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Seminar on Democratic Governance of Metropolitan Areas

Reason for seminar

This event is part of the European Union – Council of Europe “Technical Assistance Project on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in Greece” and stems from the invitation expressed by the Greek Minister of Interior Panagiotis Skourletis (in May 2017) to host the European Committee on Democracy and Governance of the Council of Europe (CDDG) Conference on governance of metropolitan areas in Thessaloniki.

The goal of this seminar is to provide the Ministry of Interior and participating national and international delegations with a comprehensive overview on governance of metropolitan areas, benefitting from experiences and good practices of other CoE member states. To do so, the event brings together representatives of member states and their metropolitan areas, with experts, relevant Greek stakeholders and international organisations (i.e. OECD and METREX).

Metropolitan areas

A metropolitan area has been defined as a functional urban area usually with at least 500,000 inhabitants. It is suggested by the OECD that to be classified as a metropolitan area governance body four criteria should be met:

1. It should cover the central city and a large share of the remaining parts of the metropolitan area;
2. National and sub-national governments should be important actors within the organisation of metropolitan area governance, or its organisation should have the status of sub-national governance;
3. The organisation should primarily focus on the governance of the whole of the metropolitan area e.g. strategic land use planning and transportation; and
4. It should have a mandate that enables it to work on more than one issue relating to metropolitan area governance.

The growth of metropolitan areas is a striking feature of urbanisation in recent decades. Therefore, national states and regional governments are increasingly recognising metropolitan areas as key sites for national economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and service delivery. Indeed, the key governance challenge for metropolitan areas is to provide effective strategic coordination to enhance the well-being and sustainable development of the city and its hinterland.



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Agenda

In this context, the seminar addresses two interrelated dimensions of metropolitan governance:

- *Governance structures of metropolitan areas* – This component refers to different measures being undertaken by metropolitan cities to address the challenge of metropolitan governance and provide strategic coordination across municipal bodies.
- *Participative democracy in metropolitan areas* – This essential dimension of metropolitan governance focuses on bottom-up (or informal) approaches to engage residents and other stakeholders and/or to encourage their participation in consultation/decision-making processes.

This seminar provides an opportunity to share good practices and reflect on success factors for metropolitan governance, bearing in mind that there is no simple or off-the-shelf solution to the design of effective metropolitan governance. Any approach ought to be designed in geographical, historical and civic context, to ensure its legitimacy, appropriateness and ownership, considering three key factors:

- The challenge of coordinating policies horizontally - between municipalities and across policy areas, and vertically - with the state and regional institutions.
- Whether a stronger or softer institutional framework is required in terms of powers, financing structure, budgets and staff.
- The importance of being perceived as legitimate and to generate trust among citizens and non-governmental organisations, private sector and other tiers of government.

Outcomes

Seminar outcomes will be:

- Shared learning of experience and knowledge about different approaches of good practice in metropolitan governance across European metropolitan areas and national settings. These will be set within an overall framework of different models of metropolitan governance.
- A conference report that will identify key issues raised by contributors, both in presentations and in discussion. It will identify good practice and lessons to be learnt.
- The conference report will be presented to the CDDG and to the Ministry of Interior for discussion and action. It will be published on the Council of Europe website.



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