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Witness protection as an indispensable tool in the fight against organised crime and terrorism in Europe

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2063 (2015)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully considered Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2063 (2015) on “Witness protection as an indispensable tool in the fight against organised crime and terrorism in Europe”, which it has communicated to the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) and the Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER), for information and possible comments.
2. The Committee of Ministers agrees with the Parliamentary Assembly about the importance of witness protection, in particular in relation to serious crimes, such as organised crime and terrorism. It notes that the Council of Europe has been active in the field of witness protection for a number of years and stresses in this respect in particular its Recommendation Rec(2005)9 on the protection of witnesses and collaborators of justice. The Committee is pleased to be able to inform the Assembly that the CDPC is undertaking an assessment of the implementation of the recommendation as part of its general ongoing assessment of legal and other instruments within its field of competence.
3. The Committee acknowledges the need to harmonise, where necessary, the transnational implementation of witness protection programmes. In this respect, it draws the Assembly’s attention to the Council of Europe’s White Paper on Transnational Organised Crime containing recommendations concerning witnesses, State witnesses and collaborators in relation to the fight against transnational organised crime. These recommendations include carrying out studies to identify possible shortcomings in witness protection programmes and how they can be improved, as well as looking into incentives to encourage the co-operation of collaborators of justice. Such studies should also look into the potential risks with incentives to encourage the co-operation of collaborators of justice. The CDPC will continue its work in this field.

1. Adopted at the 1232nd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (1 July 2015).

