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STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CDDG ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE 2020-2021

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

Introduction

The present document provides updated information on the state of implementation of the main and specific tasks of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) at the end of the biennium 2020-2021.

Overall, it can be said that despite the circumstances the CDDG has been able to implement its terms of reference and to take initiatives in relation to most, if not all, of its main and specific tasks, taking into account the expected outcome of the 14th CDDG meeting as regards specific tasks ii and iii.

The Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, which is increasingly involved in interactions with the CDDG, has contributed to the results achieved.

This biennium was particularly challenging because of the Covid outbreak, which had an impact on the planning of activities and on working conditions as many Bureau, working group and plenary meetings were held fully or partly on-line. On the positive side, new experience was gathered with regard to ICT-supported meetings, which may prove useful for the future.

As a possible result of the 14th meeting, additional consideration would be given in future to aspects such as the reviewing of the implementation of legally binding instruments for which the CDDG has responsibility.

Action

The CDDG is invited to take note of the information below and use it as a basis for a discussion on the progress that has been achieved and the future activities and challenges under item 5 of the agenda

STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CDDG ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE 2020-2021

MAIN TASKS

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, having regard to the Secretary General's reports on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law, and building on the achievements in the area of local and regional democracy and multilevel governance, the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) will steer the Council of Europe's intergovernmental work in the field of democracy and democratic governance and advise the Committee of Ministers in its field of competence, taking due account of relevant transversal perspectives. The overall aim of the CDDG is to contribute to strengthening democratic institutions, public administration reform, decentralisation and good governance, with particular emphasis on enhancing citizens' participation and strengthening public ethics. The CDDG will also work on meeting the challenges raised and using the opportunities offered by technological development to strengthen governance and democracy and citizens' trust in them. In particular, the CDDG is instructed to:

General tasks	State of implementation in 2020
(i) act as a forum where members, associating as appropriate participants and observers, exchange information, views and experience and disseminate good practice in the design and implementation of democracy related reforms, including through compilation of best practice and guidelines;	<p>In 2020-2021, under the standard item on "promoting democratic governance through shared experience", a number of CDDG delegations gave presentations on new pertinent developments (e.g. territorial and administrative reforms, e-governance); several members of government also participated for an exchange of views on such subjects and lessons learnt from the practice; partner organisations within (Congress, Pace, Venice Commission, Conference of INGOs) and outside the Council of Europe (e.g. OECD, Council of European Municipalities and Regions) shared information on current plans and their views on issues of particular importance, e.g. the democratic management of the consequences of the pandemic, principles for a fundamental rights-compliant use of digital technologies in electoral processes etc.</p> <p>The Guide on public ethics was updated and the Guidelines on e-democracy in the form of a toolkit were approved. They both include a wealth of case studies provided by CDDG members,</p> <p>Special initiatives were taken in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic: a website on national responses to Covid-19 was set up, with information provided by CDDG members; a thematic meeting on A democratic governance response to Covid-19 was held, with several members of government; the CDDG released a report on Democratic governance and Covid-19.</p>

<p>(ii) provide responses based on domestic legislation, practice and experience to member States so requesting that envisage policy reviews and legislative reforms, including through peer reviews and the rapid response service;</p>	<p>Twelve requests have been made and answered through the Rapid Response Service (RRS), providing valuable guidance to the member states on the implementation of reforms.</p> <p>To improve the sharing of experience and best practice, the visibility of the Rapid Response Service was enhanced - the webpage was updated and the information became more easily accessible to all interested member states.</p> <p>Peer reviews with participation of the CDDG members were requested and took place in the context of the projects of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance (hereinafter CEGG) in Armenia, Lithuania, Ukraine and the Slovak Republic. All peer reviews resulted in policy recommendations, and sometimes legislative improvements</p>
<p>(iii) develop as appropriate standards relating to modernisation of democratic institutions, public administration, citizens' participation and democratic governance at all levels;</p>	<p>In 2020, the Guidelines on public ethics were adopted. The draft guidelines on the use of ICT in electoral processes and a draft recommendation on the accountability of elected officials at local and regional level are to be adopted at the end of 2021.</p>
<p>(iv) promote the implementation of the 12 Principles of Good Governance through targeted action and the use of the tools of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance;</p>	<p>The 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance are constantly referred to in all the documents of the CDDG and are the basis for the toolkits and benchmarks of the Centre of Expertise. To take this work to the next level, the CDDG would work on a draft Recommendation on the 12 principles applicable to all levels of governance in 2022, according to the new draft terms of reference.</p>
	<p>In 2020, a new toolkit and benchmark on public ethics for the central authorities was finalised. It reflects the 2020 Guidelines on public ethics and complements an existing toolkit and benchmark applicable to the local level (ethical conduct is Principle 6).</p> <p>The guidelines and toolkits on civil participation were promoted at the Conference on Civil Participation in Decision-Making, and other events.</p> <p>More countries implement the ELoGE awards scheme each year – at the end of 2021, twenty member States are involved at various stages.</p> <p>CDDG members actively participate in the projects of the Centre of Expertise, thus helping to promote and implement relevant standards and toolkits</p>

<p>(v) without prejudice to the mandates of intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe that already follow the work of monitoring mechanisms, follow the activities of the relevant monitoring and other bodies or convention mechanisms;</p>	<p>The CDDG is regularly requested to comment on the recommendations and resolutions of other bodies. It follows the activities of other Council of Europe bodies working in the area of democracy and governance. An update on the relevant activities of the Secretary General, the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Conference of INGOs, the Venice Commission and GRECO is provided in a Secretariat memorandum which is submitted to the CDDG at every plenary meeting.</p> <p>Representatives of these bodies also have regular exchanges with the CDDG.</p>
<p>(vi) provide input and ensure follow-up to the sessions of the Council of Europe's World Forum for Democracy when the themes addressed fall within the mandate of the CDDG;</p>	<p>The CDDG is regularly briefed about the preparation of the WFD.</p> <p>The CDDG contributed to the 9th edition by organising webinars respectively on urban planning, the "15-Minute City" and green administration.</p> <p>The conclusions of the 2021 WFD will feed into the CDDG report on Green public administration in 2022.</p>
<p>(vii) promote and follow the implementation of the non-binding instruments that it has prepared;</p>	<p>The CDDG promotes the implementation of the non-binding instruments it has prepared through the projects which are designed and implemented by the Centre of Expertise and its toolkits.</p> <p>Given the particular relevance of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 on standards for electronic voting in the current context, the CDDG has decided to hold a review of its implementation at the 14th meeting (a questionnaire was circulated).</p>
<p>(viii) hold an exchange of views annually in order to evaluate its activities and advise the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General on future priorities in its sector, including possible new activities and those that might be discontinued;</p>	<p>This exchange of views was held during the 12th and 13th meeting of the CDDG, the overall priorities for the new terms of reference 2022-2025 were discussed. The new activities are proposed in the workplan for 2022.</p> <p>The present overview is submitted for discussion at the last meeting of the biennium.</p>
<p>(ix) take due account of gender and children's rights perspectives, building cohesive societies and promoting and protecting rights of persons with disabilities in the performance of its tasks while closely associating civil society in its activities;</p>	<p>Rapporteurs on gender equality and disability have been appointed. With a view to strengthening gender mainstreaming in its work, the CDDG adopted in April 2021 a set of guidelines. Civil society is closely associated in CDDG activities thanks in particular to the active participation of representatives of the INGO Conference.</p> <p>During preliminary discussions on specific tasks to be implemented in 2022, the possibility of adopting innovative approaches as regards the involvement of civil</p>

	<p>society in respect of specific work was discussed and could be confirmed when the CDDG adopts the workplan for 2022.</p> <p>CDDG made proposals on the revision of the ELoGE benchmark, to better incorporate gender mainstreaming into the 12 Principles.</p>
<p>(x) in accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, carry out, at regular intervals, within the limits of the available resources and bearing in mind its priorities, an examination of some or all of the conventions for which it has been given responsibility, in co-operation, where appropriate, with other relevant bodies, and report back to the Committee of Ministers.</p>	<p>The CDDG is planning to hold at its 14th meeting a discussion on the state of signatures / ratification and implementation of conventions under its responsibility and on possible further steps regarding this task. In general, through their activities, the CDDG and the CEGG - Centre of Expertise for Good Governance follow developments regarding the implementation of the Charter of Local Self-Government as well as the Council of Europe instruments on cross-border cooperation. The CEGG provided legal and policy opinions on the implementation of/compliance with the Charter in the context of its cooperation activities, at the request of the member state concerned.</p>
<p>(xi) contribute to the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regards to Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.</p>	<p>The SDGs are taken into account in the work of the CDDG and the CEGG. For instance, the draft Recommendation on accountability (see below, specific task iii), refers explicitly to SDG 16. A special page on the SDGs was created on the webpage of the Democratic Governance Division.</p>

SPECIFIC TASKS

<p>(i) Building on its previous work on e-democracy and taking into account the outcome of the 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki, prepare a study on the impact of the digital transformation, including artificial intelligence and automated decision-making, on democracy and good governance, also with a view to contributing to the work of the CAHAI.</p>	<p>The draft study prepared by the working group on democracy and technology (GT-DT) was approved following the 13th meeting of the CDDG.</p> <p>The rapporteur on democracy and technology (Mr Peter Andre, Austria) ensures coordination and liaison with the CAHAI.</p>
<p>(ii) Develop standards on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process (including voter registration, transmission and tabulation of results, etc.) in the form of a Committee of Ministers' recommendation or guidelines as a follow-up to the Secretary General's reports on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law and taking into account the outcome of the 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki as well as the work of the Venice Commission in this area.</p>	<p>The CDDG has agreed to implement this task by means of a set of guidelines. The draft prepared by the GT-DT will receive final consideration by the CDDG at its 14th meeting.</p>
<p>(iii) Draft a recommendation for the Committee of Ministers on democratic accountability of elected officials and bodies at local and regional level with a view to complementing Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 on the supervision of local authorities' activities and updating previous work in this area.</p>	<p>The draft prepared by the working group on accountability (GT-RE) will receive final consideration by the CDDG at the 14th meeting.</p>
<p>(iv) Promote the guidelines and the revised Handbook on public ethics at all levels of government.</p>	<p>The website of the democratic governance division has been updated to give more visibility to the work on public ethics.</p> <p>In 2020, a new toolkit and a benchmark on public ethics for the central authorities was prepared by the CEGG in consultation with the CDDG. It reflects the 2020 Guidelines on public ethics and complements an existing toolkit and benchmark applicable to the local level.</p>

<p>(v) Contribute to the implementation of the next Digital Governance Strategy in its field of expertise.</p>	<p>The new Strategy is not final yet. The CDDG could contribute to its implementation through its work on e-government, e-democracy, digital transformation and artificial intelligence.</p>
<p>(vi) Contribute to updating the toolkits of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance reflecting the latest governance practices as well as the principles of efficiency and effectiveness.</p>	<p>In 2020-2021, six toolkits were updated: Civil Participation, Local Finance Benchmarking, Performance Management, Strategic Municipal Planning, E-DEN and Leadership Academy Programme. Two new toolkits were prepared - on Resilience Building Strategies for local authorities and on Teleworking for public administrations. The CDDG members were consulted on the toolkits; many CDDG members were involved in helping to promote and implement the toolkits in their member states.</p>
<p>(vii) Report to the Committee of Ministers on a regular basis on the work and achievements of the European Stakeholders Platform which delivers the accreditation to the national platforms or bodies authorised to grant the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE).</p>	<p>The Stakeholders' Platform changed its name to ELoGE Accreditation Platform.</p> <p>In 2020-2021, the Platform renewed or granted new accreditations to deliver ELoGE in a dozen of countries.</p> <p>The Platform's meeting reports are submitted to the CDDG, and the progress on ELoGE is also incorporated into the CEGG reports, which are also submitted to the CM.</p>
<p>(viii) Review progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), as evidenced by monitoring mechanisms and promoted through standard-setting and exchange of experiences and good practices.</p>	<p>A special page on how the CDDG and the CEGG contribute to the SDGs was created on the webpage of the Democratic Governance Division.</p>

MEETINGS HELD IN 2020-2021

	Meeting dates	Modality
Bureau		
	20 April 2020	Videoconference
	12 May 2020	Videoconference
	12 June 2020	Videoconference
	30 July 2020	Videoconference
	24 August 2020	Videoconference
	8 October 2020	Videoconference
	6 November 2020	Videoconference
	29-30 March 2021	Videoconference
	14-15 October 2021	Strasbourg- hybrid
Enlarged Bureau (European Stakeholders' Platform)	24 March 2020	Videoconference
	29 March 2021	Videoconference
	15 October 2021	Strasbourg- hybrid
CDDG		
Thematic meeting on Covid-19	18 June 2020	Videoconference
11 th plenary	10-11 September 2020	Videoconference
12 th plenary	25-27 November 2020	Videoconference
13 th plenary	15-16 April 2021	Videoconference
14 th plenary	29-30 November 2021	Strasbourg- hybrid
Working group on democracy and technology (GT-DT)		
	27-28 January 2020	Strasbourg
	23 September 2020	Videoconference
	22-23 October 2020	Videoconference
	8 February 2021	Videoconference
	28 May 2021 (informal consultation)	Videoconference
	24 September 2021	Videoconference
Working group on accountability (GT-RE)		
	13-14 February 2020	Strasbourg
	28-29 September 2020	Videoconference
	8-9 March 2021	Videoconference
	14 June 2021	Videoconference
	13 September 2021	Videoconference