

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
OECD Anti-corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ACN)

18th ACN STEERING GROUP MEETING

24 March 2015

OECD, 2 rue André-Pascal, 75016 Paris

SUMMARY RECORD

The summary record was prepared by the ACN Secretariat. It summarises the discussion and decisions taken at the 18th ACN Steering Group meeting. For further information, please contact ACN Secretariat, tel.: 33 1 45 24 13 19, e-mail: olga.savran@oecd.org.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 18th ACN Steering Group Meeting took place on 24 March 2015, at the OECD in Paris, back-to-back with the 15th Monitoring Meeting of the Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan.

The 17th ACN Steering Group meeting was co-chaired by **Mr. Patrick Moulette**, Head of Anti-Corruption Division, OECD and **Mr. Sayan Akhmetzhanov**, Deputy Chairman of the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Prevention of Corruption of Kazakhstan.

The Steering Group took note of the 17th Steering Group's meeting Summary Record and adopted the proposed agenda for this meeting.

2. 15th MONITORING MEETING OF THE ISTANBUL ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTION PLAN

The Steering Group took note that the 15th Istanbul Action Plan Monitoring Meeting was opened by **Mr. William Danvers**, OECD Deputy Secretary General. The meeting was chaired by **Mr. Daniel Thelesklaf**, Head of the Financial Intelligence Unit, Principality of Liechtenstein. The Steering Group welcomed the adoption of the third round monitoring reports on Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine the 15th Monitoring Meeting. The Group also welcomed the adoption of progress reports by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Steering Group welcomed the growing participation of civil society and submission of a number of reports and other inputs by civil society, in particular on Armenia and Tajikistan.

3. REPORT ON ACN EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

The external evaluation of the ACN Work Programme 2013 – 2015 was conducted by **Ms. Marijana Trivunovic**. It was commissioned by the ACN in summer 2014 and covered ACN activities implemented between January 2013 and March 2015.

Ms. Trivunovic presented the final report at this meeting. She outlined that overall the activities implemented by the ACN are of relevance to its members and that the external evaluation showed the high level of efficiency of the ACN.

Meanwhile, Ms. Trivunovic highlighted the importance of further tracking the impact of ACN activities and of the implementations of IAP recommendations. There is a rich basis of information in member countries for doing it. It is also important to more systematically communicate about the results of ACN's work and its impact, for example, by using OECD press releases. Such work on tracking and disseminating results will be beneficial for both the ACN Secretariat and its members in many ways: it can help to confirm the impact of ACN's work; strengthen political will to implement recommendations; improve compliance and peer pressure; and ultimately help in fundraising.

The evaluation also indicates the positive trend of increasing involvement of countries in ACN work (nominating experts, hosting events, etc.). In the report it is recommended to consider ways to further improve this involvement, including materially, for example, using membership fees. The importance of sustainable donor funding was also highlighted.

During the discussion ACN was commended for having conducted this evaluation, which was considered to be valuable and the report of a good quality, showing that the ACN is a

successful initiative and pointing to the quality of its events and reports. It was suggested that the ACN could be a sample for similar international platforms in other world regions.

Meanwhile, ACN's sustainability remains a challenge due to the lack of stable funding. ACN countries were encouraged to look into opportunities to provide funding to the ACN. Some members expressed support to more active involvement of ACN countries and to more support.

Participants suggested enhancing the visibility of ACN and improving the readability of ACN reports, namely the structure and presentation. It was noted that the ACN is more visible in countries covered by the Istanbul Action Plan, while other ACN countries' involvement is often reduced to participation as experts. Finally, a few specific suggestions were made, such as for the law enforcement seminars to discuss the topic of defence of corruption cases in courts and to study the links between economic development and corruption.

4. ACN WORK PROGRAMME 2013 – 2015: UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION

Mrs. Olga Savran, ACN Manager, provided an update on the implementation of the ACN Work Programme in 2014 and 2015. The Steering Group discussed this update; the main outcomes of the discussion are summarized below.

Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan

Mrs. Savran informed the Steering Group that in the framework of the Istanbul Action Plan in October 2014 – March 2015 the following activities have been conducted: return missions to Armenia and Kazakhstan; third round of monitoring of Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine; and progress updates by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In March – October 2015, the following activities will be organised: return missions to Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine; third round of monitoring of Uzbekistan and joint first and second rounds of monitoring of Mongolia; and progress updates by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

The Steering Group noted that, as suggested during its previous meeting in October 2014, ACN has provided support to strengthen participation of civil society in monitoring under the Istanbul Action Plan. In the framework of the ACN project supported by the DFID Central Asia, in November 2014 ACN organised the seminar for civil society organisations in Tajikistan "Capacity Building of Civil Society to Conduct Anti-corruption Shadow Monitoring". Further, in January 2015, similar training session for civil society organizations was organised in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek.

Thematic cross-country studies

The Steering Group heard that in October 2014 – March 2015 works continued under each of the three thematic studies and two reports were finalised.

Prevention of corruption

The draft report was sent for final comments to Advisory group and the Steering Group in February 2015 and the report was finalised. The final version of the report "Prevention of Corruption in the Public Sector" was presented to the Steering Group at this meeting by **Mr. Valts Kalniņš**, Public Policy Centre "Providus" (Latvia). During his presentation Mr. Kalniņš

outlined that the report studies effective and successful policies and tools to prevent corruption in twenty – one countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia along with a number of examples from OECD countries. The report also includes regional policy recommendations.¹ During the discussion it was said that innovative approaches covered in the report will be useful sources to develop new corruption prevention measures. The Steering Group noted that the report will be presented and disseminated at the regional corruption prevention meeting in May, in Zagreb, Croatia.

Criminalisation of corruption and enforcement

The Steering Group took note that after the draft report “Criminalisation of corruption: Liability of Legal Persons” was discussed during the ACN Law Enforcement Network meeting in December 2014 and sent for final comments to ACN countries in early 2015 the report was finalised and will soon be published. The report was presented at this meeting to the Steering Group by **Mr. Margus Kurm** (Estonia). Mr. Kurm informed the Steering Group that this report studies the state of play in the area of liability of legal persons in ACN countries, identifies good practices and common problems and provides regional recommendations.

Business integrity

Also The Steering Group heard that the first expert meeting and the Advisory Board on business integrity took place in November 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey. It was organised in co-operation with the Turkish Ethics and Reputation Society TEID. The Istanbul meeting discussed the preliminary findings of the project, and additional information about trends and good practices was presented at this meeting. The Steering Group noted that work continues on facts findings and on the business integrity study in 2015.

5. ACN WORK PROGRAMME 2016 – 2019: CONSULTATIONS WITH THE STEERING GROUP

Further, Mrs. Savran presented to the Steering Group the draft of the ACN Work Programme for 2016 – 2019 and suggested to discuss it along with a series of specific questions, as follows. The Steering Group discussed these questions; the main outcomes of the discussion are summarized below.

Continuing and strengthening the ACN

During the discussion it was underlined that ACN’s work is to the benefit of member countries and should continue. It was said that ACN is a valuable platform to exchange experiences with other countries. The Istanbul Action Plan monitoring is relevant with its broader scope than other similar mechanisms, clear methodology and involvement of civil society. The IAP is putting the necessary pressure on the countries to continue the reforms. As a result, many reforms have taken place, in particular in the area of legislation and anti-corruption policy. Meanwhile, in the future focus of the monitoring work should be more on the implementation and practical approaches. The importance for recommendations to be relevant for the countries was pointed out.

¹ The report was published in May 2015 and is available at the OECD website at: <http://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/ACN-Prevention-Corruption-Report.pdf>

High Level Meeting in 2016

The Steering group was asked whether in order to gain more political support it is useful to organise a High level meeting in the beginning of 2016 and how countries can contribute to it. Some countries stressed the importance of political will and supported the idea of holding such high level meeting in the beginning of 2016 and some remained of an opinion that this is not absolutely necessary.

Istanbul Action Plan 4th round of monitoring

Further the Steering Group discussed the proposal of the Secretariat of the 4th round of monitoring methodology. The Steering Group highlighted the importance to assess the efficiency and implementation of anti-corruption measures. It was noted it is important to explore why recommendations are not implemented, to see where there are problems, for example, awareness of practitioners, and how else the problems can be tackled.

The draft 4th round methodology suggests conducting in-depth examination of a selected sector. The Steering Group overall agreed with this idea. It was noted that it is a useful proposal along with keeping the comprehensive approach, which is unique to the Istanbul Action Plan.

It was suggested to choose this sector on a country-basis, in co-operation with donors and international partners, when possible using areas of anti-corruption strategies of this country.

Finally, the Steering Group agreed that the 4th round of monitoring could have a cycle of four years with one monitoring meeting per year, as well as regular progress updates (there was a suggestion to provide them every 6 months).

In order to support the monitoring, a suggestion was made to create within countries donor platforms with governments to discuss anti-corruption issues and assess countries' commitments in anti-corruption area.

Thematic cross-country studies

The Steering Group discussed the proposals of the Secretariat for thematic cross-country studies. The proposal is to continue thematic cross-country studies in three areas: corruption prevention in the public sector; criminalisation and law enforcement; and business integrity. It was proposed that thematic cross-country studies result in reports and provide each a platform to exchange experience among practitioners.

It was noted during the discussion that it is crucial, but often challenging to study practice, in particular in the area of corruption prevention. Proposals were made to study how conflict of interest prevention mechanisms work in practice, how protection of people who report corruption works, or how regimes of freedom of information work. It was said it is important and useful to involve private sector in integrity plans. It was also pointed out that it is important to study what other groups are doing in this area not to duplicate efforts.

ACN funding and communication

Regarding funding the Steering Group discussed options of co-funding, for instance, through funding sectorial initiatives with other international organisations, paid country studies, translation of reports by countries or financing of costs of return missions.

Concerning communication the idea was mentioned to organise during the Steering Group meetings a *Tour de Table* where the ACN countries are given the opportunity to discuss current ongoing reforms in their countries.

5. Closing remarks by Mr. Drago Kos, Chairman of the OECD Working Group on Bribery

Mr. Drago Kos congratulated the ACN Steering Group for impressive work it is doing. Mr. Kos informed the Steering Group about the work of the OECD Working Group on Bribery. Mr. Kos stressed that practical implementation plays a crucial role and without it there is no change.