

Resolution 2170 (2017)¹

Promoting integrity in governance to tackle political corruption

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly reaffirms that the fight against corruption remains not only a cornerstone of the rule of law but also a key component of a genuine democracy and an essential element in ensuring the protection of human rights.

2. Frequent corruption scandals, both in national and European institutions, have led populist leaders to exploit the disenchantment of the people with the “corrupt elite”. Furthermore, the perception of corruption or misconduct negatively affects voter turnout and conditions citizens’ judgment regarding incumbent leaders and political institutions. The Assembly therefore considers that stepping up the fight against corruption and restoring trust in the efficiency and effectiveness of democratic institutions must be a priority for all European democracies, including European institutions.

3. The Assembly recalls, *inter alia*, its resolutions and recommendations – “Corruption as a threat to the rule of law” ([Resolution 1943 \(2013\)](#) and [Recommendation 2019 \(2013\)](#)); “Lobbying in a democratic society (European code of good conduct on lobbying)” ([Recommendation 1908 \(2010\)](#)); “Improving the protection of whistle-blowers” ([Recommendation 2073 \(2015\)](#) and [Resolution 2060 \(2015\)](#)); “Judicial corruption: urgent need to implement the Assembly’s proposals” ([Resolution 2098 \(2016\)](#) and [Recommendation 2087 \(2016\)](#)); and “Transparency and openness in European institutions” ([Resolution 2125 \(2016\)](#) and [Recommendation 2094 \(2016\)](#)) – and stresses the importance of further promoting integrity in public governance.

4. While welcoming existing anti-corruption, transparency and accountability measures at national, European and international levels, the Assembly also stresses the need to promote a political and cultural environment which is conducive to a corruption-resilient society. It believes that any anti-corruption and transparency initiative at national and European level should:

- 4.1. take into account the diversity and richness of political, social, economic and cultural traditions in Council of Europe member States;
- 4.2. receive strong grass-roots backing from a broad coalition of groups in society opposed to existing corrupt practices;
- 4.3. be flexible enough to adapt and respond to new forms of corruption as they emerge.

5. The Assembly takes note of the variety of functions, powers and mandates of national anti-corruption institutions, including multi-purpose anti-corruption agencies, law-enforcement bodies, policy co-ordination and prevention bodies, and internal control mechanisms by other public institutions. The Assembly reiterates its invitation to all member States to review and strengthen their legislation concerning the fight against corruption, ensuring that all acts of corruption are criminalised in accordance with the standards set out by relevant international instruments and monitoring bodies. It calls on Council of Europe member States that have established separate specialist anti-corruption bodies to provide them with specific skills, a clear mandate and sufficient powers, subject to proper checks and balances, in line with Committee of Ministers [Resolution 97 \(24\)](#) on the twenty guiding principles for the fight against corruption, the recommendations of

1. *Assembly debate* on 27 June 2017 (22nd Sitting) (see [Doc. 14344](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Michele Nicoletti; and [Doc. 14352](#), opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Vusal Huseynov). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 27 June 2017 (22nd Sitting).

See also [Recommendation 2105 \(2017\)](#).



the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and the guidelines of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. It also calls on these bodies to develop their monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to examine their own performance and to improve public accountability and support, with the possible support of the Council of Europe.

6. In the light of the above, the Assembly invites all Council of Europe member and observer States and States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly to step up the fight against corruption by:

6.1. promoting integrity and transparency in public life at all levels, in particular by:

6.1.1. adopting sound rules on the declaration of assets, income and financial and other interests by members of government and parliament, by leaders of political parties and political movements and by civil servants, judges and prosecutors;

6.1.2. making such declarations easily accessible to the public;

6.1.3. setting up independent supervisory bodies and regulating lobbying activities, in line with Committee of Ministers Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)2](#) on the legal regulation of lobbying activities in the context of public decision making;

6.2. signing or ratifying without delay, if they have not yet done so, the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption (ETS No. 173), its additional protocol (ETS No. 191) and the Civil Law Convention on Corruption (ETS No. 174);

6.3. ensuring full co-operation with GRECO and the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) and implementing their recommendations without further delay, especially those emanating from GRECO's Fourth Evaluation Round, which focused on the prevention of corruption in respect of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors;

6.4. ensuring the independence of the judiciary through transparent appointment and promotion procedures and, if need be, the use of appropriate disciplinary measures, applied by bodies free from political interference and other undue influence;

6.5. acknowledging the role of the media in denouncing corruption and ensuring that media regulation respects media freedom and responsibility;

6.6. continuing to improve the protection of whistle-blowers in law and practice;

6.7. implementing the Recommendation on Public Integrity adopted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which provides a blueprint for upholding and prioritising the public interest over private interests in the public sector;

6.8. considering establishing specialist integrity units in public institutions to promote ethics, accountability and transparency;

6.9. paying attention to regional and local levels of government and considering setting up an institutional source of confidential counselling to provide local representatives with guidance and advice on questions of ethics and integrity and on possible conflicts of interest, as well as dedicated training activities;

6.10. organising public-awareness anti-corruption campaigns targeting various groups of citizens, media, non-governmental organisations, businesses and the general public;

6.11. developing integrity education programmes as part of primary and secondary school curricula, focusing on individual and social responsibility, with the support of the Council of Europe.

7. In addition to the traditional approaches based on legislation, specialist institutions and stricter compliance and enforcement, governments should pay particular attention, through further academic and policy research, to the ways in which corruption was and is embedded in social and cultural values, as these provide the essential environment in which institutional reforms and anti-corruption initiatives can succeed.

8. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on all parliaments of Council of Europe member and observer States and parliaments which enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly to further promote transparency and accountability measures, in particular by:

8.1. developing a code of conduct covering guidance on the prevention of conflicts of interest, gifts and other advantages, accessory activities and financial interests, disclosure requirements, and making it easily accessible to the public, in line with Recommendation No. R (2000) 10 of the Committee of Ministers on codes of conduct for public officials;

8.2. considering setting up an institutionalised source of confidential counselling to provide elected representatives with guidance and advice on questions of ethics and integrity and on possible conflicts of interest, as well as dedicated training activities;

8.3. ensuring that parliamentary immunity does not protect members of parliament from criminal prosecution for corruption-related acts;

8.4. setting up specific parliamentary scrutiny procedures, with special emphasis on the implementation of recommendations emanating from GRECO's Fifth Evaluation Round, focusing on preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central governments (top executive functions) and law-enforcement agencies;

8.5. ensuring that co-operation with the investigative media is based on reasonably sound proof, and implementing [Resolution 2171 \(2017\)](#) "Parliamentary scrutiny over corruption: parliamentary co-operation with the investigative media".

9. In accordance with the Code of Good Practice in the Field of Political Parties of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the Assembly invites all political parties to exclude from their lists of candidates and from party membership any person convicted of corruption.

10. For its part, the Assembly resolves to:

10.1. pay special attention to the revision and effective implementation of its own code of conduct;

10.2. fully support the independent external investigation body to look into allegations of corruption within the Assembly;

10.3. strengthen the PACE anti-corruption platform with the aim of promoting integrity campaigns in national parliaments;

10.4. provide sound regulation for lobbying activities, including through the setting up of a Parliamentary Assembly transparency register, following the example of the European Parliament.

11. The Assembly welcomes the inclusion of the fight against corruption, including its intention to participate in GRECO in the long term, among the European Union's priorities for co-operation with the Council of Europe in 2016-2017. The Assembly further welcomes the publication by the European Ombudsman of practical recommendations for public officials' interaction with interest representatives (representatives of interest groups), as well as the European Parliament's resolution of 16 May 2017 on the 2015 Annual Report on the protection of the EU's financial interests – Fight against fraud (2016/2097(INI)), which called for the European Union to advance its application for membership of GRECO as soon as possible. Finally, the Assembly reiterates its call to the European Union to pursue full accession to GRECO as soon as possible, and to respect the principle of equal treatment among members of GRECO, which involves the evaluation of European Union institutions by GRECO's mechanisms, taking into account its specificity as a non-State entity.