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STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CDDG ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE 2020-2021

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the
Directorate General of Democracy
Democratic Governance Division

Introduction

The present document provides information on the state of implementation of the main and specific tasks of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) for the biennium 2020-2021.

Action

The CDDG is invited to take note of the information below and use it as a basis for a discussion on the progress that has been achieved, the challenges ahead, and the identification of possible new priorities for the work of the CDDG.

STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CDDG ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE 2020-2021

MAIN TASKS

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, having regard to the Secretary General's reports on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law, and building on the achievements in the area of local and regional democracy and multilevel governance, the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) will steer the Council of Europe's intergovernmental work in the field of democracy and democratic governance and advise the Committee of Ministers in its field of competence, taking due account of relevant transversal perspectives. The overall aim of the CDDG is to contribute to strengthening democratic institutions, public administration reform, decentralisation and good governance, with particular emphasis on enhancing citizens' participation and strengthening public ethics. The CDDG will also work on meeting the challenges raised and using the opportunities offered by technological development to strengthen governance and democracy and citizens' trust in them. In particular, the CDDG is instructed to:

General tasks	State of implementation in 2020
<p>(i) act as a forum where members, associating as appropriate participants and observers, exchange information, views and experience and disseminate good practice in the design and implementation of democracy related reforms, including through compilation of best practice and guidelines;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - during the 11th meeting of the CDDG, the Guide on public ethics was updated with additional case studies provided by CDDG members, - the Guidelines on e-democracy in the form of a toolkit were approved at the 11th meeting of the CDDG. They include a wealth of case studies provided by CDDG members, - a website on national responses to Covid-19 has been set up, with information provided by CDDG members, - in June 2020, the CDDG thematic meeting on A democratic governance response to Covid-19 provided a platform for CDDG members and other participants to discuss how to ensure that the response to the current pandemic is in line with democratic standards and the 12 Principles of good democratic governance. Several ministers addressed the thematic meeting, including the Deputy Minister for Civil Protection of Greece, the Minister of Public Administration of Croatia, the Deputy Minister of the Interior of Albania and the State Secretary for Local Government of Serbia,

	<p>- at its 12th plenary meeting, the CDDG approved a report on Democratic governance and Covid-19. This report analyses the replies to the questionnaire on national responses provided by CDDG members. In addition, government representatives from Finland, Germany and the Slovak Republic presented ongoing reforms and policies in their countries, concerning the implementation of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, digitalisation of the public administration and local government.</p>
<p>(ii) provide responses based on domestic legislation, practice and experience to member States so requesting that envisage policy reviews and legislative reforms, including through peer reviews and the rapid response service;</p>	<p>In 2020, 7 questionnaires have been circulated through the Rapid Response Service (RRS). As of 1 April, 2 RRS questionnaires have been circulated in 2021.</p> <p>At its 12th plenary meeting, the CDDG agreed on measures to enhance the visibility of the Rapid Response Service. As a result, the webpage of the CDDG was updated with information about the RRS.</p> <p>A peer review on territorial consolidation/ municipal amalgamation took place in the context of the project of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance in the Slovak Republic, in January 2021. Another peer review has been requested by Finland. The date will be fixed in due course.</p>
<p>(iii) develop as appropriate standards relating to modernisation of democratic institutions, public administration, citizens' participation and democratic governance at all levels;</p>	<p>In March 2020, the Committee of Ministers adopted the Guidelines on public ethics. The CDDG is currently preparing draft guidelines on electoral standards and a draft recommendation on the accountability of elected officials at local and regional level.</p>
<p>(iv) promote the implementation of the 12 Principles of Good Governance through targeted action and the use of the tools of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance;</p>	<p>- The 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance are constantly referred to in all the documents of the CDDG and are the basis for the toolkits and benchmarks of the Centre of Expertise.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 2020, a new toolkit and benchmark on public ethics for the central authorities was finalised. It reflects the 2020 Guidelines on public ethics and complements an existing toolkit and benchmark applicable to the local level (ethical conduct is Principle 6). In addition, - When participating in the online International Conference on Civil Participation in Decision-Making, the Chair ad interim of the CDDG to the CDDG work in this area, which develops Principle 1 of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, and the toolkit on civil participation of the Centre of Expertise, which has been updated in 2020.
(v) without prejudice to the mandates of intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe that already follow the work of monitoring mechanisms, follow the activities of the relevant monitoring and other bodies or convention mechanisms;	The CDDG follows the activities of other Council of Europe bodies working in the area of democracy and governance. An update on the relevant activities of the Secretary General, the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Conference of INGOs, the Venice Commission and GRECO is provided in a Secretariat memorandum which is submitted to the CDDG at every plenary meeting.
(vi) provide input and ensure follow-up to the sessions of the Council of Europe's World Forum for Democracy when the themes addressed fall within the mandate of the CDDG;	<p>The CDDG is regularly briefed about the preparation of the WFD.</p> <p>It is proposed that the CDDG contributes to the "12 months, 1 question campaign" by organising webinars respectively on urban planning, public-private partnerships and green administration.</p>
(vii) promote and follow the implementation of the non-binding instruments that it has prepared;	The CDDG promotes the implementation of the non-binding instruments it has prepared through the projects which are designed and implemented by the Centre of Expertise and its toolkits.
(viii) hold an exchange of views annually in order to evaluate its activities and advise the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General on future priorities in its sector, including possible new activities and those that might be discontinued;	This exchange of views was held during the 12 th plenary meeting of the CDDG. At its 13 th plenary meeting, the CDDG will discuss possible priorities for its next terms of reference.

<p>(ix) take due account of gender and children's rights perspectives, building cohesive societies and promoting and protecting rights of persons with disabilities in the performance of its tasks while closely associating civil society in its activities;</p>	<p>Rapporteurs on gender equality and disability have been appointed. The CDDG will examine measures for strengthening gender mainstreaming in its work at its 13th plenary meeting. Civil society is closely associated in CDDG activities thanks to the active participation of representatives of the INGO Conference.</p>
<p>(x) in accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, carry out, at regular intervals, within the limits of the available resources and bearing in mind its priorities, an examination of some or all of the conventions for which it has been given responsibility, in co-operation, where appropriate, with other relevant bodies, and report back to the Committee of Ministers.</p>	<p>Specific activities to implement this task are not currently foreseen in the CDDG work programme. In general, through their activities, the CDDG and the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance follow developments regarding the implementation of the Charter of Local Self-Government as well as the Council of Europe instruments on cross-border cooperation. The Centre of Expertise for Good Governance provided legal and policy opinions on the implementation of/compliance with the Charter in the context of its cooperation activities, at the request of the member state concerned.</p>
<p>(xi) contribute to the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regards to Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.</p>	<p>The SDGs are taken into account in the work of the CDDG and the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance. A special page on the SDGs has been created on the webpage of the Democratic Governance Division.</p>

SPECIFIC TASKS

<p>(i) Building on its previous work on e-democracy and taking into account the outcome of the 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki, prepare a study on the impact of the digital transformation, including artificial intelligence and automated decision-making, on democracy and good governance, also with a view to contributing to the work of the CAHAI.</p>	<p>The approval of the study is planned for the 13th plenary meeting of the CDDG.</p> <p>The rapporteur on democracy and technology (Mr Peter Andre, Austria) ensures coordination and liaison with the CAHAI.</p> <p>A restricted webspace has been set up to ensure that all CDDG members can have access to the working documents of the working group and contribute to its activities remotely.</p>
<p>(ii) Develop standards on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process (including voter registration, transmission and tabulation of results, etc.) in the form of a Committee of Ministers' recommendation or guidelines as a follow-up to the Secretary General's reports on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law and taking into account the outcome of the 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki as well as the work of the Venice Commission in this area.</p>	<p>At its first meeting, the working group on democracy and technology held 2 hearings on this matter and examined a paper by an expert consultant setting out the issue. During the third meeting the working group held a hearing with the Venice Commission and drafted a questionnaire with a view to collecting information via the CDDG. At its fourth meeting, the working group examines the replies to the questionnaire. The CDDG will consider preliminary draft guidelines at its 13th plenary meeting.</p> <p>A restricted webspace has been set up to ensure that all CDDG members can have access to the working documents of the working group and contribute to its activities remotely.</p>
<p>(iii) Draft a recommendation for the Committee of Ministers on democratic accountability of elected officials and bodies at local and regional level with a view to complementing Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 on the supervision of local authorities' activities and updating previous work in this area.</p>	<p>The working group on accountability held two meetings in 2020 and one in 2021. It agreed on the scope of the recommendation and decided to propose to the CDDG a longer time frame for finalising its work, within the current biennium. A questionnaire has been sent to CDDG members to collect additional information. Replies are being examined with the help of two expert consultants. The CDDG will examine the preliminary elements of a draft recommendation at its 13th plenary meeting.</p>

	A restricted webspace has been set up to ensure that all CDDG members can have access to the working documents of the working group and contribute to its activities remotely.
(iv) Promote the guidelines and the revised Handbook on public ethics at all levels of government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The website of the democratic governance division has been updated to give more visibility to the work on public ethics. - In 2020, a new toolkit and benchmark on public ethics for the central authorities has been finalised following consideration by the CDDG. It reflects the 2020 Guidelines on public ethics and complements an existing toolkit and benchmark applicable to the local level (ethical conduct is Principle 6).
(v) Contribute to the implementation of the next Digital Governance Strategy in its field of expertise.	The new Strategy is not final yet. The CDDG could contribute to its implementation through its work on e-government, e-democracy, digital transformation and artificial intelligence.
(vi) Contribute to updating the toolkits of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance reflecting the latest governance practices as well as the principles of efficiency and effectiveness.	In 2020, 4 toolkits were updated (Civil Participation, Local Finance Benchmarking, E-DEN and Leadership Academy Programme). In addition, 2 new toolkits were initiated and will be completed after the 12 th plenary meeting of the CDDG, on Emergency Preparedness and Resilience for local authorities and on Teleworking for public administrations.
(vii) Report to the Committee of Ministers on a regular basis on the work and achievements of the European Stakeholders Platform which delivers the accreditation to the national platforms or bodies authorised to grant the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE).	This is part of the annual report of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance. On 25 February 2020, the 2019 report, including a part on ELoGE, was presented to the GR-DEM. The Committee of Ministers subsequently took note of it. The CDDG examined the 2020 report of the Centre of Expertise at its 12 th meeting. It was presented to the GR-DEM. The Committee of Ministers took note of it.
(viii) Review progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), as evidenced by monitoring mechanisms and promoted through standard-setting and exchange of experiences and good practices.	A special page on how the CDDG and the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance contribute to the SDGs has been created on the webpage of the Democratic Governance Division.

MEETINGS HELD IN 2020-2021

	Meeting dates	Modality
Bureau		
	20 April 2020	Videoconference
	12 May 2020	Videoconference
	12 June 2020	Videoconference
	30 July 2020	Videoconference
	24 August 2020	Videoconference
	8 October 2020	Videoconference
	6 November 2020	Videoconference
	29-30 March 2021	Videoconference
Enlarged Bureau (European Stakeholders' Platform)	24 March 2020	Videoconference
	29 March 2021	Videoconference
CDDG		
Thematic meeting on Covid-19	18 June 2020	Videoconference
11 th plenary	10-11 September 2020	Videoconference
12 th plenary	25-27 November 2020	Videoconference
Working group on democracy and technology (GT-DT)		
	27-28 January 2020	In Strasbourg
	23 September 2020	Videoconference
	22-23 October 2020	Videoconference
	8 February 2021	Videoconference
Working group on accountability (GT-RE)		
	13-14 February 2020	In Strasbourg
	28-29 September 2020	Videoconference
	8-9 March 2021	Videoconference