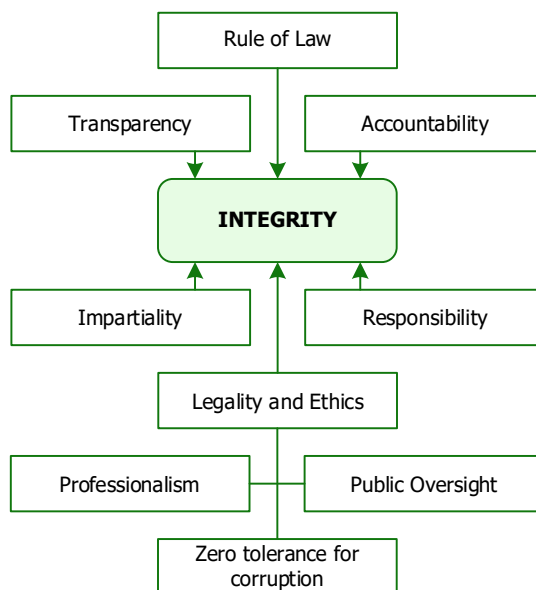
Inductive and deductive methods were used to formulate theoretical generalizations and provide a logical justification for the role of integrity as a principle of anti-corruption activities in public administration. To study the specifics of developing and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption in public administration, an economic and legal analysis was applied, which made it possible to assess the interconnection between regulatory frameworks and management practices.

An institutional approach was used to analyze the role of public authorities and anti-corruption institutions in ensuring integrity and transparency in the management of financial resources. To compare national and European approaches to ensuring the principle of integrity in public administration, a comparative method, cluster analysis, and grouping were applied, which made it possible to identify common and distinctive features of anti-corruption activities in Ukraine and European Union countries, as well as to determine the possibilities for adapting European practices to Ukrainian realities.

Statistical and analytical methods were applied in the analysis of international indicators of public administration quality and the Corruption Perceptions Index, as well as data from official reports of international organizations and national authorities. The method of scientific generalization and formalization was used to substantiate approaches to ensuring integrity in public administration and improving the effectiveness of anti-corruption policy in the sphere of public finance, taking into account European experience. The combined application of these methods ensured the objectivity, scientific validity, and practical relevance of the research results.

## RESULTS

In the context of ongoing transformation in public administration, integrity acquires decisive importance as a system-forming principle for corruption prevention and for enhancing the effectiveness of state institutions. The key principles of effective anti-corruption measures are the rule of law, legality, transparency, accountability, responsibility, impartiality, professionalism, public oversight, and zero tolerance for corruption (Figure 1). Central among these is the principle of integrity, which defines the moral and ethical standards of conduct for public officials, guides them toward upholding the public interest, preventing conflicts of interest, and avoiding corrupt practices. It is integrity that serves as the foundation for building citizens' trust in government authorities and ensures the effectiveness of other anti-corruption principles.

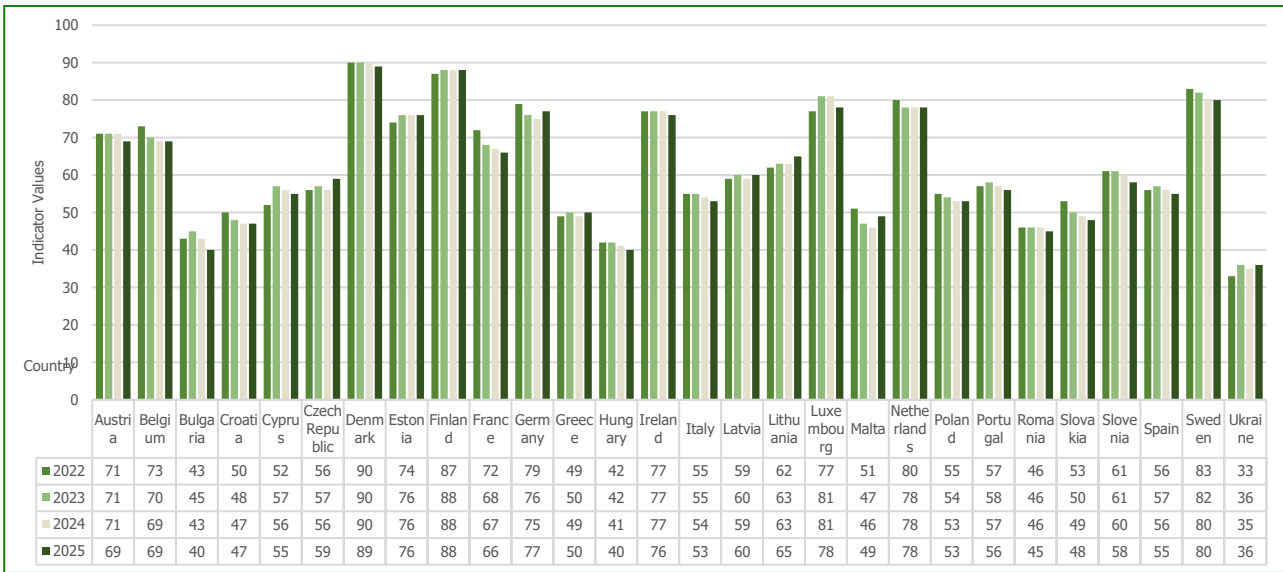


**Figure 1. Key principles for the effective implementation of anti-corruption measures.**

Its implementation directly affects the level of public trust, the transparency of budgetary processes, and the resilience of the financial system, which is particularly relevant for Ukraine in the context of its European integration aspirations. The experience of European Union member states demonstrates that the institutionalization of integrity standards in the public sector contributes to strengthening fiscal discipline, reducing corruption risks, and improving the investment climate. In this regard, a comparative analysis of Ukrainian practice and European approaches to the development of integrity-based public governance becomes increasingly important as a precondition for the advancement of the country's financial system. It is becoming clear that integrity in public administration plays an extremely important role, as it also serves as a principle for preventing corruption and has a significant impact on the parameters of a country's financial system development from a strategic perspective.

At the same time, in contemporary empirical studies, the effectiveness of anti-corruption reforms and their impact on the development of financial systems are assessed primarily through indicators of perceptions of corruption and the quality of governance; therefore, these indicators form the basis of this study. Theoretical studies confirm that understanding the interrelationship between corruption and integrity within institutions or national systems is of critical importance. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), annually published by Transparency International, measures the perceived level of public sector corruption in a country, whereas integrity reflects the capacity to act honestly, transparently, responsibly, and in accordance with the law, even in complex or challenging situations. Moreover, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is a global indicator that assesses perceptions of corruption in the public sector based on expert assessments and business surveys (Transparency International, 2022; Transparency International, 2023; Transparency International, 2024; Transparency International, 2025; Syrovackyi, Kashchuk et al., 2022). "It is recognized as one of the most important indicators for indirectly assessing the effectiveness of implementing integrity principles in the public administration system and their impact on the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures in public administration". The index is measured on a scale from 0 to 100, where higher scores indicate lower perceived corruption and, consequently, a lower level of corruption.

It is clear that the Corruption Perceptions Index can be used as an indirect measure of integrity in public administration, but on its own it does not cover all aspects of integrity, such as procedural transparency, internal controls, or ethical standards for public servants. It is appropriate to analyze the dynamics of the Corruption Perceptions Index in Ukraine and the European Union member states over the period 2022–2025. The results of this analysis are summarized in Figure 2, which enables an assessment of the corruption levels across the countries selected for the study.



**Figure 2. The state and dynamics of changes in the Corruption Perceptions Index in Ukraine and the European Union member states in 2022–2025.** Note: data for 2025 are forecasted. (Source: Corruption Perceptions Index, 2022–2024)

It should be noted that in 2022, Ukraine scored 33 points on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). In 2023, an increase of 3 points was observed, reaching 36, which represented one of the best results among all countries included in the ranking. However, in 2024, Ukraine’s Corruption Perceptions Index score stood at 35 and showed a downward trend, indicating a weakening of efforts in the fight against corruption and reflecting a possible stagnation of reforms or the merely superficial implementation of anti-corruption measures. In addition, in 2024, several high-profile corruption scandals were recorded in the country, along with the prosecution of senior officials for corruption-related offenses. Data for 2025 indicate that the Corruption Perceptions Index has risen to 36.

An analysis of the Corruption Perceptions Index as a perceptual indicator of anti-corruption efforts in the public administration sector shows that changes are sensitive to the quality of anti-corruption reforms and the transparency of public administration. The improvement of Ukraine’s CPI score in 2023 reflects relative progress in combating corruption and strengthening anti-corruption efforts, which is associated with reforms in anti-corruption legislation and enhanced control over public finances. Conversely, the decline observed in 2024 reflects certain challenges in the implementation of reforms, the inefficiency of specific anti-corruption measures, and shifts in corruption perceptions among society and experts. This, in turn, signals risks for the financial system, including reduced investor confidence and, consequently, a decline in investment inflows into the country’s financial system.

At the same time, European Union countries traditionally score higher on the Corruption Perceptions Index, reflecting lower levels of perceived corruption and more developed anti-corruption systems. In particular, the Netherlands consistently demonstrates a high level of anti-corruption efforts ( $\approx 78$ ), which significantly exceeds Ukraine’s scores. Lithuania, as an example of an Eastern European country in the European Union, has a score of  $\approx 63$ , which is also significantly higher than Ukraine’s. Greece shows a moderate increase in its Corruption Perceptions Index score of  $\approx 49$ , indicating an average level of transparency in anti-corruption efforts among EU members. Poland’s data indicates a Corruption Perceptions Index score of 54, which is also higher than Ukraine’s, though lower than that of the Netherlands or Lithuania. These differences indicate a significant gap between Ukraine and developed EU member states in terms of perceptions of corruption and anti-corruption efforts in public administration, which has a direct impact on financial processes, investment, and tax compliance. A comparative analysis reveals significant disparities in integrity levels between Ukraine and leading EU countries, which can be explained by both the history of the development of socio-political institutions and the level of development of anti-corruption mechanisms in public administration. Implementation of Integrity Principles in the public sector requires not only changes in legislation but also real changes in accountability, transparency, and oversight.

In this context, it is advisable to study the assessment of the quality of public administration in Ukraine and the EU Member States according to six indicators from the World Governance Indicators for 2022-2024, which comprehensively reflect the perception of the effectiveness of governance, institutional capacity, and corruption control in these countries (Table 1). This analysis covers voice and accountability, government effectiveness, political stability, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. The use of a dynamic framework allows for the identification of both stable structural differences between countries and short-term trends driven by political, economic, and security factors. Particular attention is paid to

Ukraine’s positioning relative to both average and leading EU countries in the context of European integration processes and public administration reforms.

**Table 1. State and dynamics of changes in public governance quality indicators in Ukraine and the European Union member states in 2022–2024.** Note: \* Data for 2025 will be published in September 2026. (Source: *Worldwide Governance Indicators 2022–2024*)

No.	Country	Voice and Accountability	Government Effectiveness	Political Stability	Regulatory Quality	Rule of Law	Control of Corruption
		2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
1	Austria	1.48	1.43	1.41	1.74	1.58	1.51
2	Belgium	1.54	1.52	1.50	1.31	1.16	1.19
3	Bulgaria	0.20	0.26	0.21	-0.07	0.11	0.04
4	Croatia	0.59	0.63	0.65	0.72	0.75	0.71
5	Cyprus	0.89	0.90	0.89	0.95	0.93	0.87
6	Czech Republic	1.08	1.14	1.25	1.20	1.24	1.18
7	Denmark	1.91	1.92	1.89	2.10	1.96	1.91
8	Estonia	1.42	1.40	1.41	1.36	1.27	1.30
9	Finland	1.91	1.84	1.85	1.90	1.79	1.82
10	France	1.18	1.17	1.15	1.46	1.35	1.20
11	Germany	1.56	1.59	1.60	1.78	1.56	1.55
12	Greece	0.79	0.83	0.78	0.56	0.26	0.19
13	Hungary	0.04	-0.05	-0.03	0.66	0.55	0.50
14	Ireland	1.60	1.63	1.64	1.71	1.66	1.61
15	Italy	1.04	1.09	1.07	0.72	0.85	0.79
16	Latvia	1.07	1.11	1.13	0.73	0.64	0.74
17	Lithuania	1.18	1.19	1.22	0.94	0.94	1.20
18	Luxembourg	1.69	1.67	1.67	1.97	2.15	2.04
19	Malta	1.02	0.96	0.92	0.91	0.76	0.62
20	Netherlands	1.73	1.70	1.65	1.77	1.75	1.75
21	Poland	0.38	0.41	0.75	0.52	0.63	0.67
22	Portugal	1.31	1.31	1.27	1.02	0.97	0.95
23	Romania	0.52	0.50	0.39	0.20	0.13	0.42
24	Slovakia	0.95	0.97	0.93	0.80	0.58	0.66
25	Slovenia	0.98	1.03	1.06	1.26	1.16	1.09
26	Spain	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.14	1.08	1.11
27	Sweden	1.75	1.73	1.73	1.91	1.69	1.77
28	Ukraine	-0.02	-0.09	-0.11	-0.64	-0.58	-0.60

The results of the conducted research demonstrate a clear differentiation among European Union countries in terms of institutional quality. The stable leaders across most indicators in 2022–2024 are Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, which exhibit high values of government effectiveness, rule of law, and control of corruption (above 1.7–2.3 points). These countries are characterized not only by high-ranking positions but also by relative stability of indicators over time, which confirms their institutional maturity and the sustainability of integrity standards in public administration.

Countries of Central and Southeastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia) are characterized by significantly lower values, particularly in the indicators of rule of law and control of corruption, where in some years negative or near-zero values are recorded. This indicates structural problems of institutional development and vulnerability to political influence, resulting in unstable dynamics and limited progress in the field of anti-corruption efforts.

Ukraine demonstrates the lowest values among all analyzed countries across all indicators during 2022–2024, particularly in terms of government effectiveness, political stability, rule of law, and control of corruption, which remain in the negative range. At the same time, the dynamics show certain positive shifts, including gradual improvement in political stability and regulatory quality in 2023–2024, which may indicate institutional adaptation under conditions of martial law and strengthening of anti-corruption and regulatory mechanisms. Overall, the results confirm a substantial institutional gap between Ukraine and most EU countries, while also outlining areas where strengthening integrity in public administration is critically important for reducing corruption risks.

To further deepen the research results, it is considered appropriate to group European Union countries and Ukraine according to public governance quality indicators and to identify common and distinctive characteristics among the analyzed states. To achieve this objective, the necessary calculations will be conducted using cluster analysis techniques (Statistica 8.0 software; k-means method), and the results will be summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Clustering of European Union member states and Ukraine by the level of public governance quality in 2022–2024.** Note: \* Data for 2025 will be published in September 2026. (Source: *Worldwide Governance Indicators 2022–2024*).

Cluster	Cluster characteristics	Average WGI level (range)	Countries
I	High level of implementation of anti-corruption measures	+1.30 ... +2.10	Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Netherlands, Luxembourg
II	Stable effective democracies	+0.60 ... +1.25	Germany, Austria, France, Ireland, Belgium, Estonia
III	Countries with moderate institutional risks	-0.10 ... +0.55	Spain, Portugal, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Cyprus, Malta
IV	Countries with increased institutional vulnerability	-0.15 ... -1.20	Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Ukraine

The first cluster encompasses Northern and Western European jurisdictions exhibiting persistently superior performance across all six Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), with particular salience in control of corruption and rule of law, where mean scores exceed +1.5 for the 2022–2024 period. This configuration constitutes a benchmark of institutional integrity and governance excellence, typified by Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The group is characterized by sustained convergence toward maximal governance performance, including exceptionally high control of corruption values ( $CC > 1.9$ ), alongside robust rule of law and regulatory quality.

The second cluster is defined by structurally consolidated governance systems demonstrating high administrative effectiveness, albeit with comparatively attenuated political stability and regulatory quality metrics. It comprises advanced yet institutionally heterogeneous settings, including Germany, Austria, Ireland, Estonia, France, and Belgium. These cases reveal strong performance in government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and rule of law, while simultaneously exhibiting moderate variability in political stability and uneven integration of anti-corruption and digital governance mechanisms.

The third cluster reflects intermediate WGI performance and indicates persistent institutional asymmetries, particularly in corruption control and regulatory quality dimensions. It includes transitional or institutionally exposed systems such as Spain, Portugal, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, Slovakia, and Hungary. These systems demonstrate mid-range indicator values and non-uniform development trajectories across governance pillars, wherein institutional integrity operates as a critical determinant of macro-financial stability.

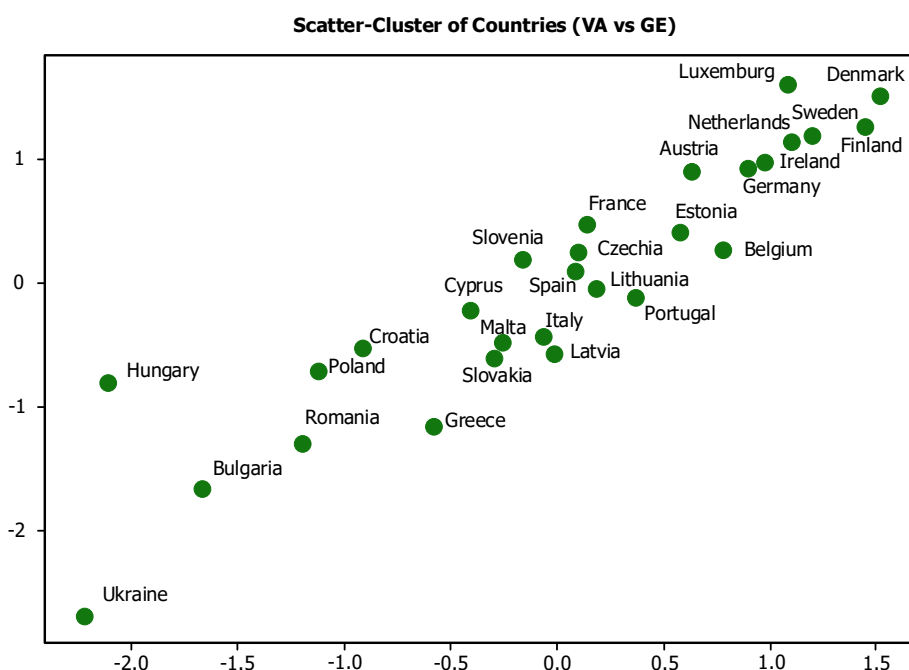
The fourth cluster is characterized by elevated institutional fragility and heightened governance risk exposure. Within this configuration, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, and Ukraine occupy positions marked by structurally constrained governance capacity, with pronounced deficits in rule of law and political stability. Regulatory quality in this group is frequently weak or negative, accompanied by systemic limitations in corruption control mechanisms. Ukraine occupies a distinct peripheral position within this cluster due to war-induced constraints and accelerated institutional stress. Nevertheless, recent WGI dynamics (2023–2024), particularly in control of corruption and government effectiveness, suggest incipient convergence tendencies toward Cluster III, contingent upon sustained administrative digitalization and reinforcement of anti-corruption institutional frameworks.

The conducted analysis of Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) for EU member states and Ukraine over the 2022–2024 period reveals a pronounced stratification of European governance systems, characterized by stable institutional hierarchies and persistent cross-country disparities. First, the empirical evidence confirms the existence of a consolidated core of high-performing governance systems in Northern and Western Europe, where exceptionally strict rule of law, government effectiveness, and control of corruption jointly form a structurally stable model of institutional integrity. The limited intertemporal variability of these indicators suggests high institutional resilience and path-dependent governance performance. Second, the cluster structure derived from k-means analysis demonstrates that differences among European states are not merely quantitative but reflect qualitatively distinct governance regimes. The transition between clusters corresponds to non-linear shifts in institutional capacity, particularly in anti-corruption effectiveness and legal enforcement, which act as key discriminating dimensions of governance quality. Third, Central and Southern European countries exhibit hybrid institutional configurations, where moderate administrative effectiveness coexists with persistent weaknesses in regulatory quality and corruption control. This asymmetry indicates incomplete institutional consolidation and vulnerability to political and administrative volatility. Fourth, Ukraine occupies a structurally distinct position characterized by systematically negative or below-average WGI scores across all governance dimensions. However, observed marginal improvements in selected indicators suggest the presence of adaptive institutional responses under conditions of systemic stress, including wartime governance transformation and accelerated regulatory adjustment. Finally, the study confirms that rule of law and control of corruption are the most influential variables in shaping the overall clustering of countries, thereby functioning as core determinants of institutional convergence or divergence within the European governance space. This

finding underscores the primacy of integrity-based governance mechanisms over purely administrative efficiency metrics in explaining cross-country differences in public sector performance. Overall, the results substantiate a multi-tiered model of European governance quality and highlight the persistence of an institutional gap between Ukraine and EU member states, while also indicating potential trajectories of gradual convergence under sustained reform dynamics.

Furthermore, the results of the cluster analysis for European Union countries and Ukraine made it possible to construct a scatter plot (X-axis: Voice & Accountability; Y-axis: Government Effectiveness), which shows that the upper-right quadrant includes countries with higher scores on the Corruption Perceptions Index and the Quality of Public Administration Index, the central quadrant characterizes countries with moderate values for these indicators, and the lower-left quadrant reflects countries facing significant challenges in implementing anti-corruption measures, which consequently reduces the quality of public administration. Ukraine is clearly separated from the countries of the European Union, which statistically justifies the need to strengthen anti-corruption measures, digital oversight, and transparency and public accountability in the public administration system. Ukraine is clearly separated from EU member states, statistically confirming the need to strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms, digital governance tools, and transparency in public finance.

Figure 1 presents the results of visualizing European Union countries and Ukraine in a two-dimensional space based on the indicators "Voice and Accountability" (VA) and "Government Effectiveness" (GE). The positioning of countries on the graph allows us to identify distinct groups of states with similar indicators of public governance quality.



**Figure 3. Schematic representation of the position of European Union member states and Ukraine in the public governance quality ranking in 2022–2024.** (Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators 2022–2024)

An analysis of the Worldwide Governance Indicators revealed significant disparities between European Union countries and Ukraine. In particular, a reduction in the level of corruption in the country leads to increased trust in public sector governance bodies. This confirms the hypothesis regarding the key role of anti-corruption mechanisms in minimizing corruption risks and increasing trust in public institutions. An index that aggregates indicators of accountability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and corruption control demonstrates the decisive role of a state's institutional capacity in creating a stable environment for the functioning of public authorities. Moreover, the introduction of digital tools into the public administration system contributes to increased transparency of budgetary processes, reduced transaction costs, and strengthened financial control. This effect is particularly pronounced for countries with medium and low levels of institutional quality, as digitalization acts as a catalyst, amplifying the positive impact of institutional reforms.

At the same time, the digitalization of public administration can be viewed as one of the potential tools for enhancing the transparency and efficiency of administrative procedures, particularly in the area of budgetary control. Its impact is uneven and depends not only on the level of technological adoption but also on the degree of data openness and regulatory restrictions on access to information (for example, in the field of customs or fiscal statistics). In this context, digital tools serve as a complementary factor to institutional quality rather than an independent determinant of it.

An analysis of indicators of governance quality and anti-corruption efforts makes it possible to identify the key economic and legal mechanisms for ensuring anti-corruption efforts in the areas of public administration and public finance, the effectiveness of which directly influences the level of corruption risks. The analysis allows for a synthesis of the approaches presented in the academic literature (Dobrogorsky & Keda, 2023; Tellis, 2024; Siahay, 2023) and public administration practice regarding the main tools for preventing corruption risks and ensuring proper public administration. These tools include:

- institutions of accountability and transparency in the budget process;
- legal regulation of public finances;
- the independence of oversight and anti-corruption bodies;
- digital tools for monitoring the use of public resources.

At the same time, an important prerequisite for the effectiveness of these economic and legal mechanisms is ensuring the principle of integrity in the activities of public administration bodies, since integrity is a fundamental principle of good governance that entails adherence to ethical standards, the prevention of conflicts of interest, transparency in decision-making, and a focus on the public interest. It is integrity that creates the institutional environment in which anti-corruption mechanisms can function most effectively. European experience shows that a high level of integrity in public institutions is one of the key factors in the successful implementation of anti-corruption efforts. In countries with the best performance in combating corruption, integrity is integrated into the system of public administration through codes of ethics, mechanisms for preventing conflicts of interest, internal control tools, and accountability procedures for public officials.

Empirical data (Table 1) indicate that in European Union countries with high levels of control of corruption, rule of law, and government effectiveness (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands), economic and legal integrity mechanisms are systemic in nature and integrated into the financial and credit policy of the state. In particular, the combination of strict legal regulation of budget discipline, effective financial control procedures, and strong sanctions for violations of financial legislation ensures the minimization of corruption risks at all stages of public management.

Furthermore, the results show that in countries with lower scores on indicators of institutional quality – specifically, control of corruption, rule of law, and governance effectiveness (according to the Worldwide Governance Indicators), as well as the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) – economic and legal mechanisms to combat corruption are often fragmented and do not ensure systematic prevention of corrupt practices in the sphere of public finance. Fluctuations in regulatory quality and government effectiveness indicators in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia indicate limited effectiveness of legal norms in the absence of their proper enforcement and adequate financial control. Such a situation negatively affects budgetary policy efficiency, reduces investment attractiveness, and increases risks to the financial system.

For Ukraine, the results confirm that existing economic and legal mechanisms for ensuring integrity in public administration and public finance remain insufficiently effective, as reflected in negative values of control of corruption, rule of law, and government effectiveness indicators. At the same time, the observed positive changes in regulatory quality and accountability in 2023–2024 indicate a gradual institutional strengthening of the legal foundations of public finance management, particularly in terms of harmonizing anti-corruption legislation with European standards and strengthening financial monitoring.

This provides a basis for identifying potential areas for improving the economic and legal mechanisms that support anti-corruption efforts within public administration bodies and for strengthening anti-corruption systems, drawing on European experience. Of primary importance in this context is the further strengthening of legal mechanisms of budget accountability through the introduction of clear financial and legal sanctions for violations of transparency and efficiency principles in the use of public funds. In addition, it is necessary to institutionalize a risk-based approach to financial control, widely applied in EU countries, which allows state oversight resources to be focused on the most corruption-prone areas of public finance. Equally important is strengthening the independence and coordination of anti-corruption and financial control bodies, ensuring not only formal compliance with legal norms but also the real inevitability of punishment for corruption offenses. The study also confirms the expediency of integrating digital tools into public finance management as an economic and legal mechanism for enhancing integrity, particularly through the automation of budgetary procedures, e-procurement systems, and open financial registers.

The role of integrity as a foundational element of anti-corruption efforts deserves special attention. Undoubtedly, integrity forms the value foundation for the functioning of state institutions and determines the quality of anti-corruption measures. A high level of integrity helps strengthen public trust, improve the effectiveness of financial oversight, and reduce the risks of abuse of power. For Ukraine, upholding the principle of integrity must become one of the top priorities in improving the

public administration system, which entails developing mechanisms for ethical oversight, strengthening accountability for violations of standards of official conduct, and adopting European Union practices and standards.

Thus, the effectiveness of anti-corruption policy in public administration and public finance is determined not by individual legal or economic instruments, but by their systemic interaction. The implementation of a comprehensive model of economic and legal regulation of integrity, adapted to European standards, is a key prerequisite for strengthening Ukraine's financial system and improving the effectiveness of its financial and credit activities.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study generally confirm the findings of academic works dedicated to elucidating the role of integrity as a principle of anti-corruption efforts in public administration. In particular, the positive correlation between the quality of public administration and corruption control identified in this study is consistent with the findings of Tellis (2024), who emphasizes the importance of systemic mechanisms for preventing corruption and resolving conflicts of interest in the activities of public institutions. Our analysis confirms that countries with higher levels of corruption control are characterized by upward trends in government effectiveness. The results also align with the findings of Su et al. (2023), who demonstrate that public participation, accountability, and financial oversight contribute to reducing corruption risks and improving the quality of governance. At the same time, our study expands on these approaches by demonstrating that the positive effects of transparency and accountability are evident in the sphere of public administration. Our analysis of European Union countries and Ukraine showed that higher values of accountability and anti-corruption indicators correlate with better performance in anti-corruption efforts.

To a certain extent, the study's results confirm the findings of Kashchuk et al. (2023), which substantiate the importance of transparency as a factor in reducing administrative and financial corruption. At the same time, this study has shown that transparency alone is not a sufficient condition for ensuring the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts in public administration. Empirical results show that the greatest effect is achieved when transparency is combined with the effectiveness of government structures, an adequate regulatory environment, and the digitization of administrative processes.

At the same time, the findings highlight the principle of integrity as one of the key elements of effective anti-corruption efforts. Unlike specific instruments of financial control or legal regulation, integrity forms the value foundation of public administration and determines the level of compliance with standards of legality, impartiality, transparency, and accountability. In this context, integrity serves not only as an ethical characteristic of public officials' conduct but also as a vital principle of good governance that ensures the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. The role of integrity is particularly evident in the creation of an institutional environment conducive to preventing corruption. The results of the analysis show that countries with high levels of corruption control, rule of law, and governance effectiveness are also characterized by more developed mechanisms for ensuring the principle of integrity in the activities of state institutions.

Similarly, the results are partly consistent with the findings of Shidqi and Arfiansyah (2025), who demonstrated the importance of internal audit and internal control systems in reducing corruption risks in the activities of local government bodies. Our study confirms the significance of control mechanisms but shows that their impact on the activities of public administration bodies is indirect and depends to a large extent on the overall level of the state's institutional capacity.

Particular attention should be paid to comparing the results obtained with the approach taken by Khomyshyn (2021), who views integrity primarily as an ethical and professional characteristic of public servants' activities. Unlike that approach, this study does not assess integrity as a standalone quantitative category. Instead, the analysis focuses on measurable international indicators of governance quality, anti-corruption efforts, and digitalization, which have enabled a shift from a normative understanding of integrity to an empirical assessment of the institutional factors that underpin it. The study's findings also align with the conclusions of Mutiah et al. (2023), which justify the use of integrated indicators to assess the state of public administration and anti-corruption efforts. At the same time, a broader approach is proposed that combines the World Governance Index (WGI), the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), and a cluster analysis of European Union countries and Ukraine.

The scientific novelty of the findings lies in the identification of cluster-based heterogeneity in the impact of institutional factors on the anti-corruption activities of public administration bodies. Unlike most of the studies reviewed, this paper demonstrates that European Union countries exhibit several distinct patterns of interaction between the quality of governance and anti-corruption activities. At the same time, Ukraine occupies a distinct position, which is due to lower scores on indicators of government effectiveness, the rule of law, and corruption control; however, it also demonstrates positive trends in preventing and combating corruption.

At the same time, the study's findings have certain limitations. First, the CPI and WGI metrics used are aggregated international indicators that are partly based on expert assessments and may contain a subjective component. Second, the study's time frame covers 2022–2025, a period characterized by significant geopolitical and economic upheavals, most notably the full-scale war in Ukraine. A comparison with the approaches of Transparency International and the World Bank (Worldwide Governance Indicators) suggests that Ukraine and certain countries in Central and Eastern Europe are in a phase of institutional transformation, where formal anti-corruption measures do not yet ensure full stabilization of integrity indicators. At the same time, Northern European countries demonstrate a model of institutional equilibrium in which a high level of accountability and the rule of law ensure a consistently low level of corruption risks.

This study also helps to refine existing scholarly approaches. Unlike previous works, in which integrity is viewed primarily as an ethical or normative category, this article interprets it as an institutional outcome of the interaction between legal, economic, and managerial mechanisms that shape the environment for preventing corruption in public administration. Thus, the focus shifts from a declarative understanding of integrity to its functional dimension within the public administration system.

Consequently, the findings of this study do not contradict existing scholarly approaches but rather complement them by clarifying the role of integrity as a principle of anti-corruption efforts in public administration. This allows for a more balanced understanding of the relationship between the quality of public administration and anti-corruption efforts.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article examines the role of integrity as a principle of anti-corruption efforts in public administration. The study made it possible to draw certain conclusions in line with the objectives set. Based on an analysis of the scientific literature, it was found that contemporary research focuses primarily on the role of anti-corruption mechanisms, transparency, accountability, internal control, and digitalization in enhancing the effectiveness of public administration. At the same time, insufficient attention has been paid to a comprehensive study of the relationship between the quality of governance and anti-corruption activities, and research on defining integrity as a principle of anti-corruption efforts in public administration is limited, which necessitated this study.

Based on an analysis of the CPI and WGI international indicators, significant differences were identified between European Union countries and Ukraine in terms of the quality of public administration, the effectiveness of government structures, the rule of law, and corruption control. The highest values for these indicators are characteristic of Northern and Western European countries, while Ukraine continues to demonstrate lower results on most institutional indicators.

The results of the cluster analysis made it possible to identify four groups of countries based on their level of corruption prevention and control, as well as the effectiveness of public administration. It was found that countries with high scores on indicators of government effectiveness, the rule of law, and corruption control form a separate cluster characterized by the most favorable conditions for anti-corruption efforts. In contrast, Ukraine, along with certain countries in Central and Eastern Europe, belongs to a group of states with elevated corruption risks.

It was found that the positive effect of anti-corruption measures is most evident when combined with effective public administration, a high-quality regulatory environment, effective control mechanisms, and a high level of digitization of public processes. Thus, the study's findings confirm that Ukraine's priority areas for further reforms remain strengthening the state's institutional capacity, improving mechanisms for controlling corruption, and reinforcing the rule of law.

Based on the results obtained, priority areas for improving the economic and legal regulation of anti-corruption activities in Ukraine have been identified, including strengthening budgetary accountability and financial and legal sanctions, institutionalizing risk-based financial control, ensuring the genuine independence of anti-corruption and oversight bodies, and further digitizing public administration. The implementation of these areas is viewed as a necessary prerequisite for improving the effectiveness of public administration and anti-corruption efforts.

An important finding of the study is the justification of the role of integrity as a fundamental principle of anti-corruption efforts in the sphere of public administration. It has been established that integrity is not limited solely to the ethical characteristics of public officials' behavior, but serves as a systemic foundation for the functioning of institutions of accountability, transparency, legality, and responsibility. It is precisely adherence to the principle of integrity that ensures the proper implementation of anti-corruption mechanisms and contributes to the formation of a sustainable institutional environment focused on preventing corruption. The findings allow us to conclude that integrity is a key institutional factor in enhancing the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. The experience of European Union countries shows that a high level of integrity among public administration bodies, combined with effective mechanisms for controlling corruption and

the rule of law, creates the conditions for ensuring financial stability and increasing public trust in state institutions. In this regard, the implementation of the principle of integrity across all aspects of anti-corruption efforts should be considered a priority for improving the public administration system in Ukraine.

Prospects for further research include deepening the quantitative analysis of integrity in public administration and developing indicators to measure its level in the country. It is also advisable to study the impact of digital anti-corruption tools on reducing corruption risks. Particular attention should be paid to analyzing the institutional capacity of anti-corruption and financial oversight bodies in the context of Ukraine's European integration and post-war recovery.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors have contributed equally.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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## ДОБРОЧЕСНІСТЬ ЯК ПРИНЦИП АНТИКОРУПЦІЙНОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ В ПУБЛІЧНОМУ УПРАВЛІННІ: ДОСВІД УКРАЇНИ ТА КРАЇН ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКОГО СОЮЗУ

Метою дослідження є наукове обґрунтування ролі доброчесності як принципу антикорупційної діяльності в публічному управлінні на основі порівняльного аналізу досвіду України та країн Європейського Союзу. Досліджено роль антикорупційної діяльності в публічному управлінні в системі запобігання та протидії корупції. У межах дослідження узагальнено теоретичні підходи до трактування доброчесності як інституційної та управлінської категорії, що поєднує етичні, правові й економічні складові. На основі використання міжнародних індикаторів якості врядування та Індексу сприйняття корупції проаналізовано взаємозв'язок між антикорупційною діяльністю та якістю публічного управління. Проведено порівняльний аналіз показників якості публічного управління в Україні та країнах Європейського Союзу за шістьма основними індикаторами Worldwide Governance Indicators: підзвітність і реалізація права голосу, ефективність діяльності урядових структур, політична стабільність, якість законодавства, верховенство права та контроль корупції, а також значення Індексу сприйняття корупції в Україні та країнах Європейського Союзу, – що дозволило згрупувати країни за спільними ознаками та виявити суттєві відмінності в антикорупційній діяльності, а також визначити групи країн-лідерів і аутсайдерів за показниками якості публічного управління й запобігання та протидії корупції.

Окрему увагу приділено дослідженню економіко-правових механізмів забезпечення боротьби з корупцією в царині публічного управління та публічних фінансів, зокрема механізмів бюджетної відповідальності, фінансового контролю, діяльності антикорупційних інституцій і цифрових інструментів управління публічними ресурсами. Установлено, що в Україні, попри наявність окремих позитивних зрушень, економіко-правові механізми антикорупційної діяльності залишаються недостатньо результативними, що негативно позначається на ефективності публічного управління. На основі отриманих результатів обґрунтовано пріоритетні напрями вдосконалення економіко-правового регулювання антикорупційних механізмів з урахуванням європейського досвіду.

**Keywords:** антикорупція, доброчесність, корупція, антикорупційна діяльність, публічне управління, Індекс сприйняття корупції, протидія корупції, система запобігання корупції, економічна безпека, євроінтеграція

**JEL Classification:** H11, H61, D73, K42, E62