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Respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption within the Council of Europe

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 2293 (2025)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2293 (2025) "Respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption within the Council of Europe", and communicated it to the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) for information.

2. In response to the Parliamentary Assembly's call, the Committee would like to highlight that the Council of Europe put in place a new internal ethics framework on 1 January 2023 with the adoption by the Secretary General of a Code of Conduct and the Policy on respect and dignity in the Council of Europe (anti-harassment policy). These texts were supplemented on 1 June 2023 with the adoption of "Speak Up": Council of Europe Policy on reporting wrongdoing and protection from retaliation (whistleblowing policy), which was recently completed by the adoption of the Policy on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. The Staff Rules also include provisions on ethics, notably in the areas of conflict of interest, outside activities and gifts and other favours.

3. These policies and provisions are the subject of frequent discussions, including with the Organisation's Ethics Officer, who took up her duties in September 2024, becoming the first externally recruited Ethics Officer of the Council of Europe and whose Office was recently strengthened by the recruitment of a new colleague. In addition, awareness-raising initiatives are undertaken regularly by the Ethics Office and the Directorate of Human Resources, to promote awareness and understanding of the Organisation's ethics framework. The activities of the Ethics Office are the subject of a public annual report available online, which very concretely demonstrates that the implementation mechanisms of this framework exist and are active.

4. The Committee of Ministers takes note of the Parliamentary Assembly's specific proposal in paragraph 1.1 to review the ethical standards and associated enforcement mechanisms regularly. Indeed, it is planned that the ethics framework texts will be revised, together with the Organisation's Staff Rules, later this year in the context of a comprehensive review process, to be undertaken in collaboration with the Staff Committee and other internal stakeholders. The review is intended to examine the legislative and ethics framework in a holistic manner, applying lessons learned from practical implementation over recent years.

5. The Committee agrees with the Parliamentary Assembly on the crucial role that member States play in relation to ethical standards and anti-corruption practices. In this respect, the Committee's Rapporteur Group on Programme, Budget and Administration held an exchange of views with the newly appointed Ethics Officer in November 2024, during which it noted the importance of the Ethics Officer's work and indicated that the Group would continue to follow developments on this aspect of the Organisation's governance.

6. Finally, the Committee welcomes the Parliamentary Assembly's proposal to call on all national institutions of Council of Europe member States to regularly review and update, as necessary, their ethical standards and associated enforcement mechanisms.

1. Adopted at the 1534th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (9 July 2025).