



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 28 November 2019

CDDG(2019)13
Item 9 of the agenda

**EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE
(CDDG)**

**CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE
ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2019**

For discussion

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the
Directorate General of Democracy
Democratic Governance Department

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1. Introduction

The mission of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance is to support the authorities at all levels of government to deliver good governance, for the benefits of citizens and society at large.

To carry out this mission, the Centre of Expertise elaborates and implements cooperation activities, drawing from Council of Europe standards and European best practice, as enshrined in the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance.

In over 13 years of experience, the Centre has developed benchmarks, evaluation instruments and innovative methodologies ("tools"), inspired by the guidelines and recommendations emanating from the Council of Europe's European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG). Country-specific projects, often initiated at the request of member states, are implemented in cooperation with local, national and international stakeholders and aim at improving the legal framework in the area of decentralisation and public administration and at strengthening the institutional capacity of local, regional and central authorities to deliver good governance.

The Centre of Expertise is inherently linked to the Council of Europe's intergovernmental dimension: working with the CDDG and its members, it translates into toolkits the standards that are adopted by the Committee of Ministers; it develops new toolkits or updates existing ones; provides policy advice; organises peer reviews and international conferences. The Centre also cooperates with the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Venice Commission, the Group of States against Corruption, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and other bodies of the Council of Europe.

The Secretariat of the Centre of Expertise is part of the Good Governance Division of the Directorate General of Democracy (DG II). It consists of a small team of staff and relies on a network of qualified national and international experts, institutions as well as senior CDDG officials to provide policy and legal advice, capacity-building, training, and expertise which, together, also contribute to the development and implementation of state-of-the-art toolkits.

In 2016, ten years after its establishment, the Centre of Expertise – then called 'for Local Government Reform' requested an evaluation to the Directorate of Internal Oversight. The evaluation report noted that the expertise of the Centre was highly regarded because it crystallised the experience of all member states, and that the Centre had secured appropriate recognition. Following the recommendations laid down in the report, the Centre prepared its Strategic Plan 2017-22, including a new vision statement, an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), and an action plan for the next five years. Further, to reflect the fact that the Centre had been increasingly called upon by member states to provide technical assistance at all levels of government, in 2019 its name was changed to "Centre of Expertise for Good Governance".

Three years into the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2022, the Centre has consolidated its position as a repository of expertise and a reliable actor in the elaboration and implementation of projects. Its activities are increasingly aimed not only at the local but also the regional and central level of public administration and its capacity to help member States implement Council of Europe standards in the area of democracy and governance, at all levels, through practical tools and activities, has increased.

Centre of Expertise for Good Governance in 2019

Key facts and figures

As of the end of 2019, the Centre of Expertise manages the implementation of projects and activities for a total budget of over €10 million, a steep increase compared to nearly €4 million at the end of 2018. In 2019, the Centre of Expertise provided support to 19 Council of Europe member states and Belarus.

Projects are under way in the following countries (total budget in parenthesis):

- Albania (€ 720 000)
- Armenia (€ 1.5 M)
- Greece (€ 800 000)
- Serbia (€ 4 M)
- Ukraine (€ 1.8 M);
- Slovakia (€ 560 000)
- Lithuania (€ 310 000).

Further, in 2019 the Centre oversaw the implementation of smaller, high-impact activities in 13 member states. These were funded through the ordinary budget and amounted to about €400 000.

Policy and legal assistance

Legal and policy advice was provided to about 10 member states, on public administration and local government reforms, including decentralisation, territorial reforms, public ethics, civil service, national training and capacity-building strategies, and civil protection. Peer reviews were organised in Greece (civil protection), Lithuania (regional development), Slovakia (on internal audit and supervision of local authorities) and Ukraine (metropolitan governance).

Capacity building activities

In 2019 there was a renewed interest in the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE), with seven more requests for ELoGE accreditation being submitted. In October, the Centre of Expertise organised an International Conference on ELoGE, in cooperation with the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. The Conference provided a platform to share the results of ELoGE in France and other countries. Stakeholders from 20 Council of Europe member States attended the event.

There was also a consistently strong demand from public authorities for the Leadership Academy Programme, Human Resource Management, Best Practice, and Training and Capacity Needs Analysis. Public Ethics, Civil Participation, and Inter-municipal Cooperation also remain present in many projects while, increasingly, member states express interest in Cross-Border Cooperation.

Key partners

Key partners outside the Council of Europe are the European Union and the Austrian, German, Swedish and Swiss development agencies. Other partners include the OECD, WB, UN, UNDP, and USAID. National schools, institutions of public administration and associations of local authorities play an essential role in capacity-building and training activities implemented by the Centre.

Important partners within the Council of Europe are: the CDDG, the Congress, other sectors in DGII, the Venice Commission and PACE.

Outlook

For 2020, all of the above large-scale projects will continue. In addition, new project proposals were submitted for funding by Cyprus, Slovakia, Greece. New projects are being discussed with the authorities of Croatia and Malta.

2. Overview of main activities in 2019

In 2019, the Centre of Expertise continued its efforts to promote good governance in Council of Europe member states. The most important projects were funded by the European Union and by a number of Council of Europe member states through voluntary contributions. These were implemented in Albania (funded by Switzerland), Armenia (funded by Austria), Greece, Slovakia, Lithuania, Serbia (all funded by the EU), and Ukraine (funded by member states in the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan 2018-2021). In addition, several small high-impact projects were implemented through the ordinary budget in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Estonia, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Spain, Turkey, and Belarus.

The Secretariat of the Centre of Expertise was actively engaged in fund-raising and proposal-writing to ensure follow-up to projects that ended and to respond to growing demands for advice and capacity-building projects which are highly valued by beneficiary countries. At the same time, the Centre of Expertise tried to broaden the sources of funding, for example by assisting with the preparation of project proposals for submission to the EC's Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) for EU member states, when asked to do so by the countries concerned.

On 28 October 2019, the Centre of Expertise organised an International Conference on ELoGE, in cooperation with the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, where the results of ELoGE in France and other countries were shared and discussed with stakeholders from about 20 Council of Europe member states. The conference proved to be a valuable opportunity not only to share the experiences of municipalities across Europe but also to promote good governance among all member states.

In order to ensure sustainability of project results and local ownership of the various activities, the Centre of Expertise cooperated in project design and implementation with domestic actors, primarily governments, associations of local and regional authorities, and institutions such as schools of public administration. Furthermore, it paid particular attention to coordination with other donors, in particular the Austrian, German, Swedish and Swiss development agencies, the European Union and UNDP, to ensure complementarity of action.

The projects of the Centre of Expertise contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. They also contribute to the European Commission's 20 Goals for 2020 which include, among others, strengthening institutions and governance and improving the participation of civil society in decision-making.

More details on each project are provided below.

Albania

The joint Council of Europe - Swiss Development Cooperation-funded project on *Strengthening Local Government Structures in Albania* was extended until 31 December 2019, when ten years of cooperation over three phases will come to end. For these past 10 years, the project has sought to support the public administration reform process and help in the transition towards a more efficient and accountable public administration. As a culmination of these efforts, in April 2019 a standardised, interoperable online Public Administration Portal was launched under the project. The Portal regroups tools, standards and indicators on modern human resource management, and serves as a platform for exchange and dialogue between all levels of public administration. The launch of this Portal is a *major step towards a more effective, transparent, inclusive and accessible Albanian administration leading to improved service delivery and public trust in democratic institutions.*

Other key achievements include substantive support to the ambitious territorial administrative reform process and the establishment of a Consultative Council to institutionalise cooperation between central and local authorities in the development of policy and legislation. Close cooperation with the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA) and the Academy of Political Studies has seen the Centre's Leadership Academy Programme being translated into Albanian and included in the local training curricula for central and local officials.

The Centre of Expertise also helped develop exchange of good practice between ASPA and the Irish Institute of Public Administration: ASPA officials participated in a study visit to Dublin and also met with the Irish CDDG member.

A new project proposal is currently being developed that would strengthen civil participation, further promote the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, reinforce cooperation under the Consultative Council and pilot the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE) in Albania.

For further information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tirana/strengthening-local-government-structures-in-albania>

Armenia

A new *Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance* project aimed at supporting democratic consolidation by developing effective, accountable and transparent local government bodies, promoting principles of good governance, and fostering inclusive participation and equal opportunities for women in political decision-making was launched in 2019.

A series of workshops based on tools such as Civil Participation, Performance Management, Inter-municipal Cooperation and Local Finance were designed to build the capacities of the 52 amalgamated municipalities to develop project proposals eligible for small grants under the project. In a novel approach, this project, implemented with the generous support of Austrian Development Cooperation, will use the Centre's Best Practice Programme methodology to evaluate project proposals and oversee the awarding of small grants to support the renovation or development of community facilities, live webcasting of council sessions, and start-up grants to launch inter-municipal cooperation initiatives.

Following translation and adaptation, the Centre's e-learning tool on the 12 Principles will be piloted in 2020.

For further information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/yerevan/support-to-consolidating-local-democracy-in-armenia>

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Following successful completion of the Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) in 2018, local partners from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska requested further capacity building from the Council of Europe to support cross-border cooperation (CBC). A workshop, organised in November 2019 based on the Centre's CBC toolkit, offered an opportunity to share experiences of CBC in a post-conflict environment. There are plans to build on this cooperation in 2020 (including a possible study visit to the North West City region in Ireland) with a view to developing a more substantive project in line with the Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The support of the Centre of Expertise is greatly appreciated by beneficiaries in Bosnia and Herzegovina who welcome the opportunity to develop capacities and share experience with participants from the other entity under the umbrella of the Council of Europe. Several cross-border and inter-entity project ideas are being developed as a result of these training activities. Further support, including to develop effective civil participation at local level, can help ensure these projects are implemented successfully for the benefit of citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighbouring states.

For further information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/bosnia-and-herzegovina>

Bulgaria

Bulgaria was the first Council of Europe member state to commit to the Strategy of Good Governance and to award the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in 2010. In 2019, the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development participated in the ELoGE conference in Strasbourg and presented important initiatives implemented as a result of the ELoGE process, such as improvement of the performance management system. The next, fifth cycle of ELoGE in Bulgaria will take place in 2020.

The Centre of Expertise has also cooperated with the Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives Balkans (CESCI Balkans) and Euroregion Nišava to deliver two stages of Leadership Academy for Cross-Border Cooperation in the Bulgaria-Serbia border region.

Representatives of the municipalities and institutions from Bulgaria (Kostinbrod, Slivnica, Dragoman, Sofia region) and Serbia (Pirot region, City of Pirot, Dimitrovgrad, Babušnica, Bela Palanka, Euroregion Nišava) participated in the training. The first stage was held in June in Pirot, Serbia, and the second one in November in Bransko, Bulgaria.

After Serbia's ratification of the Madrid Convention, Euroregion Nišava launched an initiative to establish an (institutionalised) cross-border structure which will include cities and municipalities from both sides of the border, as well as from Romania at a later stage. The Leadership Academy Programme supports this initiative to meet the need for capacity building and for legal and policy advice in this complex trilateral cooperation.

Croatia

The Croatian Minister of Public Administration visited Strasbourg in October 2019 to discuss possibilities for cooperation with the Council of Europe and specifically with the Centre of Expertise on the implementation of decentralisation and public administration reforms. A new project proposal was prepared in this regard.

Additionally, the Centre of Expertise, in cooperation with the Ravecon ethics and compliance consultancy, provided support for the implementation of the Public Ethics Benchmarking in Croatian municipalities. About 20 municipalities participated in the workshop on Public Ethics in October in Zagreb. They agreed on a set of 120 indicators and completed self-evaluations in order to create a National Scorecard on Public Ethics by the end of the year. The results will be peer-reviewed, presented and discussed in 2020. The project will contribute to raising awareness on public ethics, developing ethical infrastructure and mechanisms to prevent corruption, and making concrete improvements at local level.

Cyprus

Following the preparation and adoption of the National Training and Capacity-Building Strategy (NTS) in 2018, the Ministry of Interior invited the Centre of Expertise to assist with its implementation. A series of consultations were organised with the main stakeholders (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance, UCM - Union of Cypriot Municipalities, and CAPA – Cypriot Academy of Public Administration) in November 2019 in order to agree on the Action Plan and schedule training delivery for 2020. The implementation of NTS will support the decentralisation reform announced by the Cypriot authorities and will provide necessary capacity-building and training to public officials at all levels, especially in such areas as public ethics, strategic planning, and leadership.

The Centre of Expertise also assisted the Ministry of Interior in preparing a project proposal to help implement local government reform in Cyprus. This proposal was submitted for funding to the SRSS. If approved the project will start in 2020.

Estonia

The Centre of Expertise provided support to the project implemented by TI (Transparency International) in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice. The project aimed at helping municipalities to implement the Public Ethics Benchmark (PEB) tool, and specifically its corruption risk assessment part. Consultations with municipalities were held and a working group of internal auditors was established. An international conference was organised with participation of the Centre of Expertise, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, representatives of the Estonian government (Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Finance), the Association of local authorities as well as the OECD in April to introduce international standards, best practices and recent developments in anti-corruption, ethics, and governance. During four subsequent regional workshops, with the participation of the Corruption Crime Bureau of Central Criminal Police, the Ministry of Finance, the National Audit Office and the Ministry of Justice, participants discussed the establishment of a corruption risk assessment system. The results and further steps are scheduled to be discussed at a conference in December.

France

The Centre of Expertise has developed close ties with the French National Institute of Local Government Studies (INET), based in Strasbourg. The Institute trains senior officials from French local authorities and is part of the French National Centre of Local Public Service (CNFPT). On average, four training sessions are co-organised every year at the Council of Europe, introducing INET students to the main reform trends in Europe, the Centre's tools and European approaches to performance management.

In 2019, the CNFPT requested and was granted an accreditation to deliver the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE). The expert-supported self-evaluations and surveys were conducted in four pilot municipalities. The results were presented and the four labels were awarded at the International Conference on ELoGE and the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance on 28 October, organised by the Centre of Expertise in cooperation with CNFPT, in the framework of the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Conference enabled participants to exchange experience and best practice in the area of governance. Amongst them were local, regional authorities from about 20 member states, the CNFPT and other ELoGE-accredited organisations, members of the European Committee for Democracy and Governance, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, and the Assembly of the European Regions.

Furthermore, the Centre of Expertise cooperates closely with the French National School of Administration (ENA) to help implement capacity-building activities in several European countries. In 2019, ENA, in cooperation with the Strasbourg Metropole and the region of Alsace, hosted a study visit of representatives of the Serbian central administration and the Academy of Public Administration, which was organised under the aegis of the project in Serbia.

Greece

The "Technical Assistance Project on Delivering Good Governance in Greece", co-funded by the EU (SRSS) and implemented by the Centre of Expertise, was launched in March 2019. The initiative is divided into two parts: the first one aims at strengthening the capacity of the General Secretariat for Civil Protection to provide emergency sheltering services to populations affected by natural and human-made disasters; the second one focuses on strengthening inter-municipal cooperation (IMC) and is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the National Transparency Authority.

Under Part I, the project delivered a Technical and Economic Study on emergency sheltering needs, which will provide the foundation for a Strategic Concept of Operations for the development of a disaster shelter capability in Greece. The Study was enriched by a Council of Europe international peer review which took place in November.

Under Part II, the Centre of Expertise conducted a nation-wide survey on the needs and challenges of IMC, the results of which will serve as a basis for the development of a Handbook on IMC tailored to the Greek context. In November, the project team organised the first series of workshops for mayors and high-ranking civil servants from the two different IMC pilot groups which will be supported throughout the project. The first pilot group includes 7 island municipalities from the Dodecanese, while the second involves Larissa and 4 neighbouring municipalities and will be pioneering the adoption of an IMC solution to deliver Internal Audit services.

Further project information is available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/greece>

Hungary

The Best Practice Programme (BPP) has been implemented continuously since 2008 by the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities in co-operation with the Centre of Expertise. The 2019 BPP topics were: elderly care, democratic participation, cooperation between Roma and non-Roma local governments; public safety best practices. Twenty-six applications were submitted, and the winners participated in a study visit to Bulgaria, paving the way for a fruitful exchange between mayors, professionals and experts together with representatives of Ministries from both the Hungarian and the Bulgarian side. A study visit to Hungary of a Bulgarian delegation will follow in 2020.

The Leadership Academy for Cross-Border Cooperation (LAP for CBC) was organised by the Centre of Expertise in cooperation with CESCO - Central European Service for Cross Border Initiatives, and Tisza EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) of for the local authorities of the Hungarian-Ukrainian border region. Two stages were held in Ukraine and one in Hungary. A range of innovative training techniques was used, and the participants were introduced to new thinking about cross-border cooperation and good governance. Participants examined the challenges faced by border municipalities and learned how good institutional leadership can tackle those challenges by strengthening the institutional capacities of the municipality and working effectively with civils society and organisations. They also developed awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes that form the foundations of good leadership, and learned how to apply the Council of Europe legal and capacity-building tools on cross-border cooperation. Practical consultations and assistance on the concrete CBC projects and structures were also provided in the course of the programme.

For more information:

<http://www.slg-coe.org.ua/p17382/> and <https://decentralization.gov.ua/news/11289>

Lithuania

A new Council of Europe-EU Joint SRSS-funded Project "Delivering Good Governance in Lithuania" was launched in September with its first Project Board meeting. The project will last for 18 months. One of the main results so far is a peer review on regional development, which took place in Vilnius in early December. The Council of Europe peers and experts discussed and analysed the best ways to develop and strengthen Lithuanian regions, and thereby decrease existing disparities between them. A Peer Review Report containing concrete advice and recommendations for setting up the foundation for regional development, based on Council of Europe standards, comparative European experience and expert opinions, was prepared by the Centre of Expertise. The report will be presented and discussed with the Lithuanian government next year.

In addition to the legal and policy advice provided through the Peer Review, the project team prepared a set of capacity building activities which will take place in 2020. These exercises aim to support regional development and will focus, in particular, on civil participation in decision-making; inter-municipal cooperation; strengthening leadership and institutional skills of local authorities; and promoting the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance.

Republic of Moldova

The Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul", with the support of the Centre of Expertise, implemented another round of the Best Practice Programme (BPP) to identify, promote and disseminate good practices among local public authorities. In this year's round, forty-one local authorities submitted sixty-four applications. The 2019 BPP areas were: transparency, local involvement for urban revitalisation, cultural heritage and authentic traditions, and smart communities through efficient public services. The award ceremony took place on 18 December. An anthology of best practices is being prepared and will be uploaded onto the IDIS "Viitorul" website. <http://viitorul.org/ro/library>.

Poland

Following the implementation of the first round of ELoGE in Poland in 2018, the Polish Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (FSLD) presented its results at the International ELoGE Conference in Strasbourg in October, emphasising how it triggered a major change of mindset among participating local authorities. The Foundation is planning to conduct the next round of ELoGE in 2020.

In addition, in 2019, the FSLD and the Centre of Expertise (including its Decentralisation and Local Government Reform Program in Ukraine) organised the Leadership Academy for Cross-Border Cooperation for a joint Ukrainian-Polish group of local governments located in their respective border regions. The Training of Trainers (ToT) and the first of the three stages of the Academy were held in October in Rzeszow, Poland. The next stages will follow in 2020.

The training focuses on building a network of partnerships between the bordering local authorities, enhancing cross-border cooperation using the opportunities provided by national legislation, Council of Europe standards and EU treaties, and developing joint projects.

Romania

Following the implementation of the Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) in 2018, the Centre of Expertise cooperated with the Romanian Institute of National Administration (INA) to prepare an ELoGE project. INA submitted an accreditation request, held a workshop for the participating municipalities, and launched the evaluations. The ELoGE award ceremony is planned for 2020, and further cooperation is being discussed.

Serbia

In December 2018, the Centre of Expertise launched the second phase of the 3-year, €4-million "Human Resource Management in Local Self-governments" Programme. The Programme team based in Belgrade, in co-operation with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia (SCTM), is supporting enhancement and further strengthening of a coordinated, continuous and sustainable system of human resource management and professional development for local government employees, thus helping Serbia implement the relevant Council of Europe and EU standards. The Programme is providing guidance and capacity building to the Ministry for Public Administration and Local Self-governments and the National Academy for Public Administration in relation to professional development and human resource management in local self-government.

One of the major achievements in 2019 was the selection of the 50 pilot local self-governments (LSGs) that will implement Municipal Support Packages (MSP) over the next two years. The Programme team ran an awareness campaign throughout the year, and as a result received 59 applications from interested LSGs (out of a possible 170).

In addition, the Centre of Expertise organised a high-level study visit for representatives of the Serbian government, the SCTM, and the Public Administration Academy to Strasbourg, where the participants had a chance to learn about the training system for local authorities in France.

For further information: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/serbia>

See also LAP for CBC project under Bulgaria.

Slovak Republic

In June, the Centre of Expertise conducted a Peer Review on supervision and audit of local authorities upon request of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, with the participation of some members of the CDDG. Peers and experts from Austria, Denmark, France, Greece, United Kingdom and Ukraine met with Slovak counterparts to discuss and provide advice on the system of internal control, audit, and supervision.

Furthermore, in September, a new 18-months, SRSS-funded Project on “Delivering Good Governance in Slovakia”, was launched. By the end of the year, a significant portion of the work under the first component – Training and Capacity Needs Assessment (TNA) - had been completed. The National Training and Capacity-Building Strategy (NTS) will be developed next year based on the TNA results. Other components of the project will be launched next year, including legal and policy advice on the Strategy to strengthen local governance; cooperation between the local, regional and central authorities; territorial consolidation and improvement of the structure, competences and financing of local governments. In addition, the project will ensure provision of capacity-building based on the implementation of such tools as LAP (strengthening leadership and institutional skills of local authorities), URSO (evaluation of training programmes for professional development of local government), and ELoGE (European Label of Governance Excellence and the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance).

Spain

Following the two rounds of European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) run by the Association of Basque Local Authorities (EUDEL) in the Basque region, the Centre of Expertise provided further support to refine the indicators of the benchmark and launch the third round for all Basque municipalities. At the ELoGE Conference in Strasbourg on 28 October 2019, the Executive Director of EUDEL presented the results of the implementation of ELoGE in the Basque region, underlying that the 12 Principles provided a useful and important reference for local authorities and civil society and contributed to achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. The third ELoGE ceremony in the Basque region is planned for 2020. Further cooperation, notably on the Leadership Academy and Cross-Border Cooperation, is being discussed.

Turkey

From June to November 2019, the Centre of Expertise, in cooperation with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) and the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (TBB), supported three rounds of the Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) addressed to senior local government officials and elected representatives involved in the RWI’s Human Rights Cities project. Subsequently, on 10 December, the Centre of Expertise participated in a conference on local democracy organised by RWI and hosted by TBB in Ankara, bringing together LAP participants as well as other municipal and institutional representatives to discuss and share the LAP experience among a wider group. The Centre of Expertise was able to present the wider role of the Council of Europe in good governance and democracy. Further cooperation activities in Turkey are being discussed.

Ukraine

The “Decentralisation and Local Government Reform in Ukraine” Programme (March 2018 – June 2020) continued in the framework of the Council of Europe Action plan for Ukraine. In 2019, the Council of Europe remained the main advisor to the Government and Parliament in the implementation of the decentralisation reform, considered as one of the most complex but also among the most successful reforms in Ukraine. The key achievements in 2019 included provision of over 15 pieces of legal opinion, expertise, and policy papers on decentralisation-related legislation. Regional and local level consultations on territorial reform resulted in: (i) criteria for establishing capable sub-regional level integrated into the Ministry’s methodological recommendations; (ii) nine draft laws being initiated on changing sub-regional level boundaries in nine regions; (iii) establishment of the local government association “Kyiv Agglomeration” to improve inter-municipal cooperation within the Kyiv metropolitan area, as a follow up to the Council of Europe Peer Review.

The Programme also supported the reform of the national training system for local civil servants, and the creation of a legal framework for a modern training system for local government employees, through expert and policy advice on: Statute of the training system adopted by the Government, National Capacity and Training Needs Analysis and Methodology of Training Needs Analysis for Public Officials, Recommendations on developing and monitoring of implementation of the individual professional development programme, Procedure for recognition of qualification documents and participation in exchange of experience in Ukraine and abroad, Requirements for the structure and content of professional (certification) and short-term training programs for public servants approved by the National Agency on Civil Service.

Capacities of local authorities and their associations were strengthened through a comprehensive training programme on human resources management for local government; the establishment of a network of regional trainers; a thematic online webplatform on human resource management in amalgamated communities; and the organisation of Leadership academies for specific groups of local authorities (e.g. for cross-border cooperation on the borders with Hungary and Poland).

Awareness of the results of decentralisation reform has increased through the national and regional Best Practice and Media contests.

Close collaboration was maintained with the Special Envoy of Germany for the Ukrainian reform agenda Mr Georg Milbradt and other international actors (GIZ U-LEAD, USAID DOBRE and PULSE projects, Ukrainian-Swiss Decentralisation project, SKL International Decentralisation project Despro, EU-4-PAR project and others).

The in-house synergies were also scaled up, e.g. through the platform of the annual local government forum in Kramatorsk (Donetsk region), bringing together key national authorities and seven Council of Europe projects implemented by Venice Commission and other Council of Europe institutions. Cross-country synergies were built with projects in other countries: jointly with the "Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia" the working visit of the specialised Parliamentary Committee secretariat was organised to Armenia.

In 2020, the programme will continue to focus on the reforms of local self-government and of the national training system for civil servants, as well as on enhancing capacities of the Ukrainian communities to deliver better services. A package support will be offered to municipalities from the Kyiv metropolitan area and to a newly established local government association "Kyiv Agglomeration": leadership development training programme, coaching of IMC projects, metropolitan governance forum and others.

A new follow-up programme is being negotiated and is expected to be launched after the end of the current programme in July.

More details are available at <http://www.slg-coe.org.ua/?lang=en> .

Belarus

Over the past 3 years, the Centre of Expertise worked closely with the Academy of Public Administration, under the aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus. The Centre of Expertise co-operated with the Academy and the Minsk Regional Executive Committee on the drafting of a methodology for developing job profiles as a part of new HRM procedures.

In 2019, the Centre of Expertise contributed to the seminar on the enhancement of public participation in the law-making process organised by the National Centre of Legislation and Legal Research of Belarus. It has also supported and participated in the conference on the modernisation and reform of the civil service organised by the Academy of Public Administration in Minsk (22-23 October 2019).

3. Capacity-Building Tools

The development and promotion of innovative capacity-building tools is among the priorities of the Centre of Expertise. The tools are regularly reviewed and updated. All relevant counterparts are encouraged to use those tools provided that the copyright is respected, qualified experts are used and the Centre of Expertise is informed.

The revision and development of the toolkits continued in 2019 with updates of the training modules for the Leadership Academy and the Leadership Academy for Cross Border Cooperation, including specific training curricula for officials from the central level of administration. The on-line training course on the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance was translated and adapted to the respective domestic contexts under the projects in Armenia and Serbia. In 2019, the Centre of Expertise also examined the need for revision of the Public Ethics Benchmarking tool, which might be updated and adapted to be used by the central level in 2020, to complement the new Guidelines on Public Ethics being developed by the CDDG. Projects currently being implemented by the Centre of Expertise are based on the following toolkits:

Democratic Participation:

CLEAR - Citizen Participation

CPT - Civil Participation and Stakeholder Mapping Toolkit

Human Resources and Leadership:

HRM - Human Resources Management

TNA - Training Needs Analysis and National Training Strategy

LAP - Leadership Academy Programme for public authorities

LAP for CBC - Leadership for Cross-Border Cooperation

Quality Public Services:

PMP - Performance Management

SMP - Strategic Municipal Planning

BPP - Best Practice Programme

LGA - Strengthening Capacity of Local Government Associations

Local Finance and Public Ethics:

LFB - Local Finance Benchmarks for local and central levels

PEB - Public Ethics Benchmark

Territorial and Cross-border Cooperation:

IMC - Inter-municipal Cooperation

TAT - Territorial Amalgamation Toolkit

CBC - Cross-Border Cooperation

C2C - City to City Cooperation

EDEN – online CBC database

Good Governance:

ELoGE - European Label of Governance Excellence Benchmark

E-Tool on Good Governance at Local Level

All tools are currently available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/toolkits>

4. Partners

The Centre of Expertise cooperates with many associations and organisations. This section concerns European and international organisations; national organisations are mentioned in the respective country sections of this report.

European Union and its institutions

The European Commission is an important partner of the Council of Europe. The Centre of Expertise liaises with the EU Delegations in the countries where it implements cooperation projects. The European Commission currently co-finances some of the biggest projects implemented by the Centre of Expertise, notably in Greece, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Serbia. A very good cooperation has been recently developed with the SRSS (Structural Reform Support Service of the European Commission), with which several new projects are currently being discussed.

OECD

The Centre has been cooperating with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development for a number of years. It participates in the Steering Committee of the Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment, where it contributes on the basis of the standards, tools and expertise on local finance and capacity-building for public authorities. The Centre of Expertise participated in the OECD Fiscal Network Across Levels of Government in Paris in December. The OECD Secretariat was invited to attend the CDD meeting also in December, to present its work and discuss cooperation in the areas of multi-level governance, fiscal equalisation, decentralisation reforms, etc.

World Bank

The Centre of Expertise has been contacted and consulted with by the PEFA Secretariat of the World Bank. PEFA (pefa.org) is a Public Finance Management diagnostic tool used in 152 countries since 2006. It has been widely used at the subnational level, including in several European countries. The WB is currently adjusting and revising the PEFA Framework for subnational government and using the Council of Europe recommendations on local finance as well as the Local Finance Benchmarking toolkits for these revisions. It was agreed to present PEFA and discuss further cooperation at the future CDDG meetings.

UN and UNDP

The Council of Europe and UNDP have a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of local democracy. UNDP country missions are regularly involved in the implementation of the cooperation projects of the Centre of Expertise, in particular in Albania, Armenia and Ukraine.

The Centre of Expertise contributes to the global UN discussion and promotion of Good Governance, in particular by presenting the 12 European Principles of Good Governance at the expert and plenary meetings of ECOSOC, UN DESA, and UN Habitat. The Centre of Expertise also helps promote and implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through its cooperation projects.

It participated in the 68th session of the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva in April 2019, which was devoted to "Smart Sustainable Drivers for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

The CEMR (which is part of UCLG) has been a long-standing partner and provides a good platform for sharing experience and expertise as well as for promoting the capacity-building tools of the Centre of Expertise.

Association of Local Chief Executives (U.Di.T.E.)

U.Di.T.E. is a federation of professional associations which today represents local government in 14 European countries: Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. Promoting the 12 Principles of Good Governance has been a part of its workplan for the past several years. In 2019, U.Di.T.E. presented results of its ELoGE pilot project at the ELoGE Conference in Strasbourg. In 2020, the federation is planning to apply for accreditation in order to implement ELoGE in Portugal.

European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)

ALDA is an international non-governmental organisation dedicated to the promotion of good governance and citizen participation at the local level. ALDA focuses in particular on activities that facilitate cooperation between local authorities and civil society. It is the umbrella organisation of the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) which are self-sustainable, locally registered non-governmental organisations that promote good governance and local self-government. The Head of the Centre of Expertise represents the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in the Governing Board of ALDA. In 2020, ALDA has been actively promoting the 12 Principles among its members, it has piloted ELoGE in two large municipalities of Ukraine (Dnipro and Mariupol), and brought over several delegates to the ELoGE Conference. Further cooperation, including specifically a new proposal for a partnership under a project in Tunisia in 2020, is being discussed.

CESCI - Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives

CESCI promotes cross-border cooperation through applied research, strategic planning, development activities in border regions and networking between the local, national and European levels. The Centre of Expertise works with CESCI on capacity-building to strengthen CBC in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Balkans. Three LAPs for CBC were organised in partnership with CESCI in 2019: for the border regions of Ukraine-Hungary, Bulgaria-Serbia, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

5. Prospects for 2020

The Centre of Expertise will continue to mobilise and involve stakeholders from all levels of governance and its broad network of national and international partners in programme design and implementation. This will help improve the impact of its programmes, reinforce commitment to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance across Europe and help adapt tools to the domestic contexts and emerging needs.

As outlined above, several large, externally-funded projects will continue in 2020: funding secured so far will allow planning for the 2020 projects in Armenia, Greece, Lithuania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. New projects are being discussed and negotiated with donors and member states, e.g. with Albania, Cyprus and Greece.

The ordinary budget of the Centre of Expertise will be dedicated to providing support to Council of Europe member states that submit requests for legal and/or policy advice and capacity-building in the area of good governance. Implementation of the National Training and Capacity Building Strategy will be supported at the request of the government of Cyprus. The implementation of various toolkits is foreseen in Italy, Poland, Greece, Croatia, and Spain. The e-learning platform on the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance will be implemented under the new projects in Armenia and Serbia. The Centre of Expertise plans to continue supporting Best Practice implementation in Bulgaria, Hungary, Republic of Moldova and Romania.

The importance of Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) seems to be growing in Europe, especially in connection with the EU policy of boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions. In this regard, the Centre of Expertise has seen an increase in requests for assistance with capacity-building and especially for the organisation of the Leadership Academy Programmes for CBC. A new benchmark for CBC could be developed as an improvement tool for local and national authorities.

The Centre of Expertise is also planning to update its Public Ethics Benchmark (PEB), to add other levels of governance and to bring it in line with the new Public Ethics Guidelines being prepared by the CDDG.

Cooperation with international partners will continue, especially in the areas of good governance, cross-border cooperation, public ethics and local finance. It will continue supporting the UN 2030 Agenda and implementation of SDGs.

Such a broad range of projects and activities across a diverse geographic and political landscape require a clear strategic vision and inclusive planning process. The Strategic Plan 2017-2022 of the Centre of Expertise addresses these needs. Pursuing a more impact-oriented approach to the above-mentioned activities, the Centre of Expertise can work towards successful implementation of its Strategic Plan, the priorities of which include – as indicated - promoting Good Governance, piloting of new tools on participation, cross-border cooperation, and public ethics, as well as developing regional projects among its priorities.

The Centre will also attempt to free up more capacity at senior and middle management level to prioritise and optimise the use of resources, analyse results and impact achieved, retain lessons learned, and secure more continuous donor support. New programme staff will be encouraged deepen their competences and perform more autonomously. Finally, as a result of the multiplication of demands and programmes, the Centre of Expertise will also need to focus more on fund-raising.

List of Abbreviations

ADA: Austrian Development Agency
 AEBR: Association of European Border Regions
 ALDA: European Association for Local Democracy
 BPP: Best Practice Programme
 C2C: City to City Cooperation
 CBC: Cross-border Cooperation
 CDDG: European Committee for Democracy and Governance
 CEMR: Council of European Municipalities and Regions
 CESC: Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
 CLEAR: Can do, Like to, Enabled to, Asked to, Responded to
 EaP: Eastern Partnership
 ELoGE: European Label of Governance Excellence
 ENA: French National School of Administration (Ecole Nationale d'Administration)
 E-PAV: Electronic Platform for Public Administration
 EU: European Union
 EUDEL: Association of Basque local authorities
 FRDL: Polish Foundation to Support Local Democracy
 GIZ: German Society for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
 HRM: Human Resources Management
 IMC: Inter-municipal Cooperation
 INET: French National Institute for Territorial Studies (Institut National des Etudes Territoriales)
 ISIG: Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia
 LAP: Leadership Academy Programme
 LFB: Local Finance Benchmark
 MOT: Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT)
 NTS: National Training Strategy
 OSCE: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
 PEB: Public Ethics Benchmarking Programme
 PMP: Performance Management Programme
 RESPA: Regional School of Public Administration
 SDC: Swiss Development Cooperation
 SMP: Strategic Municipal Planning
 SRSS: Structural Reform Support Service of the European Commission
 TMC: Top Management Corps
 TNA: Training Needs Assessment
 ToT: Training of Trainers
 U.Di.T.E: European Association of Local Chief Executives
 UN: United Nations
 UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

List of countries of operation in 2019

1. Albania
2. Armenia
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. Bulgaria
5. Croatia
6. Cyprus
7. Estonia
8. France
9. Greece
10. Hungary
11. Lithuania
12. Republic of Moldova
13. Poland
14. Serbia
15. Slovak Republic
16. Spain (Basque region)
17. Romania
18. Turkey
19. Ukraine
20. Belarus