



**Centre of Expertise
for Local Government Reform**



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CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

Draft Annual Activity Report 2017

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1. Introduction

Established in 2006 following a decision of the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 2005), 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 authorities.

The Centre's aim 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, 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 of Democratic Governance - Directorate General of Democracy. It consists of a small team of staff and relies on a network of qualified national and international experts and institutions and the senior officials of the CDDG to provide policy and legal advice, capacity-building, training, and access to state-of-the art expertise in the form of toolkits.

Since its creation it has been working in close cooperation with the Council of Europe's intergovernmental sector (formerly the European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) and since 2014 the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG)), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (the Congress), and other relevant units across the Council of Europe.

The management of the Centre is overseen by a four-member Advisory Board – the Director of Democratic Governance, the Secretary General of the Congress, one member appointed by the CDDG and another one by the Congress – which serves as a platform for regular consultation between the Secretariat, the CDDG and the Congress on:

- a) the development and implementation of the Centre's strategic priorities and plans;
- b) the lessons to be drawn from the evaluation of its achievements;
- c) the opportunities for cooperation both within the CoE and with external partners.

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 concluded 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 this trend 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, SWOT analysis, and an action plan for the next five years.

2. Overview of Main Activities in 2017

In 2017, the Centre organised activities in at least 25 member states. The most important projects were funded by external donors through voluntary contributions and were implemented in Albania (funded by Switzerland), Armenia (funded by Denmark), Greece (funded by the EU), Serbia (funded by the EU), Ukraine (funded by member States in the framework of the Action Plan), and in the Eastern Partnership countries (funded by the EU). In addition, several small but high-impact projects were implemented through the ordinary budget in other countries such as Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, and Poland.

The Project “Strengthening Local Government Structures and Cooperation between Local Elected Representatives in **Albania** – Phase II (2012 – 2017), which supported the creation of standards and indicators on modern human resources practices, implementation of the Civil Servants Law and the establishment of e-PAV, an electronic platform for public administration was successfully completed. An independent review of Phase II¹ of the project noted that it has been implemented effectively and is fully in line with the Albanian reforms and Council of Europe / Swiss Development Cooperation priorities. However, the review also noted that further consolidation of local government units and substantial efforts to increase their administrative capacity are still needed. Building on achievements of previous phases of this project, a final Phase III was launched in August 2017 to ensure that good governance principles are anchored and project outputs sufficiently well developed to ensure sustainability and self-sufficiency.

The “Support to consolidating local democracy in **Armenia**” project, funded by Denmark ended in December 2016. A follow-up project was launched in August 2017 in the context of the Action Plan and funded by Sweden. The Centre provided legislative support and policy advice to further decentralisation while building the capacities of local authorities to strengthen their ability to deliver services and engage with citizens.

The CoE-EU Joint Project “Technical Assistance on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in **Greece**” launched in 2016 continues until 15 February 2018. In 2017, the activities focused on 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 components included workshops on IMC, LFB, SMP, PEB, and ELoGE. A special Conference on Metropolitan Areas in cooperation with CDDG was organised in Thessaloniki in September.

Another joint CoE-EU initiative “Human Resources management in Local Self-Government” in **Serbia** (March 2016 to December 2017) is implemented by the Centre of Expertise in cooperation with Serbian Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, Association of Towns and Municipalities. The Project is based on the achievements of the Programme “Strengthening Local Self-Government in Serbia”, phases 1 and 2 (2006-2012). It is built on the implementation of the Strategy of Public Administration Reform (PAR Strategy) in accordance with the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which provides a solid basis for setting-up strong and stable local authorities in the country. The Project is based on two regulations: the Law on employees in autonomous provinces and local self-government units and the Law which will regulate salaries of employees in public sector (including autonomous provinces and local government units). The successful implementation of both laws is closely linked to the Strategy for Professional Training of Employees in Local Self-government Units. The Project also supports introduction of human resources management function in LSG units and the establishment of professional training system of the LSG units’ employees, as well as development and adoption of the Law on National Training Academy. The Project’s closing event presenting its main achievements and results was held on 5 December 2017 in Belgrade.

¹ An independent evaluation of Phase II of the project was carried out in September-October 2016 to assess the extent to which the project achieved its objectives; to evaluate the relevance and added value of CoE intervention; and to identify possible lines of action for future activities.

Since 2015, the project “Decentralisation and Territorial Consolidation in **Ukraine**” has been providing policy and legal expertise in line with the CoE standards, as well as capacity-building activities to amalgamated communities in order for them to deliver better services. A peer review on the reform of the training system for local civil servants took place in May 2017 and launched an important process towards modernising both the training market and the human resource management at the local level. Cooperation with state and local authorities from Donetsk and Luhansk regions has been consolidated; two forums on decentralisation, as well as a Leadership Academy, Best Practice Programme and a media contest have been organised. A high-level study visit of the national authorities (MPs, Ministry of Regional Development, and National Agency on Civil Service) to Spain was arranged. Direct local expert support has been provided to the Specialised Parliamentary Commission, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Regional Development. The Cooperation with USAID project DOBRE has been established and allowed to reach a greater number of mayors of amalgamated communities to enhance their leadership skills

A three-year **Partnership on Good Governance** (PGG) Programme (formerly Partnership Cooperation Framework) between CoE and EU started in January 2015 and run until the end of 2017. Its beneficiaries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. The Centre of Expertise supported the on-going process of reform of local government in participating countries, including improvement of the financial management of local administrations through benchmarking, and capacity-building to help local authorities create inter-municipal cooperation arrangements.

At the same time, over a dozen of smaller projects and activities were funded by the Ordinary Budget of the Centre of Expertise or in cooperation with local stakeholders all over Europe:

In **Belarus**, the Centre implemented a small-scale project in Minsk consisting of a training for senior municipal official and mayors on how to face and respond to labor market challenges at local level (in co-operation with EIPA) on 11-13 October 2017, and a specific introductory training on HRM in the course of which the Serbian experience was shared (at the specific request of the Belarus counterparts).

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the LAP was launched for the benefit of newly elected mayors, in cooperation with the Associations of Cities and Municipalities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. The third stage will be delivered in early 2018. The Centre also organised a forum with relevant stakeholders to discuss Human Resource Management at all levels with a view to developing an Action Plan level project to deliver good governance at local level.

In **Bulgaria**, in addition to the ELoGE, the first round of the Best Practice in Local Government Programme was conducted.

In **Cyprus**, the Centre and the Union of Cypriot Municipalities (UCM) implemented the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) project. The final report was presented in December. Also, under the Cypriot Chairmanship of the CoE Committee of Ministers, the Centre organised a European Conference on IMC and Good Governance in cooperation with the Cypriot government and the UCM on 8 February 2017 in Nicosia with CDDG members, European experts and local authorities from about 20 countries as participants.

The Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) was successfully delivered for 20 mayors and senior municipal officials in **Lithuania** in cooperation with Dainava training centre. Representatives from the Ministry also participated in the final stage which served as a constructive platform to promote interaction between levels of governance.

A Peer Review on the Strategy on Development of Local Self-Government until 2020 was organised in July 2017 in **Slovenia**.

ELoGE accreditations were requested and granted to various organisations in Greece, Spain, and Poland. At the end of the year, a new request was received from two Italian regions. In December, a special international ELoGE ceremony was organised in Madrid to deliver labels to municipalities from 5 member states under a CoE-UDITE² project.

Best Practice Programmes (BPP) continued in **Hungary, Romania, Moldova, and Bulgaria**.

A special training programme on **Leadership Academy for Cross-Border Cooperation** was completed to help several neighbouring municipalities from Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina build comprehensive and sustainable cross-border cooperation.

The Centre continued working on the revision and development of its **capacity-building tools**: the Leadership Academy Programme was revised and updated, with new modules on Ethics, Cross Border, and City to City Cooperation, as well as modules for the central authorities. New tools on CBC for Practitioners and on Civil Participation were developed. The Public Ethics tool (PEB) was revised to include Public Ethics Infrastructure and Corruption Risk Analysis. An on-line training course on 12 Principles of Good Governance is being developed. The Amalgamation toolkit "Territorial Reforms in Europe: does size matter?" will provide guidance on territorial reform policy options and steps to follow for member states considering or starting to implement territorial reforms, amalgamation, consolidation or alternative solutions such as inter-municipal cooperation. It is therefore a practical tool, based on European experience. It contains an overview members states' experience and recent developments in territorial reforms; arguments for and against amalgamation; policies, practical solutions, lessons learned, best practices for territorial reforms; practical policy recommendations.

Finally, a **Winter School** took place in March 2017 in Innsbruck, Austria. It provided training of trainers from a dozen of countries and Centre's staff on three highly popular tools such as HRM, PMP, and SMP. It also provided an opportunity for the strategic planning exercise for the Centre's staff.

Appendix I contains more detailed information on the activities implemented in 2017 in each country. Appendix II provides a list of toolkits developed and applied by the Centre of Expertise.

3. Relations with Partners

Cooperation with the European Union and its institutions

The European Commission is an important partner of the CoE. It currently co-finances some of the biggest programmes implemented by the Centre of Expertise, such as the PGG for the EaP countries, Serbia, and Greece.

Within the EU Danube Strategy, the Centre initiated coordination with the Priority Area 10 "Building Institutional Capacity and Cooperation", in particular with the Urban Platform, the Capacity Building Platform and the Danube Local Actors Platform to promote good governance and other CoE tools. The Centre was also invited to join the Danube Local Actors Platform to share tools and good practice to support multi-level governance reforms. Delegates at the 4th Danube Participation Day in Budapest (October 2017) agreed to adopt and disseminate the **Guidelines for civil participation** in political decision-making in the context of their work. There was also significant interest in the new toolkit on participation and a pilot project could be developed for implementation in the Danube region in 2018.

² Federation of European Local Chief Executives

Cooperation with the OECD

The Centre has been cooperating with the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** for a number of years. This year, it participated in the First Steering Committee Meeting to establish an Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment at the OECD Headquarters in November. The meeting set the strategic vision of the Observatory for the next phase, following the pilot report on Subnational Governments Around the World: Structure and Finance. This is the first initiative undertaken at such a large scale, to organise and standardise data collection on subnational government finance and investment, as well as territorial organisation, in over 100 countries around the world.

Further cooperation was also discussed with OECD SIGMA, Public Governance Directorate, and the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development. Several OECD colleagues were invited to address the December CDDG meeting.

Cooperation with the OSCE

The Council of Europe and OSCE have a framework agreement of cooperation on local and regional democracy. Regular contacts have been maintained with the Vienna and Warsaw offices, as well as field offices in the Balkans and Ukraine. The OSCE is closely associated to the implementation of legal assistance and capacity building programmes implemented by the Centre of Expertise in Albania, Serbia, and Ukraine.

Cooperation with the UN and UNDP

The Council of Europe and UNDP have a Memorandum of Understanding for co-operating in the field of local democracy. UNDP country missions are regularly involved in the implementation of the Centre's sizeable programmes, in particular in Albania, Armenia and Ukraine.

In 2017, the Centre participated as an observer to the session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration at the UN Headquarters in New York, where the development of the universal principles of good governance was discussed.

Cooperation with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

CEMR has been a long-standing partner and a good platform for sharing of experience and expertise, as well as for promotion of the Centre's tools: for example, it helped in rallying the support of its members to piloting the Local Finance Benchmarking and was a partner of the Centre in testing it in Portugal, Spain and Greece.

The CEMR is a part of the **UCLG – United Cities and Local Governments**, with which the Centre has also developed cooperation. In October, the Head of the Centre presented the Centre's tools at the training on peer reviews in Morocco, organised by the **UCLG-Africa**. The UCLGA proposed to develop a joined project in order to train the African experts and trainers in the use of the CoE tools, in particular peer reviews, HRM, PEB, LFB, and ELoGE.

Cooperation with the 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 (NGOs) 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. The Centre also agreed to act as an Associate in some of the EU-funded projects implemented by ALDA, and participated in the Conference on the LADDER (Local authorities as drivers for development, education, and raising awareness) project in Strasbourg in November.

Cooperation with the European 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 supported the implementation of a pilot project to benchmark ELoGE in 10 municipalities – two from each of the 5 countries represented in the Governing Board: France, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, and Spain. The Ceremony of Awards and a round table to share experience on the implementation of ELoGE was organised in December 2017 in Madrid.

Cooperation with the European Network of Training Organisations for Local and Regional Authorities (ENTO)

The Centre organises training activities with ENTO in order to train experts in the use and implementation of the capacity-building tools on leadership, ethics, HRM and good governance. In 2017, the training did not take place due to the lack of funds.

Cooperation with National Partners

All country-specific capacity-building activities are implemented in close cooperation with national partners. Most often, such partners are associations of local authorities and ministries in charge of local government. Information on the relations with these specific partners (Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) in Norway, National Institute for Territorial Studies (INET) in France, Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) in Austria, Association of Basque local authorities (EUDEL), Polish Foundation to Support Local Democracy (FRDL) in Poland, Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia (ISIG) in Italy) is available in the description of country-specific and regional programmes (Appendix I).

The Centre of Expertise has Memoranda of Understanding with INET and ENA (France).

4. Prospects for 2018

In **Albania**, the Centre is planning to implement the LAP and continue supporting the HRM, other projects are under discussion. The projects' continuation in **Armenia** and **Serbia** are also being discussed.

The Centre will keep working with **Greece** (ELoGE ceremony will be the final event of the current project in February), and **Cyprus**, where a joint project is now being prepared with the EU.

In **Ukraine**, a new project will start as a follow-up of the on-going one on decentralisation. It will be enshrined in the new CoE Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021. The project will use the cumulated expertise of the Centre to advise the main national authorities on decentralisation; and the tools of the Centre to continue improving the capacity of amalgamated local authorities (leadership skills, learning from the best experience of peers, human resources management).

In **Croatia**, a CBC Conference under the Croatian Chairmanship of the CoE Committee of Ministers will be organised in 2018.

The **Leadership Academy Programme** will continue in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. A regional **LAP for central authorities** is planned in cooperation with the Regional School of Public Administration (RESPA) in the **Western Balkans**. A LAP for central authorities is being discussed with the National Institute of Administration in **Romania**.

In the area of **Good Governance** – ELoGE projects are foreseen in Spain, Poland, Greece, and Italy. More requests for accreditation are being prepared by several other countries.

The Centre plans to continue supporting **BPP** implementation in Hungary, Romania, and Moldova.

More toolkits will be updated and published on the Centre's website, including the tool on Municipal Amalgamation, the revised and updated EDEN– electronic platform for cross-border cooperation, and a new e-learning platform on 12 Principles of Good Governance.

Finally, the Centre will work on the implementation of its Strategic Plan – by implementing the above activities and taking a more impact-oriented approach, which requires a clearer strategic vision, and an inclusive strategic planning process. Promotion of Good Governance, new tools on participation, cross-border cooperation, and public ethics, as well as the development of regional projects will be among 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 will continue working more on fund-raising.

APPENDIX I – Activities in 2016

1. Albania

The Project “Strengthening Local Government Structures and Cooperation between Local Elected Representatives in Albania – Phase II” (2012 – 2017) supports the on-going decentralisation process and the consolidation of the principles of good governance. It is implemented in cooperation with the Congress and is funded by the Government of Switzerland. The Centre’s part of the project aims to strengthen local government structures through 1) improving conditions for and fostering the implementation of Inter-Municipal Cooperation (IMC) initiatives; and 2) supporting the creation of standards and benchmarks on HRM, transposed into legislation and practices.

Phase II of the project expired on 30 June 2017. Phase III of the project was agreed with SDC as an "exit" phase designed to ensure sustainability of outcomes of the previous two phases. It began on 1 August for a two year period with the focus on the following:

- Developing the e-PAV (electronic platform for public administration) into a fully interoperable public administration portal incorporating standardised procedures in respect of CM/Rec(2004)15 and regrouping the full range of HRM tools and procedures elaborated in the context of project activities, respectful of the autonomy of local HRM units;
- Cementing ownership of the portal by the Albanian Government and consolidating management and hosting at the Albanian Agency on Information Society (AKSHI);
- Consolidation and completion of standard HRM templates and tools to complete the portal;
- Complementary training activities to ensure central and local staff are fluent in HRM procedures and tools and the functioning of the portal;
- Revision and fine-tuning of the Training Needs Analysis and methodology prepared under Phase II to ensure that it reflects the needs of beneficiaries;
- Supporting the Albanian School for Public Administration to develop a pilot credit-based evaluation system for its curricula and training coordination / management, mainstreaming good governance principles in training delivery;
- Mainstreaming good governance principles across Albanian School for Public Administration curricula.

2. Armenia

Support to consolidating local democracy in Armenia (follow-up) project was launched in August 2017 in the context of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia. The project builds on outputs from the previous project by supporting the decentralisation agenda and building capacities of Armenian communities.

Legal and policy advice support the preparation and adoption of legislation on inter-municipal cooperation, a Roadmap for Decentralisation, and relevant implementing legislation. Awareness-raising and capacity-building activities support dissemination of the public ethics benchmark prepared under Phase II and the Guidelines on Civil Participation adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017.

3. Austria

See section on relations with partners

4. Belarus

The Centre implemented a small scale project in Minsk consisting of a training for senior municipal official and mayors on how to face and respond to labor market challenges at local level (in co-operation with EIPA) on 11-13 October 2017 and a specific introductory training on HRM in the course of which the Serbian experience will be shared (at the specific request of the Belarusian counterparts). The prospects for a comprehensive project under an Action Plan are being discussed. See also under the PGG activities.

5. Bosnia and Herzegovina

The LAP was launched for the benefit of newly elected mayors, in cooperation with the Associations of Cities and Municipalities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska and the third stage will be delivered in early 2018. The Centre also organised a forum with relevant stakeholders to discuss Human Resource Management at all levels with a view to developing an Action Plan level project to deliver good governance at local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6. Bulgaria

Bulgaria is regularly running and awarding the ELoGE to its local authorities. The first BPP was implemented in 2017 with three thematic areas: the municipal support for civic initiatives, new management technologies and solutions, social innovation and partnerships.

7. Croatia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro)

Two final stages of LAP for CBC - Leadership for Cross-Border Cooperation course for local authorities of Dubrovnik and neighbouring municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro were held in Trebinje and Herceg Novi.

More projects are being discussed with the Croatian authorities, including an organisation of a CBC Conference under the Croatian Chairmanship of the CoE Committee of Ministers in 2018.

8. Cyprus

A Training Needs Analysis (TNA) project was carried out in 2017 in cooperation with UCM and the Ministry of Interior. The results of the project were presented and discussed in December. The TNA will be followed by preparation of the NTS in 2018.

An international conference on IMC and local government reforms was organised under the Cypriot Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers on 8 February 2017 in Nicosia, with CDDG members, European experts and local authorities from about 20 countries as participants. The conclusions of the Conference will help the Cypriot Government prepare and carry out the planned reform involving creation of inter-municipal clusters.

9. France

Since 2008 and the signature of a formal cooperation agreement, the Centre has developed close ties with the French National Institute of Local Government Studies (INET), based in Strasbourg. The Institute trains the senior officials of French local authorities and is part of the French National Centre of Local Public Service. 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.

The Centre also cooperates closely with the French National School of Administration (ENA) to implement the capacity-building activities in Serbia in Ukraine.

In addition, the Head of the Centre of Expertise was invited to present the 12 Principles of Good Governance at the French Parliament. The French authorities are also actively participating in the Centre's peer reviews and conferences. One of the French municipalities (Fleury-les-Aubrais) participated in the ELoGE benchmarking within the Centre-UDITE project.

10. Greece

The EU-CoE Joint Project "Technical Assistance on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in Greece" was launched in August 2016 and continues until May 2018.

In 2017, activities focused on policy advice on the governance of metropolitan areas and the status of the capital (jointly with the CDDG), competences by island municipalities and on management of local budgets improvement of the fiscal supervision system. Capacity building was provided on Local Finance Benchmarking, Public Ethics Benchmarking (including new component of corruption risk assessment), SMP (Strategic Municipal Planning, 3 pilot municipalities), IMC (focusing on islands) and ELoGE (45 municipalities signed up to participate in the benchmarking). The Greek Association of Local Authorities applied for and was granted accreditation for ELoGE in September 2017.

In October, the CDDG organised within the framework of this project an international seminar on governance of metropolitan areas in Thessaloniki.

11. Hungary

See section of toolkits and partners

12. Lithuania

The 2 remaining stages of the Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) were organised in cooperation with the Dainava training centre. Eighteen mayors were trained on how to provide institutional leadership and good governance in their municipalities. The Centre also delivered a special training for 12 local trainers to ensure sustainability and local ownership of the programme in the future. The follow-up for the next year, including ELoGE, is being discussed.

13. Republic of Moldova

See section of toolkits and partners. Moldova is also a part of the PGG project which is managed by the Centre's team in the Council of Europe's Chisinau office (see PGG below for more details). A separate project under the Country Action Plan was prepared for 2018.

14. Poland

Following implementation of LAP and TNA, the Polish Foundation to Support Local Democracy (FRDL), applied for and received accreditation of ELoGE.

15. Romania

The Centre delivered expertise to the Romanian authorities in developing cost and quality standards for decentralised services, and supported implementation of BPP.

16. Slovenia

The Centre cooperated with the CDDG in the organisation of a Peer Review in July 2017 on the Strategy on Development of Local Self-Government until 2020. Peers from France, Ireland, Slovakia, Greece, and the UK took part in the review. The report providing advice and recommendations was submitted to the Slovenian authorities in October.

17. Serbia

Significant progress was made in the implementation of the Joint Programme "Strengthening of administrative capacities in area of local self-government" (2016-2017).

The activities addressed Human Resources Management practices and continued to support the establishment of coordinated, continuous and sustainable system of professional training of local government staff, in cooperation with STMC and the Ministry for Public Administration. The project ended in December and negotiations for a follow-up project beginning in the course of 2018 are advanced.

The establishment of a transparent, reliable and efficient local self-government system, in line with the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (the Carter), is one of the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Serbia by signing the Charter in 2007. The abovementioned project contributes to the fulfilment of the Charter commitments, in particular under two main components of the project: Human Resources Management (HRM) and Professional Development.

During 2017, the project has organised a series of capacity building activities on the new HRM function and newly established professional development system for heads of local administrations and employees in local HRM units. Eight regional trainings have been held on the topic of HRM in LGs, each lasting for three days. The aim of these trainings was to efficiently and fully harmonise local administration with the novelties prescribed in the new Law and establishing a HRM function based on modern principles. In 2017, 50% of LGs participates in these trainings, with 373 participants in total. To provide LSG employees with more detailed training on the HRM function and the new Law provisions, the Project has developed and implemented an eLearning programme for modern HRM function. During nine weeks of the programme 146 participants from LSG successfully finalised the course.

In addition, expert assistance was provided to local self-governments in applying new legal provisions in the area of professional development and local self-government which has shown to be particularly useful to LSGs and also to the line Ministry in analysing LSG concerns in regard to the law implementation.

In order to analyse situation in 50 LSGs (including 20 pilot LSGs) at the beginning of the Law implementation and approximately six months after the implementation of the Law, the performance management index was run. Aim of the exercise was to measure the real impact achieved and to compare achievements in pilot municipalities and those who were not mentored by the project.

At the central level, assistance was provided to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government in the area of professional development, jurisdiction within the mandate of the Ministry. Expert assistance was delivered also to the newly established Council for Professional Development of Local Self Government in setting up legal framework and assisting in accreditation process of the institutions authorised to conduct trainings. In addition, a set of documents has been developed such as a Rulebook on mandatory elements for general and specific training programmes and technical criteria for the implementation of training programmes. Also, the Project has delivered four priority training programmes, prioritised in line with findings from the National Training Needs assessment. Two out of four training programmes are being currently implemented in the form of 65 workshops throughout the country, namely the programme on General administrative procedure and Preparation and implementation of projects and Local Economic Development. Implementation of trainings is in parallel testing the professional development system which is being established with the Project assistance and shall be run by the Ministry and the National Training Academy (NTA) in the future.

The Project helped revise the new Strategy for professional development of LSG employees and its AP, which sets up new framework for LSG professional development.

The Project has provided support in defining the institutional framework that will be taken over by the National Training Academy once established. The results accomplished within this Joint Programme could support NTA in efficient work, preferably related to the accreditation procedure for legal and natural providers, mandatory elements of implemented training programs, as well as monitoring and evaluation of trainings.

Two professional development systems, at the national and local level are being developed but jet not connected in all its segments. To assist in merging and modernising the systems of communication two technical specifications are developed: one on HRM data base for local level and another on professional development for LG employees. The first one is planned to be used for development of the unified software solutions for LGs and the second one for development of unified professional database for central and local level.

As specifically requested by the line ministry, the project has prepared the Methodology for monitoring and evaluation of trainings implemented in LGs, and the Action plan for monitoring and evaluation of 65 trainings which is being currently used by outsourced company to monitor some of the trainings throughout the country. A road map for the LSG system integration into the national system for professional development, specifically its integration to the National Training Academy, was prepared.

The Project's closing event was held on 5 December 2017 in Belgrade.

18. Spain

The Association of Basque local authorities (EUDEL) applied for and received accreditation of ELoGE. The Centre supported benchmarking of the 12 principles in 15 Basque municipalities in 2017. The ELoGE Ceremony was planned for January 2018.

19. Ukraine

The "Decentralisation and Territorial Consolidation" project focused on:

- The provision of legal expertise for the revision and improvement of the legislation related to the local government reform in line with the European standards: more than 10 opinions and thematic reports delivered on request of the Government and the Parliament, one peer review on reforming the human resources management at local level organised in Kyiv and led to a full report with recommendations;
- The improvement of the central authorities' knowledge related to decentralisation: setting up and sustaining of small expert teams with the Ministry of Regional Development and the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers, one study visit on local self-government and public administration issues organised in Spain;
- The strengthening of the public administration capacity to deliver reforms: leadership capacities of mayors of newly amalgamated communities including the Donetsk and Luhansk regions increased, a Concept of Reforming Professional Training System of Civil Servants, Local Self-Government Officials and Local Councillors was drafted with CoE support;
- The Best Practice in Local Government and the Best Media Coverage of the decentralisation reform were promoted and awarded;
- An all-Ukrainian opinion poll was launched in November 2017.

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

20. Regional Projects

Partnership on Good Governance (PGG) - Eastern Partnership: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus

The establishment of a transparent, reliable and efficient local self-government system, in line with the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, is one of the commitments undertaken by the Eastern Partnership countries. In 2017, the Centre continued to help them in meeting these commitments by providing assistance on a range of important issues, in particular under two main components of the project: Inter-Municipal Cooperation (IMC) and Local Finance Benchmarking (LFB).

The Centre launched a call for proposals for grants supporting projects promoting inter-municipal cooperation in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova. 34 consortia of municipalities and joint municipal enterprises from those three countries submitted their proposals. Altogether 5 grants were awarded (one in Georgia and two in each Armenia and Moldova), amounting to about EUR 170 000 in total. The supported projects sought to improve provision of several public services - waste management, water supply, road maintenance, as well as tourism development. The projects were implemented between July and October 2017.

In the first half of the year the CoE experts carried out a pre-feasibility study assessing the institutional, organisational and technical possibilities for IMC on solid waste management in Adjara region in Georgia. Subsequently, series of meetings and a workshop on IMC took place in Batumi and Keda, Adjara region. The activity gathered together representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, Adjara Government (Ministry of Finance and Economy), local stakeholders and the CoE experts. The latter presented three technical scenarios for the material, personnel and financial requirements of the solid waste management service for the three municipalities of Adjara: Khulo, Keda and Shuakhevi. As a result of discussions, a new option (combining two original scenarios) was developed.

The Centre also published three reports on the results of the LFB pilot in all three countries: "Local Finance Benchmarking Toolkit: piloting and lessons learned", prepared by the international and local experts who had carried out the pilot. They are now available on the websites of Centre of Expertise and the Council of Europe Office in Chisinau.

Following the interest in the LFB pilot first phase, Armenia and Georgia requested that it is extended to a number of their amalgamated municipalities to improve local finance management, and to foster fiscal decentralisation. Ten more municipalities participated in the second phase of the pilot in Georgia. In Armenia, seven municipalities took part. Subsequently, the pilot was extended to eight further municipalities in Armenia (third phase). Moreover, local finance benchmarking and indicators web-application, created by the CoE was adjusted to Georgian and Armenian needs. After the closure of the Project, the software and the database will be handled by the domestic authorities.

The staff of the Executive Committee of Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, Moldova participated in a series of trainings on records management and normative acts drafting. The goal of the trainings was not only to strengthen their capacities in management and drafting but also consolidate the dialog between regional and central authorities in Moldova. 38 participants benefited from a series of training sessions on regulations for public procurement, public records management, labour relations, legal drafting techniques, protocol of state institutions. They could also learn how to write a project proposal and submit it for funding.

Two trainings on Enhancing Public (Financial) Governance and Management in European Cities for mayors, senior local public officials and representatives of ministries from Moldova and Armenia were carried out by European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA). The participants were given an overview of the Politics and Management Deal approach and methodology as well as skills to design public strategies and establish performance and management/control systems.

EIPA also delivered a training on “Prosperity - more employment, less regional, urban and rural disparity and SMART local economic strategies” in Minsk, Belarus, in cooperation with the Belarusian Academy of Public Administration. It was addressed to senior local public officials from local authorities and the Academy. The training aimed at providing participants with a sound overview of the economic growth tools and job related policies from different European cities. They acquired knowledge and skills to develop local tools and papers in accordance with national policy priorities. The special sessions and practical exercises were dedicated to formulating development policies, including best practises, as well as preparing documents on regional development at the national level.

Belarus officials participated in a training “Introduction to Human Resource Management” in Minsk, Belarus. It was for them an opportunity to learn about the Centre’s Toolkit on Human Resource Management, but also the results of the related project implemented in Serbia.

A delegation of representatives of central and local public authorities from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Belarus participated in a study visit to Bilbao in Spain. The purpose was for them to learn the Spanish IMC experience, management of policies for public services among municipalities and relevant practices.

To summarise the progress of the Project and pave the way for future cooperation, a regional workshop on a methodology for monitoring and evaluation of programmes in the area of local self-government was organised in Vienna, Austria. The Project’s closing event, a regional workshop took place in Prague. The workshop was an opportunity for the Eastern Partnership countries to discuss lessons learned and but also to learn the basics of the strategic municipal planning.

More information is available on the project’s website:

http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/EAP/default_en.asp

http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/centre_expertise/local_finance_benchmarking/default_en.asp?

http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/EAP/IMC-mapping_en.pdf

APPENDIX II – Current Tools

The development and promotion of new innovative capacity-building tools is among the Centre's priorities. The tools are also being regularly revised and updated. All relevant institutions are encouraged to use those tools, provided that the copy right is respected, qualified experts are used, and the Centre of Expertise is informed. Currently, the Centre implements projects based on the following toolkits:

Democratic Participation

CLEAR - Citizen Participation

Citizens Engagement - Increasing Civic Participation in Frameworks and Activities of Cooperation between Municipalities

Human Resources and Leadership

HRM - Human Resources Management

TNA - Training Needs Analysis and National Training Strategy

LAP - Leadership Academy Programme for local authorities

LAP for central authorities (under preparation)

LAP for CBC Leadership for Cross-Border Cooperation

Quality Public Services

PMP - Performance Management

SMP - Strategic Municipal Planning

BPP - Best Practice Programme

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

Territorial Amalgamation (under preparation)

CBC - Cross-Border Cooperation

C2C - City to City Cooperation

EDEN – online CBC database

Good Governance

ELoGE - European Label of Governance Excellence Benchmark

All tools are available at http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/WCD/Toolkits_en.asp.

APPENDIX III – List of Abbreviations

ALDA: European Association for Local Democracy
 BPP: Best Practice Programme
 C2C: City to City Cooperation
 CBC: Cross-border Cooperation
 CEMR: Council of European Municipalities and Regions
 CDDG: European Committee for Democracy and Governance
 CDLR: European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy
 CLEAR: Can do, Like to, Enabled to, Asked to, Responded to
 CoE: Council of Europe
 EaP: Eastern Partnership
 EEA: European Economic Area
 ELoGE: European Label of Governance Excellence
 ENA: French National School of Administration
 ENTO: European Network of Training Organisations for Local and Regional Authorities
 E-PAV: Electronic Platform for Public Administration
 Eu/ European Union
 EUDEL: Association of Basque local authorities
 FRDL: Polish Foundation to Support Local Democracy
 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
 KDZ: Centre for Public Administration Research
 KS: Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities
 LAP: Leadership Academy Programme
 LFB: Local Finance Benchmark
 NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
 NTS: National Training Strategy
 OSCE: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
 PCF: Programmatic Cooperation Framework
 PEB: Public Ethics Benchmarking Programme
 PMP: Performance Management Programme
 RESPA/ Regional School of Public Administration
 SMP: Strategic Municipal Planning
 TNA: Training Needs Assessment
 ToT: Training of Trainers
 U.Di.T.E: European Association of Local Chief Executives
 UNDP: United Nations Development Programme