



Strasbourg, 13 November 2020

CDDG-Bu(2020)36

**BUREAU OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE
ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE
(CDDG)**

**REPORT OF THE MEETING
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE, 6 November 2020**

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

Mr Markku Mölläri, Chair *ad interim* of the CDDG, opened the meeting and welcomed members. The list of participants is set out in Appendix I. The draft agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix II.

2. Information on recent activities and developments

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the latest developments concerning the terrorist alert and the state of the anti-COVID precautionary measures in France and those applied by the Council of Europe; the partial lockdown reintroduced in October imposed restrictions on hybrid meetings (online and in-person). As regards the Committee of Ministers, the ministerial conference held online on 4 November had led to the adoption of the so-called [Athens Declaration](#) on human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the context of COVID-19, which was backed by 43 member States only. The text referred to the expression "multilevel governance" - which was an innovation - as one of the safeguards in times of crisis.

The Bureau took note of the information.

3. Draft agenda of the 12th CDDG plenary meeting

The Secretariat presented the changes to the draft agenda of the upcoming 12th plenary meeting of the CDDG, drawing the Bureau's attention to the participation of Finnish and German State Secretaries as well as the Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, to the inclusion of a new sub-item for members to share information on recent national developments, and to a new item giving the gender equality rapporteurs an opportunity to present *inter alia* an overview of the Committee's activities which were relevant for the subject of gender equality.

The Bureau took note of the information and suggested setting aside a specific slot to give candidates to the Bureau the opportunity to present themselves.

4. State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2020-2021

The Secretariat provided updated information on the activities of the Working Group on Democracy and Technology – GT-DT (document CDDG-Bu(2020)30), including its third meeting (document GT-DT(2020)10). The Bureau examined the draft study on digital transformation (task i, document CDDG-Bu(2020)31 which was in the final stage of drafting and was nearly ready for final adoption at the 13th meeting.

As regards progress in relation to new technologies in the electoral process (task ii, document GT-DT(2020)9), a lot of work still needed to be done. A questionnaire was about to be sent out to all delegations. Given the CDDG's limited experience with electoral matters, members should be encouraged to involve the ministry responsible for elections in providing replies while the Venice Commission could be solicited to share the questionnaire with national election management bodies.

The Bureau held an exchange of views and suggested that, to avoid confusion, the questionnaire be transmitted only via the CDDG. CDDG members should reach out to the competent ministries, election management bodies and other relevant bodies. The Venice Commission could help spread the information to election management bodies that this work was ongoing.

Bureau members also considered a revised and updated version of the report on COVID-19 and democratic governance (document CDDG-Bu(2020)32), prepared by the Secretariat in the light of the discussions held during the 11th plenary meeting and of additional information concerning national developments and Council of Europe activities. The report should clearly indicate that it mainly covered the response to the first wave of the pandemic. The Bureau took the view that even after the adoption of the report, it would be worth retaining the possibility of producing a further updated version reflecting lessons from the management of the second wave of infections.

5. Tentative work plan for 2021 and working methods

The Secretariat presented a tentative work plan for 2021, as outlined in document CDDG-Bu(2020)33, providing for two plenary meetings and two meetings of each working group. The likely use of videoconferencing for meetings taking place in the beginning of the year would generate savings which could be used to hire more than one consultant to support the work of the working group on democracy and technology in the area of elections. The consultants would not represent a new structure but only provide scientific and technical expertise to the working group.

The Bureau supported the draft work plan proposed by the Secretariat, including the calendar of meetings and working methods.

It also discussed ways to increase the level of participation during plenary meetings – e.g. through the more frequent use of round tables, recourse to videoconferencing platforms providing a greater visibility at all times of all participants, establishing breakout groups before certain items are considered in plenary etc. It was pointed out that the level of participation was important in particular for the quality and ownership of the CDDG's work.

6. Activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance

Alina Tatarenko, Head of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, presented highlights of the draft Annual Report (document CDDG-Bu(2020)34). Overall, activities and projects were implemented in 20 member states, and good results were achieved in Armenia, Greece, Lithuania, Ukraine and other countries. The report points also to challenges and opportunities connected with COVID-19 and its consequences, including the impact on projects, the digitalisation of activities, the development of new partnerships and new toolkits. Project-based activities were adapted to an online format whenever possible. A new toolkit on Resilience Building Strategies (ReBus) was developed to help local authorities assess and improve resilience and preparedness for emergencies in their communities. Another toolkit, on Teleworking, was under preparation. The new Toolkit of Public Ethics for Central Authorities had already been published online, thus becoming available for implementation.

The Bureau took note of the above information and sought clarification of certain aspects of the draft annual report, which would be adjusted accordingly.

7. Activities of the Elections and Civil Society Division

The Secretariat explained that, for the first time and following a reform of the Department on Democracy and Governance, this report would be presented to the CDDG during the 12th plenary meeting.

8. Participation of CDDG representatives in the 17th European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies

The Secretariat provided information on the above event, entitled “Electoral law and electoral administration in Europe - Recurrent challenges and best practices” (12-13 November, online event, under the aegis of the Venice Commission). Bureau members supported the principle of a participation of the CDDG in the event, through a member of the Secretariat and the Chair of the GT-DT.

9. Elections of the Bureau of the CDDG for 2021

The Secretariat provided information on the current state of candidatures for the elections of the Bureau for 2021. The Bureau discussed ways to encourage more women to stand for the elections in order to ensure a balanced composition of the Bureau.

10. Other business

None.

11. Next meeting

The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting tentatively on 29-30 March, as the date needs confirmation in the light of decisions to be taken during the 12th meeting concerning the work plan for 2021.

Bureau members thanked Mr Mölläri for having chaired *ad interim* the Bureau and the CDDG in a very professional manner despite challenging conditions.

APPENDIX I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****CHAIR AD INTERIM / PRESIDENT AD INTERIM**

Mr Markku MÖLLÄRI, Ministerial adviser, Department for Local Affairs and Regional Administration, Ministry of Finance, Helsinki, Finland

OTHER MEMBERS / AUTRES MEMBRES

Mr Peter ANDRE, Ministry of Interior, Senior Expert for Legal Affairs, Wien, Austria,

Mr Edwin LEFEBRE, Ministry of the Flemish Community, Agency for Home Affairs, Brussels, Belgium

Mr Paul ROWSELL, Head of Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London, United Kingdom

SECRETARIAT

Ms Sonia SIRTORI, Head of the Democratic Governance Division – Secretary of the CDDG - Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, Directorate General of Democracy

Mr Christophe SPECKBACKER, Administrator – Democratic Governance Division - Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, Directorate General of Democracy

Ms Alina TATARENKO – Head of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance / Cheffe du Centre d'expertise pour la bonne gouvernance - Democratic Governance Division / Division de la gouvernance démocratique - Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Direction de la dignité humaine, de l'égalité et de la gouvernance - Directorate General of Democracy / Direction générale de la démocratie

APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. **Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda** [CDDG-Bu(2020)OJ7]
2. **Information on recent activities and developments**
3. **12th plenary meeting of the CDDG**
 - Consideration of the preliminary draft agenda [CDDG(2020)OJ2 prov.]
4. **State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2020-2021**
 - *Democracy and technology*
 - Report of the 3rd meeting of the Working Group on democracy and technology [GT-DT(2020)10]
 - Progress of work [CDDG-Bu(2020)30]
 - Examination of the draft study on digital transformation (task i) [CDDG-Bu(2020)31]
 - Examination of the progress in relation to new technologies in the electoral process (task ii) [GT-DT(2020)9]
 - *Covid-19 and democratic governance*
 - Update from the Secretariat, examination of the draft report [CDDG-Bu(2020)32 + Addendum]
5. **Tentative work plan for 2021 and working methods** [CDDG-Bu(2020)33]
6. **Activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance**
 - Annual report [CDDG-Bu(2020)34]
 - Toolkit for local authorities on emergency resilience and preparedness
 - Toolkit on teleworking
7. **Activities of the Elections and Civil Society Division**
 - Annual report [CDDG-Bu(2020)35]
8. **Participation of CDDG representatives in the 17th European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies** "Electoral law and electoral administration in Europe - Recurrent challenges and best practices" (12-13 November, online event, under the aegis of the Venice Commission) –
[[link to further information](#)]
9. **Elections of the Bureau of the CDDG for 2021**
 - Information from the Secretariat (update) [CDDG(2020)13]
10. **Other business**
11. **Next meeting**