

GRECO: Fifth Round Evaluation Report on France



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News

On 9 January 2020, GRECO published its [fifth round evaluation report on France](#). The focus of this evaluation round is on preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central governments (top executive functions) and law enforcement agencies. The evaluation focuses particularly on such issues as conflicts of interest, the declaration of assets, and accountability mechanisms (for other reports on this evaluation round, see, e.g., [euCRIM 1/2018](#), pp. 38–39; [2/2018](#), pp. 109–110; [4/2018](#), p. 208; [1/2019](#), pp. 43–44 and [3/2019](#), pp. 182-184). The report calls primarily for improvements in the effectiveness and practical application of the existing framework to prevent corruption within the executive branch (President of the Republic, ministers, members of private offices, and senior officials) and in the National Police and National Gendarmerie.

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Among the positive legislative developments, GRECO commends the establishment of the High Authority for Transparency in Public Life, the French Anticorruption Agency, and the National Financial Prosecution Office. In addition, it welcomes the adoption of a multi-annual anti-corruption plan for the systematic identification of corruption risks and their prevention within ministries, as well as legislation on whistleblowers and the creation of a public register identifying areas where ministers will withdraw from the decision-making process.

The core problem can be summarised as the need to better coordinate certain measures and commitments between the various actors. Accordingly, the multiannual anti-corruption plan should also involve the Private Office of the President of the Republic, while the codes of conduct to be adopted by the ministries and the Charter of Ethics of the President's private office should be aligned with each other in terms of integrity requirements and sanctions for violations. In order to facilitate transparency and avoid conflicts of interest, GRECO also proposes the following:

- The public register, which lists the areas in which ministers withdraw from decision-making, should also apply to members of private offices, as they have an impact on the decision-making process;
- In order to specify the role of lobbyists on the executive and decision-making, members of the executive, including the President of the Republic, should publicly and regularly report on their meetings with lobbyists and on the issues discussed;
- The declaration of assets and interests submitted by the President of the Republic should be examined upon taking office in order to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

The report also recommends that corruption cases involving ministers be referred to another court. They currently fall within the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the Republic, half of which is made up of parliamentarians.

With regard to the National Police and the National Gendarmerie, the report calls for the development of a comprehensive strategy to prevent corruption. In this context, security vetting should be guaranteed throughout the entire police career and not only at the time of recruitment. This should make it possible to account for changes that might make police force members more vulnerable to corruption risks. In addition, staff rotation should be provided for in sectors that are more exposed to risks of corruption.

Lastly, the implementation of the whistleblower legislation proved to be complex and not entirely effective. The report therefore recommends that the legislation be revised and the staff of the law enforcement branch given more training in this area.

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