The OECD urges Ukraine to strengthen its fight against corruption

Ukraine needs to urgently tackle corruption in political and judicial circles as part of a broad campaign to strengthen its fight against corruption, according to a new report by the OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The report analyses the progress made by Ukraine to put in place the recommendations made by the OECD during their last review in 2004. Among its findings are:

- An anti-corruption action plan, with strong leadership and an effective co-ordination mechanism, needs to be put in place urgently;
- Ukrainian criminal legislation should be reformed to meet international standards and to close loopholes which allow corrupt persons to escape from punishment; the Parliament should speed up the adoption of these changes;
- Prosecution of corruption remains weak. Only a small number of cases find their way to court and few end in convictions. Immunity of senior officials presents a serious problem for prosecution of high level corruption, and this needs to change;
- Co-operation between the different agencies responsible for the fight against corruption, including specialised anti-corruption investigators and prosecutors, must be strengthened;
- The civil service needs to raise its low standards of professionalism and integrity; Codes of Conduct must be adopted and enforced; transparency of asset declarations by high level officials must be ensured;
- Political corruption and corruption in the judiciary need special attention if the country is serious about the fight against corruption.

The report also highlighted some progress made by the Ukrainian authorities. Anti-corruption training was organised for public officials. A number of agencies, including the police, security, customs and tax offices, strengthened their internal investigation mechanisms to detect and prosecute corruption. Money laundering legislation and institutions were strengthened. Steps were also taken to develop the system of internal and external financial control. New amendments to the law on public procurement were adopted as recent as 1 December 2006, and may remove important shortcomings in the old system; but the provisions are still be to carefully evaluated, including in regard of their implementation.

The report (with full assessment of progress and ratings to each recommendation) is available at the ACN web site www.oecd.org/corruption/acn. As other countries, Ukraine will be invited to report on further steps to implement the recommendations at the following ACN meetings in 2007-2008.

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