

Emergencies and public procurement corruption risks:

Evidence from TED and national public procurement data

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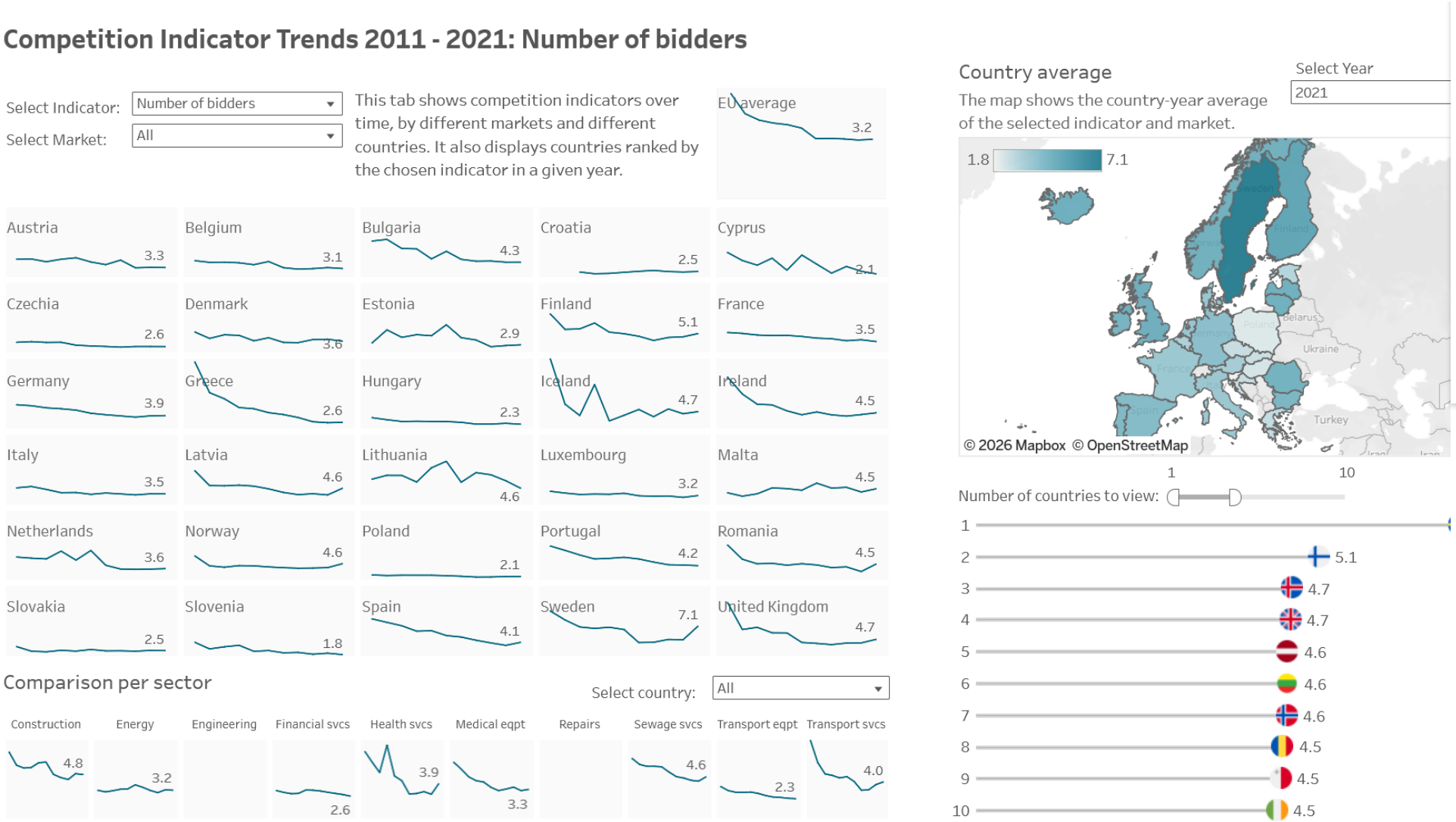
TED Together conference of the Publications Office of the European Union. *25 November 2026*

Main points

1. Competition is weakening in public procurement across the EU
   - Relatedly, corruption risks are also on the rise
2. Some of the main reasons can be pinned down
   - Recurrent emergencies
3. We have some actionble recommendations based on the evidence available

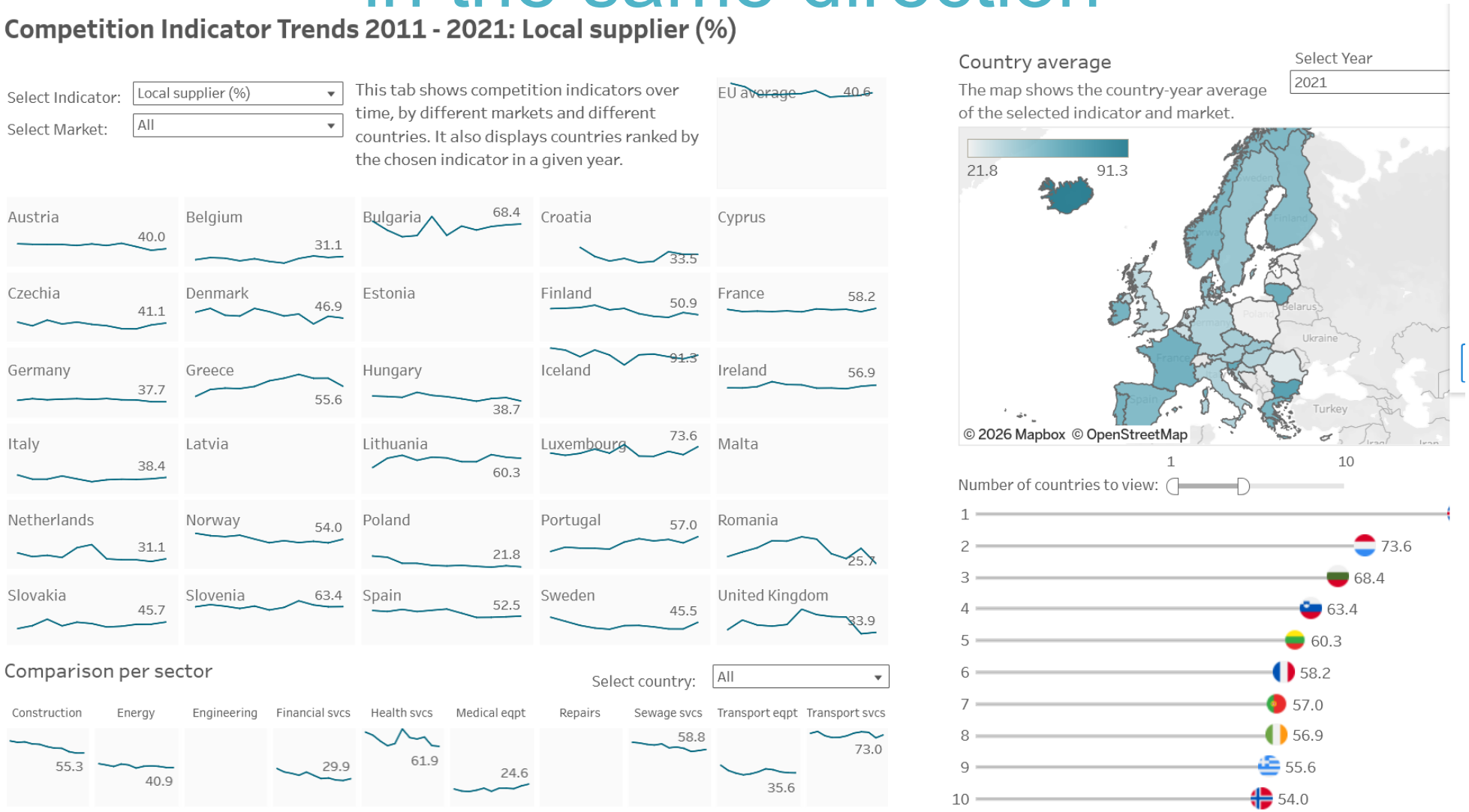
I. The challenge

Competition weakens across the board…



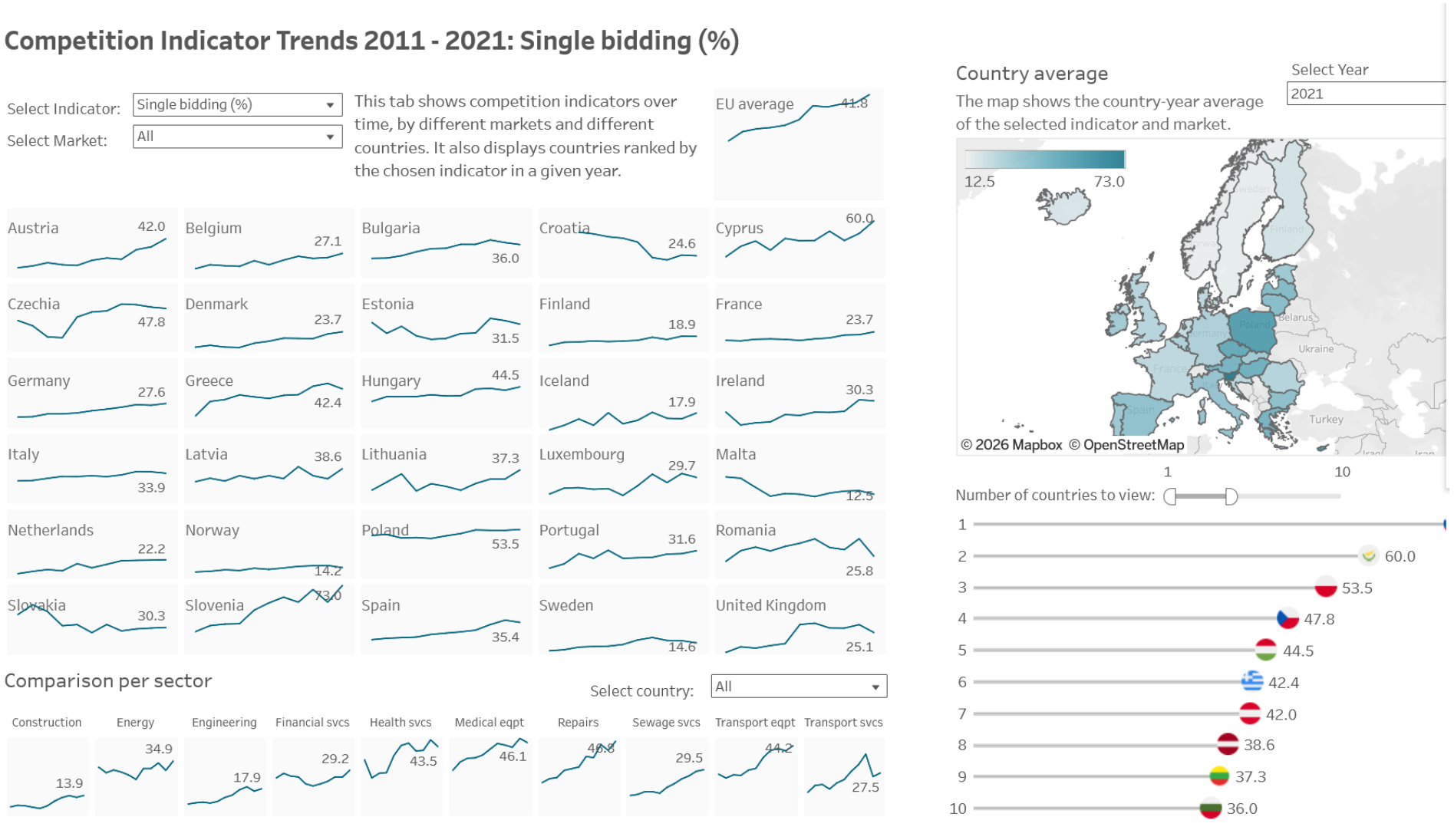
Source: European Court of Auditors (2022): https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/eca.public.procurement/viz/eca_dashboard_17002195654680/Story

…although not all indicators of competition move in the same direction



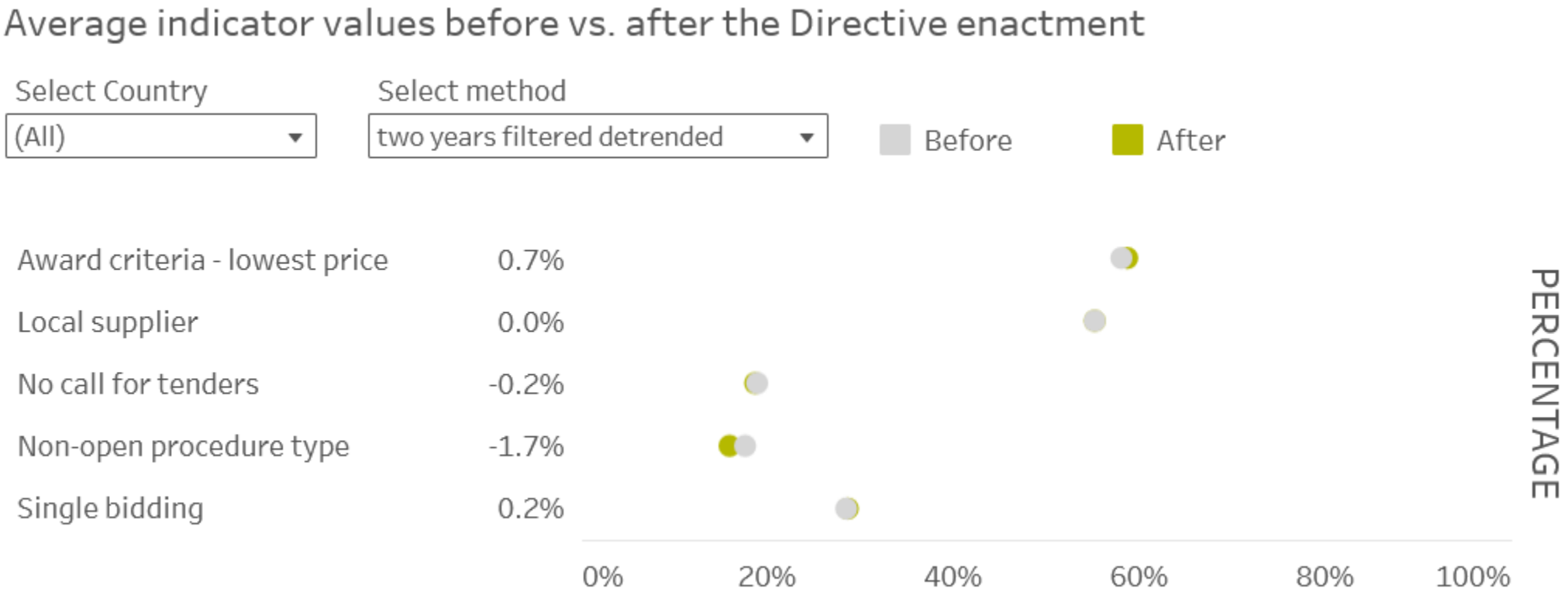
Source: European Court of Auditors (2022): https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/eca.public.procurement/viz/eca_dashboard_17002195654680/Story

As competition weakens corruption risk rise



Source: European Court of Auditors (2022): https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/eca.public.procurement/viz/eca_dashboard_17002195654680/Story

The introduction of the 2014 Directive helped little to turn things around

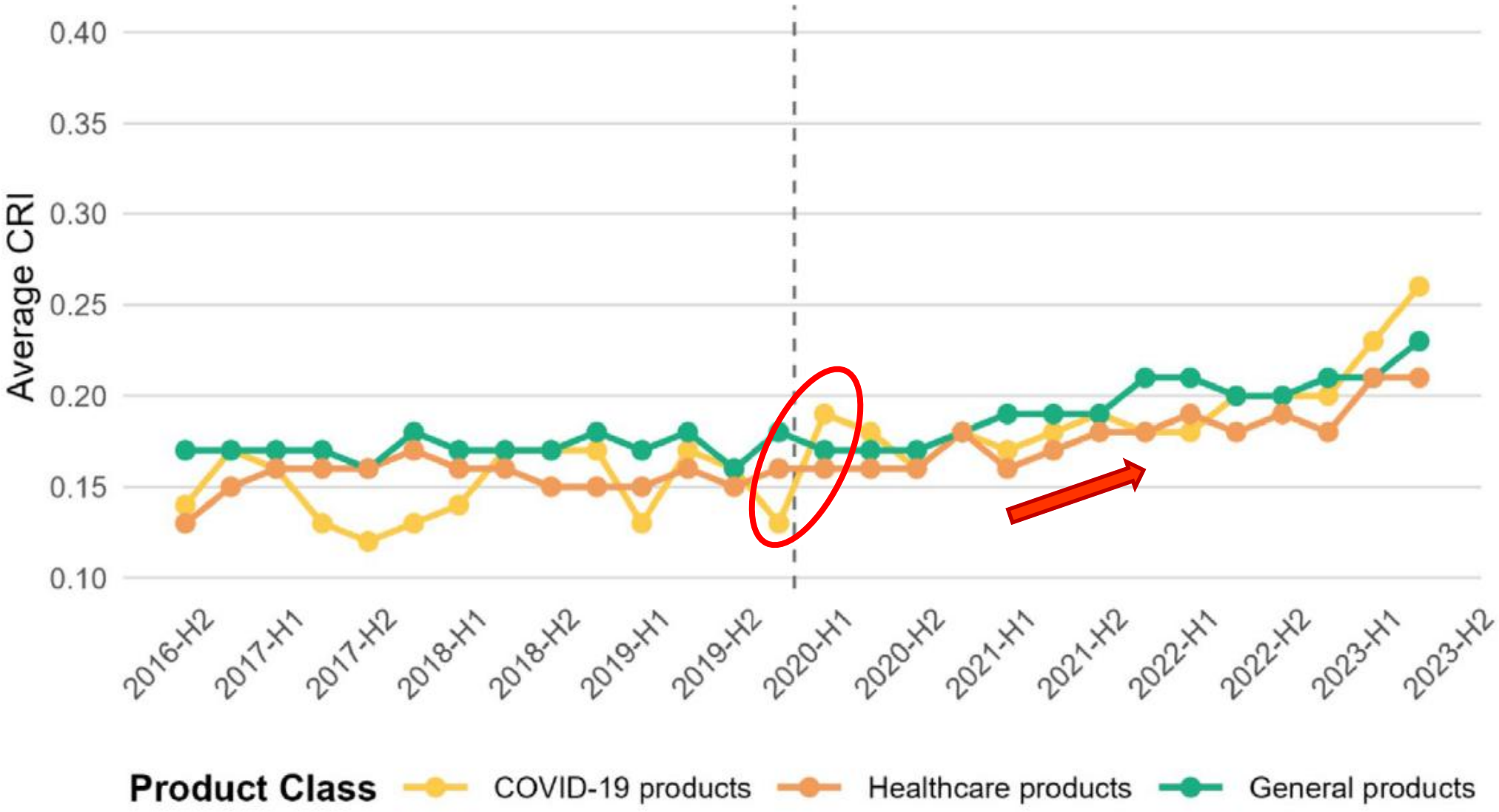


Source: European Court of Auditors (2022): https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/eca.public.procurement/viz/eca_dashboard_17002195654680/Story

II. A key driver of corruption risks: Emergencies

Emergencies and corruption risks across Europe

The COVID emergency resulted in a lasting increase in corruption risks



Public procurement CRI across Europe, 2016–2023, Quarterly averages by product groups (TED Data).

Source: Fazekas, Mihály; Veljanov, Zdravko & Abdou, Aly (2026) Public Procurement's Long COVID: Emergency Responses and Shifting Corruption Risks in Europe. Regulation and Governance. 21(1).

Similar patterns in Italy following natural disasters



FIGURE 1 | Map of Italy depicting the treated and untreated areas.

Source: Fazekas, Mihály; Nishchal, Shrey & Soreide, Tina (2025) The impact of emergencies on corruption risks: Italian natural disasters and public procurement. Regulation & Governance. 19(4).

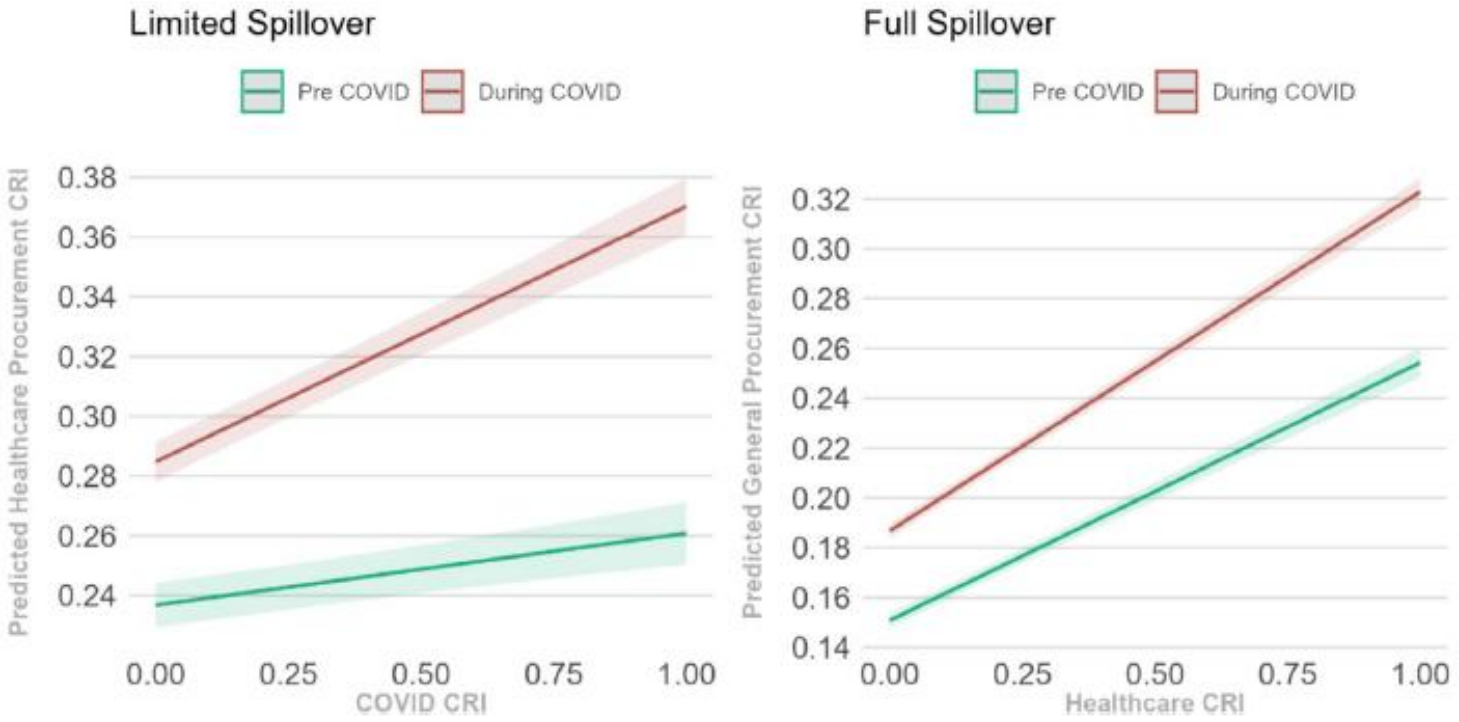
Just like for COVID, effects are lasting and keep rising years after the disaster

TABLE 7 | Binary logistic regression results; the table reports the average marginal effects from the binary logistic regression of treatment dummy on each of the dependent variables (std. errors are in the brackets).

	Binary logistic regression			
	Non-open procedure	No tender call	Too-short advertisement period	Single bidding
Treatment (full period)	0.0667**	0.0599***	0.0932***	0.071***
	(0.0071)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.0142)
Control variables				
Contract value (log)	Y	Y	Y	Y
CPV (medical or not)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Contract year	Y	Y	Y	Y
Contract month	Y	Y	Y	Y
Buyer type (regional or not)	Y	Y	Y	Y
N (total)	9322	9322	9321	3648
N (after disaster)	5624	5623	6624	1138
Cox and Snell's R^2	0.17	0.22	0.42	0.17

Note: *$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

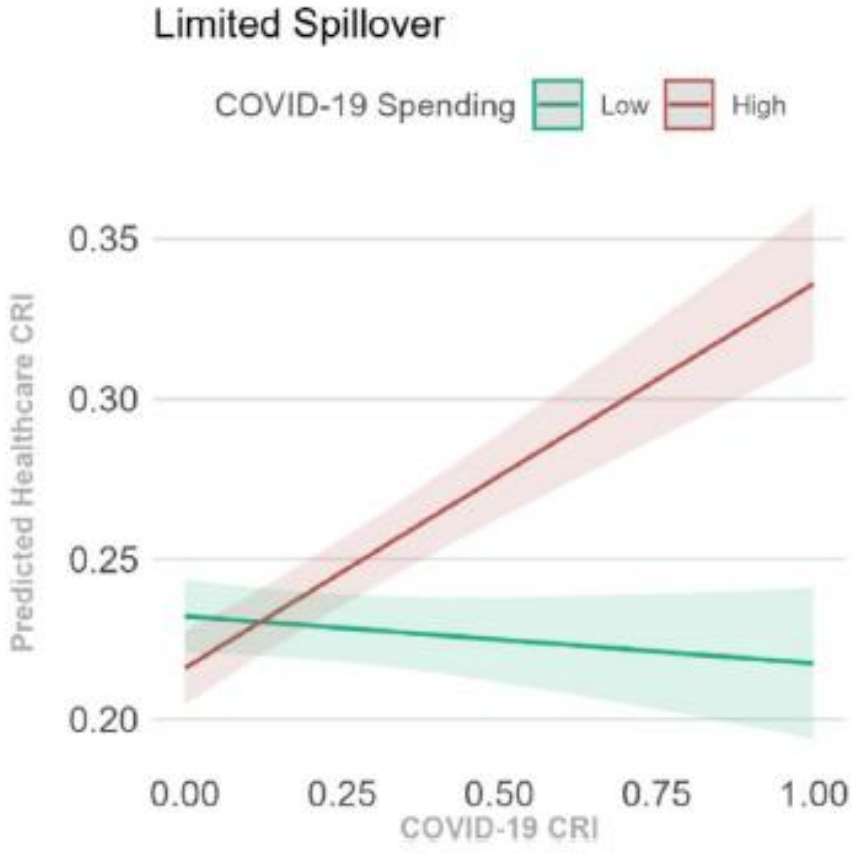
Behavioral drivers



Buyer-level predicted adjacent market CRI by affected market CRI across the COVID-19 pandemic, 2016–2023.

Key channel:

- Buyer-level learning and spillovers,
- driven by the size of the initial shock



Source: Fazekas, Mihály; Veljanov, Zdravko & Abdou, Aly (2026) Public Procurement's Long COVID: Emergency Responses and Shifting Corruption Risks in Europe. Regulation and Governance. 21(1).

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Emergencies and corruption risks: Key take-aways

- Common thread:
  - The overall legislative framework and institutional set-up remained the same
- What changed is
  - buyer and market behavior, the accepted norms of procurement behavior

III. Range of tested solutions

Tested interventions in public procurement

INTERVENTION TYPE	COUNTRIES	MARKETS	LARGEST EFFECT SIZE (savings)	EVIDENCE BASE
TARGETING SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT PHASES				
e-notification, e-access, e-attestations & e-submission	EU, Italy, India, Indonesia, Denmark, Netherlands, Portugal, LMICs	Infrastructure, general procurement	6.75%	high-quality systematic evidence
framework agreements	Italy, UK, Brazil, Colombia	general procurement, homogenous goods	34-78%	limited systematic evidence
e-auction & e-evaluation	Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Bangladesh	public works, IT, sugar, general procurement	7.4-8%	limited systematic evidence
preferential treatment of bidder and product classes	Italy, Japan, USA	public works, general procurement	0.10-0.23%	high-quality systematic evidence
award mechanism and auction design	Brazil, EU, Italy	general procurement, construction, social spending	7-8%	high-quality systematic evidence
e-invoicing, e-payment & e-contract monitoring	-	-	-	no systematic evidence
civil society supervision of contract execution	Indonesia, Peru, Mexico, USA	small-scale infrastructure projects	51%	limited systematic evidence
TARGETING THE WHOLE PROCUREMENT PROCESS				
centralization of procurement functions and collaborative procurement	Australia, EU, Italy, UK	pharmaceuticals, general procurement	60%	high-quality systematic evidence
transparency and watchdog portals	Georgia, Slovak Republic, EU, LMICs	general procurement	11% (increase in open bidding)	limited systematic evidence
rule-bound or discretionary decision making	China, France, Germany, Italy, Nigeria, USA, Hungary	general procurement	25%	high-quality systematic evidence
professionalization and capacity development	Guatemala, LMICs	general procurement	0.6-1.3%	limited systematic evidence
audits and supervisions	Argentine, EU, Indonesia, Chile	homogenous hospital inputs	11%	limited systematic evidence
performance pay and incentives	Pakistan	general procurement	3%	limited systematic evidence
Conflict of interest rules	Lithuania, Colombia, Romania, Hungary, US, Brazil, Czech Republic	general procurement	24%	limited systematic evidence

Source: Adam, Isabelle; Blum, Jürgen Rene; & Fazekas, Mihály. (2025) Improving Public Procurement Outcomes: Review of Tools and the State of the Evidence Base. GTI-WP/2025:01, Budapest: Government Transparency Institute. [under peer review]

Valuing public sector managers

- The impact of mayoral salaries on corruption risks across Europe
- As salaries increase corruption risks drop
- A 15% salary increase lowers corruption risk sby about a third
- Cost of higher salaries would result in net budgetary savings

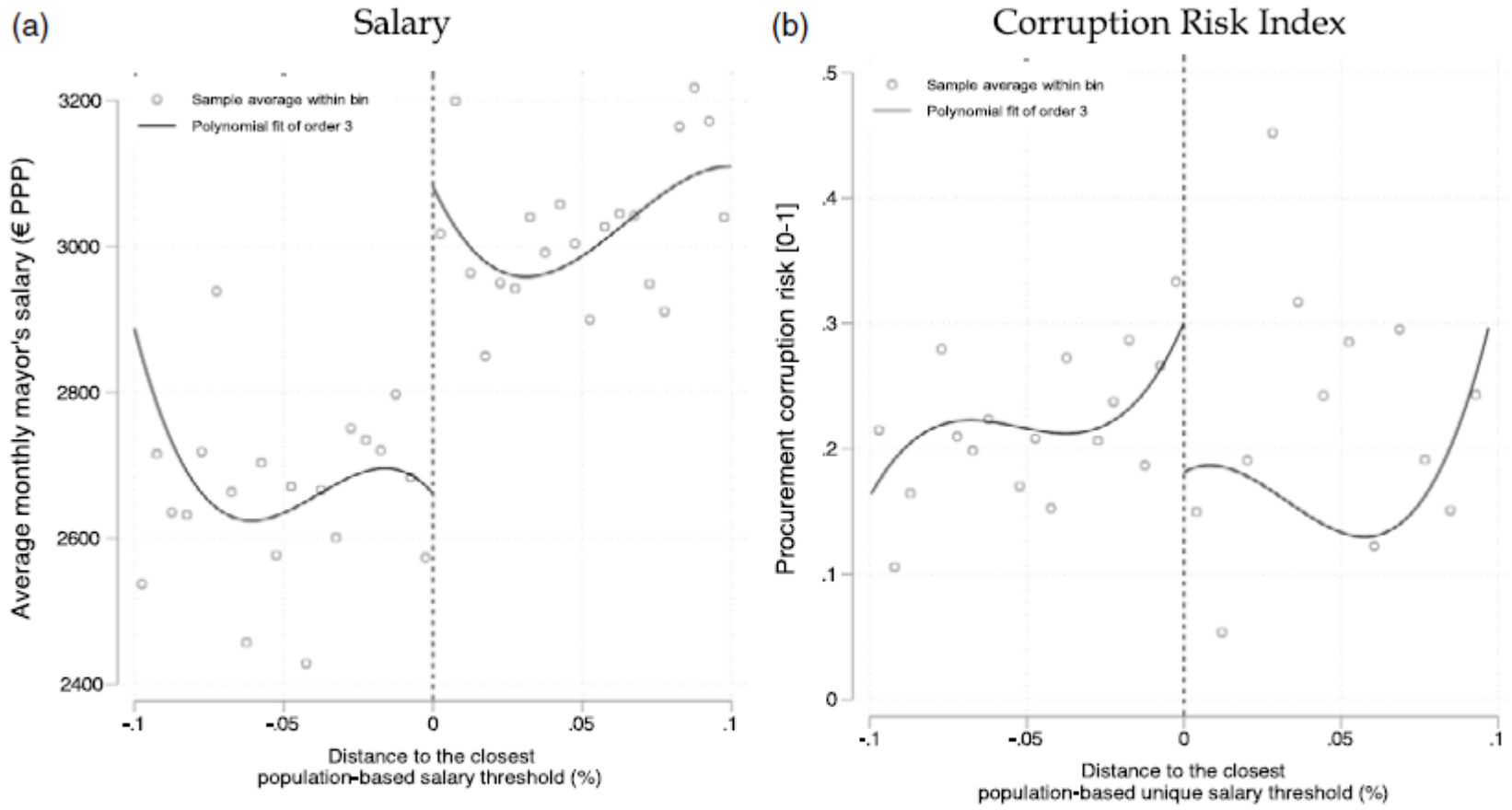


Figure 1. RD plots of change in average mayoral salary and corruption risk index at the cut-off. *Notes*: panel (a) includes all population-based salary thresholds; panel (b) includes only the unique thresholds described in the text. Dots are averages of the *y* variable within small ranges (or 'bins') of the *x* (or 'running') variable, which represents the per cent distance of a town to the closest salary threshold (indicated by the vertical dashed line); lines on each side of the discontinuity are cubic best-fit curves fit to the data (separately on the left and right of the discontinuity). Bins of the running variable are determined with the data-driven procedure by Calonico et al. (2015).

Source: Klasnja, Marko; Fazekas, Mihály & Al-Shaibani, Ahmed (2026) Revisiting the Link between Politicians' Salaries and Corruption. British Journal of Political Science. Av. online.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

- **Data** is key to monitoring market dynamics and administrative behavior
- The main challenges in Europe lie in **policy implementation**, not laws on paper
- Emergencies and disasters leave **lasting damage** to anti-corruption institutions
- More meritocratic, independent and well-paid **bureaucrats** are the cornerstone of a high-integrity procurement market

Thank you very much for your attention!



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Articles cited in the prsentation

Fazekas, Mihály; Veljanov, Zdravko & Abdou, Aly (2026) Public Procurement's Long COVID: Emergency Responses and Shifting Corruption Risks in Europe. Regulation and Governance. 21(1).

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Fazekas, Mihály; Nishchal, Shrey & Soreide, Tina (2025) The impact of emergencies on corruption risks: Italian natural disasters and public procurement. Regulation & Governance. 19(4).

Further resources

http://www.govtransparency.eu/

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mihaly_Fazekas/research