

2023 ACTIVITY REPORT

CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR
GOOD GOVERNANCE – CEGG



CDDG(2023)21

December 2023



This document was prepared by the Centre of
Expertise for Good Governance, Directorate
General II – Democracy and Human Dignity,
Council of Europe.

Illustration on the cover page:
The Effects of Good Governance
By A. Lorenzetti – Sala dei nove
Siena, Italy (1339)

© CoE - Centre of Expertise for Good
Governance, December 2023

Table of content

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4	MALTA	30
HIGHLIGHTS BY MEMBER STATE	8	NORTH MACEDONIA	31
ALBANIA	9	POLAND	32
ARMENIA	11	PORTUGAL.....	33
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.....	14	ROMANIA.....	34
BULGARIA.....	15	SERBIA.....	35
CROATIA	17	SLOVAK REPUBLIC	36
CYPRUS.....	17	SPAIN	37
FINLAND	19	TÜRKIYE	37
FRANCE.....	21	UKRAINE	38
GEORGIA.....	22	UNITED KINGDOM	42
HUNGARY	22	KOSOVO*.....	42
ITALY	26	PROSPECTS FOR 2024.....	43
LATVIA.....	27	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	45
LITHUANIA.....	28	TABLE OF PICTURES	47

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

Executive summary

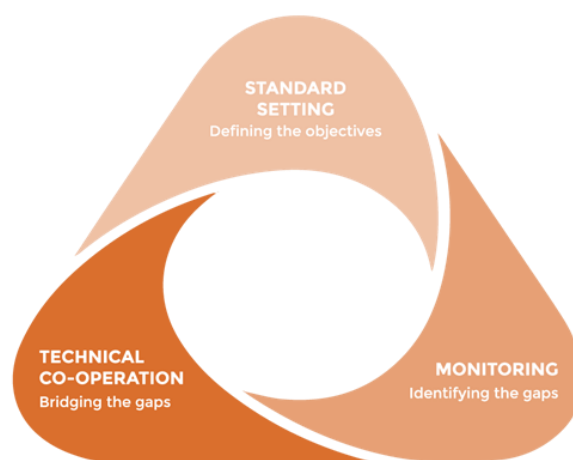
The Centre of Expertise, established in 2006 as the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform following a decision by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe at the 3rd Summit in Warsaw in 2005, was renamed in 2017 as the [Centre of Expertise for Good Governance](#) (CEGG), to 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*. 4 Peer Review visits were organised in Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, and North Macedonia; 5 exchanges of good practice between

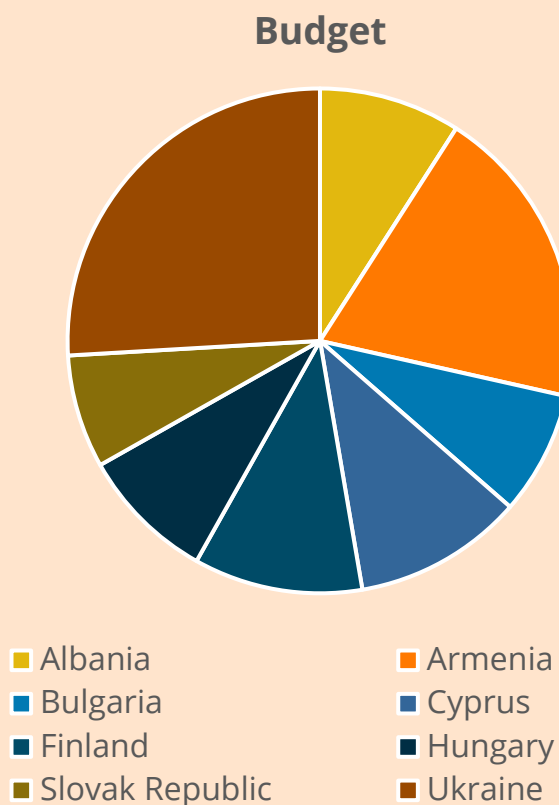
member States took place; 12 Policy Advice documents were delivered to support alignment with Council of Europe standards; and the capacities of several thousand public officials and civil society actors across Europe have been developed in the context of several hundred capacity building activities.

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 facts and figures

In 2023, the Centre of Expertise was responsible for managing the implementation of projects and activities for a total budget of roughly €7,5 million, in 23 Council of Europe member States. The biggest projects include:

CoE member State	Total budget
Albania	€ 700.000
Bulgaria	€ 610.000
Finland	€ 835.000
Slovak Republic	€ 670.000
Armenia	€ 1.1 M
Cyprus	€ 840.000
Hungary	€ 670.000
Ukraine	€ 2 M



Key statistics for CEGG activity in 2023



Almost **100** local authorities received ELoGE at award ceremonies organised in **9** member States in 2023

ELoGE

Benchmark revised and updated to reflect CM/Rec (2023) 5 on principles of good democratic governance and following feedback from partners across Europe

Officials, experts, and CDDG members from more than

30 States

participated in CEGG activities and in exchanges of good practice between member States

ACTIVITIES IN 24 MEMBER STATES



Large scale projects in 7 member States
Smaller scale projects and activities in a further 16 Member states
Capacity-building in 17 member States

Formal legal & policy advice

11 formal legal and policy advice papers delivered to help attune legislative frameworks to CoE standards

Detailed guide on "Strasbourg Format" methodology

prepared in light of the successful Lviv meeting on reform of sub-national representation and supervision of Legal Advice Acts



New guide on Strategic Regional Development prepared

PEER REVIEWS

organised in:

- **Bulgaria**
- **Finland**
- **Hungary**
- **North Macedonia**

12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance

promoted through the implementation of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in **15** member States and Kosovo*

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.

“

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

”

ALBANIA



Sustaining Public Administration Reform at Local Level in 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 10 sessions that took place in 9 cities (Shkodra, Tirana, Vlora and Saranda, Gjirokastrer, Durrës, Lezhe, Korca and Lalez). 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



Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia – Phase II

The [“Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Good Governance in Armenia – Phase II”](#) (DDDGGA – 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 policymaking 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.

A call for proposals for grants applications on feasibility studies was launched in early December. The grants will enable the most relevant projects to build up an evidence base in support of proposals to enhance inter-municipal and cross-border cooperation.

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 10 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.

“

[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.

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

”

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



First ELoGE award ceremony

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 first ELoGE award ceremony was organised in Sarajevo on 8 December 2023.

Out of a total of 12 local governments that participated in the ELoGE process, the Municipality of Jablanica, the City of Prijedor and the Municipality of Žepče were awarded the label

BULGARIA



Developing Fiscal Decentralisation and Improving Local Financial Management in 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;
- 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 equalization has been prepared for the Bulgarian MoRDPW and Ministry of Finance.

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 Poreč, Croatia on 22 November 2023.

CYPRUS



Enhancing the Local Government Reform in 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;
- Prepared a Training Needs Analysis (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). Both the TNA and NTS the TNA will be confirmed in a validation seminar in mid-December 2023 with 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;
- Adapted the Public Ethics Benchmarking (PEB) material to the Cypriot context in anticipation of a mid-December workshop with municipalities representatives aiming at developing a National Public Ethics Benchmark;
- Delivered a series of trainings on LAP Stage I to elected officials and civil servants from municipalities and communities (6 classes).

FINLAND



Delivering Good Governance and Balanced Local Economy in 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 organised 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](#), made publicly available by the Finnish authorities, underlines challenging areas of the reform where Finland may wish to adapt its policies;
- A draft report addressing metropolitan governance issues, drawing on previous [CDDG work](#) in this domain and incorporating recent good practice from member States, including Austria, Latvia and the Slovak Republic, is currently being prepared and will be presented in February 2024.
- Building up on the results of a recent Local Finance Benchmarking for central and local authorities, a Policy Advice report on fiscal decentralisation issues is also under preparation. Aiming to reconcile the budgetary needs of the municipalities with the fiscal decentralisation capacity of the central government, the Policy Advice will present recommendations for strengthening the financial autonomy of the Finnish regional and local government.

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



ELoGE award Ceremony

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.

The following were awarded the label:

- Communauté de Communes des Lisières de l'Oise
- Eurométropole de Strasbourg
- Haute Corrèze Communauté
- Morne-à-l'Eau
- Sceaux

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



Local Government Public Finance Development and Municipal Capacity Building in Hungary

The project '[Local Government Public Finance Development and Municipal Capacity Building in Hungary](#)' is co-funded by the European Commission (DG REFORM) under the Technical Support Instrument 2022 and the Council of Europe. It 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 the aim

of strengthening the administrative and financial capacity of the municipalities in Hungary through a combination of policy advice and capacity building.

Key project activities include a [Peer Review](#) 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 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 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 learning and networking to 36 elected officials and senior staff from more than 30 municipalities. In two cohorts, these local leaders met in 5 multi-day sessions throughout the year. Throughout the LAP, 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. 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.

A series of public events throughout 2023 also offered 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, connecting NGOs and business leaders, promoting civic participation and participatory budgeting. The project's [mid-term conference](#) on 24 May was attended by more than 100 mayors and representatives of central ministries. On 20 November, the 2023 edition of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE) concluded with a [ceremony](#) at which the municipalities of Budapest's XIIIth district, Szarvas, Zalaszentgrót, Hernád, Vép and Rigács received the label.

Other project efforts in 2023 included the adaptation of the [Public Ethics Benchmark](#) (PEB) and the [Local Finance Benchmark](#) (LFB) which are currently being implemented.

In total, 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.

In 2024, the focus will be on delivering a Policy Advice on intergovernmental financial relations and on ensuring sustainable outputs, in particular in relation to the design and test development of the local government data platform.

“

Receiving the [ELOGE] award is confirmation for us of our commitment to European values, and the opportunities we seek to provide for citizens to express and channel their views into decision-making, based on transparency and publicity.

Dr. Beáta Simon, Notary of the city of Zalaszentgrót

”

ITALY



Study visit and European Academy Programme

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 (LAP) with some twenty municipalities' representatives and a piloting of the updated ELoGE Benchmark with ten municipalities. This synergy was further strengthened with the organisation of a [European conference](#) to discuss the recently adopted CM Rec(2023)5 on good democratic governance with the presence of numerous local, regional and national stakeholders (around 90 participants).

LATVIA



International Conference on good democratic governance

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

LITHUANIA



2nd cycle of ELoGE

Lithuania's commitment to promoting good democratic governance, notably through cooperation with the CEGG and the CDDG, was underlined through implementation of the 2nd cycle of the European Label of Governance Excellence. Further to a 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.

29 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.

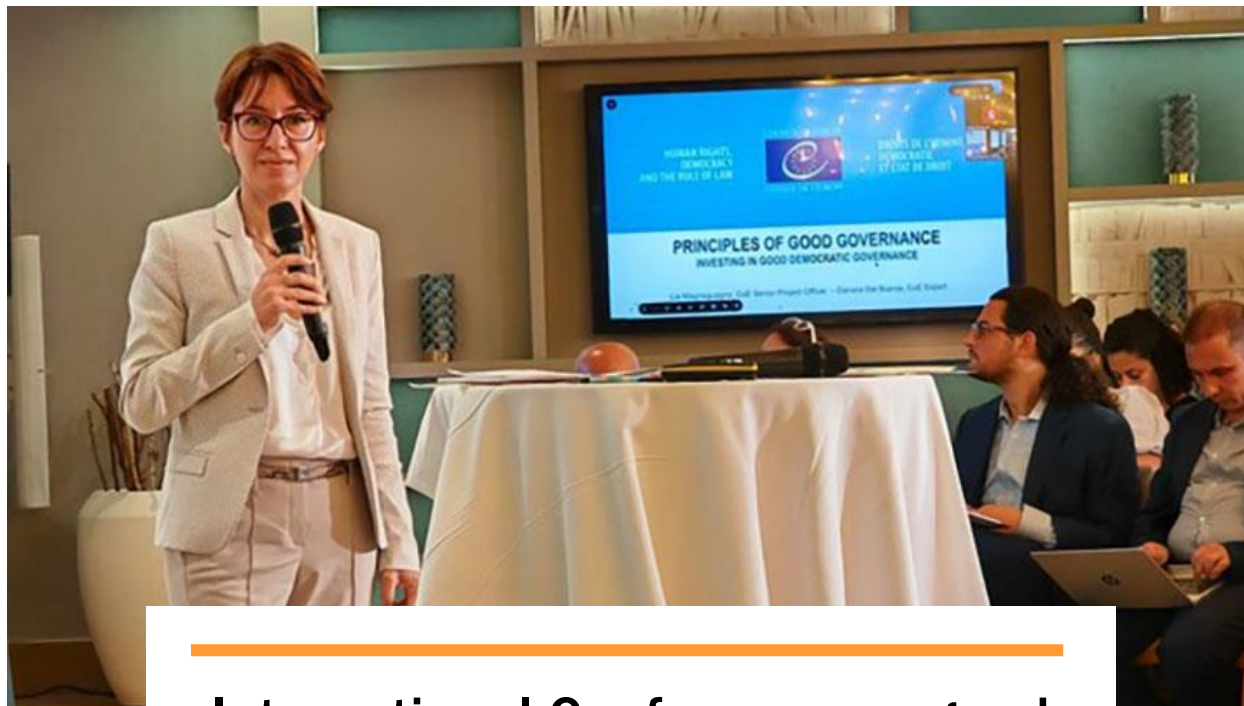
“

... 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

”

MALTA



International Conference on good democratic governance

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 results of the TNA were presented at a validation seminar on 1 December 2023 and will be used to inform the establishment of a sustainable training curriculum and academy for local authorities in Malta.

The CEGG also contributed 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



Peer review activity

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 the national authorities in relation to the potential establishment of a Regional Academy for Good Governance.

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 pledged to support the preparation of draft statutes of the Regional Academy that shall aim to 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 OECD in Skopje, on 23 November 2023.

POLAND



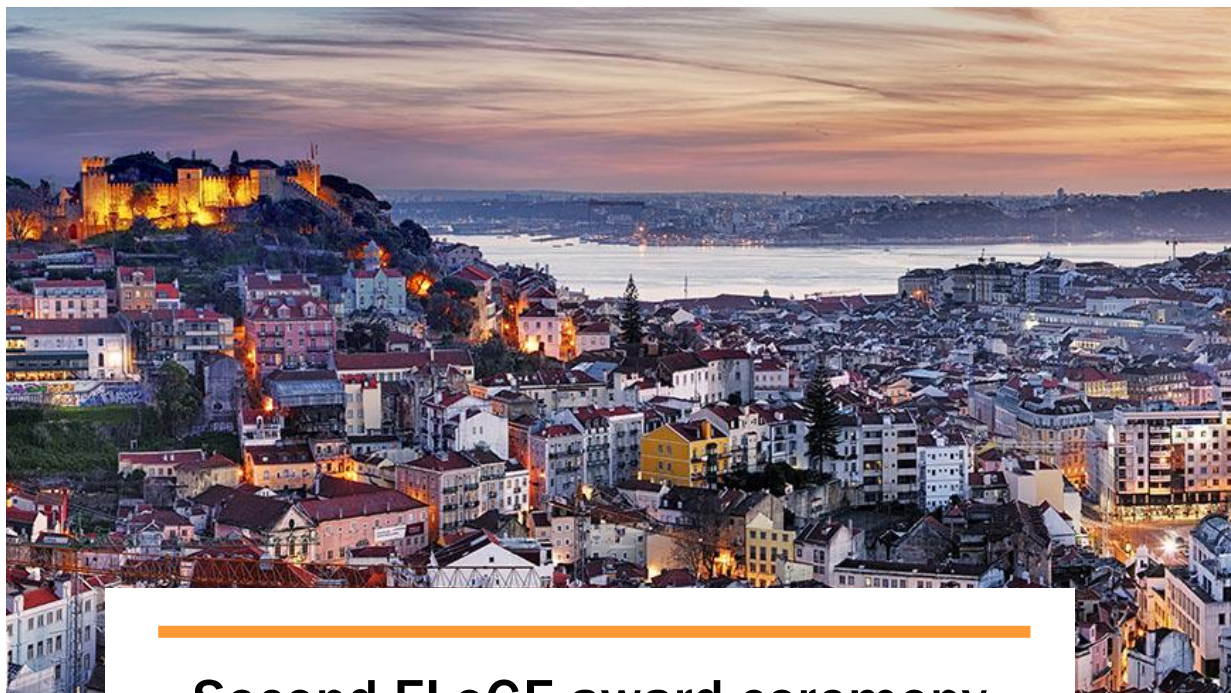
Third cycle of ELoGE

The CEGG, in cooperation with the *Foundation in support of local democracy* – supported implementation of the third cycle of ELoGE 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

In this same spirit, encouraging stronger European cooperation between local authorities, the CEGG ensured the participation of the ELoGE municipalities at an international conference on democratic governance and deliberative democracy, held in Vilnius, Lithuania in November 2023. Polish and Lithuanian authorities exchanged experience on the challenges and lessons learned in delivering good democratic governance at local level.

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



Second ELoGE award ceremony

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



First ELoGE award ceremony

This first cycle of ELoGE in Romania was launched in May 2022 and, following awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, local authorities were invited to indicate their intention to complete the self-assessment process, including surveying citizens and elected officials.

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



Policy Advice Document on Lifelong Professional Development in Public Administration

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). This new Policy Advice document (CEGGPAD(2023)10 on Lifelong Professional Development in Public Administration, helps the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government meet a key deliverable in the Action Plan of the Strategy for Public Administration Reform.

SLOVAK REPUBLIC



Delivering Good Governance in 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.

TÜRKİYE



ELoGE award

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 took place on 14 December 2023](#). The metropolitan municipalities of Ankara and Eskişehir and the district municipalities of Bağcılar, Gebze, Sultanbeyli and Şişli were received ELoGE.

UKRAINE



Strengthening Good Democratic Governance and Resilience in 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 co-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.

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 activity 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 strategic vision of further reforms and specific steps to be taken for implementation of the Roadmap and in view of the EU enlargement [report](#) released by the European Commission in November 2023. Thus, the dialogue addressed the transitional period from military to civilian administration, division of powers of the state and local self-government and amongst their tiers, European standards, and good practice from other Council of Europe member States.

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 was presented in a public meeting on 24 November 2024. As a result, 9 municipalities established the new association of local authorities “Lviv Agglomeration” in December 2023.

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.

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 Europe (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 for 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*.



Prospects for 2024

At their [Fourth Summit](#) in Reykjavík, in May 2023, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe made a renewed commitment to “securing and strengthening democracy and good governance at all levels throughout Europe.” Member States agreed to support the essential role of multilevel governance in delivering the Organisation’s vision, including through the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities’ role in implementing the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Recognising the importance of the principle of subsidiarity and the role of local and regional authorities as key players in tackling democratic backsliding; safeguarding the European Convention of Human Rights; and protecting the environment, the subsequent reform of the Organisation saw the strengthening of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and the integration of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance (CEGG) into the Congress secretariat.

The European Committee for Democracy and Governance (CDDG) will be discontinued, but the new Committee on Democracy – CDDEM – will [“exchange information, collaborate with and be kept abreast of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance’s activities.”](#)

The reform offers an opportunity to strengthen existing projects and will cement the position the Council of Europe to better implement decisions taken at the [Fourth Summit](#) in Reykjavik. The implementation of all the current projects will continue, and several potential new projects are pending, subject to funding. The name will be amended to the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance to reflect the vision of the Organisation as outlined in the Reykjavik Declaration.

Working under the aegis of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance will be an important hub for cooperation projects that address public administration and multilevel governance reforms; develop capacities of staff and elected officials of local and regional authorities; foster political dialogue; and deliver advice to promote good democratic governance based on CoE standards and tools.

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
TÖÖSZ	Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities
UDiTE	European Federation of Local Government Chief Executives

Table of pictures

Page	Caption
9	Leadership Academy training session, Albania
11	Field visit to a youth facility in Aparan municipality, Armenia
14	
15	Citizen consultation during the Peer review Visit, Bulgaria
17	Project presentation, Cyprus
19	Peer Review visit, Finland
21	ELoGE award ceremony, France
22	The Peer Review team visit, Hungary
26	European Conference on “Good Democratic Governance: The New Standard for Member States of the Council of Europe”, Italy
27	International Conference on good democratic governance, Latvia
28	International conference on democratic governance and deliberative democracy, Lithuania
30	Celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of local government in Malta, Malta
31	Peer Review visit, North Macedonia
32	ELoGE award ceremony, Poland
33	Overview of city name, Portugal
34	ELoGE award ceremony, Romania
35	Peer Review Visit in 2022, Serbia
36	ELoGE study visit, Italy
37	
38	<i>Strasbourg format</i> meeting, Ukraine
43	LAP session, Hungary. Photo: Péter Kolin, TÖÖSZ
45	LAP Session, Armenia