

**REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON
GOOD GOVERNANCE, ETHICS AND TRANSPARENCY AT LOCAL LEVEL**

3-4 June 2010, Budva, Montenegro

RECOMMENDATIONS ON STRENGTHENING THE QUALITY OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

1 At the invitation of the Ministry of Interior and Public Administration of Montenegro, with support of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe, and in co-operation with the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, ministers, state secretaries, senior officials, local elected representatives and their associations of South-eastern Europe have met in Budva to take stock of progress made in the action engaged at both central and local level to fight corruption and promote public ethics.

2 The participants have exchanged information and good practice, reviewed current policies and considered further measures aimed at enhancing the quality of local governance, with particular focus on the transparency and the ethical conduct of public affairs by all those involved.

3 All participants acknowledged that while significant progress has been achieved so far with a view to raising - and meeting - ethical standards in public affairs, there is still a need for sustained political commitment, appropriate legal measures and support for their implementation at all levels concerned. All agreed that fighting corruption, promoting ethical behaviour and cleaning up political life at local level is part of an overall effort aimed at the strategic goal of delivering good democratic governance at all levels. Corruption diverts resources, steers citizens away from political life, discredits institutions and erodes the very foundations of democracy.

4 It was recognised that the actions to be further undertaken should include the introduction of systems of performance management and that such actions would fit into - and benefit from being part of - the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level of the Council of Europe. The participants agreed to consider taking the appropriate action for the Strategy to be adopted in, and implemented by the countries of the region, with the involvement of governments and local authorities' associations and with the support of the International community.

5 The participants further agreed on the following specific recommendations:

To central authorities

6 Ensure the existence and implementation of a simple and uniform legal framework governing the rights and obligations of public officials and local elected representatives, including accountability, guarantees and protection, remuneration and working conditions, supervision, disqualification, termination of office and suspension.

7 Ensure within the system of local self-government the existence of monitoring systems that verify the establishment and efficiency of anti-corruption measures in co-operation with NGOs and media.

8 Ensure arrangements enabling active participation of citizens in public controls of the work of local level institutions.

9 Encourage the adoption by local authorities of performance management systems that would supplement and enhance anti-corruption measures.

To each municipality

10 Publicly adopt a policy of zero-tolerance on corruption as an acknowledgement that the ethics of local government has a direct impact on the provision of good governance and that this is what citizens are entitled to and legitimately expect.

11 Introduce a Code of Ethics and an Ethics Committee in order to give direction to ethical local government and to respond vigorously to failures in ethical behaviour.

12 Supplement the anti-corruption policy by performance management systems that would engage all staff and stakeholders in contributing to achieving the municipality's priorities and plans and give direction and sense of purpose to staff in their everyday work.

13 Establish an Internal Audit system to advise on the soundness of systems, processes and procedures, to carry out spot checks to determine their proper operation, particularly where functions are vulnerable to corruption, and to issue and publish an Annual Internal Audit Report highlighting improvements made as well as risks that will need further management.

14 Develop a training policy and training programmes aimed at reinforcing in local staff and elected representatives the knowledge of, and compliance with the rules governing the rights and duties of public officials and local elected representatives.

To the Local Government Associations

15 Establish an Ethics Committee or Commission to promote ethical local government, prepare appropriate policies, oversee specific programmes and act as mediator in disputes on un-ethical behaviour at the level of municipalities.

16 Establish the professional capacity to support municipalities in delivering good local governance, particularly through capacity development programmes, performance management systems, best practice exchange, models and consultancy services.

17 Promote and facilitate the participation of local authorities in international benchmarking and sharing of best practice projects on good governance, ethics and transparency at local level.