



Montenegro
Agency for Prevention of Corruption

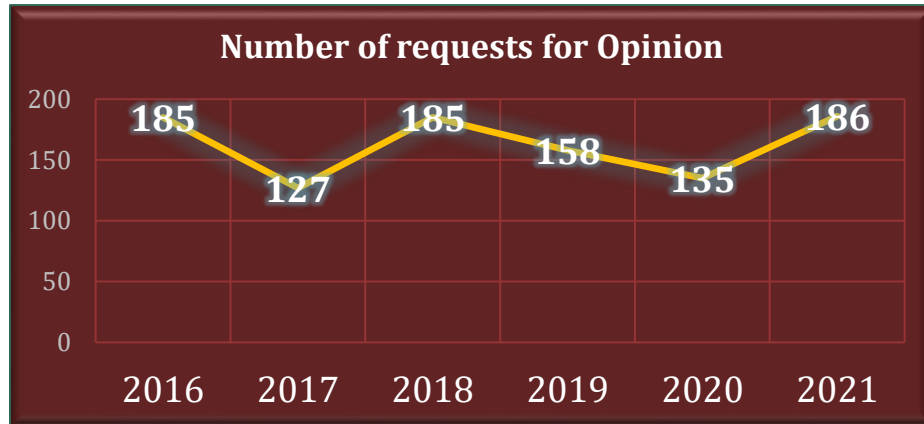
SUMMARY OF THE APC'S WORK REPORT IN 2021



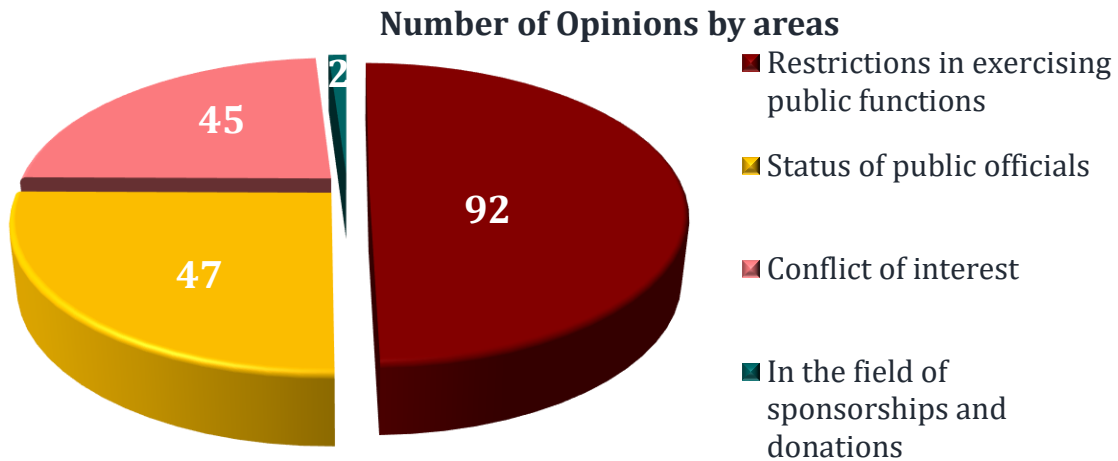
Podgorica, March 2022

PREVENTING CONFLICT OF INTEREST OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND RESTRICTIONS IN EXERCISING PUBLIC FUNCTIONS

In 2021, the Agency, acting on all received requests, **issued 186 Opinions** on the existence of conflicts of interest and restrictions in exercising public functions, **37.8% more than in the previous year and the most on an annual basis since its establishment.**



This is the result of an intensive campaign aimed at raising the awareness of public officials regarding compliance with the obligations prescribed by the Law on Prevention of Corruption (LPC), but also the growth of trust in APC, its importance and quality of work.



In 2021, the Agency initiated **50 administrative procedures in the field of prevention of conflicts of interest and restrictions in exercising public functions. 40 procedures** (including cases from the previous period) **were completed**, and **violations of the Law were found in 57.5%** of cases (23).

After the administrative procedures were completed, the authorities **submitted 10 answers**, of which **6 imposed disciplinary measures** (1 fine in the amount of 20% of monthly salary in one month and 5 warnings).

In 2 cases the public official **resigned**, in 1 case the authority concluded that it was not competent to conduct disciplinary proceedings, and in 1 it informed of the intention to further proceed.

Based on the issued Opinions and the adopted Decisions of the Agency, **26 resignations of public officials were submitted** (24 after the issued Opinions and 2 on the basis of the Decisions).

Due to the violation of the provisions of the LPC related to **restrictions in exercising public functions**, in 2021 the Agency submitted **5 requests for initiating misdemeanor proceedings** to the competent misdemeanor courts, of which **one of the courts requested the confiscation of the proceeds** derived from violations.

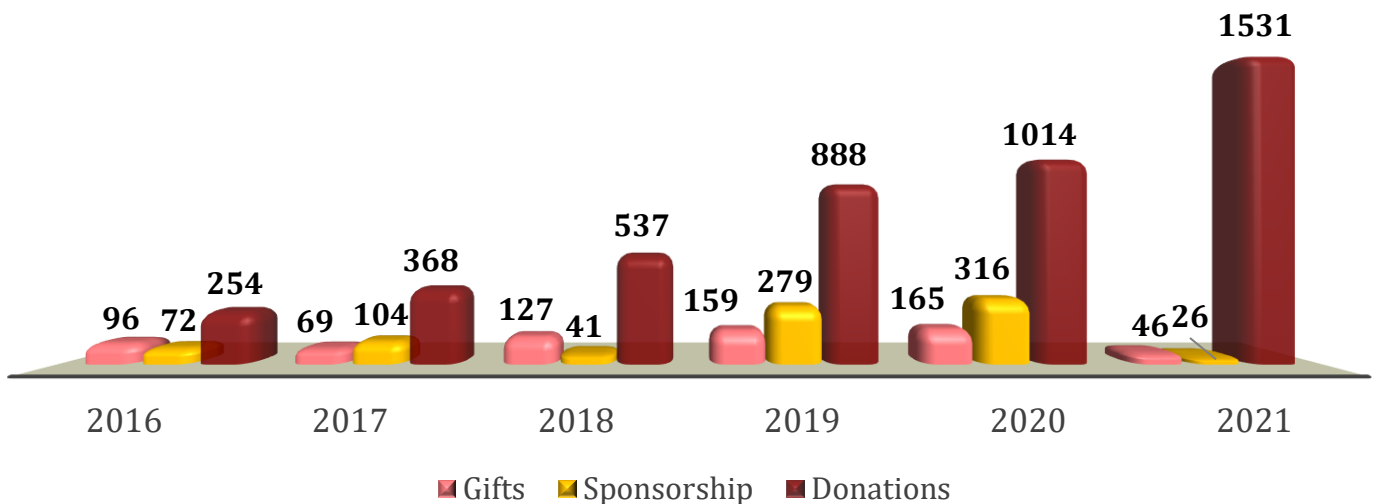
CONTROL OF RECEIVED GIFTS, DONATIONS AND CONCLUDED SPONSORSHIPS

In 2021, a total of **46 gifts** (3 occasional and 43 protocol gifts) **received during 2020** were reported to the Agency by **ten authorities**.

Also, in 2021, a total of **1,531 donations** were reported to the Agency by **97 authorities**, while a total of **26 sponsorships from 2020** were reported by **7 authorities**.

As expected, due to the Covid19 pandemic, and the financial crisis it caused, in 2021 there was a significantly lower number of reported gifts and sponsorships for 2020, while, on the other hand, for the same reasons, there was **an increase in reported donations (by 50, 1% more than in the previous year)**, as well as the **constant trend of growth of reported donations since the beginning of the Agency's work (six times more than in 2016)**.

Number of reported gifts, sponsorships and donations by years

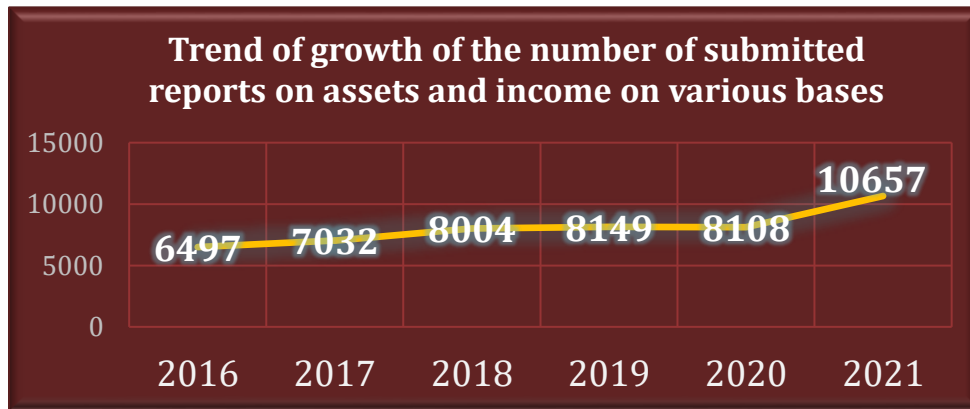


Due to the violation of the LPC provision which prescribes the obligation of the authorities to submit a report on received donations from the previous year with a copy of documentation to the Agency by the end of March of the current year, APC **submitted 1**

request for initiating misdemeanor proceedings to the competent misdemeanor court in 2021.

VERIFICATION OF REPORTS ON INCOME AND ASSETS

In 2021, the Agency received a total of **10,657 reports on income and assets** on various bases of submission, which is **31.4% more than in the previous year and the most since the beginning of its work.**

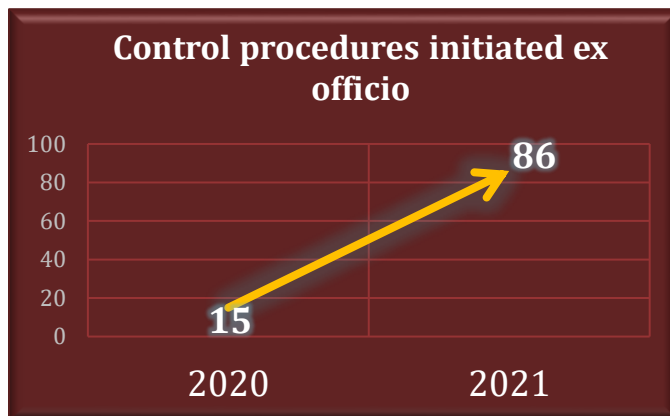


A total of **90.12% of public officials and civil servants** fulfilled their legal obligation to submit a regular annual report on income and assets within the legal deadline of March 31, 2021.

The Annual Verification Plan for 2021 was fully implemented and exceeded.

The plan envisages that **884 reports** on income and assets, submitted on various bases, will be checked in terms of accuracy and completeness of data. **That number was exceeded by over 10% and a total of 974 reports were checked.** Additionally, acting upon requests and ex officio, the Agency started the control of **145 reports** (by December 31 2021, the control of 140 reports was completed).

Six times more control procedures were initiated ex officio than in the previous year.

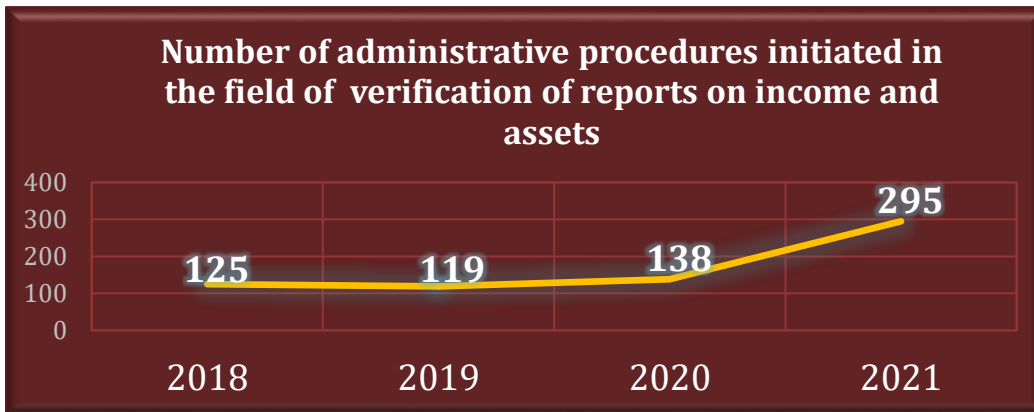


The **additional check**, the most complex type of control over the income and assets of public officials, which refers to 20 high-ranking public officials, selected in accordance with the degree of vulnerability of the area / function to corruption,

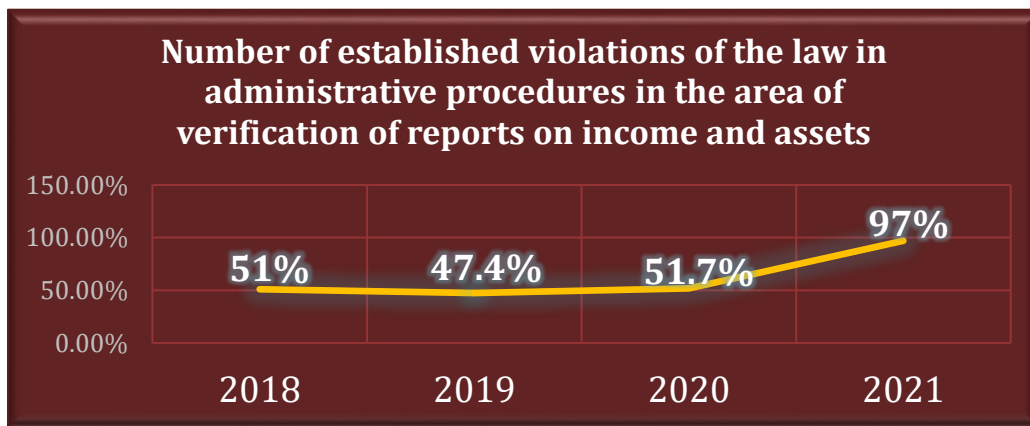
was completed. In the first quarter of 2022, **all procedures against public officials**, where possible violations of the LPC have been noticed **will be initiated**.

Noticing the space for more complete use of legal powers, the Agency introduced monitoring of the lifestyle of public officials at the end of 2020. In that sense, **in 2021, the Agency initiated a procedure for examining the lifestyle of 3 public officials. In the case related to one public official, the Agency submitted the case to the competent Special Prosecutor's Office, while other procedures are ongoing.**

In 2021, the Agency **initiated 295 administrative procedures in the field of verification of reports on income and assets, more than in the previous two years of operation in total.**



165 procedures were completed (including cases from the previous period), and **violations of the Law were found in 97% of cases (160)**, which is **significantly more than in the previous three years of the APC's work.**



Violations of the law were identified in all administrative procedures initiated ex officio in 2021 in the area of verification of reports on income and assets.

After the administrative procedures were completed, the authorities **submitted 14 answers**, of which **9 imposed disciplinary measures**:

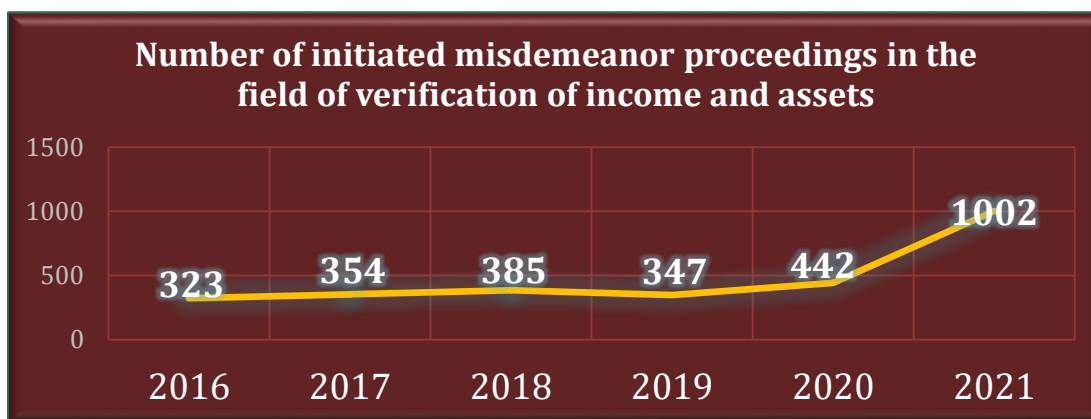
- ✓ **an reprimand** was issued in 7 cases;

- ✓ **a reduction of salary in the amount of 20% for two months** was imposed in 1 case;
- ✓ **a warning** was issued in 1 case.¹

Due to the violation of the provisions of the LPC relating to the obligation to submit reports on income and assets, in 2021 the Agency initiated a total of **1,002 misdemeanor proceedings**:

- ✓ **903 requests** to initiate misdemeanor proceedings;
- ✓ **99 misdemeanor orders**.

The number of initiated misdemeanor proceedings in 2021 in this area **is significantly higher than the annual level of all previous years of the APC's work**, which is primarily generated by intensive work and proactive approach of the Agency.



In 2021, **due to the failure to submit a regular annual report on income and assets**, the Agency initiated the most misdemeanor proceedings since the beginning of its work, when observed on an annual basis.

In 2021, due to the submission of reports on income and assets with inaccurate and incomplete data, the most misdemeanor proceedings were initiated since the beginning of its work, 21.6 % more than in the previous five years of work all together.

APC initiated a **significantly higher number of misdemeanor proceedings (the most since the beginning of its work)** for violating the provisions of the LPC relating to the obligation to submit reports on income and assets 30 days after assuming public office and upon termination of public office.

CONTROL OF FINANCING OF POLITICAL ENTITIES AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

In the area of **financing political entities and election campaigns**, the Agency continued to implement activities in a planned and systematic manner in order to consistently monitor the implementation of the Law on Financing of Political Entities and Election Campaigns

¹ In 2 cases the authorities informed that they were incompetent, 1 case was submitted by the authority to another competent authority, while in 2 cases the authority is awaiting the decision of the Administrative Court

(LFPEEC) and control the implementation and compliance with all prescribed prohibitions and restrictions during the election campaigns for local elections held in 2021 (Nikšić, Herceg Novi, Cetinje, Mojkovac, Petnjica).²

Additional quality in the implementation of the Agency's competencies in the election campaign was provided by strategic planning of capacities and activities carried out by the APC, development of methodologies for the Agency, continuous joint consideration and acceptance of proposals by NGOs and experts, and regular meetings with the representatives of civil society, media and political entities. In this way, **the Agency continues to contribute to strengthening the integrity and transparency of the electoral process** as a whole.

According to all bases of the Agency's work in this area, during 2021, the control of **6,512 submitted reports** was carried out by the subjects to the LFPEEC on regular work and during election campaigns.

When it comes to the regular work of subjects to LFPEEC, a total of 143 reports were submitted and controlled, of which **101 reports / notifications** of political entities.³

Categories of submitted reports / notifications		Number of submitted reports	Number of registered subjects to the law	Percentage of compliance
Consolidated Annual Report for 2020	Delivered on time	47 ⁴	65	72,3%
	Delivered subsequently	3		
Decisions on the amount of membership fee for 2021	Delivered on time	46 ⁵	65	70,8%
	Delivered subsequently	3		
Decision on the amount of membership fee for 2022		6	-	-

By comparing the data, the Agency determined that the obligation to submit the balance sheet and consolidated annual financial reports to the APC, the State Audit Institution and the Revenue and Customs Administration, within the legal deadline, was not fulfilled by **23 political entities**, and in all cases where this was possible due to legal restrictions, the Agency initiated misdemeanor proceedings. The Agency also **imposed measures to suspend the transfer of budget funds to finance regular work or a measure of losing these funds for 9 political entities** that have not submitted reports to the Agency, but have won mandates at the state or local level.

² The Agency has published detailed reports on the monitoring of election campaigns for the local elections held in 2021.

³ The Agency, in accordance with its legal powers, supervises the implementation of the obligation of the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare and the bodies of 25 local administrations responsible for finance to make a Decision on the amount of budget funds for financing the regular work of political entities by January 31 at the latest, and publish it on its website within seven days of its adoption. During 2021, a total of 42 Decisions were made.

⁴ This number does not include the report of a political entity that has been deleted from the Register of Political Parties, and there is no obligation to submit a report.

⁵ Due to the percentage of compliance with the obligation, this number includes 5 decisions on the amount of membership fees for 2021, which were submitted by political entities at the end of 2020.

After the fulfillment of obligations by political entities, the APC sent a **notice** to the municipalities **on the termination of the measure of suspension of funds for 4 political entities**.

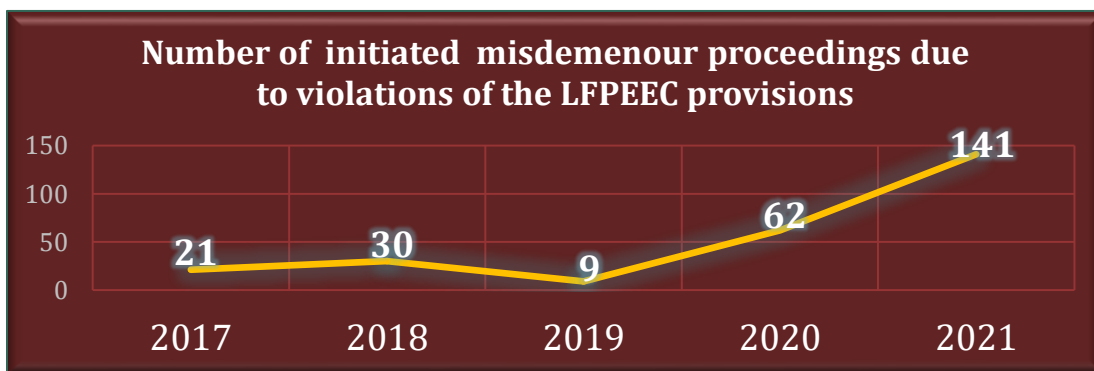
In the context of **the local elections** held in 2021, the Agency controlled a total of **6,369 reports** and other supporting documentation:

- ✓ **219** by **33 political entities** / electoral lists;
- ✓ **6.010** by 202 authorities;
- ✓ **140** by service providers of media advertising.

Proactively, the Agency sent a total of **235 warnings** (158 to the authorities and 77 to the political entities) in order to submit the report on time, as well as in the case of spotted technical irregularities, to which **everyone responded positively**.

354 controls of compliance with prohibitions and restrictions during the election campaign were carried out by subjects to the law in the mentioned election campaigns (20 controls of political entities and 334 controls of authorities). In addition, the control of 14 prescribed prohibitions was carried out i.e., inspection and control of **2,246 persons contributing to political entities** for regular work in 2020 and the election campaign in 2021.

Despite the legal restrictions due to which it could not initiate misdemeanor proceedings in all cases of identified irregularities, the Agency in this area of work, in 2021, initiated a total of **141 misdemeanor proceedings** (128 connected with election campaigns), which is **15.6% more misdemeanors proceedings in relation to the previous four years all together**, which was contributed by the **adoption of LFPEEC in 2020** and its **consistent application** in practice, as well as **the application of developed accompanying methodologies** to control the use of public resources and funding of political entities in the campaign.



During 2021, a total of **6 complaints** which were submitted during the election campaign due to suspicions of violating the Law, were submitted and processed (one complaint was related to the 2020 election campaign). The Agency forwarded one case to the competent prosecutor's office (the prosecutor's office informed the APC that there were no grounds for criminal prosecution) and one to the competent authority for further proceeding.

Regarding lawsuits against the APC acts in the proceedings on complaints due to suspicions of violations of the LFPEEC during the election campaign for the parliamentary elections held in 2020, the **Administrative Court** in 2021 issued **9 decisions on lawsuits and rejected them all**. The **Supreme Court** also issued a **judgment rejecting as unfounded the requests for review of the judgment of the Administrative Court**, which referred to the APC's handling of complaints during the election campaign.⁶

The practice of regularly presenting the results of the work, publishing all relevant data and reports, thus **making all data on the use of public resources and campaign financing available**, continued. In this context, it is particularly encouraging that APC's efforts have been recognized by the public, as evidenced by the findings of the 2021 opinion poll, which found that as many as **77.4% of respondents (4% more than in 2020) believe that the APC contributed to strengthening the transparency** of the use of public resources and the financing of political entities during election campaigns.

Through the application of the Law in the election campaigns in 2020 and 2021, **several shortcomings and ambiguities in the legislative framework were noted**, so the Agency defined a number of recommendations for its future improvement, and to that end, it continued cooperation and **support to relevant parliamentary working groups**. This main challenge has been registered by both international and domestic partners, so it is **necessary to further improve the legislative framework** in order to prescribe clear obligations, prohibitions and restrictions, and create conditions for consistent application of the Law in practice.

ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRITY PLANS

Since the beginning of 2021, a total of **15 authorities have adopted their first integrity plan**, after the APC previously informed them in a letter about that legal obligation. These are newly formed authorities or bodies that due to lack of human resources were not previously able to fulfill the obligations of appointing an integrity manager and forming a working group to develop an integrity plan.

Since the beginning of work, **a total of 707 authorities (97.8%) have fulfilled the obligation to adopt and submit an integrity plan** to the Agency.

The authorities were obliged to submit a report on the implementation of the integrity plan in 2020 to the Agency by April 15, 2021, in electronic and printed form.

Since the beginning of the year, 692 reports on the implementation of the integrity plan in 2020 have been submitted to the Agency.

⁶ During 2020, a total of 144 lawsuits were filed with the Administrative Court in cases of complaints during the election campaign (*there were several lawsuits in one case*). The Administrative Court, as of 31.12.2021. issued a total of 43 decisions on lawsuits (including 9 from 2021), and dismissed the lawsuits in all of them. The Supreme Court also issued a total of 7 judgments (including 1 from 2021) rejecting as unfounded the requests for review of the judgments of the Administrative Court, which referred to the APC's handling of complaints.

The Agency regularly updates the list of persons responsible for the development and implementation of the integrity plan (integrity manager). According to the records of the Agency, **during 2021, 17 authorities appointed their integrity manager for the first time**. Since the beginning of the year, **52 authorities have informed the Agency that a new integrity manager has been appointed**.

The total number of authorities that have appointed an integrity manager as of January 1, 2016 is 710 (98.2% of the total number of authorities).

In the first quarter of 2022, the Agency prepared a **Report on the adoption and implementation of integrity plans in 2021**, which contains a **detailed analysis** of integrity plans and reports on their implementation, as well as **recommendations for improving integrity plans, given within ten systems** in which the authorities are classified.

Bearing in mind that the integrity plan is subject to subjective assessment of the authorities, it is necessary to externally assess the objectivity, quality and application of measures. To this end, in 2021, the Agency developed a **Methodology for assessing the application of anti-corruption measures**, in cooperation with UNDP. The methodology has **the potential to become a very useful tool for assessing the effects of anti-corruption measures**.

The scope of the Agency's activities in the field of integrity plans was confirmed by the OECD Report on Competitiveness in South East Europe, which, **thanks to the Agency's efforts**, stated that **Montenegro has the most developed system of support and monitoring of these plans, with a score of 4.5 out of a maximum of 5, by far the best in the region**.



Due to the violation of the provisions of the LPC related to the obligation to submit a report on the implementation of the integrity plan by April 15 of the current year for the previous year, the Agency submitted **13 requests to initiate misdemeanor proceedings** to the competent misdemeanor courts.

CONTROL OF LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

Implementing the Law on Lobbying remains a challenge. **Five natural persons and one legal person were entered in the register of lobbyists** (after one person did not submit a request for extension of the approval for performing lobbying activities).

The change of members of the Commission for taking the exam for performing lobbying activities was initiated, after the expiration of the term of office of the previous one.

In September 2021, the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights formed a **Working Group to draft the Law on Lobbying**, in order to improve the institute of lobbying in Montenegro. In order to provide further support in the field of lobbying, the Agency and the proposer of the law **have expert assistance in finalizing the solution for changes in the**

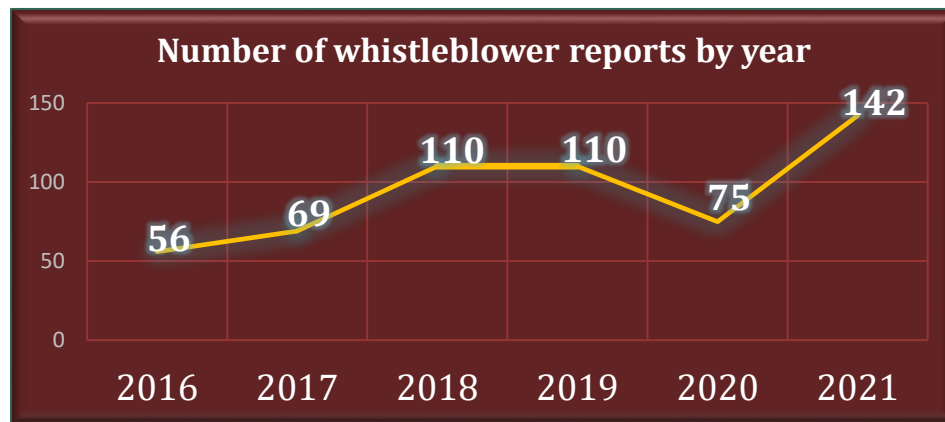
normative framework in this area, within Phase II of the Council of Europe Project for Combating Economic Crime in Montenegro.

The working group was also acquainted with the Agency's Opinion on the Law on Lobbying, from December 2019, as well as the findings from the Peer Review Mission, which was held on the topic of the functioning of the APC in April 2021.

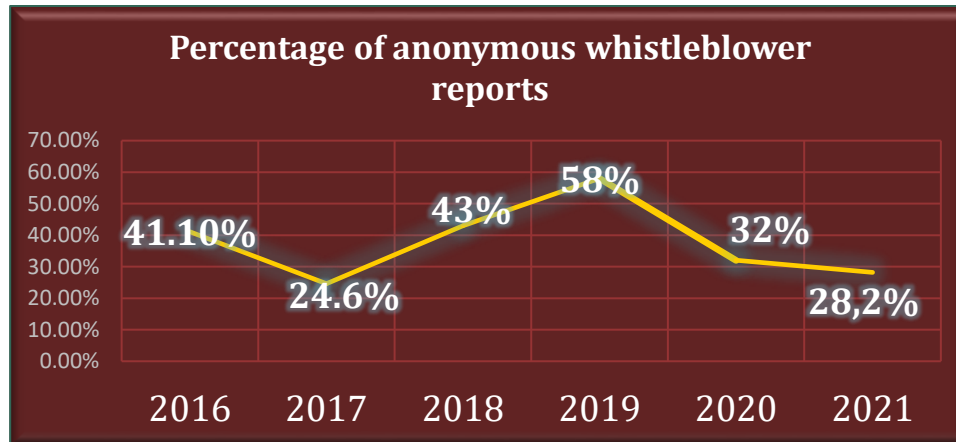
The reason for the adoption of the new law is the **harmonization with the best international experiences and practices, in order to prescribe the best normative solutions**. After the adoption of the Law on Lobbying and all bylaws, **it is necessary to start an intensive information campaign towards the general and professional public**, especially when it comes to the most important amendments to the Law.

ACTING ON WHISTLEBLOWERS REPORTS AND WHISTLEBLOWERS PROTECTION

In 2021, **142 reports of whistleblowers were submitted to the Agency, 89.3% more than in the previous year, and the most since the beginning of the APC** on an annual basis.



It is especially significant that, out of that number of whistleblowers reports, **only 28.2% were submitted anonymously, which is less compared to the previous three years of the APC's work**. Considering that the **percentage of anonymous reports decreased at the end of 2020**, this may indicate an **increase in trust in the work of the institution**, especially if we take into account the findings of public opinion polls, according to which trust in the work of the APC is highest since the beginning (78.5%), and the Agency is still in first place among the institutions to which citizens would report corruption.



In 2021, there were a total of **196 whistleblowers reports** in the work before the Agency (including 54 reports from the previous period).

39 procedures on whistleblowers reports have been completed, of which **15 have been identified as threatening the public interest**. In 2021, this **significantly exceeded the number of procedures according to reports in which the existence of endangering the public interest was determined in relation to the annual level of all previous years of work of the APC**. The reason for this can be found in the fact that the **intensive campaign of the Agency significantly increased the awareness of whistleblowers** about this important anti-corruption mechanism, and that, consequently, **reports are more meaningful and of much better quality compared to the previous period**.

In relation to these procedures, the Agency issued a total of **21 recommendations** to legal entities to improve transparency and eliminate corruption risks.

Also, the APC initiated **6 ex officio proceedings**, and continued and closed **3 ex officio proceedings from 2020, in which it determined the existence of endangering the public interest** (four recommendations were given to improve transparency and eliminate corruption risks and all were implemented).

In the reporting period, the Agency submitted **10 proceedings** to the **competent prosecutor's offices** (8 on whistleblowers reports and 2 ex officio, of which 7 from 2021 and 3 from the previous period) and the proceedings are ongoing.

The Agency forwarded **18 whistleblowers reports** to other competent institutions (9 reports from 2021 and 9 from the previous period), of which **3 received feedback that in one case the existence of irregularities was established**, while in two it was not. Also, for 5 reports forwarded to the competent authorities in the previous period, feedback was provided that **in one case the existence of irregularities was found**.

During 2021, **five requests for protection of whistleblowers** were submitted, and **one procedure was conducted on the request for protection from 2020**. In the reporting period, the Agency issued **3 Opinions in which it determined that damage occurred, i.e.**

that there is a possibility of damage to whistleblowers and gave a total of five recommendations to employers on what should be done to eliminate the damage.

In 2021, **2 requests were submitted for initiating misdemeanor proceedings** for failure to submit a report on actions taken, regarding the implementation of the Agency's recommendations in this area.

CORRUPTION PROOFING OF LEGISLATION

With the application of the highest European standards, the Agency has identified legal norms that can lead to systemic corruption, **and issued 10 opinions on regulations in the field of anti-corruption, more than in the previous three years in total.**

In 2021, the Agency adopted:

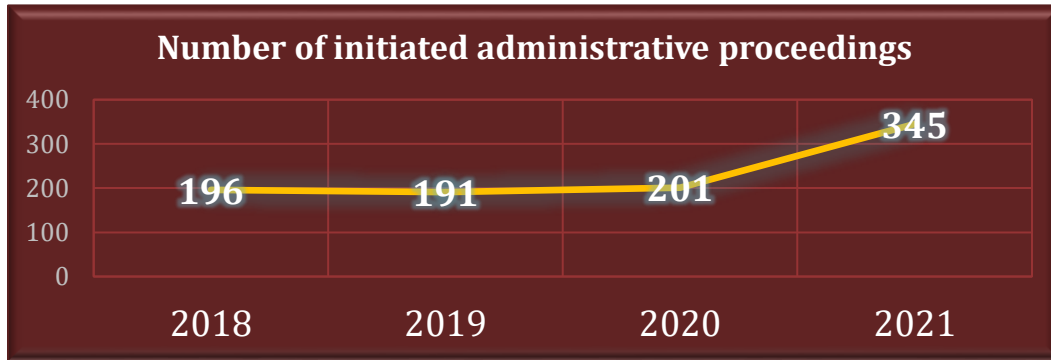
OPINIONS ON DRAFT LAWS, OTHER REGULATIONS AND GENERAL ACTS	OPINIONS ON AMENDMENTS TO LAWS, OTHER REGULATIONS AND GENERAL ACTS	INITIATIVES
Opinion on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on the State Prosecutor Office	Opinion on the Law on Value Added Tax	Initiative of the Parliament of Montenegro to amend the Law on Misdemeanors, by urgent procedure
Opinion on the Draft Law on the Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime and Corruption	Opinion on the Labor Law	
Opinion on the Decision on the National Council for the Fight against High-Level Corruption	Opinion on the Law on the State Prosecutor Office	Initiative of the Government of Montenegro for organizing a public debate in relation to the Draft Law on Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in 2021
Opinion on the Decision on the manner and criteria for addressing the housing needs of officials	Opinion on the Law on Amendments to the General Law on Education and Upbringing	
Opinion on the Draft Law on Higher Education	Opinion on the Law on National Public Broadcasting Radio-Television of Montenegro	

Intensive work has been done on improving the **Methodology Regulatory Impact Analysis** in order to determine risk areas for corruption - at the initiative of the Agency, the Methodology on the basis of which the APC plans its activities and conducts risk analysis of corruption in regulations is the subject of analysis by an international expert engaged in support of UNDP to APC. The task of the expert is to make a comparative analysis of the need to **introduce risk assessment of corruption as a mandatory part of the legislative process**.

Through participation in working groups, the APC made a full contribution to the draft law on amendments to the law on lobbying, international restrictive measures, as well as on confiscation of proceeds of crime and property of illegal origin.

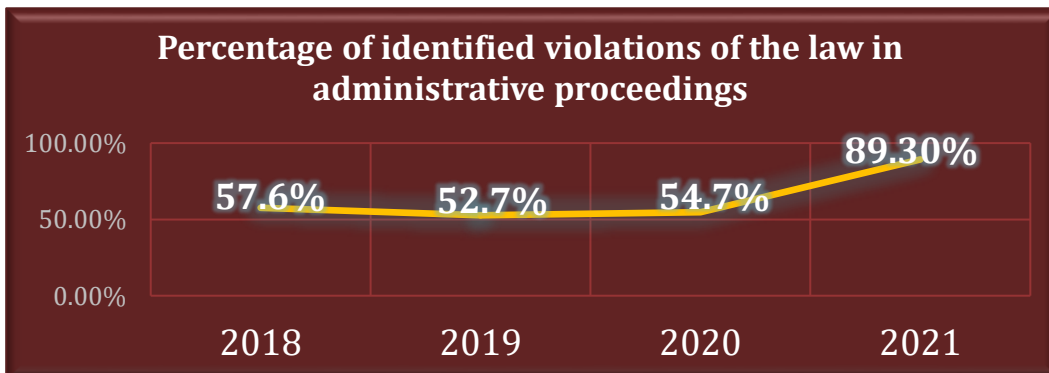
MANAGEMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES UNDER THE COMPETENCE OF THE APC

In 2021, the Agency significantly intensified its work in the field of conducting administrative proceedings, thus **initiating 345 administrative proceedings against public officials** (50 in the field of preventing conflicts of interest and respecting restrictions in performing public functions and 295 in the field of revenue and property verification). This is **71.6% more than in the previous year**, 80.6% more than in 2019, and 76% more than in 2018.



A total of 205 proceedings (including cases from the previous period) **were completed and violations of the Law were found in 89.3% of cases (183)**.

Additionally, **the percentage of identified violations of the law is significantly higher in 2021 compared to the annual level of the previous three years of APC**.



In 2021, the Administrative Court issued 8 verdicts (7 referring to cases from 2019 and one to a case from 2018), which annulled 6 decisions of the APC and returned them for retrial, and confirmed 2 decisions and rejected the lawsuits as unfounded. Also, in one case, the Supreme Court rejected a request to examine a court decision as unfounded.

Confirmation of the quality of the Agency's decisions is that no decisions from 2020 and 2021 have been revoked.

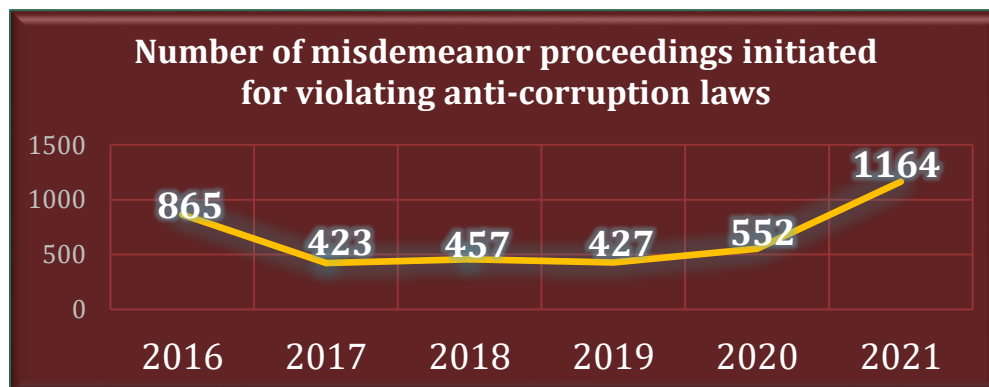
INITIATION OF MISDEMEANOR PROCEEDINGS AND ISSUE OF MISDEMEANOR ORDERS

During 2021, the Agency initiated a total of **1,164 misdemeanor proceedings** for violating anti-corruption laws within its competence:

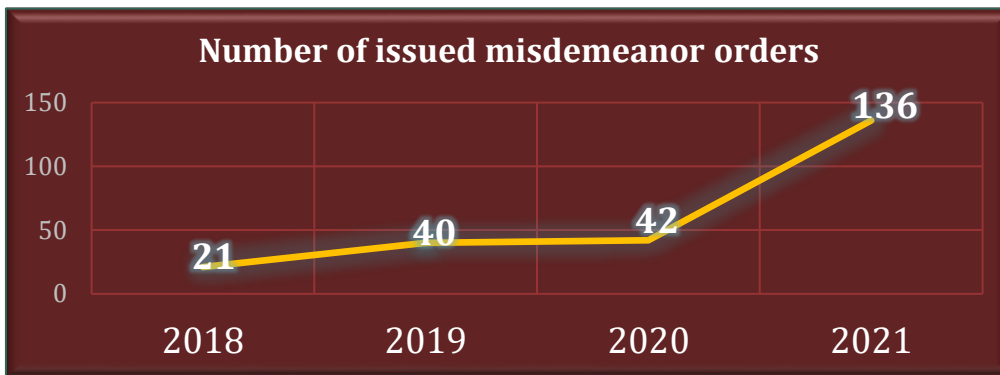
- ✓ **1.023** for violating the LPC (924 requests to initiate misdemeanor proceedings; 99 misdemeanor orders);
- ✓ **141** for violating the LFPEEC (104 requests for initiating misdemeanor proceedings; 37 misdemeanor orders).

During the reporting period, a **total of 870 proceedings were completed** (including proceedings on requests from previous years and misdemeanor orders executed), of which **89.4% were sanctioned**. The total amount of fines, including executed orders, is **€ 149,242**, which is 66.4% more than the amount of fines imposed during 2020.

Due to violations of anti-corruption laws within its competence, in 2021 the Agency initiated **twice as many misdemeanor proceedings compared to 2020, and significantly more than in previous years of APC**. This was primarily **generated by a number of initiated misdemeanor proceedings in the field of verification of income and assets**, due to more intensive work and proactive approach of APC.



The Agency **continued with the consistent implementation of the European Commission's recommendation** on the direct imposition of misdemeanor penalties for violating anti-corruption laws, so in **2021 it issued 136 misdemeanor orders**, which is **32% more than the number of orders issued in the previous three years**.



The Agency is continuously implementing the **recommendation of the experts of the European Commission regarding the confiscation of property gains** obtained by committing misdemeanors. In this regard, in the requests for initiating misdemeanor proceedings submitted to the competent courts for misdemeanors, in addition to requiring the conviction and punishment of the defendant for the committed misdemeanor, the Agency also proposes confiscation of property gains obtained by committing misdemeanors, which is most often the practice in proceedings for violating legal restrictions in the public service performance.

During 2021, **in one case, the Agency requested the competent courts for misdemeanors to confiscate the proceeds of the misdemeanor, in the area of legal restrictions in the public service performance.**

Based on the proposal for **confiscation of property gain**, in addition to fines, the courts in two cases (from 2021 and 2019) **confiscated property gain acquired by committing a misdemeanor in the amount of 8,655€.**

In November 2021, the Agency established a **Working Group to collect data on misdemeanors and sanctions** imposed for violating the provisions of the LPC in the period from January 1, 2016 to June 30, 2021, which aimed to analyze the results of the Agency's work in the field of misdemeanors, as well as the conduct of the misdemeanor courts, in order to determine whether the imposed sanctions have a deterrent effect. The working group prepared a special report (which is an integral part of the Report on the work of the APC in 2021) which states that, although the courts for misdemeanors in almost all cases for violations of LPC reduced fines or reprimands, the fact that in 86.4% of cases imposed a sentence, as well as the fact that over 50% of public officials accepted guilt and paid misdemeanor orders, speaks of the high degree of success of the Agency in this area. However, the low percentage of returnees in violation of the Law, as well as the high percentage of penalties, did not reduce the number of violations of the law by public officials, on various grounds.

In order to reduce violations of the law by public officials, create a deterrent and preventive effect of sanctions, and enable effective implementation of the provisions of the law, the Working Group made a number of recommendations. Among other things, the need

to organize **meetings of the APC representatives with presidents of misdemeanor courts** was pointed out, in order to point out the effects of imposing sentences below the legal minimum and uneven sentencing policy, as well as the need to impose higher fines for perpetrators of misdemeanors who have previously been convicted in the same case, and the imposition of a maximum sentence for persons who do so frequently. Also, it is necessary to continue efforts to raise awareness of public officials and the general public about the importance of respecting the obligations arising from anti-corruption laws, and informing public officials about the obligations and deadlines for acting on legal obligations.

ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGNS, PUBLIC RELATIONS, RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

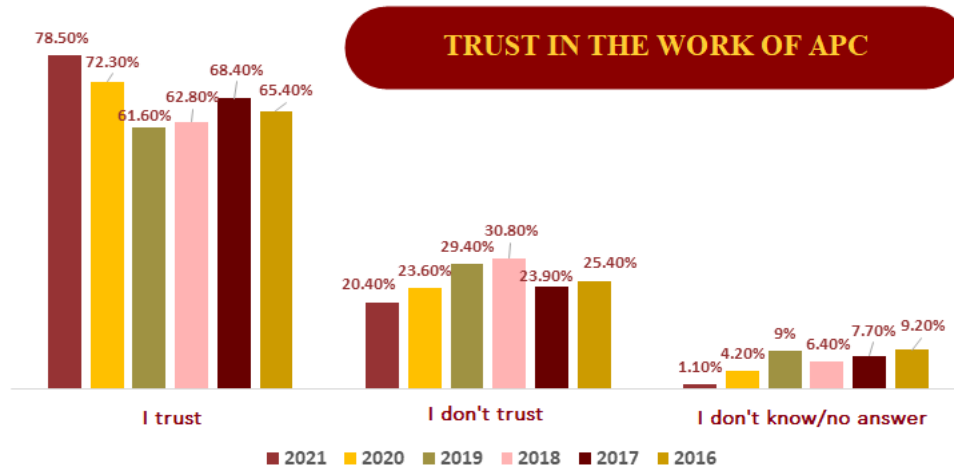
Through the implementation of campaigns, educational activities and cooperation with the media, the Agency contributes to strengthening the knowledge of the general public and those obliged to anti-corruption laws on the competencies and results of this institution, as well as the trust of citizens in its work.

During 2021, the implementation of an intensive information and anti-corruption campaign continued, **video clips** "For a society without corruption" and "Report corruption, because the society you want starts with you" were broadcast, and **city-light posters** were placed in 12 Montenegrin municipalities.

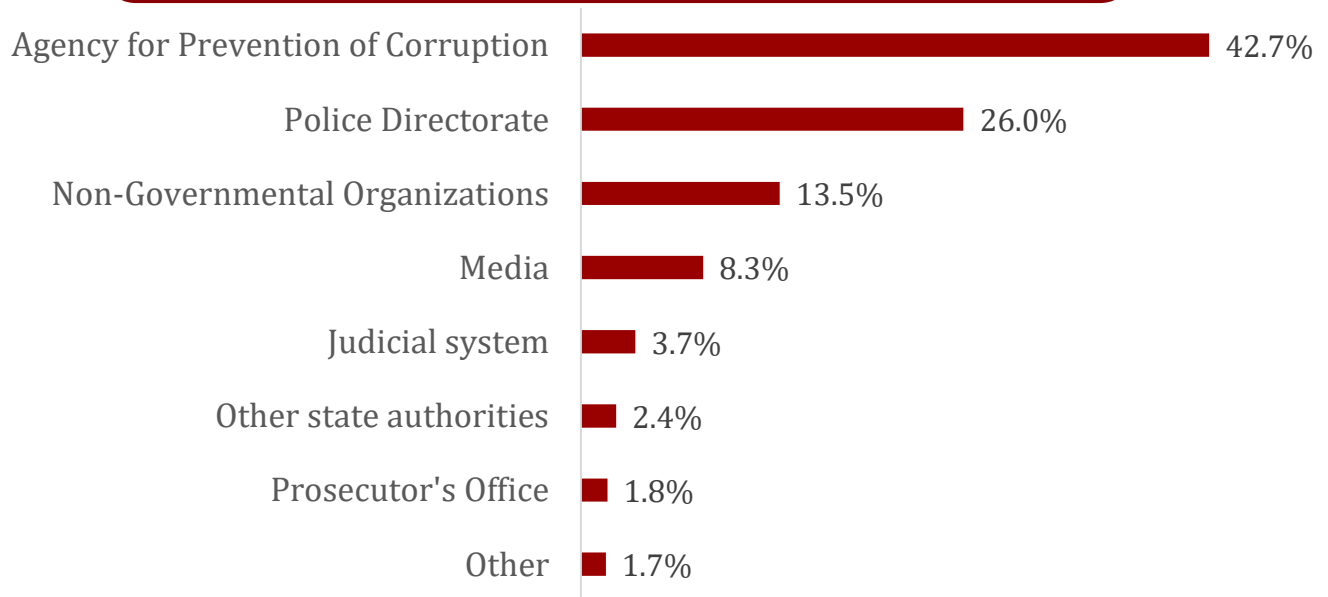
In 2021, the Agency conducted trainings for various target groups, with a special emphasis on educating newly appointed public officials on their obligations arising from the law within the competence of this institution. **17 trainings** for anti-corruption lawmakers were organized, which were attended by a total of **197 participants**. The trainings were organized both independently and in cooperation with other competent institutions, as well as through international projects. In cooperation with the competent institutions and the NGO sector, as well as international partners, **26 employees of the Agency** attended **20 domestic and international seminars and workshops** in 2021.

According to the results of the annual public opinion poll "Public attitudes towards corruption and familiarity with the work of APC", the sixth of its kind, conducted by *Defacto Consultancy* this year, cumulatively, **78.5% of respondents stated they have more or less confidence in the work of the APC**, which is the highest since the beginning of the Agency's work.

In all previous research, the agency is **in the first place among the institutions to which citizens would report corruption**.



TO WHOM WOULD YOU REPORT CORRUPTION?



Transparency has been strengthened through greater openness to the media, as evidenced by the fact that the **media image of the APC in 2021 was markedly positive**, with 832 positively intoned publications, **more than the sum in the previous three years and twice the number of negatively intoned publications**. This suggests that the challenge of the legacy of negative perceptions of the APC in the media has been addressed. The fact that transparency in the work of the Agency is at a significantly higher level is evidenced by the results of public opinion polls, according to which a total of **33.4% of respondents, 10% more than last year's survey, believes that the transparency of the Agency's work has increased compared to 2020**.

COOPERATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

Aware that only a synchronized action and systematic approach of all actors responsible in this process can achieve substantial success in the prevention of corruption, the Agency has intensified and deepened **cooperation with the civil sector**.



In that sense, the constructive practice of holding periodic meetings with representatives of non-governmental organizations continued - **ten meetings** were held on the topic of monitoring, supervision and control of the election campaign for local elections in the municipalities of Nikšić, Herceg Novi, Petnjica, Mojkovac and Cetinje.

The agency organized an **Open Day for NGOs** in June.

Representatives of the Agency also took part in numerous seminars, workshops and discussions on anti-corruption topics organized by the NGO sector.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The presented results of the work are also a consequence of the application of all methodologies, projects and expertise that the Agency continuously receives from international partners.

With the support of UNDP, an international anti-corruption expert was hired who, in cooperation with representatives of the APC, drafted a **Strategic and Action Plan for the period 2022-2025**, which defines the priorities in the work of the Agency in the following period.

An expert mission of the European Commission was held in order to deeply analyze the work in all competencies of the Agency and comprehensively assess the progress of Montenegro in the field of corruption prevention. Most of the experts' recommendations referred to the need to improve the legal texts of the LFPEEC and LPC, as well as to strengthen human resources in terms of increasing the number of employees for certain areas of the Agency's work.

During 2021, **the GRECO evaluation team visited Montenegro**, as part of the 5th round of evaluation.

On the occasion of the **International Anti-Corruption Day**, a **working breakfast** was organized on **December 8** with **international partners and media representatives**, with the aim of making a cross-section of the most important activities in the field of corruption prevention in 2021, and that APC, as a key institution in this field and as the bearer of the implementation of important interim measures in the negotiating Chapter 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, present its contribution to the effective and efficient fight against corruption and affirmation of the environmental rule of law.



The **EC Working Document on the situation in Chapters 23 and 24** for Montenegro recognizes progress in the work of the Agency. The report states that **"after the changes in the Agency's Council and its leadership in 2020, the Agency has started a proactive approach to the challenges of its independence, integrity, impartiality, transparency, non-selective approach and quality of its decisions, improving overall performance"**, which further encourages the APC to continue with ongoing reforms.