



**Centre of Expertise  
for Local Government Reform**



Strasbourg, 20 November 2018  
CELGR(2018)2

**CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM**

**Draft Annual Activity Report 2018**

The present document was prepared by the  
Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform  
Directorate General II – Democracy

## **1. Introduction**

Established in 2006, the Centre of Expertise was created to deliver good local and regional governance promoting European standards and best practice. Its capacity building programmes and legal assistance activities are increasingly aimed not only at local but also at regional and central levels of public administration.

The main goal of the Centre of Expertise is to promote the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance through implementation of benchmarks, evaluation instruments and innovative methodologies ("tools"), inspired by the guidelines and recommendations of the Council of Europe's intergovernmental Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG). The practical and impact-oriented "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 legislation in the area of decentralisation and public administration, and strengthening the institutional capacity of local, regional and central authorities.

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

The Centre of Expertise is intricately linked to the Council of Europe's intergovernmental sector and has been working in close cooperation with the CDDG, for example when updating toolkits, providing policy advice or organising international conferences. It also cooperates with the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Venice Commission, the Group against Corruption and other bodies of the Council of Europe

At its own initiative, ten years after it was established, an evaluation of the Centre was conducted under the aegis of Directorate of Internal Oversight in the second part of 2016. The evaluation report noted that the expertise of the Centre is highly regarded because it crystallises the experience of all member states. The evolution of the Centre's mission has mirrored developments in member states and it is increasingly called on to provide technical assistance for multi-level governance at all levels of government. The Report concluded that "the Centre has efficiently developed itself as an emerging institution, securing sufficient recognition". Following the Report's recommendation, the Centre prepared its own Strategic Plan for 2017-22, including the new vision statement, and analysis of its strength, weakness, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis), and an action plan for the next five years.

To reflect these changes, and on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council of Europe, it is envisaged to modify name and logo of the Centre of Expertise as follows: a dodecahedron – symbol of Good Governance and “Centre of Expertise for Good Governance” underneath:



## 2. Overview of Main Activities and Achievements in 2018

In 2018, the Centre of Expertise continued its efforts to promote Good Governance in Council of Europe member states and was also involved in a small scale activity in Belarus. The most important projects were funded by the European Union and some member states through voluntary contributions and were implemented in Albania (funded by Switzerland), Armenia (funded by Sweden and Austria), Greece (funded by the EU), Serbia (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, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Spain as well as in Belarus.

In 2018, the team of the Centre of Expertise was actively engaged in fund raising to ensure follow-up to projects which ended in 2017 or 2018 (for example the Partnership for Good Governance for Eastern European countries, or the projects in Armenia, Greece and Serbia) and to respond to growing demands for advise and capacity building projects which are highly valued by beneficiary countries. At the same time, the Centre of Expertise tries to broaden the sources of funding, for example by helping at the request of the countries concerned with the preparation of project proposals for submission to the EU's Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) for EU member states.

In order to ensure sustainability of project results, the Centre of Expertise cooperated in project design and implementation with local actors, in the first place the governments and associations of local authorities and institutions such as Schools of Public Administration so that the knowledge and know-how remains in the country. Furthermore, it paid particular attention to coordination with other donors, in particular the Austrian, German and Swiss development agencies and the EU and UNDP, to ensure complementarity of action.

Some of the projects of the Centre of Expertise are designed to 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. Other projects in Eastern Europe 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.

**Albania**

The core element of the 720.000 Euro (24 months, August 2017 – July 2019, funded by Switzerland) project on “Strengthening Local Government Structures in Albania – Phase III” is the establishment of a public administration portal to improve communication between central and local authorities and facilitate the dissemination of good governance practices. The portal will regroup the full range of Human Resource Management (HRM) tools and procedures elaborated over the course of all phases of the project (based on the Centre’s HRM Toolkit) and should be operational by early 2019.

The Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) has also been adapted to the Albanian context and delivered in close cooperation with the Albanian School of Public Administration and the Albanian School of Political Studies.

In line with the evolving mission of the Centre of Expertise to promote good governance at central and local levels, the LAP was adapted for the Top Management Corps (TMC) of the central civil service to support “The Administration We Want” policy following a direct request from the Department of Public Administration. Six cycles of this LAP for TMC will be delivered to 120 senior civil servants in November and December with the curricula validated in both English and Albanian by the Albanian School of Public Administration for further delivery to senior civil servants beyond the project life cycle.

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

**Armenia**

The project on “Consolidating Local Democracy in Armenia” (15 months, August 2017 – September 2018, 320.000 Euro) provided legislative support and policy advice to further decentralisation and enhance civil participation in decision-making. This project also served to pilot several capacity building activities that informed preparation of a comprehensive new three year project that is expected to be launched in December 2018 with Austrian funding. These capacity-building activities were based on the Civil Participation and Strategic Municipal Planning toolkits and on the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The new project (36 months, December 2018 – November 2021, 1.5 million Euro) will continue to provide legal and policy advice to central government while helping local authorities deliver better services to citizens by: developing their capacities and institutional structures; improving civil participation and the empowerment of women; and promoting respect for good governance principles including through adaptation of the e-learning course on the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance to the Armenian context. Centre toolkits to be used in the new project include Civil Participation, Public Ethics (PEB), Local Finance Benchmarking (LFB), Inter-municipal cooperation IMC), Best Practice (BPP) and the E-tool on good governance.

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

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The second and third stages of the LAP were organised in Sarajevo and Bijeljina respectively. Newly elected mayors and their staff from six municipalities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and six from the Republika Srpska participated in the LAP which was organised in cooperation with the Associations of Cities and Municipalities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the Republika Srpska. Participants welcomed the opportunity to strengthen relations with colleagues from the other entities and requested further Centre of Expertise support in developing effective civil participation and promoting inter-municipal and cross-border cooperation.

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

### **Bulgaria**

Bulgaria was the first member state to commit to the Good Governance Strategy and to award the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in 2010. In 2018, the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and committed partners, including the National Association of Municipalities, the Foundation of Democracy and the University of Sofia, continue to support its implementation.

A national conference dedicated to ELoGE was organised in September to promote identified good practice among municipalities. The next, fifth cycle of ELoGE in Bulgaria will take place in 2020. Until then, the Bulgarian stakeholders plan to review the Benchmark in order to facilitate its reading for Bulgarian municipalities, learn from the experience of other countries implementing ELoGE, and promote the 12 Principles.

A new cooperation project proposal for Bulgaria was submitted to the SRSS (Structural Reform Support Service of the European Commission) for possible funding and implementation in 2019-20. It focuses on fiscal decentralisation, public ethics and good governance.

### **Croatia**

Upon request from the Croatian Ministry of Public Administration, the Centre of Expertise, also in cooperation with the CDDG provided policy advice on the draft legislation on civil service (performance-based salaries), and public ethics (conflict of interest and post-public service employment). The Minister will attend the CDDG meeting in November to present and discuss Croatian public administration and decentralisation reform.

Please refer also to the section on cross-border cooperation below.

### **Cyprus**

The final report on the 2017 Training Needs Analysis (TNA) project which was carried out in 2017 in cooperation with Union of Cypriot Municipalities and the Minister of Interior was presented and discussed at a national Conference in March 2018. The TNA was followed by the preparation of the National Training and Capacity-Building Strategy (NTS), which was finalised and will be presented on 11 December 2018 at a national conference, also with the participation of the Minister of Interior.

Both, the TNA and NTS reports contributed greatly to the national discussions and preparations which are taking place for a reform of the system of local government of Cyprus, with a direction towards a more decentralised approach and creation of bigger, more viable municipalities.

As a result of these projects, the Centre of Expertise was requested and provided support to the Ministry of Interior and the Union of Cypriot Municipalities in preparation of a comprehensive project proposal to help implement the local government reform in Cyprus. The proposal was submitted for funding to the SRSS.

### **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 of French local authorities and is part of the French National Centre of Local Public Service (CNFPT). Four training sessions on average are co-organised every year at the Council of Europe. INET students are thus introduced to the main reform trends in Europe, the Centre's tools and to European approaches to performance management.

In 2018, the CNFPT and INET have also formally informed the Centre of Expertise that they were preparing an ELoGE accreditation request, and asked for assistance in providing training on the 12 Principles of Good Governance. Two workshops were held in Strasbourg as a result – one to train the experts and trainers of INET and ALDA (Association of Local Democracy Agencies), and the second one to train and prepare the implementation of ELoGE with the representatives of the French pilot municipalities.

The Centre of Expertise also cooperates closely with the French National School of Administration (ENA) to help implement capacity-building activities in several European countries.

### **Greece**

The Council of Europe - EU Joint Project "Technical Assistance on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in Greece" (21 months, August 2016 - May 2018, 800.000 Euro) provided policy advice on the governance of metropolitan areas and the status of the capital city; competences of the island municipalities; management of local budgets and improvement of the fiscal supervision system. Capacity building was provided on Local Finance Benchmarking (LFB), Public Ethics Benchmarking (PEB), Strategic Municipal Planning (SMP), Inter-municipal Cooperation (IMC, focusing on islands) and ELoGE. Over 70% of all Greek municipalities from all regions were involved in the project activities. There has been a high level of citizen involvement and participation in the project, especially in the ELoGE surveys.

The project provided a solid base of data and evidence with a view to informing the revision of the Kallikratis Reform. The new law on local government, "Cleisthenes I" of July 2018 contains provisions in line with several Council of Europe recommendations, such as the categorisation of municipalities based on new criteria, the streamlining of the distribution of financial resources to municipalities, the mapping and re-definition of local government competences, the amendment of the supervision system, the enhancement of civil participation and public consultation at local level and the strengthening of strategic planning and inter-municipal cooperation.

The project also showed the need to support the revision of the legal framework with more effective and systematic participatory initiatives and capacity-building actions. It contributed to building trust, improving the performance of local public administrations and ensuring ownership of reforms.

Project results are available on the website at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/greece>.

Since May, in cooperation with the Greek authorities and the SRSS, the Centre of Expertise has been developing the next project (18-months, 800.000 Euro) on inter-municipal cooperation and civil protection services. It is scheduled to begin in January 2019.

### **Hungary**

The BPP has been implemented continuously since 2008 by the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities in cooperation with the Centre of Expertise. The 2018 Steering Committee of the programme consists of representatives from Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Human Resources, Hungarian Village Association, Hungarian National Association of Municipalities and the Hungarian National Association of Civil Guards.

The 2018 BPP was implemented in two areas, the best practice community programmes and activities of Roma and non-Roma in the municipality; and cooperation of local civil guards and local government. Thirty-three applications were submitted. The award ceremony was held on 14 November at the Ministry of Interior in Budapest.

### **Lithuania**

Following successful implementation of a LAP cycle in Lithuania in 2017, the Centre of Expertise provided support to the Ministry of Interior and the Association of Local Authorities to develop a project proposal to promote civil participation, PEB and ELoGE. The proposal was submitted to the SRSS for funding.

### **Moldova**

The Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul" implemented another round of the BPP to identify, promote and disseminate good practices among local public authorities. The 2018 BPP areas were citizen participation for good governance, local development through community involvement, cultural-historical heritage and public services of quality, closer to citizens. The award ceremony will be held in December 2018.

An anthology of best practices is being prepared and will be uploaded on the website <http://viitorul.org/ro/library>.

### **Poland**

The Centre of Expertise supported the Polish Foundation for Local Democracy in the implementation of the first round of ELoGE in Poland. Seven communities and two counties were awarded the Label at a high-level award ceremony in Warsaw on 8 October, co-organised with the major Polish newspaper, Rzeczpospolita. The feedback from the participating mayors, chief executives and the Association of local authorities was very positive particularly as to the evaluation process, comparing self-evaluations with public opinion, and how the benchmark provides common reference points for the improvement of governance at local level. The Foundation is planning to conduct the next round of ELoGE in 2020.

**Romania**

The Centre of Expertise cooperated with the Romanian Institute of National Administration and delivered three stages of the LAP for about twenty mayors. Local trainers were trained and the LAP materials were adapted to the Romanian context. In the course of this training, new LAP modules were developed, for example on civil participation. The feedback from the Institute's management, trainers and participants was very positive; further cooperation is being discussed. The main challenges identified in the training were mainly related to human resources issues, such as lack/abundance of personnel (both linked to national legal framework limitations), lack of 'up to date' competencies among staff. Citizens'/community engagement in the decision-making process was another challenge. The participants were also very interested in implementing the ELoGE. Further cooperation is being discussed.

**Serbia**

After achieving significant results with the implementation of the Council of Europe – EU Joint Programme "Human Resource Management in Local Self-governments" implemented in 2016-2017, the Centre of Expertise continued to support the establishment of a coordinated, continuous and sustainable system for human resource management and professional development of local government staff, in cooperation with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia (SCTM). It provided advice to the Ministry for Public Administration and Local Self-governments and the National Academy for Public Administration on matters related to professional development and human resource management in local self-government what remained on the priority list of the Serbian government in its Action plan 2018-2021.

In 2018, the second phase of the "Human Resource Management in Local Self-governments" Programme, was prepared (36 months, December 2018 – November 2021, 4 million Euro) in close consultation with the beneficiaries, partners and relevant stakeholders to meet the needs of the Serbian government, local self-governments and the expectations of the EU. The staff also maintained contacts with the GIZ and other donors to ensure project coordination and prevent overlapping of the activities.

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

**Slovakia**

At the request of the Ministry of Interior, the Centre of Expertise assisted with the preparation of a comprehensive project proposal to improve the local government system in the country, provide policy advice and capacity-building based on European standards and good practice. The proposal was submitted to the SRSS for funding.

**Slovenia**

Following the results of the 2017 Peer Review on the Strategy on Development of Local Self-Government, the Centre of Expertise worked with the Ministry of Public Administration and three associations of local authorities on the preparation of a project proposal to provide policy advice and capacity-building to help implementing the strategy and strengthening local governance. The proposal was submitted by the Slovenian Government to the SRSS for funding.

## **Spain**

The Association of Basque Local Authorities (EUDEL) ran two rounds of ELoGE with support from the Centre of Expertise. Two ceremonies were held and a total of ten labels were awarded in March and December 2018. The ELoGE process was very highly acclaimed by the Basque mayors, and it was widely publicised in local and national media, including *El Pais* newspaper.

The Report on ELoGE in the Basque Region is available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/12-principles-and-elope>

The Centre of Expertise was also approached by the Federation of the Catalan Municipalities and the Association of Local Authorities of Spain (FEMP) with a request to help implement ELoGE in 2019.

## **Turkey**

The Argüden Governance Academy developed a customised and operational local governance model for Turkish municipalities based on the 12 Principles of Good Governance, taking into account the Turkish administrative and legal context. The Academy also completed research for the district municipalities of Istanbul and prepared a publication on the Governance Scorecard of Istanbul District Municipalities. In April, the Centre of Expertise participated in the International Conference on "Good Governance at Local Level" in Istanbul, where the results were shared with the public. Further cooperation activities in Turkey are being discussed.

## **Ukraine**

The new 1.8 million Euro, 28 months project began in March as a follow-up to the previous "Decentralisation and Territorial Consolidation in Ukraine" project. It provides further support to decentralisation, territorial administration reform, amalgamation of small local communities, and reform of the national training system for local public administration. It also offers specific support to decentralisation and leadership development in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Legal advice and expertise to support development of policy and legislation in line with European standards and good practice was provided through overviews and opinions on the organisation and statutes of administrations of parliamentary assemblies; the appointment of deputy city mayors following a competitive procedure; legal expertise of draft laws on principles of administrative territorial structure of Ukraine, the procedure for the formation and liquidation, establishment and change of Rayon boundaries, and amendments to the law on local self-government bodies. Roundtables with senior government officials, members of parliament, and associations of local and regional authorities, local authorities and Council of Europe experts were organised in Kyiv and Strasbourg to support the preparation of the new law on legal supervision of local authorities.

Close collaboration with Mr Georg Milbradt, Special Envoy of Germany for the Ukrainian reform agenda and the GIZ provided for coordination of action, additional political support and funding to the project.

The project also provided support to the implementation of the Action Plan “On Reforming Professional Training System of Civil Servants, Local State Administration Heads, their First Deputies and Deputies, Local Self-Government Officials and Local Councillors”. With support from the Council of Europe experts, the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service is implementing a comprehensive capacity and training needs assessment for local civil servants. Training sessions were delivered in the framework of the LAP, supported jointly by the project and the DOBRE programme in Ukraine (funded by the US Government).

A cooperation agreement was signed between the project, the GIZ implemented “U-LEAD with Europe: Ukraine – Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development Programme” and the National Agency for Civil Service in Ukraine to jointly support human resource management in all amalgamated hromadas.

More details are available on the project’s website at <http://www.slg-coe.org.ua/?lang=en>

### **Cross border Cooperation**

The Centre of Expertise paid special attention to promoting Council of Europe standards and the Centre’s toolkits on cross-border cooperation (see also under Croatia above).

In cooperation with the CDDG and the City of Dubrovnik, the Centre of Expertise organised an international conference on cross-border cooperation (CBC) under the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Dubrovnik in May 2018. The aim of conference was to promote the Council of Europe standards and tools in the area of CBC, such as Madrid Convention and its three additional protocols, as well as the CBC capacity-building tools of the Centre of Expertise. It was a successful event, with about 60 participants from over a dozen countries. It generated a great deal of interest and follow up. The conference materials and conclusions are available at the dedicated webpage of the Centre: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/transfrontier-cooperation>.

Two stages of LAP for CBC for local authorities of bordering municipalities from Croatia, Serbia and Hungary were organised by the Centre of Expertise in Sombor (Serbia) and Valpovo (Croatia). The training was organised in cooperation with Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI) and received a very positive feedback from the participants who started developing concrete CBC proposals as the result of the programme.

At the invitation of the Ministry of Economy and Trade and CESCI, the Centre of Expertise also participated in the conference of a Slovak-Hungarian European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in order to present and discuss implementation of a LAP for CBC for the Hungarian and Slovak local authorities.

EDEN – an electronic database and capacity-building tool on cross-border cooperation – was updated to include over 600 CBC cases by the end of 2018. The EDEN platform is also being linked to the new SECCO2 project platform (youth for cross-border partnership and cohesion of the EU Strategies for the Danube Region and the Adriatic-Ionian Region) established by CESCI and the Institute of International Sociology in Gorizia (ISIG) thus multiplying access to EDEN. It is currently the largest and the most comprehensive CBC tool in Europe, and the Centre of Expertise has been involved in discussions with the European Commission (DG Regio), the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT), the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), CESCI, ISIG and other stakeholders in order to prepare a proposal on the integration of the existing databases and tools into one pan-European database which would provide solutions to the obstacles and advance CBC in Europe.

### 3. Capacity-Building Tools

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

The Centre of Expertise continued working on the revision and development of its tools in 2018: the training modules for the Leadership Academy and the Leadership Academy for Cross Border Cooperation were revised and updated, including a specific training curricula for central officials.

The on-line training course on the 12 Principles of Good Governance was finalised and put on the Centre's website. Translation and adaptation of the e-learning course to the local context are key components of the proposed new projects in Armenia and Serbia.

The EDEN database has been further developed and is being connected to related initiatives (please see above under cross-border cooperation).

Currently, the Centre of Expertise implements projects based on the following toolkits:

#### Democratic Participation:

CLEAR - Citizen Participation

CPT - Civil Participation and Stakeholder Mapping Toolkit (2017)

#### Human Resources and Leadership:

HRM - Human Resources Management

TNA - Training Needs Analysis and National Training Strategy (updated in 2017)

LAP - Leadership Academy Programme for public authorities (updated in 2017)

LAP for CBC - Leadership for Cross-Border Cooperation (updated in 2018)

#### 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 (updated in 2017)

#### Territorial and Cross-border Cooperation:

IMC - Inter-municipal Cooperation

TAT - Territorial Amalgamation Toolkit (2017)

CBC - Cross-Border Cooperation

C2C - City to City Cooperation

EDEN - online CBC database (updated in 2017)

#### Good Governance:

ELoGE - European Label of Governance Excellence Benchmark

E-Tool on Good Governance at Local Level (2017)

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

#### **4. Relations with Partners**

The Centre of Expertise cooperates with many associations and organisations. This section concerns European and global 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 and Serbia where the second phase of the respective projects begins in January 2019. In 2018, at the request of the CoE member states, and in cooperation and coordination with the SRSS – Structural Reform Support Service of the European Commission – the Centre helped prepare large project proposals to implement relevant reforms and build capacities of the public service in a number of countries, pending financial decision of the SRSS.

Another important partner in 2018 was the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), in particular its Interreg, Cross-border Cooperation, Internal Borders Unit. The Centre of Expertise participated in several events and consultations organised on the subject of the new European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM) and was invited to present and promote its capacity-building tools in the area of CBC, which is of growing importance to the Commission and its new policy of boosting growth in border regions.

##### **OECD**

The Centre has been cooperating with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development for a number of years. It continues participating in the Steering Committee of an Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment, where it contributes its standards, tools and expertise on local finance and capacity-building for public authorities. The 2018 meeting will be held in December in Paris.

Other cooperation and coordination is under way with OECD SIGMA, the Public Governance Directorate and the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development.

##### **OSCE**

The Council of Europe and OSCE have a framework agreement of cooperation on local and regional democracy. Contacts have been maintained with the Secretariat in Vienna, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw, as well as field missions.

##### **UN and UNDP**

The Council of Europe and UNDP have a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperating 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 helped promote and implement the UN SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through its cooperation with UCLG – United Cities and Local Governments, UNDP, and UN-Habitat. The 12 European Principles became a part of the 2018 Report on the Sustainable Cities Dialogue: Urban Governance at the Core of the Implementation of SDG 11. In fact, the Council of Europe standards and tools in the area of local democracy and governance are among the most advanced in the world and are often used as a model by non-European countries and organisations.

### **United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)**

The Centre of Expertise cooperates with the UCLG in the promotion of Sustainable Development Goals and Good Governance (please see above).

### **Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)**

The CEMR (which is part of UCLG) has been a long-standing partner and a good platform for sharing of experience and expertise, as well as for promotion of the capacity-building tools of the Centre of Expertise in several member states. In June, the Head of the Centre of Expertise was a keynote speaker in the panel on Good Governance at the CEMR Conference in Bilbao - <https://www.cemrbilbao2018.eu/index.php/en/>.

### **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, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom. The Centre of Expertise supported the implementation of a pilot project to benchmark ELoGE in 2017. In 2018, U.Di.T.E. continued promoting the 12 Principles and the benchmark among its members and kept regular contact with the Centre.

### **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 in particular focuses on activities that facilitate cooperation between local authorities and civil society; it is the umbrella organisation of the Local Democracy Agencies which are self-sustainable, locally registered non-governmental organisations that act as promoters of good governance and local self-government. The Head of the Centre of Expertise represents the CoE Secretary General in the Governing Board of ALDA.

In 2018, ALDA submitted a request for the accreditation of ELoGE. The Centre organised a training workshop on the ELoGE for ALDA staff and members, with a view to promoting the 12 Principles through the LDAs.

### **CESCI - Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives**

CESCI promotes cross-border cooperation through applied research, strategic planning, development activities in border regions and regional networking between the local, national and European levels. The Centre of Expertise works with CESCI on capacity-building for better CBC in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Balkans (please refer to the section on cross border cooperation above).

### **Regional School of Public Administration - ReSPA**

ReSPA is an international organisation which has been entrusted with the mission of boosting regional cooperation in the field of public administration in the Western Balkans. A representative of the Centre of Expertise is member of the RESPA Advisory Board. RESPA expressed an interest in cooperating with the Centre of Expertise in the piloting of a regional Leadership Academy Programme for public authorities at central level. The project proposal was prepared and the funding is being identified.

## **5. Prospects for 2019**

Going forward, 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 new large, externally-funded projects are expected to begin in December 2018 – January 2019, and several more are expected to begin later in the year, pending financial decisions. The funding secured so far will allow planning for the 2019 externally-funded projects in Albania, Armenia, Greece, Serbia and Ukraine. At the same time, the constraints on the ordinary budget and staff represent a major challenge in terms of meeting growing demand for assistance and cooperation in 2019.

The ordinary budget of the Centre of Expertise will be dedicated to continuing support of member states which submit requests for policy advice and capacity-building in the area of good governance. The implementation of various toolkits is foreseen in Georgia, Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain. The new 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 BPP implementation in Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova and Romania.

The importance of CBC seems to be growing in Europe, especially in connection with the new EC Communication and policy of boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions. In this regard, the Centre of Expertise has seen more requests for assistance with capacity-building, and especially for the organisation of LAPs for CBC for the external EU border regions. Also a new benchmark for CBC could be developed as an improvement tool for local and national authorities and practical CBC capacity-building activities are under consideration with CESCI in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Balkans.

In 2019, the Centre of Expertise will revise the PEB in line with the new Public Ethics Guide which is being prepared by the CDDG. Transparency International Estonia has expressed its interest in running the second round of PEB in Estonia.

The Centre of Expertise will continue cooperation with its international partners, especially in the areas of good governance, cross-border cooperation, public ethics and local finance. It will continue supporting the UN 2030 Agenda and is planning to participate in the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva in April 2019, which will be devoted to "Smart Sustainable Drivers for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

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 of the Centre of Expertise for 2017-2022 addresses these needs. Taking a more impact-oriented approach to the above-mentioned activities, the Centre of Expertise can work towards successful implementation of its Strategic Plan which will also include promotion of Good Governance, piloting of new tools on participation, cross-border cooperation, and public ethics, as well as the development of regional projects among its priorities. The Centre will also attempt to liberate 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. Programme staff will be encouraged to perform more autonomously. With the multiplication of demands and programmes under strict budgetary constraints, the Centre of Expertise will continue working 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  
 CESCO: Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives  
 CLEAR: Can do, Like to, Enabled to, Asked to, Responded to  
 CoE: Council of Europe  
 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