

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 2 December 2020

CDDG(2020)31

**12th PLENARY MEETING OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE
(CDDG)
25-27 NOVEMBER 2020, BY VIDEOCONFERENCE**

ABRIDGED MEETING REPORT

At its 12th plenary meeting (25-27 November 2020, by videoconference), the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG):

1. adopted the agenda of the meeting, which was chaired by Mr Markku Mölläri (Vice-Chair, Finland), as Chair *ad interim*;

Information

2. heard welcome words by Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy (DGII);

3. held an exchange of views with Ms Claudia Luciani, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance (DGII), on a number of Council of Europe developments in areas relating to the terms of reference of the CDDG;

Promoting democratic governance through shared experience

4. held exchanges of views with the following members of government of Council of Europe member States:

- Mr Ján Lazar, State Secretary, Ministry of the Interior, Slovak Republic, on local self-government in the Slovak Republic;
- Mr Jari Partanen, State Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Finland, on the implementation of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance in Finland;
- Mr Markus Richter, State Secretary and Federal Commissioner for Information Technology, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany, on digitization of the public administration in a federal context;

5. heard presentations from its members from Albania, Belgium (Flanders), Cyprus, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom on ongoing reforms in their respective countries;

6. held an exchange of views with Mr Sean Dougherty, Coordinator of the OECD Network on Fiscal Relations, on the impact of COVID-19 on public authorities of all levels and on inter-governmental fiscal relations;

State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2020-2021

Democracy and technology

7. heard a presentation by Mr Almir Sahović, Chair of the working group on democracy and technology (GT-DT), on the progress of work of the working group;

8. heard a presentation by Professor Ines Mergel (University of Konstanz), expert consultant of GT-DT, on digital transformation in public administrations;

9. examined a draft study on the impact of digital transformation on democracy and good governance, and invited its members to send comments, contributions and case studies to the Secretariat by 31 December 2020;

10. heard an update from Mr Peter Andre (Austria), CDDG Rapporteur on democracy and technology and CDDG representative to the Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI), on the recent activities of CAHAI and its working groups;

11. shared the view of the GT-DT that it should draft Committee of Ministers' guidelines on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process, rather than a recommendation; modified and approved the text of a questionnaire on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process; decided that it should be sent to its members, with the request that they consult competent bodies within their countries, including Election Management Bodies, with a view to drafting replies to be transmitted to the Secretariat by 31 December 2020;

Democratic accountability

12. heard a presentation by Mr Paul-Henri Philips, Chair of the working group on accountability (GT-RE), on the progress of work of the working group;

13. heard a presentation by Professor Arnaud Duranthon (University of Strasbourg), expert consultant of GT-RE, providing an analysis of the replies to the questionnaire on the accountability of local and regional elected officials and bodies;

14. encouraged its members who had not yet done so to reply to the questionnaire by 31 December 2020 and to submit any relevant information, examples of legislation and case studies by the same deadline;

Democratic governance and Covid-19

15. modified and approved for publication a report on "Democratic Governance and Covid-19" and decided to provide an update by the end of 2021, with a view to reflecting the evolution of the response to the pandemic by Council of Europe member States;

Stocktaking and exchange of views on priorities

16. held an exchange of views on the state of implementation of its terms of reference for 2020-2021; expressed appreciation for the progress made despite the change of working methods and additional workload due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and held an exchange of views on possible future priorities;

Work plan

17. modified and approved the work plan for 2021, and took note of a provisional calendar of meetings;

Activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

18. held an exchange of views with Mr Andreas Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress, underlined the importance of close cooperation and coordination between the CDDG and the Congress and expressed the wish for a close involvement of the Congress in the work of GT-RE;

Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers

19. took note of the achievements of the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in the period May - November 2020, as well as of the priorities of the German Presidency for the period November 2020 – May 2021;

Activities of the Committee of Ministers

20. held an exchange of views with Ambassador Rasmus Lumi, Permanent Representative of Estonia to the Council of Europe, Thematic Coordinator on Information Policy (TC-INF) of the Ministers' Deputies;

Activities of other Council of Europe bodies and structures

21. took note of a Secretariat memorandum on activities of particular interest to the CDDG carried out by other Council of Europe bodies;

22. heard a presentation by Ms Sibel Arslan (Switzerland, SOC), Parliamentary Assembly General Rapporteur on local and regional authorities and member of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development;

23. heard a presentation by Mr Gerhard Ermischer on the recent activities of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (CINGO);

24. was briefed about the 2020 edition of the World Forum for Democracy;

Activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance

25. approved the annual report and expressed great appreciation for the work of the Centre of Expertise which, through its cooperation activities, contributes to strengthening democratic governance in Council of Europe member States;

26. heard a presentation by Mr Daniele Del Bianco, expert of the Centre of Expertise, on the draft toolkit on Emergency resilience and preparedness for local authorities (ReBus);

27. heard a presentation by Ms Agnes Uherezky, expert of the Centre of Expertise, on the draft toolkit for teleworking in public administrations;

Activities of the Elections and Civil Society Division

28. approved the annual report and welcomed the opportunity to have an oversight of the activities of the Division;

Elections to vacant posts in its Bureau for 2021

29. elected by acclamation:

- Mr Markku Mölläri (Finland) as Chair;
- Mr Peter Andre (Austria) as Vice-Chair;
- Ms Albana Koçiu (Albania) as Bureau member;
- Mr Francesco Giustino (Italy) as Bureau member;
- Mr Edwin Lefebre (Belgium, Flanders);
- and Ms Stefania Traustadóttir (Iceland);

Gender mainstreaming in the work of the CDDG

30. took note of a memorandum by Mr Edwin Lefebre (Belgium, Flanders) and Ms Siobhan Smyth (United Kingdom), Gender Equality Rapporteurs, and agreed to consider, at one of its next meetings, internal guidelines on how to ensure gender mainstreaming in its work;

The Rapid Response Service (RRS)

31. took note of a Secretariat memorandum and agreed on a set of measures aimed at increasing the visibility and accessibility of the information collected through the RRS;

Date and place of the next meeting

32. took note that its 13th plenary meeting would be held on 15-16 April 2021, according to modalities to be defined.