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## Promoting integrity in governance to tackle political corruption

**Reply to Recommendation<sup>1</sup>:** Recommendation 2105 (2017)  
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2105 \(2017\)](#) on “Promoting integrity in governance to tackle political corruption”. It has brought it to the attention of the member States and communicated it to the competent bodies<sup>2</sup> of the Council of Europe for information and possible comments.
2. The Committee of Ministers stresses the importance of the Twenty Guiding Principles for the Fight against Corruption, adopted in November 1997, recognising that corruption represents a serious threat to the basic principles and values of the Council of Europe. These principles are more relevant than ever, and the Committee of Ministers is aware of the need to create an environment in which anti-corruption initiatives can ultimately succeed. It is also aware of the key role civil society has to play in ensuring the legitimacy and effectiveness of anti-corruption activities.
3. It wishes to highlight the work carried out by GRECO, as the Council of Europe's anti-corruption monitoring body, and its recommendations on the development of integrity and transparency policies in public life, including in the legislature. The full implementation of these recommendations would help States to go a long way towards strengthening public confidence in political institutions and in democracy generally.
4. Concerning the independence of national bodies engaged in the prevention of and fight against corruption (cf. paragraph. 4.6 of the recommendation), the Committee of Ministers emphasises that GRECO's reports have consistently promoted the independence and autonomy appropriate to those bodies so that they can function free from improper influence and have the means to carry out their tasks.
5. The Committee of Ministers furthermore observes that GRECO has noted the Assembly's proposal that it “provides a platform for anti-corruption authorities in its member States in order to gather and discuss good practice and current challenges in the fight against corruption and the promotion of integrity in public life, and consider setting up a network at European level” (cf. paragraph 4.7 of the recommendation).
6. Other Council of Europe bodies have introduced tools for preventing and combating corruption, including the 12 Principles of Good Governance, forming part of the Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level, endorsed by the Committee of Ministers in 2008, the Handbook for Public Ethics at Local Level and the Road map of activities for preventing corruption and promoting public ethics at local and regional levels, adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in October 2016. The Committee of Ministers invites the member States to make the broadest possible use of the tools and assistance available.

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1. Adopted at the 1313<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (10 April 2018).

2. Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) and Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE).



7. The Committee of Ministers notes that the Assembly tends to regard corruption in education as an integral part of the overall issue of corruption and lack of transparency. It shares this view and considers that corruption in education is a particularly serious issue, as it gives students and young people the impression that observing democratic norms and behaviour is unimportant and will not bring the immediate advantages that they may gain by bypassing rules.

8. Besides its immediate detrimental effects, corruption in education threatens the longer-term foundations of European societies by undermining the culture of democracy that education should play a key role in developing. The references to education standards and projects in paragraph 4 of the recommendation, including the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, are therefore particularly relevant. To strengthen work on preventing corruption in education, the Council of Europe has established the ETINED Platform (Platform for Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education), which was launched in October 2015 in Prague. The current focus of this platform is on ethical behaviour of all actors in education as well as on plagiarism and fraud in education, with the latter topic covering fraudulent qualifications.

9. With regard to the Assembly's proposal to launch the process of negotiating a framework convention on the protection of whistleblowers, the Committee of Ministers reiterates the view expressed in its reply to Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2073 \(2015\)](#) on "Improving the protection of whistle-blowers". Given the range of solutions adopted by the member States in this field, the negotiation of a framework convention would be a lengthy process without any certainty to its outcome. Consequently, and particularly in view of the delicate budgetary situation faced by the Organisation, the Committee of Ministers considers it more expedient, at this stage, to pursue efforts to promote and support the implementation of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2014\)7](#) on the protection of whistleblowers.