

Press Release

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Group of States against Corruption publishes report on Belgium

Strasbourg, 22.06.2009 - The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) today published its Third Round Evaluation Report on Belgium, following the agreement of the Belgian authorities. It focuses on two distinct themes: [criminalisation of corruption](#) and [transparency of party funding](#).

Numerous aspects of Belgian law on corruption offences meet the requirements of the [Criminal Law Convention on Corruption \(CETS No. 173\)](#) and its [Additional Protocol \(CETS No. 191\)](#). Moreover, Belgian practice reflects the country's genuine capacity to bring various corrupt activities before the courts, especially since the abandonment in 1999 of the need to establish that there was a prior agreement between the two parties or that the proposal of one had been accepted by the other.

The effectiveness of the provisions could be strengthened still further by recalling that receiving an advantage - within the meaning of the Convention - is an offence. Furthermore, thanks to broad jurisdiction, it is easy to prosecute in Belgium cross-border corruption offences, but it would be appropriate to clarify certain aspects. GRECO also invited Belgium to withdraw or not renew its reservations to the Convention, which concern in particular the incrimination of trading in influence and that of bribery in the private sector.

The legislation of 1989 on the financing of political activities, in conjunction with a significant level of public funding of political parties, have seemingly led parties to show financial moderation and the country no longer suffers from the major political and financial scandals of the past. The measures in place reflect to some extent the relevant provisions of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns](#).

GRECO also considers that political parties' various activities and structures should be better accounted for in the financial statements, and that there is room for improving the rules governing donations as well as the control mechanism since the parliamentary control commissions have not been able to establish their authority over time and remain shackled by their political composition. A fairly wide range of sanctions are available to help enforce the rules but in certain cases, questions can be asked about their proportionality and dissuasiveness.

The report addresses a total of 15 recommendations to Belgium. GRECO will assess the implementation of these recommendations in the second half of 2010, through its specific compliance procedure.

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