



Strasbourg, 4 November 2016

CDDG-Bu(2016)20

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

MEETING REPORT

30 September 2016
Council of Europe, Agora, Strasbourg
Room G02

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 was informed that the abridged report of the CDDG May 2016 meeting as well as the 2015 Activity Report by the Centre of Expertise would be discussed at the meeting of the Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM) on 4 October before being transmitted to the Committee of Ministers.

4. Developing tools on good democratic governance and supporting reforms

4.1 *From public ethics at local level to ethics in public life*

The Bureau took note of the information presented in document CDDG-Bu(2016)13. It underlined the need to address the findings set out in the Secretary General's report 2015 "State of Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law: A security imperative for Europe". It recommended to invite the Congress' rapporteur on Ethics and transparency at local level, Mr Herwig van Staa, as well as a representative GRECO to present their respective bodies' work in this area at the CDDG's November meeting and instructed the Secretariat to finalise the preparations for the exchange accordingly.

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)14. Ms Alina Tatarenko, Deputy Head of the Centre of Expertise, emphasised in particular the excellent cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities and the progress being made in the area of decentralisation. She underlined the significant number of requests received by the Centre for assistance also in areas such as inter-municipal cooperation and Local Finance Benchmarking.

The Bureau expressed its support for the tangible contribution to good governance provided by the Centre. In relation to the peer reviews, the revision of existing toolkits as well as the toolkit on amalgamation currently under preparation, it reiterated the importance for suggestions and contributions by CDDG delegations to ensure that the latest developments in good practices and policies in member states were included.

Concerning the Centre's evaluation, the members took note of the involvement of the CDDG through a questionnaire and asked for preliminary findings to be presented, if possible at the November meeting.

The Bureau encouraged the Secretariat to give greater visibility to the Centre's activities, for example by way of a dynamic presentation at an upcoming CDDG meeting, with a view to promoting positive action by CDDG members and their administrations.

Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance

The Bureau took note with interest of Romania's expressed intention to join the Strategy as well as of the discussions taking place with a number of interlocutors in other member States (including Poland, Portugal and Spain (Basque Country)).

The Bureau asked to be kept duly informed about possible applications for accreditation of national structures with a view to holding a meeting of the European Stakeholders' platform, if necessary, in early 2017.

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

The Bureau took note of the information presented in document CDDG-Bu(2016)15.

The Bureau noted the state of the preparations of the peer reviews scheduled in Armenia and in Greece expressing its appreciation for the generous efforts and contributions made by peers and member states alike.

The Secretariat recalled that following a general call for expressions of interest to participate in peer reviews, representatives from the member states are selected to match the needs for policy advice in specific areas of the requesting state while ensuring balanced participation in all respects.

5.2 *CDDG Working Group*

Guidelines for civil participation in political decision-making

Exchange with the working group (29 September 2016 at 4.00 pm)

Following the exchange with the members of the working group the previous day, the Bureau discussed issues that would merit further reflection by the CDDG as well as preparations for updating Recommendation CM/Rec (2001)19 on the participation of citizens in local public life.

In relation to this update scheduled for 2017, the Bureau recalled that the issues were closely related with the guidelines. At its November meeting, the CDDG should therefore decide on possible preparatory activities to be undertaken and review the composition of the working group to ensure a well-balanced representation and participation of the most suitable experts.

The Bureau discussed the importance of differentiating between the scope and substance of Recommendations by the Committee of Ministers, legally binding in nature, and guidelines which sought to create a positive and constructive working environment for civil participation in member states.

Regarding the guidelines, the Bureau:

- Took note of the preliminary draft text of the guidelines to be circulated to the working group members for final contributions;
- Concurred with the need to include relevant reference documents of the Council of Europe, on the basis also of the compendium,
- Instructed the Secretariat to prepare a paper outlining issues identified by the Bureau to give guidance to the CDDG.

The Chairman recalled the challenges facing democratic society and the functioning of democratic institutions in the member states, outlined also in the Secretary General's report. The guidelines should present appropriate mechanisms for civil participation, complementing representative democracy and strengthening democratic legitimacy and decision-making by public authorities, in order to overcome disengagement and rebuild trust.

With a view to meeting the deadline adopted by the CDDG at its December 2015 meeting, the Bureau recommended that:

- The Secretariat finalise the draft guidelines on the basis of the written submissions by the members of the working group, seek advice from the Directorate of Legal Advice on the draft and prepare a short paper outlining issues identified by Bureau to give guidance to the CDDG;
- Following the November meeting, the draft guidelines be revised by the Secretariat as per the CDDG's comments;
- The Bureau, appropriately mandated by the CDDG, finally review the text, possibly resolving remaining issues,
- The CDDG adopt the guidelines through silent procedure.

The draft guidelines would be transmitted no later than early February to the Committee of Ministers for adoption.

The Bureau was informed that the working group's co-Chairs had been invited to present the work on the guidelines to the Standing Committee of the Conference of NGOs on 10 October 2016.

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

The Bureau took note of document CDDG-Bu(2016)16 and examined the proposals for follow-up to be given by the Committee.

Given the practical nature of the Compendium, the Bureau felt that in addition to regular updates, the CDDG should seek to raise awareness and visibility of the Compendium, promoting its use at the level of the Council of Europe, the member states, other international institutions and research centres as well as among academic circles.

Council of Europe events such as the World Forum for Democracy or the European Local Democracy Week could be used to promote the Compendium.

6. Preparation of the 6th meeting of the CDDG (14-15 November 2016)

6.1 Draft Agenda

The Bureau examined the proposals by the Secretariat and instructed it to prepare a draft agenda for the November meeting 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 (Albania, Greece and Romania) with a view to possible 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 should continue the preparations and keep the Bureau duly informed.

Strengthening e-Democracy and e-Governance in member States

The Bureau took note of the information presented in document CDDG-Bu(2016)17 and agreed on the proposed line of action.

Democratic Governance of Metropolitan Areas

The Bureau took note of the information presented in document CDDG-Bu(2016)18 and asked the Secretariat to continue preparations accordingly. It also envisaged favourably the possible organisation of an event in a metropolitan city in 2017.

7. Information on the activities of other relevant bodies

The Bureau took note that the Chairman, Mr Paul Rowsell, would attend the 31st Session of the Congress from 19 to 21 October 2016 and events organised in Strasbourg during the European Local Democracy Week 2016 "*Living together in culturally diverse societies: respect, dialogue, interaction*".

8. Other business and date of the next meeting

The Bureau asked that an update on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on legal, operational and technical standards for e-voting (CAHVE) be presented at the next meeting. The CAHVE would finalise the new Recommendation on e-voting at its meeting on 3-4 November. The Vice-Chair, Mr Paul-Henri Philips, informed the Bureau that due to personal circumstances he would be unable to attend that meeting of CAHVE on behalf of the CDDG.

The date for the next meeting of the Bureau would be agreed by electronic means following verification of possible constraints by the Secretariat and in function of possible request for adhesion to the Strategy and the state of progress of the guidelines.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX II

AGENDA

Preceded by an exchange with the CDDG working group on guidelines for civil participation
in political decision-making
(29 September 2016 at 4.00 pm)

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda [CDDG-Bu(2016)OJ2]
3. Decisions of the Committee of Ministers of relevance to the work of the CDDG [CDDG-Bu(2016)12]
4. Developing tools on good democratic governance and supporting reforms
- 4.1 *From public ethics at local level to ethics in public life* [CDDG-Bu(2016)13]
- 4.2 *Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform*
- Activities and prospects for 2016
(Peer Reviews in member States) [CDDG-Bu(2016)14]
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)15]
- 5.2 *CDDG Working Group*
- Guidelines for civil participation in political decision-making –
Exchange with the working group
(29 September 2016 at 4.00 pm)
- 5.3 *Compendium of Council of Europe Texts in the area of Democracy*
- Follow-up to be given [CDDG-Bu(2016)16]
6. Preparation of the 6th meeting of the CDDG
(14-15 November 2016)
- 6.1 *Draft agenda* [CDDG(2016)OJ2prov.]

Thematic exchanges
- 6.2 *Strengthening e-Democracy and e-Governance in member States* [CDDG-Bu(2016)17]
- 6.3 *Democratic Governance of Metropolitan Areas*
- Models for democratic governance [CDDG-Bu(2016)18]
7. Information on the activities of other relevant bodies [CDDG-Bu(2016)19]
8. Other business and date of the next meeting