



Strasbourg, 19 April 2016

CDDG-Bu(2016)11

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

MEETING REPORT¹

4 March 2016
Council of Europe, Paris
Room 2

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened and chaired by Mr Paul Rowsell, Chair of the CDDG. The list of participants is set out in Appendix I.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda as adopted is set out in Appendix II.

3. Decisions of the Committee of Ministers of relevance to the work of the CDDG

The Bureau took note of the information set out in document CDDG-Bu(2016)2. It was informed that the abridged report of the CDDG's December 2015 meeting had been transmitted to the Committee of Ministers following discussion in the Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM).

The Bureau also took note of the interest expressed by the Ministers' Deputies in the work and future priorities of the Committee. The Chairman recalled the breakfast with the Permanent representatives in April 2015 and the Secretariat was instructed to look into organising a similar event at an appropriate time.

¹ Prepared by the Secretariat and approved by the Chair.

4. Developing tools on good democratic governance and supporting reforms

4.1 *Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance*

Procedures for accreditation of national stakeholders' platforms and awarding the Label

The Bureau examined the draft procedures for accreditation of national structures and for awarding the EloGE Label (document CDDG-Bu(2016)3).

In the discussion, it was made clear that the proposed regulations for national platforms and for new institutions and bodies reflected the applicable regulations in force to ensure both consistency and continuity. Clear rules also had the advantage of preventing decisions being challenged on grounds of unequal treatment.

While the Bureau was receptive to these arguments it nevertheless invited the Secretariat to draw up streamlined provisions on which the opinion of the Legal Counsel could be sought. For the comprehension of the general public, local authorities and government administrations, an information booklet could also be published.

The Bureau also expressed the wish that member States currently implementing the Strategy would be allowed to operate under the existing arrangements which had met with the approval of the previous European Stakeholders' Platform. It was informed that Bulgaria has requested a new accreditation for its national platform. Norway was also interested in continuing with the current arrangements.

It was agreed that the first meeting of the Enlarged Bureau acting as Council of Europe Platform should take place on 18 May in the afternoon.

4.2 *Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform*

Activities and Prospects for 2016

The Bureau took note of the activities and prospects for 2016 as set out in document CDDG-Bu(2016)3. It noted in particular that a new programme on human-resource management and capacity building will start soon in Serbia (with substantial EU funding) and two new toolkits (on Amalgamation and on the Leadership Academy with an emphasis on the national level) will be drawn up.

The Bureau underlined the importance of member States' contributions to ensure that the latest developments in best practices and policies are taken into account.

5. State of implementation of the CDDG's activities according to its terms of reference

5.1 *Terms of Reference 2016-2017*
 CDDG Work Programme
 Framework for prioritisation of CDDG activities

The Bureau examined the state of implementation of its activities in the light of its terms of reference for 2016-2017 as well as the framework of functions and activities presented in document CDDG-Bu(2016)6.

In addition to the core issues set out in its terms of reference, the Bureau suggested that the Committee continue its reflections on new forms and tools of participatory democracy and involvement, including e-democracy and e-government applications, the rise of new types of political parties, and its reflection on inclusive societies at all levels.

The Committee should not aim to respond rapidly to high-profile current issues but rather on their implications for democratic society and the different tiers of government, focussing on democratic structures and tools and defining sustainable responses and practices in relation to democratic challenges. In this connection a reference was again made to the Secretary General's report on human rights, democracy and rule of law as a source of inspiration for action.

The Bureau further underlined the following:

- the need to consider not only the tools of good democratic governance (Strategy, Centre of Expertise, Peer reviews) but also the key beneficial results thereof that impacted positively on economic growth, prosperity, inclusiveness and democratic stability and security;
- the role, implementation and impact of the twelve principles in terms of good democratic governance in member States;
- the importance of transversal coordination with other Council of Europe bodies.

As regards the Structure and Operation reports, the Bureau stressed that they are useful if constantly updated. The Secretariat was asked to raise member States' awareness of and interest in these Reports.

As regards the Rapid response service, it should remain quick and informal. However, to avoid duplication of requests and responses, member States could be invited to authorise the dissemination of past responses to new requesting states. The Secretariat was invited to look into this issue and make proposals.

The Secretariat was asked to present an updated framework for prioritisation of the CDDG activities for the next plenary meeting.

5.2 *Compendium of Council of Europe texts in the area of democracy*

The Bureau examined its draft report draft to the GR-DEM as set out in document CDDG-Bu(2016)7 and the draft Compendium in its current (22 February) version.

The Bureau took note that consultations were ongoing with other Directorates and bodies in the Council of Europe. It suggested that where possible, chapters should evolve from more general to more specific relationships in terms of democratic institutions.

It agreed that the draft report to the GR-DEM be slightly modified with regard to the issue of publication of the Compendium and submitted again to its members for approval. It also wished to be provided with a copy of the Compendium once internal consultations are finalised.

It finally agreed that the Compendium be disseminated for information and possible comments to all CDDG delegations prior to being transmitted to the GR-DEM.

5.3 *CDDG Working Groups*

Guidelines on the participation of civil society in political decision-making

The Bureau took note of the information presented in document CDDG-Bu(2016)8.

The Bureau considered that issues to be considered in relation to the updating of Recommendation (2001)19 on the participation of citizens in local public life were closely related to the meaningful participation of civil society in political decision-making. These two points should be examined concurrently by the working group.

Given the broad scope of the Committee's mandate in terms of democracy, the composition of the working group should be well-balanced in terms of adequate representation at national level also on the part of the Conference.

In order for the participating member States to identify the most suitable experts, the Working Group's terms of reference should be communicated with the convocation. The Secretariat was asked to draw up draft Terms of reference for the Bureau's approval by written procedure.

The working papers currently being prepared by a consultant should be made available to the Working Party and the Bureau members alike.

The Working Group should be open to CDDG participants², should they wish to attend.

² As defined by the terms of reference of the CDDG.

The first meeting of the Working Group could take place in the last week of April.

5.4 *Conference on Good Governance at Local Level – Challenges and perspectives – Sofia, 31 March 2016*

Update on preparations and programme

The Bureau took note of document CDDG-Bu(2016)1 and of the updated programme. It was informed that delegations of the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly would participate.

6. Preparation of the 5th meeting of the CDDG (19-20 May 2016)

6.1 *Draft Agenda*

The Bureau examined the proposals by the Secretariat and instructed it to prepare a draft agenda reflecting the points raised in the earlier discussions.

6.2 *Thematic exchanges of information, views and good practices*

Identification of topics for thematic exchanges

Discussions were underway with a number of member States in view of possible presentations and high-level representation at the thematic exchanges on the subject of administrative and local government reforms as well as on participatory democracy initiatives.

The Secretariat was invited to continue the preparations and to keep the Bureau duly informed.

7. Information on the activities of other relevant bodies

The Bureau took note of the information set out in document CDDG-Bu(2016)10.

8. Other business and date of the next meeting

The date for the next meeting of the Bureau would be agreed by electronic means following verification of possible constraints by the Secretariat.

E-Democracy and e-Governance Workshops in 2015

In light of previous discussions and decisions on publishing the proceedings of the CDDG's workshops on e-democracy and e-Governance, the Secretariat was invited to look into the most expedient modalities for finalising the publication of the proceedings and contributions of the Budapest workshop, with a view to presenting these at the next CDDG meeting.

APPENDIX I
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda [CDDG-Bu(2016)OJ1rev.]
3. Decisions of the Committee of Ministers of relevance to the work of the CDDG [CDDG-Bu(2016)2]
4. Developing tools on good democratic governance and supporting reforms
 - 4.1 *Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance*
- Procedures for accreditation of national stakeholders' platform and awarding the Label [CDDG-Bu(2016)3]
 - 4.2 *Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform*
- Activities and prospects for 2016 [CDDG-Bu(2016)4]
5. State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its Terms of Reference
 - 5.1 *Terms of Reference 2016-2017*
- CDDG work programme [CDDG-Bu(2016)5]
- Framework for prioritisation of CDDG activities [CDDG-Bu(2016)6]
 - 5.2 *Compendium of Council of Europe texts in the area of democracy*
- Final Draft [CDDG-Bu(2016)7]
 - 5.3 *CDDG Working Groups*
- Guidelines on the participation of civil society in political decision-making [CDDG-Bu(2016)8]
 - 5.4 *Conference on "Good Governance at Local Level – Challenges and perspectives" - Sofia, 31 March 2016*
- Update on preparations and programme [CDDG-Bu(2016)1]
6. Preparation of the 5th meeting of the CDDG (19-20 May 2016)
 - 6.1 *Draft agenda* [CDDG(2016)OJ1prov.]
 - 6.2 *Thematic exchanges of information, views and good practices*
- Identification of topics for thematic exchanges [CDDG-Bu(2016)9]
7. Information on the activities of other relevant bodies [CDDG-Bu(2016)10]
8. Other business and date of the next meeting