



Strasbourg, 22 July 2014

CDDG-Bu(2014)9

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

MEETING REPORT¹

3 July 2014
Office of the Council of Europe, Paris
Room 2

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened and chaired by the Chair of the CDDG, Mr Paul-Henri Philips (Belgium). The list of participants appears in Appendix I.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda as adopted appears in Appendix II.

3. Committee of Ministers decisions concerning the activities of the CDDG

The Bureau was informed that the Committee of Ministers had taken note of the abridged report of the CDDG's first meeting at the Deputies' 1024th meeting (2-3 July 2014).

The Bureau took note of the information concerning the achievements of the Austrian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers (November 2013-May 2014) and the activities planned during the Azerbaijani chairmanship (May-November 2014). Its attention focused on the "Conference on public service delivery in the context of human rights and good governance". The Bureau agreed that if the Azerbaijani authorities so desired, CDDG members would be invited to attend or to pass on information to departments or individuals concerned by the subject so that really competent and interested individuals could contribute to the event.

¹ Drawn up by the Secretariat and approved by the Chair.

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

The Bureau took note of the information set out in the working document and discussed the following points in particular.

With regard to point 2.1 (thematic workshops), the Chair and Mr Balthasar expressed the interest of Belgium – during the forthcoming Belgian chairmanship – and of Austria in holding thematic workshops on e-voting and e-governance respectively in 2015. The Bureau invited other countries to put forward proposals at the CDDG's next meeting in terms of holding workshops.

With regard to point 2.2 (rapid response service), the Bureau invited the Secretariat to study the arrangements for compiling and publishing the replies received by states and to report back at the next meeting.

With regard to point 3.1 (peer reviews), Ms Dragova announced Bulgaria's intention to seek a peer review on fiscal decentralisation in spring 2015. The Bureau considered the programme of "peer reviews" and asked for more details about the membership of the CDDG "teams" involved.

Under point 6.1 (review of conventions), the Bureau asked the Secretariat for a document listing the reservations and declarations entered by member states upon ratification of the relevant conventions so as to be able to request a review of the latter by the CDDG delegations.

5. Exchanges of information, views and good practices

5.1 Territorial reforms in member states

The Bureau took note of the questions put by Ukraine and Armenia in connection with the rapid response service. Members would do what they could in their respective administrations to provide responses.

The Bureau was informed about the preparations for the conference to be held in Kyiv on 25 and 26 September. The states which had replied to the prior announcement and expressed interest in taking part – given the topics on the agenda – would be invited. The aim was to bring together a cluster of states that were actively involved in territorial reforms so that they could exchange their experiences for the benefit of the government of Ukraine. A second and final call for expressions of interest would be made shortly.

It was underlined that political-level participation (deputy minister, state secretary) was desired for the first day. If necessary, specific invitations signed by the Director General would be issued. Discussions on the second day would be technical, at peer level. Bureau members asked to be kept informed about the choice of peers.

5.2 Participation of citizens in public life at all levels

The Bureau took note of the information concerning the 16th session of the CEMAT.

5.3 Relations and institutional dialogue between tiers of government

As the CDDG's work programme for 2014 was full enough, the Bureau agreed that this issue should be dealt with in 2015.

5.4 Modernisation of public administration

The Bureau was informed about the initiative by Austria (supported by other states) concerning e-voting and the possible updating of Recommendation Rec(2004)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on legal, operational and technical standards for e-voting. The Belgian and Austrian members underlined their respective countries' interest in these issues and the CDDG's terms of reference, which included e-governance and e-democracy (see also item 4).

5.5 Transfrontier co-operation

The Bureau was informed of the outcome of the second regional seminar on introduction of Protocol No. 3 to the Madrid Outline Convention (Budapest, 30 June 2014). It congratulated the participating states (Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia) on their interest in the protocol and asked the Secretariat to provide them with any technical or legislative assistance they might need. A third meeting was due to be held in Belgrade before the end of the year.

6. Development of tools on good democratic governance

6.1 Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level

The Bureau was informed of the outcome of the working group's first meeting. It noted that the meeting report would be revised to include Norway's position and that the country's proposals would be circulated to all members of the group.

Ms Dragova (Bulgaria) said that her country had officially requested the renewal of the accreditation given to the national platform so that implementation of the strategy and the label could be continued. While bearing in mind the rule that a meeting of the Council of Europe platform would be necessary to that end, the Bureau concluded that if Bulgaria's request was the only item on the agenda, consultation of the members could be by email rather than an actual meeting provided that the amendments made to the benchmark by Bulgaria were minor. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to inform all members accordingly.

6.2 Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform

The Bureau took note of the centre's draft annual report and of the report on the last meeting of the advisory board. It congratulated the centre on its outstanding results.

7. Preparation of an opinion to the Committee of Ministers on a possible reference text on democracy

The Bureau held an exchange of views on the outcome of the working group's first meeting. Several members underlined the importance of the comprehensive document which the Secretariat was required to prepare in accordance with the terms of reference assigned to the CDDG being ready well in advance of the group's next meeting. With regard to the opinion proper, it would be up to the working group to take a decision and, as requested by the CDDG, draw up a draft text to be approved by the committee in November.

Members underlined the need for the group to work in such a way that the CDDG could take a decision promptly without distracting its attention during the plenary meeting from the key items on its agenda.

8. Information on the activities of other relevant bodies

The Bureau took note of the information set out in document CDDG-Bu(2014)7.

9. Other business and date of the next meeting

The Bureau discussed the issues and the arrangements for the thematic exchanges which were due to be held at the CDDG's second plenary meeting. It said it would prefer the exchanges to cover citizen participation, modernisation of administration and democratic governance and asked the Secretariat to begin the preparatory work and report without delay to the national delegations so that they had the time needed to prepare and play an active part.

Although it did not object to highly qualified outside figures (Venice Commission, European Ombudsman) taking part in or chairing the discussions, the Bureau nevertheless stressed the need for:

- the intergovernmental dimension of the discussions to be safeguarded,
- outside participation to be in a minority compared to that of the delegations, and
- political-level figures (ministers, state secretaries) to be present during the introductory statements, if possible.

The Bureau noted that the working groups would hold a second meeting and that other events related to the CDDG's work would take place in the autumn (Kyiv and Belgrade). It asked the Secretariat to identify dates – including for the Bureau's next meeting – which leave sufficient time for effective preparation and agreed that the CDDG's second meeting would have to be held at the end of November or the beginning of December rather than on 17 and 18 November as initially planned. Members would be notified of the proposed dates and would decide by written procedure, after which all members of the CDDG would be notified in turn.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda [CDDG-Bu(2014)OJ1
rev2]
3. Decisions of the Committee of Ministers of relevance to the work of the CDDG [CDDG-Bu(2014)1
[CDDG-Bu(2014)1
Addendum]
4. State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its Terms of Reference
 - Report of the 1st meeting of the CDDG (3-4 April 2014) [CDDG(2014)11]
 - CDDG work programme (2014-2015) [CDDG-Bu(2014)2]
5. Exchanges of information, views and good practices
 - 5.1 *Territorial reforms in member States*
 - Rapid Response Service at the request of Ukraine [CDDG-Bu(2014)3]
 - High-Level Conference and Peer Review on Territorial Reform in Ukraine [CDDG-Bu(2014)4]
 - 5.2 *Participation of citizens in public life at all levels*
 - 16th session of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (Nafplion, Greece, 17 June 2014) [CDDG-Bu(2014)8]
 - 5.3 *Relations and institutional dialogue between tiers of government*
 - 5.4 *Modernisation of public administration*
 - Issues relating to e-democracy and e-voting
 - 5.5 *Transfrontier co-operation*
 - Second regional seminar on Protocol No. 3 to the Madrid Outline Convention (Budapest, Hungary, 30 June 2014) [CDDG-Bu(2014)6]

6. Development of tools on good democratic governance
 - 6.1 *Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level*
 - Report of the 1st meeting of the GT-GD (3 June 2014) [GT-GD(2014)4]
 - 6.2 *Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform*
 - Report of the meeting of the Advisory Board (24 June 2014) [CELGR/AB(2014)2]
7. Elaboration of an advice to the Committee of Ministers on a possible reference text on democracy
 - Report of 1st meeting of the GT-TD (19 June 2014) [GT-TD(2014)3]
8. Information on the activities of other relevant bodies [CDDG-Bu(2014)7]
9. Other business and date of the next meeting