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Centre of Expertise for Good Governance

CEGG



2023 Activity Report

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** All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.*

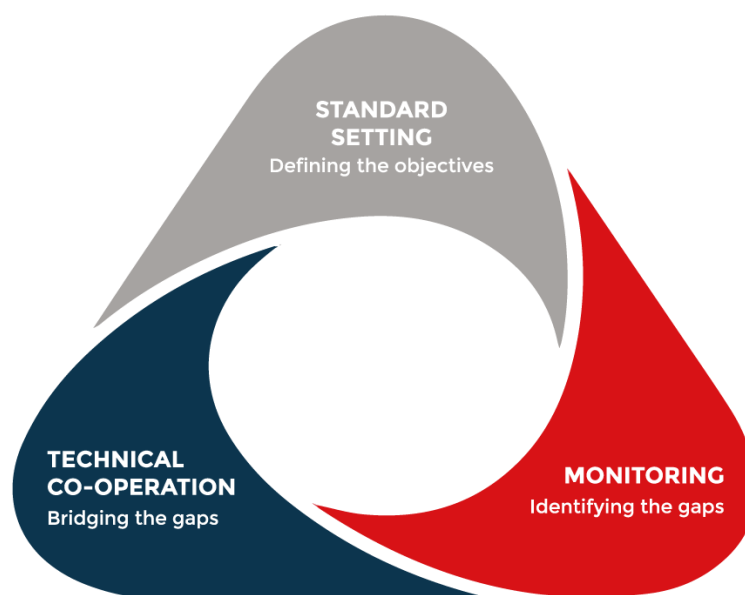
Executive summary

The Centre of Expertise, established in 2006 as the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform following a decision by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe at the 3rd Summit in Warsaw in 2005, was renamed in 2017 as the [Centre of Expertise for Good Governance](#) (CEGG), to reflect the evolution of its areas of intervention to support good governance at all levels of government.

Through links with the Council of Europe intergovernmental [Committee on Democracy and Governance](#), the CEGG has benefitted from a multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue, awareness-raising, and peer exchange, and ready access to high-level government officials from 46 member States with a reservoir of knowledge and expertise in governance reforms.

The CEGG has a history of close cooperation with the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#), using monitoring reports, legal instruments, and reference texts in the design and implementation of projects.

This virtuous circle of intergovernmental standard-setting work, cooperation activities, and the monitoring of the implementation of standards is central to the strategic framework of the Council of Europe. The CEGG's cooperation projects and targeted interventions promote Council of Europe standards; address issues and fill gaps that have emerged through monitoring; and support on-going processes of public administration and local government reforms thus exemplifying the “dynamic triangle” of the Council of Europe.



In 2023, the CEGG has been implementing full-scale projects in 7 member States, including a new project to Strengthen Good Democratic Governance and Resilience in Ukraine. Targeted activities have been organised in a further 16 member States and Kosovo*. 3 Peer Review visits have been organised in Bulgaria, Finland, and Hungary; 5 exchanges of good practice between member States have taken place; 11 Policy Advice documents have been delivered to support alignment with Council of Europe standards; and the capacities of several thousand public officials and civil society actors across Europe have been developed in the context of several hundred capacity building activities.

The repertoire of Toolkits has also been expanded to include a Regional Strategic Planning Guide; and an updated ELoGE Benchmark and Handbook. A detailed presentation of the “Strasbourg Format” methodology will also soon be published on the CEGG webpage.

Key statistics for CEGG activity in 2022

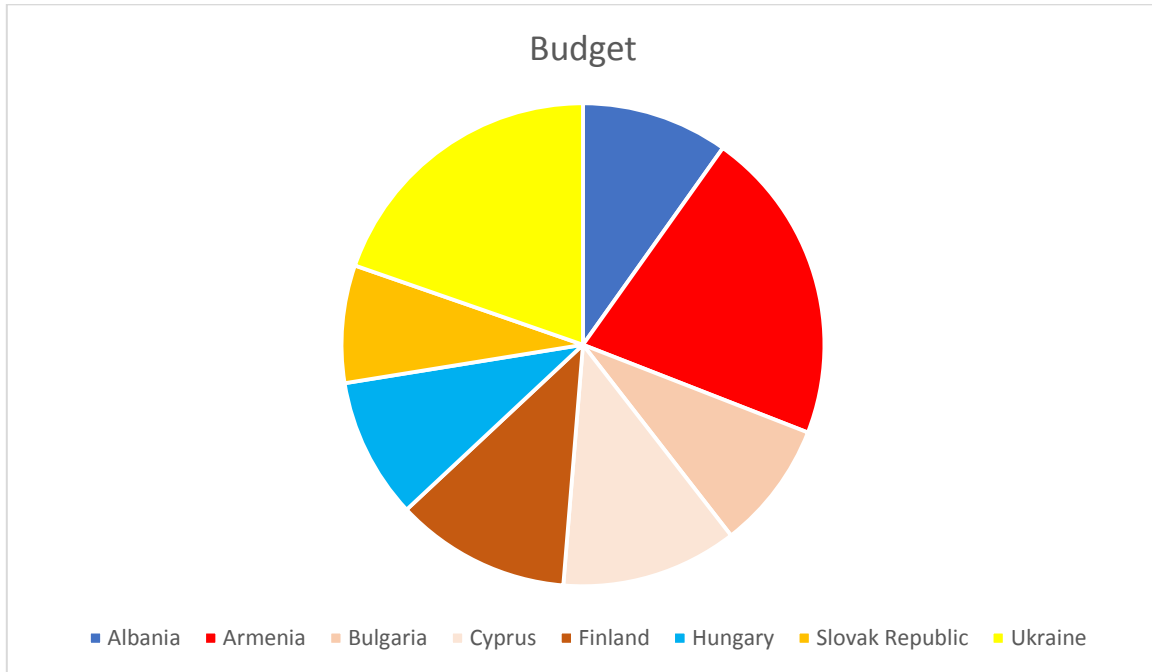
- Activities organised in 23 member States;
- Large scale projects implemented in 7 member States;
- Smaller scale projects / activities implemented in a further 16 member States;
- Capacity-building activities delivered in 17 member States;
- Officials, experts and CDDG members from more than 30 member States participated in CEGG activities and in exchanges of good practice between member States;
- 3 Peer Reviews organised in Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary;
- 11 formal legal and policy advice papers delivered to help attune legislative frameworks to Council of Europe standards;
- 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance promoted through the implementation of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in 15 member States and Kosovo*;
- A new toolkit on Strategic Regional Development published;
- Detailed guide on “*Strasbourg Format*” methodology prepared in light of success of Lviv meeting on reform of sub-national representation and supervision of LA Acts.
- ELoGE Benchmark revised and updated to reflect CM/Rec (2023) 5 on principles of good democratic governance and following feedback from partners across Europe.

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Key facts and figures

In 2023, the Centre of Expertise is responsible for managing the implementation of projects and activities for a total budget of roughly €7,5 million, in 25 Council of Europe member States. The biggest projects include:



- Albania (total budget: € 700.000)
- Armenia (total budget: € 1.1 M)
- Bulgaria (total budget: € 610.000)
- Cyprus (total budget: € 840.000)
- Finland (total budget: € 835.000)
- Hungary (total budget: € 670.000)
- Slovakia (total budget: € 560.000)
- Ukraine (total budget: € 2 M);

In addition to these large projects, a number of small but high-impact projects and activities have been implemented in other member States, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Türkiye. These are funded or co-funded through the ordinary budget, amounting to about € 300.000.

Peers, experts, and public authorities from some 30 member States have contributed to the implementation of these projects; many CDDG (European Committee on Democracy and Governance) members have participated in peer reviews, intergovernmental exchanges, and other activities of the CEGG. These activities will contribute to new or improved legislation, better implementation of reforms, and strengthened capacities of public authorities at all levels in our member States.

Highlights by member State

Albania

The first Steering Committee of this new project aimed at "*Sustaining Public Administration Reform at Local Level in Albania*", with funding from the German Government, took place in March 2023. A plan of activities aimed at strengthening human resource management and training and development at local level in the Albanian public administration was approved, building on outputs of long-standing CEGG project in Albania, previously implemented together with [Congress](#).

The [Leadership Academy Programme](#), launched under [Phase III](#) of the previous project, has been readapted to develop the capacities of newly elected representatives following the local elections of 14 May 2023.

Some 60 elected representatives of Local Government Units (LGUs) - mayors, deputy mayors and senior officials participated in two stages each delivered across 4 sessions that took place in Shkodra, Tirana, Vlora and Saranda. The [Fundamentals of Good Democratic Governance](#) were addressed in training modules that touched on key concepts such as ethics, integrity, emotional intelligence, teamwork and decision-making processes. Demonstrating the commitment of central authorities to support this process, the new Albanian Minister of State for Local Government participated in these sessions.



In the framework of the project, the following documents were prepared:

- **Training needs assessment:** Assessment of the current Training Needs Assessment module carried out with a view to updating to ensure the Albanian School of Public Administration and LGUs can interact effectively in the design and delivery of capacity-building programmes to promote good democratic governance and develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
- **Performance Management:** An initial assessment of performance management tools and instruments currently in use in the Albanian public administration, in particular with regards to the Human Resources Management component, has been undertaken. Recommendations for improvement of the performance appraisal. And good practice models were subject of a roundtable discussion with the main actors in the HRM area in the Albanian Public Administration. Benchmarks based on CEGG toolkits and standards for HRM in LGUs will be developed.
- **Competency framework:** A comparative analysis on good practice in development of HRM competency framework for LGUs has been prepared with specific recommendations related to the Albanian context with a view to contributing to the development of a National Competency Framework.
- **Citizen feedback tool:** in view of increasing citizen participation in the LGUs decision making processes, the Municipality of Tirana will be supported in developing an online tool based on [CM/Rec\(2018\)4](#) and the [Guidelines on Civil Participation](#) that can be used to collect citizen feedback on the services delivered by the LGU at any time.
- A questionnaire, which will serve as a basis for the online tool, has been prepared and is being piloted with one of the Tirana Administrative Units, to understand the comprehensiveness and objectiveness of the questions.

Armenia

The "[Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia – Phase II](#)" (DDDGGGA – Phase II) project is implemented in the framework of Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2023-2026, with funding from Austrian Development Cooperation. The project supports the Armenian authorities to improve the legal framework for local self-government, while developing the capacities of local authorities to deliver better services to citizens in the context of decentralisation.

The project was **formally launched** and held its **First Steering Committee meeting** in February 2023. During a panel discussion at the launch event, representatives of local authorities in Armenia listed some of the challenges that remain to ensure that the amalgamation reforms are consolidated and that decentralisation is carried out effectively.

After the Project launch event and the first SC meeting, **a first workshop on inter-municipal and cross-border co-operation** was held, with the participation of more than 35 project officers of consolidated communities.

Capacity-building activities have been organised on **how to conduct feasibility studies to support evidence-based policy-making at local level in Armenia**. Economic development officers and other senior local officials from 38 local authorities across Armenia also participated in [regional workshops on developing grant project proposals](#) and developed their capacities on performance management through a series of online trainings based on the [CEGG Toolkit](#).



A **field visit to a youth facility** in Aparan municipality (Aragatsotn region), renovated through a small grant scheme implemented under the Phase 1, and the in-depth [media coverage](#) and [a video feature](#) showcasing the tangible results of the project DDDGGA Phase 1, demonstrated the longstanding impact of the project intervention helped raise awareness of DDDGGA - Phase 2 including upcoming activities.

In light of the recommendations of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees, the project has been adapted to include an additional grant scheme to help develop [frontline communities dealing with the largest numbers of refugees from Karabakh and build their resilience](#) so that they are better able to withstand, recover, adapt, and persist in face of future crises.

A 3rd Stage of the [Leadership Academy Programme for cross-border co-operation](#)

(LAP for CBC) was organised on 3-5 April 2023 in Gyumri, Shirak region, Armenia building on the outputs of previous stages held in Armenia in May 2022 and in Georgia in October 2022. Around 30 mayors and



senior officials from Armenian and Georgian border communities looked into opportunities for practical interaction between neighbouring local authorities in Armenia and Georgia in a wide range of areas of common interest.

In order to prepare a revised legislative framework, suited to the new territorial map of Armenia, **a roundtable discussion of the legal expert group of international and local consultants** was organised in September 2023 to identify inconsistencies in the Law of the Republic of Armenia on "On Local Self-Government" vis-à-vis new realities in the area of local self-governance on the ground.

Building on the outputs from this roundtable, core standards of the Council of Europe, and recent developments in member states, a comprehensive analysis of the current legislative framework for local self-government in Armenia was launched. The resulting document on conceptual provisions and approaches regarding the Law "On Local Self-Government" was described as a ["unique opportunity to set ambitious goals"](#) at a public community consultation meeting on 8 November 2023.

At an event to celebrate the [27th anniversary of Local Self Government in Armenia](#) on 20 November 2023, Gnel Sanosyan, Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia, emphasized the importance of cooperation with the Council of Europe and noted the efforts of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance as being highly appreciated in Armenia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Centre has supported the Local Democracy Agency of Mostar to consolidate achievements of the Link4Cooperation project and help disseminate ELoGE and principles of good democratic governance beyond the initial target municipalities. The cooperation will culminate in the first ELoGE award ceremony will be held in Sarajevo on 8 December 2023.

Bulgaria

The 2016-2025 Decentralisation strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria is currently being implemented: however, several challenges remain, and while administrative and political decentralisation has advanced, fiscal decentralisation is still limited. The role of the Bulgarian local authorities in the economy is weak: the legal authority to perform certain functions is meaningless if local authorities are deprived of the financial resources to carry them out. In order to increase the financial autonomy of the Bulgarian municipalities in line with good European practice and standards, the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance is currently implementing the project ["Developing Fiscal Decentralisation and Improving Local Financial Management in Bulgaria"](#), launched in June 2022 and supported by the European Union through the Technical Support Instrument (DG Reform).

The CEGG is supporting Bulgarian stakeholders to implement the [Local Financial Benchmark](#) and [Training Needs Analysis](#) toolkits and is providing the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MoRDPW) Policy Advice and Training curricula adapted for use in capacity-building activities for and by local officials and the local government association. In the framework of this project, in 2023 the CEGG:

- A [public roundtable discussion](#) on local financial autonomy was organized to offer a channel for civil society actors to contribute to the debate on fiscal decentralisation;



Roundtable discussion organised by CPF during the Peer Review Visit

- A [technical report](#) with a comprehensive analysis of the existing legal, administrative and operational framework for municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria was prepared;
 - A [Peer Review visit](#) was organized with high-level officials from the CDDG representing the respective Ministry responsible for local financing from Armenia, Finland, Ireland, and Portugal, with international experts from Italy and Romania.
- The Peer Review report, compiling examples of good practice and pitfalls encountered in the adoption and implementation of relevant policies in member States, has been delivered to the Bulgarian authorities.
 - Grants have been awarded to the National Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Foundation for Local Government Reform to support project implementation and ensure local ownership of project outputs including an adapted [Local Finance Benchmark](#) and a [Training Needs Analysis](#).
 - The Citizen Participation Forum was supported in organising public consultations, in order to channel the Bulgarian citizens' needs and deliberation on the Policy advice.
 - Policy Advice on financial autonomy and fiscal equalisation has been prepared for the Bulgarian MoRDPW and Ministry of Finance with.

[The Peer Review visit] was a very enjoyable and interesting experience for me, from which I learned a great deal from both our Bulgarian counterparts and members of the peer review team. [...] my particular thanks to our Bulgarian hosts for their generosity and meticulous attention to the details of our trip.

Sinéad O'Gorman - Principal Officer of the Local Government Finance Unit (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage - Ireland)

Croatia

Following recent ELoGE accreditation given to the Association of Cities in Croatia, the CEGG presented the CM/Rec(2023)5 on principles of good democratic governance and the updated ELoGE Benchmark at the General Assembly of the Association of Cities in Porec, Croatia on 22 November 2023.

Cyprus

The CEGG project "[Enhancing the Local Government Reform in Cyprus](#)" (January 2023 – June 2025), funded through a Voluntary Contribution by the Government of Cyprus under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, aims at supporting the implementation of the Local Government Reform in Cyprus and strengthening the capacity of local authorities to provide good democratic governance and high quality services to their citizens, according to European standards.



The project has a significant capacity-building component based on the toolkits of the CEGG, focusing on 1) [Public Ethics Benchmarking](#); 2) [Strategic Municipal Planning](#) and [Performance Management Programme](#); 3) [Resilience Building Strategies](#); 4) [Inter-Municipal Cooperation](#); 5) [European Label of Governance Excellence](#); 6) [Leadership Academy Programme](#).

In the framework of this project, in 2023 the CEGG:

- Prepared a Policy Advice on the implementation of the Local Government Reform in Cyprus, including a set of practical recommendations;
- Drafted a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) report with the aim to identify training-related expectations of local self-government organizations' staff and elected representatives as well as the needs regarding further strategic training to be provided to these two main LA's human resource categories in Cyprus;
- Based on the above exercise, CEGG further supported effective training strategic planning by preparing the National Training Strategy (NTS). By the end of the year, CEGG and the Ministry of Interior will present both the TNA and NTS to the main local stakeholders in Cyprus;
- Conducted a series of Training of Trainers sessions on Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) – Stage I for a pool of local experts to strengthen in-country resources;
- Adapted the LAP material to the Cypriot context;
- Conducted a workshop with municipalities and experts on Public Ethics Benchmark (PEB);
- Delivered a series of trainings on LAP Stage I to elected officials and civil servants from municipalities and communities (6 classes).

Finland

The CEGG project “[Delivering Good Governance and Balanced Local Economy in Finland](#)” (September 2022 – August 2024) focuses on providing follow up support to the Finnish authorities to the most significant national reform in the recent history, by means of which, as of January 2023, 21 Wellbeing Service Counties were established that took over the provision of health, fire and rescue, and social services – previously under the competence of municipalities.

Engagement of relevant multi-level governance actors and stakeholders from central, regional and local levels of government ensures continuous good progress towards the project’s aim - to provide tailored Policy advice to the Finnish government on various governance issues, and reinforce the capacities of the local government for delivery of public services in compliance with the Council of Europe [Principles of good democratic governance](#).



At the level of Policy advice

Drawing from the broad CDDG expertise and experience, and making use of its vast network of governance practitioners, three 3 separate reports have been, or are in the process of being, delivered by the CEGG:

- Peer Review visit organized in May-June 2023, with, high level officials and delegates of the CDDG from Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the UK, and experts from France and Switzerland. The [Peer Review Report](#), which has been published, underlines challenging areas of the reform where Finland may wish to adapt policy;



- In December 2023 a draft report addressing metropolitan governance issues will be presented, drawing on previous [CDDG work](#) in this domain and presenting recent good practice from member States, including Austria, Latvia and the Slovak Republic.
- A Policy Advice report on fiscal decentralisation issues is also under preparation and will present relevant comparative practices from member States (including other recent Peer Reviews in Armenia, Bulgaria, and Hungary).

At the level of capacity-building support

An extensive capacity-building component (32 activities in 2023) seeks to develop the capacities of Finnish officials based on CEGG capacity building tools ([ELoGE](#), [Leadership Academy Programme](#), Local Finance Benchmarking for the [central](#) and [local](#) level, and the [Civil participation in decision-making](#)) helping promote good democratic governance.

France

The second [ELoGE award Ceremony](#) was held at the Council of Europe in March 2023.

For the first time, the ELoGE Benchmark was adapted to enable inter-municipal cooperation arrangements (intercommunalités) to measure their performance against principles of good democratic governance.



"...implementing ELoGE promotes the dissemination to local authorities of innovative good governance practices inspired by European experiences at local level and contributes to increase the visibility of local public action to citizens so they feel fully involved in local public affairs."

Mehaddi Belkacem, Deputy
Director, CNFPT

Georgia

Local and regional authorities from Georgia continued their participation in the Leadership Academy for Cross-border Cooperation organised in the context of the CEGG project in Armenia.

Hungary

The project '[Local Government Public Finance Development and Municipal Capacity Building in Hungary](#)', co-funded by the European Commission (DG REFORM) under the Technical Support Instrument 2022 and the Council of Europe was launched in September 2022. Since the start of the project, the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance (CEEG) has supported the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ), the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance with a number of important technical assistance measures.

The project aims to strengthen the administrative and financial capacity of the municipalities in Hungary through a combination of policy advice and capacity building.

These include a [Peer Review](#) activity and the preparation of Policy Advice on intergovernmental financial relations; the design and test development of a local government data platform; the piloting of the CEGG's benchmarking tools on [Local Finance](#) and [Public Ethics](#); and delivery of the [Leadership Academy Programme \(LAP\)](#) for local leaders. Additionally, the [Best Practice Programme \(BPP\)](#) and the [European Label of Governance Excellence \(ELoGE\)](#) initiatives involve outreach and engagement with a large number of Hungarian municipalities and other local government stakeholders on the basis of the [European standards](#) for good democratic governance.

Three key areas of work in the project were in particular focus during 2023: Intergovernmental financial relations and dialogue, data access and use, and capacity development.

Intergovernmental financial relations: In the context of recentralisation of responsibilities and resources over the past decade, local government stakeholders in Hungary are eager to demonstrate possible improvements to the intergovernmental financial system and capacity of municipalities to manage public resources effectively and efficiently.



The CEGG organised a [Peer Review visit to Budapest](#) from 11-14 September 2023. Senior government officials and local government finance specialists

The Peer Review team with representatives from the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ), the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance, Budapest September 2023

from Austria, Croatia, Czechia, the Slovak Republic and the UK shared knowledge and expertise in fruitful exchanges with the Hungarian authorities, with additional written inputs from Finland. The Peer Review report has been shared with Hungarian authorities.

Increasing access to data by local governments: In Hungary, a wide range of high-quality data is available to support evidence-based financial and service planning and management. Nonetheless, accessing this data in user-friendly formats is a challenge for local governments. Within the project, the CEGG has been able to support important steps to improve this situation. Recognising that access and responsible use of data needs to build on strong stakeholder relationships, a new Local Finance Working Group started its work in February 2023 with the support of the project. It brings together representatives of central ministries and agencies, local government associations and local finance experts. The [Working Group](#) represents a unique forum to discuss challenges, opportunities and solutions to increase local data access and use. Partly with the support of this group, the project team has completed a detailed data availability and a user needs assessments (including a nationwide survey of local government officials), and the design of the first module of the local government data platform. This will now be developed and user tested by the end of 2023.

Capacity building: The Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) is a cutting-edge training series customised to the needs of municipal leaders in Hungary, and tested in a Training-of-Trainers with Hungarian experts. In 2023, it offered the opportunity for in-depth



Leadership Academy Programme session, European Youth Centre Budapest, April 2023. Photo: Péter Kolin, TÖOSZ

learning and networking to 36 elected officials and senior staff from more than 30 municipalities. In two cohorts, these local leaders met in 4 multi-day sessions throughout the year, with a 5th and final workshop to take place in December 2023. Throughout this series of workshops, mayors and senior administrators explored a range of essential topics including leadership and

team management, public ethics and integrity, performance management and dealing with crises. The programme also includes a new module on local public finance management, connecting the capacity building activities even more closely to the overall focus of the project. Feedback from the participants on the programme acknowledged the relevance of the programme to their responsibilities and indicated their good democratic governance capacities had developed.

The Best Practice Programme (BPP), a major [project conference on 24 May 2023](#), and implementation of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) offered significant opportunities to share good practice with and engage local government stakeholders. Around 100 participants joined [the BPP ceremony on 8 February](#), where 6 municipalities received awards for their innovative initiatives in support of elderly residents, on community policing, connecting NGOs and business leaders, as well as promoting civic participation and participatory budgeting. Similarly, more than 100 mayors and representatives of central ministries attended the project's mid-term conference, which also saw the launch of the 2023 ELoGE initiative – which received an unprecedented number of 18 expressions of interest from Hungarian municipalities.

In total and including activities planned until the end of the year, the CEGG supported 20 capacity development and good practice exchange efforts in Hungary, directly reaching more than 500 representatives of local governments, associations and central ministries and agencies.

Other major efforts in the framework of the project in 2023 included the completion of the project's initial Technical Report, as well as the adaptation of the [Public Ethics Benchmark \(PEB\)](#) and the [Local Finance Benchmark \(LFB\)](#) which are currently being implemented.

Overall, the CEGG has delivered on the planned activities for 2023. Next year, the focus will be on ensuring sustainable outputs and identifying core areas for follow-up, in particular in relation to the design and test development of the local government data platform.

Italy

A study visit from Slovak municipalities to share experience and good practice on implementation of ELoGE to the Friuli Venezia Giulia region offered a chance for peer learning and helped contribute to the development of a Peer-to-Peer guide on implementation of ELoGE.

The CEGG has also supported the Associazione Italiana per il Consiglio dei Comuni e delle Regioni d'Europa – Federazione Friuli Venezia Giulia ([AICCRE FVG](#)) in implementing a [European Academy Programme](#) to strengthen institutional capacity of local authorities based on European standards through implementation of the Leadership Academy Programme and a piloting of the updated ELoGE Benchmark.

Latvia

Under the aegis of the Latvian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the CEGG supported the [Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development](#) in organising an [International Conference on good democratic governance](#) 26 May 2023 in Riga.

On the eve of the Conference with support from Latvian authorities, the CEGG organised an international roundtable discussion on implementation of ELoGE. A platform for multilateral exchange and of good practice, the event mobilised 25 participants from 11 member States, including 4 CDDG members and representatives of 10 national ELoGE accredited institutions. Outcomes from the discussion also helped feed into the ELoGE Benchmark revision process.

The international participants and CoE experts joined the high-level Conference on Democratic Governance.

Minister Māris Sprindžuks, opened the Conference, which included a roundtable discussion on challenges to local democracy. The event received widespread media coverage and was attended by the local stakeholders and the international diplomatic corps in Riga – enabling Council of Europe standards to be disseminated father afied.



The Conference was followed by the Latvian ELoGE award ceremony with 5 municipalities being recognised with the crystal dodecahedron.

Lithuania

Lithuania's commitment to promoting good democratic governance, notably through cooperation with the CEGG and the CDDG, has once again been demonstrated through implementation of the 2nd cycle of the European Label of Governance Excellence in the country. Further to a very successful first ELoGE implementation in 2020 which noted a high participation rate of 60% of all municipalities in the country, a second cycle of ELoGE was carried out in 2023 with an increased participation rate – 65% of all municipalities.

Lithuanian municipalities deemed to have demonstrated adherence to the 12 Principle of Good Democratic Governance were awarded the ELoGE dodecahedron during an Awards Ceremony held *en marge of* an international conference on democratic governance and deliberative democracy, co-organised by the Lithuanian authorities, the CEGG and the CDDG in November 2023.

High-level participation at the conference, represented at the level of Minister, Deputy Minister, Director from the Council of Europe, as well as representatives from the Baltic and Scandinavian region helped in ensuring strong visibility outreach of the event and thus contribute to the promotion of the latest standards prepared by the CDDG – the Recommendation on the principles of good democratic governance and the Recommendation on deliberative democracy.

The Conference also served as an opportunity for exchange of experience and good practice among peers from neighbouring member States. Mayors of Polish municipalities that received the ELoGE in September 2023 exchanged with the hosts about the mutual challenges in ensuring good democratic governance and their respective good practices.

Malta

The CEGG has been supporting revision and updating of the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) and National Training Strategy prepared under a previous Council of Europe project in 2014. In close cooperation with the Local Government Division and the [Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology](#) (MCAST), the TNA will be confirmed in a validation seminar in mid-December 2023 and used to inform the establishment of a sustainable training curriculum and academy for local authorities in Malta.



The CEGG also contribute to a capacity-building activity to celebrate the [30th anniversary of the establishment of the local government system in Malta](#). Participation, accountability, integrity and transparency were among the key words that emerged during the interactive session that helped connect these principles to some of the most relevant toolkits of the CEGG.

North Macedonia

At the request of the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of good governance policies, the CEGG carried out a peer review activity in February 2023 in Skopje, to offer advice and support to authorities in Skopje in relation to the establishment of a good governance training academy.

Peers/experts from 4 member States, presented expert views and their respective practice concerning the potential organisational setup of the academy. Following delivery of the Peer review report to the authorities, the CEGG has agreed to support preparation of draft statues of this potential Regional Academy for Good Governance that could develop training activities based on Council of Europe standards and toolkits.



The CDDG report on multi-level governance and CEGG activities in the region were presented in the context of a roundtable discussion on multi-level governance in the Western Balkans organised by the OECE on 23 November 2023.

Poland

The CEGG, in cooperation with the *Foundation in support of local democracy* – supported implementation of the third cycle of ELoGE cycle in Poland. Four participating municipalities received the Label during an Awards ceremony held in September 2023, attaching strong value to the European character of ELoGE.



The ELoGE municipalities subsequently participated in an international conference on democratic governance and deliberative democracy, held in Vilnius, Lithuania in November 2016 where they exchanged experience on the challenges and lessons learned in delivering good democratic governance at local level, in the context of the 2nd Lithuanian ELoGE awards ceremony.

The CEGG was also invited to present standards and ongoing activities in the context of an international seminar on Central and Eastern Europe Local Government Policies at the University of Wroclaw to senior experts and academic from 20 CEE member States.

Portugal

A second [ELoGE award ceremony](#) was organised in Vila Pouca de Aguiar in June 2023.

Alberto Machado, President of the Municipal Council of Vila Pouca de Aguiar, stressed the importance of involving citizens in designing and implementing policies that address their needs as key to good democratic governance. Marcelo Delgado, President of the Associação dos Trabalhadores da Administração Local ([ATAM](#)), acknowledged the work of local officials in delivery good democratic governance, and noted that ELoGE is sign of good quality public service. Stéphane Pintre, President of the European Federation of Local Government Chief Executives ([UDITE](#)) acknowledged the importance of Council of Europe standards and the readiness of UDITE to contribute to further dissemination throughout Europe.

Romania

The first [European Label of Governance Excellence \(ELoGE\) Awards ceremony](#) was held in Bucharest, Romania on 11 May 2023 with 30 territorial administrative units being recognised for their good democratic governance standards.

Serbia

As identified and agreed upon by all relevant local government stakeholders in Serbia, and as highlighted in the new Strategy on Public Administration of the Republic of Serbia and its Action Plan, a proposed new CEGG project "*Human Resource Management in Local Self Government in Serbia - Phase 3*" is the necessary next step to further strengthen HRM functions at the local level and ensure that they are connected into a single, coherent system, especially in the context of the new competencies framework of local government employees. In anticipation of the new project being launched in Spring 2024, the CEGG has helped bridge the gap by launching a comparative study and preparing a policy advice document that builds on the Peer Review Report on professional development in public administration in Serbia (CEGGPAD (2022)5.

Slovakia

The second phase of the CEGG project "Delivering Good Governance in Slovakia" which brought valuable CDDG expertise and experience into the country for 4 consecutive years, was successfully completed in June 2023. In the final 6 months of the project, at the request of the Slovak Ministry of Interior, the CEGG:

- prepared a Policy advice on Strengthening the financial independence of local and regional governments in the Slovak Republic, and
- organised a Study visit for Slovak ELoGE municipalities to Italy, helping the participating municipal practitioners from both countries to exchange on their respective good practices in ensuring good democratic governance at the local level and explore possibilities for cooperation.



A series of training activities on the 12 principles of good democratic governance for public administration at the local level were also delivered.

Following completion of the project, in early October 2023, the technical government of the Slovak Republic prepared a White paper on national priority areas for the consideration of the upcoming new Government, emphasising the clear and useful policy related guidance prepared by the CEGG in cooperation with the CDDG, that should inform the future decision-making process on governance issues in the country.



Spain

The ELoGE Accreditation Platform approved the renewed accreditation request from the Association of Basque Municipalities (EUDEL) at its meeting of 20 October 2023. The CEGG has been supporting local partners in updating the ELoGE digital data gathering platform used in Spain to reflect the revised ELoGE benchmark.

A new cycle of ELoGE will be launched in the Basque Country in early 2024.

Türkiye

The CEGG has supported the implementation of a second cycle of ELoGE by the [Arguden Governance Academy](#). The European Association of Local Democracy (ALDA) has been invited on to the national platform to advise and assist with the assessment process.

Following the successful pilot-project implemented in 2021-2022, a high-level of interest was shown from municipalities beyond the confines of the greater Istanbul area. A series of capacity building and awareness-raising activities were organised in September 2023 for interested municipalities.

An award ceremony is planned for 14 December 2023 for those municipalities that have demonstrated a high-level of adherence to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance.

Ukraine

[“Strengthening Good Democratic Governance and Resilience in Ukraine”](#) – a new project with a total budget of €1.400.000 – was launched in 2023. The CEGG has been able to continue providing expertise and support to Ukraine building upon past achievements with the aim of enhancing multi-level governance and sound administration at all levels during the war and in preparation for a post-war context.

Irrespective of the permanently changing and volatile environment, the CEGG has remained a valued and leading advisor to the Government, the Parliament, and local authorities in Ukraine in designing the next steps of reforms in the area.

The CEGG has continued to moderate the High-Level Dialogue on “Good Democratic Governance in Ukraine: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward in Post-War Period”, launched in the Council of Europe HQ in November 2022.

It has also been implementing other activities derived from the Joint Declaration signed by the First Vice-Speaker of the Parliament Oleksandr KORNIENKO and Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe Bjorn BERGE:

- The CEGG produced the opinion on local self-government part of the roadmap on good democratic governance (CEGG/PAD(2023)4) and discussed it with national stakeholders in Kyiv on 18 April 2023 at the [High-level Round Table](#);
- It conducted and facilitated the [“Strasbourg format” confidential meeting](#) in Lviv on 14 October leading to significant progress on contested issues of the draft law on the reform of the State sub-national representation and legality supervision over local authorities’ acts. As a result, the Parliament revised the draft law in line with the Conclusions of the meeting in Lviv.



High-Level Dialogue in Ukraine: Decentralisation and Transition to Civilian Regime

2nd High-level Dialogue meeting

The CEGG also co-organised the second High-Level Dialogue in Kyiv in December 2023 to discuss the Roadmap on good democratic governance, prepared by national stakeholders.

Senior officials including the Vice-Prime-Minister, Deputy Head of the Presidential Office, MPs from different political parties led by First Vice-Speaker of the Parliament, leaders of national local government associations, other Ukrainian stakeholders participated in the event. The event also mobilised high-level officials from across the Council of Europe dealing with the issues in question, representing the Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the Venice Commission.

The discussion touched on steps to be taken to further implementation of the Roadmap and addressed the transitional period from military to civilian administration. European standards, and good practice from other Council of Europe member States were presented and the EU enlargement [report](#) released by the European Commission in November 2023. Was discussed in view of Ukraine's status of the EU candidate country.

Legal Assistance

Furthermore, the GEGG successfully provided expert assistance to the Specialised Parliamentary Committee on local self-government to prepare the following draft laws:

- (i) "On public consultations" in view of its [Opinion of May 2021](#) (CEGG/LEX(2021)1): 36 or 90% out of 40 Council of Europe's' recommendations to the draft law were addressed (83% completely and 7% partially) – final adoption of the law is pending;
- (ii) On public service at local level a [new law adopted](#) on 2 May 2023 in line with recommendations of [Opinion of August 2022](#) (CEGG/LEX(2022)1). The CEGG provided further recommendations on amendments to other legislation, relevant by-laws, and supported elaboration of methodological guidance to local authorities.

Throughout 2023, the CEGG supported the Association of Ukrainian Cities to develop guidelines and clarifications relating to functioning of local authorities and military administrations and distribution of powers and responsibilities between them under martial law. Three dedicated webinars, bringing together over 1400 online participants, were organised to support this process.

The CEGG, drawing on previous [CDDG work](#), also advised on metropolitan governance in Ukraine, focusing on the grass-root initiative in Lviv metropolitan area comprising 18 communities, where it provided a range of tailor-made assistance, such as [sociological survey \(opinion poll\)](#) on public administration in wartime with the focus on commuting, a dedicated [peer visit](#) of local leaders from Lviv metropolitan area to Poland, and facilitated elaboration of the Lviv Agglomeration Development Strategy in close co-operation with local and regional stakeholders and in line with the CEGG [toolkit on Strategic Municipal Planning](#).

This Strategy, endorsed by the regional and local stakeholders, is the first inter-municipal co-operation agreement in Ukraine enabling access to educational services for children with special needs. This agreement in Lviv is seen as an exemplary solution which could be adapted and replicated throughout the country.

- The Lviv Agglomeration Development Strategy will be presented in a public meeting on 24 November 2024.

Public Ethics

Furthermore, in partnership with the National Agency on Corruption Prevention and two associations of local self-governments, the CEGG conducted the [Public Ethics Benchmarking](#) for local authorities (based on its relevant [toolkit](#)). The CEGG will follow-up on this in 2024, discussing possible legal initiatives to improve the overall framework for public ethics and integrity at local level, developing ethical infrastructure and practical guidelines in this field, including recommendations and model codes of ethics.

Intermunicipal Cooperation

An analysis of the Law on inter-municipal co-operation (IMC) has been undertaken in light of the recent territorial consolidation reform in Ukraine (completed in 2020); challenges linked to the invasion by the Russian Federation; and increasing recovery and reconstruction needs. Recommendations to improve by-laws relating to IMC forms, with a focus on the conflict-affected regions have been presented to the government and parliament and adapted for local authorities.

Jointly with the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service the CEGG (based on its relevant [toolkit](#)) analysed training needs of local elected and appointed officials leading to revision of the training programmes' list recommended by the Government for national training providers.

The CEGG also successfully implemented its Best Practice in Local Government toolkit and the two national contests built on in: the Best practice programme on human resources management and the Best practice programme on training innovations.

Moreover, the CEGG co-organised a number of other high-level public discussions on policy development, such as the [Annual National Richelieu Hearings \(September 2023\)](#) dedicated to the public service reform under martial law, the Local Self-Government Forum (December 2023) and other numerous round table meetings and workshops bringing together nearly 700 face-to-face and 5000 online participants.



“Our joint task is to provide citizens with accessible high-quality services, ensure openness and transparency of authorities, strengthen people's trust in government institutions. Without the Council of Europe's support the decentralisation reform would hardly be feasible but further assistance is desperately needed.”

Oleksandr KUBRAKOV, Vice Prime Minister for Restoration of Ukraine – Minister for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine

United Kingdom

The CEGG presented CM/Rec(2023)5 on principles of good democratic governance and other relevant standards and toolkits at a conference in Birmingham, UK organised by SOLACE (the UK network for local government and public sector professionals) and ICMA (the International City/County Managers Association).

Kosovo*

A second cycle of ELoGE was launched in Pristina, Kosovo* on 15 November 2023 with the support of the European Association of Local Democracy (ALDA).

The CEGG also had the lead in the preparation of an expert opinion on the draft Statute establishing the Association of the Serb-majority municipalities of Kosovo*.

* All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations' Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

List of abbreviations

ADC: Austrian Development Cooperation

AEBR: Association of European Border Regions

ALDA: European Association for Local Democracy

BPP: Best Practice Programme

C2C: City to City Cooperation

CBC: Cross-border Cooperation

CDDG: European Committee for Democracy and Governance

CEGG: Centre of Expertise for Good Governance

CEMR: Council of European Municipalities and Regions

CESCI: Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives

DGII: Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity

DDDGGA: Democratic Development, Decentralisation, and Good Governance in Armenia

DG REFORM: Directorate General for Structural Reform Support of EU Commission

ELoGE: European Label of Governance Excellence

EU: European Union

EUDEL: Association of Basque local authorities

HRM: Human Resources Management

IMC: Inter-municipal Cooperation

INET: French National Institute for Territorial Studies (Institut National des Etudes Territoriales)

ISIG: Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia

LAP: Leadership Academy Programme

LFB: Local Finance Benchmark

MPALSG: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-government (Serbia)

MoRDPW: Ministry of regional Development and Public Works (Bulgaria)

NAMRB: National Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria

NAPA: National Academy of Public Administration (Serbia)

PEB: Public Ethics Benchmarking Programme

PMP: Performance Management Programme

ReBuS: Resilience Building Strategies Toolkit

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

SMP: Strategic Municipal Planning

TNA: Training Needs Assessment

TÖOSZ: Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities

UDiTE: European Federation of Local Government Chief Executives