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Corruption amongst members of parliament, judges and prosecutors: Belgium must step up its action regarding integrity and transparency

Strasbourg, 28.08.2014 - In a [report](#) on Belgium published today, the Council of Europe Anti-Corruption Group ([GRECO](#)) calls for a reinforcement of its preventive measures concerning corruption within parliamentary and judicial institutions.

GRECO has noted the recent establishment of codes of deontology and a Federal Ethics Committee, as well as the introduction of preventive measures for federal parliamentarians which include a system for the declaration of donations, official appointments, other positions held and assets. However, the regulatory system suffers from a lack of effectiveness and sometimes appears to be unnecessarily complex.

In its evaluation report therefore, GRECO recommends to ensure that more coherent and effective regulations are put in place notably concerning gifts and other benefits, and also on how to engage in relations with third parties such as lobbies who would seek to influence the parliamentary process. Moreover, the system of declarations must be revised in order to include clearly the income and an estimate of the value of the assets of members of parliament, which should be made public and easily accessible.

The Belgian justice system can be seen to be independent and decentralised, but the lack of means and understaffing implies considerable recourse to lawyers to serve as *magistrats* (the concept refers to judges and prosecutors), which raises various questions.

Furthermore, there is no general system to assess the functioning of the courts. The High Council of Justice should make good this deficiency and reinforce its auditing role in order to identify reasons for the apparent disparities in the quality of the work done by comparable courts. The managerial function within the courts and the prosecution service should be developed for the same reasons.

Lastly, GRECO notes that the organisation of the system of administrative justice has to date not been finalised, there is not even a list of the various courts concerned and appropriate measures to guarantee the integrity of the staff should be in place, as is the case in other courts.

Following its compliance procedure, the implementation of the 15 recommendations addressed to Belgium will be assessed by GRECO in the first half of 2016.

The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is a Council of Europe body that aims to improve the capacity of its members to fight corruption by monitoring their compliance with anti-corruption standards. It helps states to identify deficiencies in national anti-corruption policies, prompting the necessary legislative, institutional and practical reforms. Currently it comprises 48 European states and the United States of America.

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