

5th Meeting of the Group of Experts on Corruption

Thursday, 21 February 2013

Meeting Report

Participants:

Experts: Philip Gounev; James Hamilton; Hans-Joachim Fritz; François Badie; Elena Koncevičiūtė; Laura Stefan; Michael Levi; Paul Stephenson; Xavier Sisternas; Goran Klemencic.

European Commission: Reinhard Priebe (*director, Directorate A*); Jakub Boratynski (*Head of Unit HOME/A2, chair of the meeting*); Raluca Stefanuc; Borbála Garai; Jonas Hakansson; Kalin Ivanov; Andre Rizzo (*HOME/A2*).

Brief update by DG HOME on latest developments relevant for the EU Anti-Corruption Report (ACR)

ACR adoption is now scheduled for June 2013.

The *Study on corruption in public procurement affecting EU funds for which OLAF* is in the lead is expected to be ready by end of April 2013 and its findings will be considered for the ACR thematic chapter on public procurement.

DG HOME organised on 10-11 December 2012 the first regional workshop in Sofia with public authorities and non-government experts from 13 Member States and Croatia. The following countries were invited to the workshop: AT, BG, CY, CZ, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, PT, RO, SK, SI. The second regional workshop will take place in Gothenburg on 4-5 March 2013 and involve the remaining 14 Member States: BE, DE, DK, EE, FI, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, UK.

Discussions on a sample of preliminary draft country chapters

The experts were divided into sub-groups and each group reviewed three preliminary draft country chapters prepared by DG HOME for the ACR. The experts gave detailed oral comments on the preliminary drafts. DG HOME explained that this is still work in progress and more will be done to check data and harmonise the style. The experts were requested to comment on the assessment, approach and format of specific chapters, including questions of style.

Overall feedback from the experts

On the overall approach, the experts made the point that ACR is a policy report. As opposed to more technical reports such as those by GRECO or OECD, the ACR should focus on key policy areas and outstanding issues rather than giving a comprehensive technical account of a wide range of corruption and anti-corruption aspects. Most experts agreed that the tone of the ACR assessments should be consistent and proportionate across all country chapters. Most experts stressed that the assessments should be straightforward, substantiated and not shy away from 'sensitive' areas.

Further recommendations from the experts:

- most experts underlined the need for more clarity, detail and a consistent format for recommendations.
- some experts called for an executive summary at the beginning of each country chapter and for more information on political and social context, or the setup of public spending, etc;
- given the limited length of the each country chapter (10-12 pages), some experts recommended avoiding an excessive number of footnotes that could obscure the policy messages;
- the experts called for a unified structure with consistent wording for subheadings;
- the experts recommended whistle-blowers' protection as one of the issues to examine across the board, in the general chapter.
- one expert stressed that the Commission should make a clear connection between the ACR and the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) for BG and RO.

 **Next expert meeting**

The next expert meeting will take place on 17 April. Tentative date for the following meeting: 6 June.