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INTRODUCTION OF A 4-YEAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: IMPLICATIONS AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON POSSIBLE PRIORITIES FOR 2022-2025

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the
Directorate General of Democracy
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Introduction

The Committee of Ministers' Deputies, in their decision of 21 November 2019, invited the Secretary General, in consultation with member states, to consider and prepare a four-year strategic framework reflecting the priorities for the Council of Europe's longer-term mission, building on the priorities underlying the Programme and Budget 2020-2021.

Consequently, and based on consultations with the member states held on 18 and 21 September 2020, with the chairs of the monitoring and advisory mechanisms on 29 June 2020, and with the chairs of the steering and ad hoc committees of intergovernmental co-operation (through written consultations), the Secretary General elaborated a strategic framework outlining the priorities, which, in her view, should represent the core of the Organisation's many activities over the next four-year period, reflected in its Programme and Budget.

As a result of this process, starting from 2022, terms of reference of steering committees will cover a period of four years.

As we approach the end of the current biennium, a reflection should be started on the possible topics and specific tasks to be included in the next terms of reference of the CDDG. At its meeting on 29-30 March 2021, the Bureau of the CDDG held a preliminary discussion, taking into account the new duration of the terms of reference and the need to align the priorities of the Council of Europe as set out in the four-year strategic framework. The draft terms of reference below include all the specific tasks that were proposed. It will be necessary to leave some tasks out so as to ensure that the CDDG has a manageable workload and can deliver results by the end of the 4-year term.

It is recalled that terms of reference of steering committees are proposed by the Secretary General and approved by the Ministers' Deputies.

Action required

The CDDG is invited to hold a discussion and provide guidance on the possible topics and tasks to be included in its next terms of reference (2022-2025).

Main tasks

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, having regard to the Strategic Framework for 2022-2025 as well as 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, with a view to strengthening public trust. The CDDG will also address emerging challenges such as how to harness the potential of technology to strengthen democracy and governance while managing its risks, how to deliver governance which is environmentally sustainable, how to tackle the of Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath in line with fundamental principles of democratic governance and strengthen democratic resilience and preparedness in the face of new emergencies. In particular, the CDDG is instructed to:

- (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;
- (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;
- (iii) develop as appropriate standards relating to modernisation of democratic institutions, public administration, citizens' participation and democratic governance at all levels;
- (iv) promote the implementation of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance through targeted action and the use of the tools of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance;
- (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;
- (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;
- (vii) promote and follow the implementation of the non-binding instruments that it has prepared;

- (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;
- (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;
- (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,^[22] in co-operation, where appropriate, with other relevant bodies, and report back to the Committee of Ministers;
- (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.

Specific tasks

- (i) Draft a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on Principles of good democratic governance of general application to all levels of government, building on the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance at local level;
- (ii) Draft a recommendation and Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers on multilevel governance and emergencies, building on its work on Democratic governance and Covid-19;
- (iii) Based on a collection of practice and case studies, prepare a report on new forms of deliberative democracy at local level, with a view to complement Committee of Ministers' recommendation (2018)⁴ on the participation of citizens in local public life and taking into account its own work on e-democracy as well as the relevant work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities;
- (iv) Taking into account the proceedings of the 2020-2021 edition of the World Forum for Democracy and its previous work on digitalisation of the public administration, prepare a report on green public administration aimed at collecting good practice and case studies and identify guidance for administrations at local, regional and national level;
- (v) Taking into account the proceedings of the 2020-2021 edition of the World Forum for Democracy and the previous work of the European Committee on Local Democracy (CDLR) in the area of spatial planning, prepare a report on urban planning for the environment aimed at collecting good practice and case studies and identify guidance for the local level;
- (vi) Prepare a report on Delivering social services at local level, building on the information collected during its work on Democratic governance and Covid-19;

- (vii) Carry out a consultation to take stock of implementation of Committee of Ministers' recommendation (2017)⁵ on electronic voting and the Guidelines on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process, involving the Venice Commission and Election Management Bodies, and draft a report on this basis;
- (viii) Develop guidance in the form of a Committee of Ministers' recommendation and/or guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence by the public administration [exact wording to be decided at a later stage on the basis of the work of the CAHAI];
- (ix) Promote the guidelines and the Handbook on public ethics at all levels of government;
- (x) Contribute to the implementation of the Council of Europe work on digitalisation and artificial intelligence in its field of expertise;
- (xi) Contribute to the updating of toolkits of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance reflecting the latest governance practices as well as the principles of efficiency and effectiveness;
- (xii) 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 entities authorised to grant the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE);
- (xiii) 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.