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Council of Europe invites France to intensify reforms promoting integrity within parliament and the justice system

Strasbourg, 27.01.2014 – In a [report](#) released today, the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption ([GRECO](#)) welcomes a series of recent reforms in the prevention of corruption in France, but notes that important gaps remain in the rules and regulations applicable to parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors.

GRECO concludes that deputies and senators are not yet bound by adequate rules on conflict of interests, gifts and other benefits, asset declaration and enforcement measures in those areas. It recommends improvements concerning parliamentary assistants and collaborators (due to risks of disguised lobbying and of fictitious jobs), operational expenses allowances (which can be used for unrelated purposes) and the so-called parliamentary reserve, which refers to funds managed by ministries but the use of which is left to the political groups and members of parliament.

The report points out that the justice system has a reputation of integrity when considered globally. Nevertheless it calls for far-reaching reforms of the labour and commercial courts, which are composed of lay judges who are subject to few effective safeguards. It also finds there are risks of the executive interfering in disciplinary proceedings and the career of judges and, even more, of prosecutors.

In 2013 the power of the Minister of Justice to give instructions to prosecutors in individual cases was definitely abolished. However, in order to avoid suspicions of disguised orders, GRECO calls for a better regulation of the ability of the Ministry of Justice to solicit information from prosecutors in real time in sensitive cases. It also calls for stricter limits to be established on national security confidentiality, so it cannot be misused in inquiries regarding sensitive cases or major corruption.

The implementation of the 11 recommendations addressed to France will be assessed by GRECO in the second half of 2015 through its specific compliance procedure.

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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