

Question 8

Following the Virtual Country Visit in the Republic of Bulgaria, held on 20 March 2025 in the context the Rule of Law Mechanism, the Chief Inspectorate to the Prime Minister received the question “What steps have been taken or are planned to fulfil the outstanding recommendations of GRECO as regards preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central governments (top executive functions)?”. During the meeting it was agreed a written information to be send.

GRECO's recommendations are set out as measures under Priority “Ensuring the democratic rule of law and protecting parliamentary democracy - strengthening institutions and freeing them from corrupting influences by pursuing anti-corruption policies and reforms in the justice system, ensuring fair and free elections, upholding human rights standards and the international legal order”, in the Justice section of the Programme for governance of the Republic of Bulgaria 2025-2029.

The objective of the priority is to improve integrity among senior positions in the executive branch, and some of the measures are as follows:

a. Approval by the Council of Ministers of a draft amendments in the **Law on Administration** to ensure the functional independence of inspectorates and their heads in order to enable them to effectively perform their role in preventing and detecting integrity violations and other irregularities within the relevant executive bodies, including where such irregularities may involve persons holding senior public office;

b. Adoption by the Council of Ministers of a **Code of Conduct for Public Office Holders in the Central Government** to establish guidelines on conflicts of interest, integrity standards, and an appropriate sanctioning mechanism;

A number of activities are foreseen for the implementation of the measures, laid down in the Programme, which were also discussed during a meeting with the heads of the inspectorates under Article 46 of the Law on Administration held on 13 March 2025 in order to define next steps. During the meeting experts from the inspectorates were identified to participate in the development of amendments to the Law on Administration.

In connection with report prepared by the Head of the Chief Inspectorate with order from 26 March 2025 by the Prime Minister an inter-departmental working group has been formed to draft a Law Amending and Supplementing the Law on Administration and Code of Conduct for Persons Holding Public Positions in the Central Executive by 30 September 2025. The first meeting of the working group will be held on 03 April 2025.

The **draft Law Amending and Supplementing the Law on Administration** aims to ensure the functional independence of the inspectorates and their heads in order to enable the effective performance of their role in the prevention and detection of integrity-related violations and other irregularities within the relevant executive bodies, including where such irregularities may involve persons holding senior government positions.

With regard to the **Code of Conduct for Public Office Holders in the Central Government**, it is envisaged to contain clear guidelines on conflicts of interest and other integrity

issues. Amendments will be made to the Law on Administration to implement the Code, providing for a mechanism for supervision and sanctions for breaches, as well as tools for their enforcement.

The draft Code of Conduct for Public Office Holders in the Central Government seeks to set out guidelines on conflicts of interest, establish standards of integrity, trainings on the implementation of the Code and establish an appropriate sanctioning mechanism.

In the process of analyzing the OECD member states' Codes of Conduct were studied different approaches on monitoring and application of the Codes relevant to the national governmental system. It is to be discussed which approach is the most appropriate to the Bulgarian governmental system.