



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 5 August 2019

CDDG-Bu(2019)9

**BUREAU OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE
ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE
(CDDG)**

MEETING REPORT¹

23 May 2019, Council of Europe, Strasbourg

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair, Mr Peter Andre, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants, especially new members. He introduced Ms Sonia Sirtori, new Head of the Good Governance Division. The list of participants is set out in Appendix I.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda as adopted is presented in Appendix II. The Chair announced that, in the order of business, items 8 and 9 would follow item 4.

3. Information by the Chair on recent activities

The Chair gave an overview of his participation in the 36th session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, during which the main issues on the agenda had been the difficulties faced by local and regional authorities and their elected representatives; the financial compensation of local and regional elected representatives in the exercise of their office; fighting nepotism within local and regional authorities; protecting whistle-blowers. Some of these issues deserved to be followed up by the CDDG in its future work. It was important for the CDDG to work in synergy with the Congress. With this consideration in mind, he had accepted the invitation to attend the conference on *Smart Cities: Democratic and Inclusive Cities*, which the Congress would organise on 14 June 2019 in Várpalota, Hungary. In addition, during the April session of the INGO Conference, he had attended the meeting of the working group on *Participation in democratic decision-making*, which had addressed the issue of the supervision of local authorities from the point of view of civil society.

¹ Prepared by the Secretariat.

A discussion ensued with the participation of members of the Bureau and the Secretariat, during which the following suggestions on how to ensure greater outreach, visibility and impact of the work of the CDDG were made:

- the dissemination of texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers should be improved; if resources allowed it, they should be translated in non-official languages; they should be transmitted to the authorities of Council of Europe member States via an official letter of the Secretariat (Director) or Permanent Representations; members of the CDDG had a role to play in promoting dissemination; the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance was key to promoting knowledge of adopted texts and elaborating toolkits based on them;
- feedback on the implementation of adopted texts should be systematically collected. The CDDG should hold regular discussions to this end, for instance by including a specific item on its agenda;
- the CDDG should intensify its practice of inviting CDDG representatives to present relevant initiatives by their government and share their experiences;
- ministers and deputy ministers should be regularly invited to participate in CDDG meetings and should be more closely associated to its work, as they have the political leverage to take issues forward at national level.

4. Information on recent developments at the Council of Europe

Ms Claudia Luciani presented the outcome of the 129th session of the Committee of Ministers (Helsinki, 16 and 17 May 2019). The stakes of this gathering were high, as indicated by the high-level attendance. The Committee of Ministers adopted a Declaration marking the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, reaffirming the importance of the Organisation as a unique, value-based platform for dialogue and co-operation, including all its member States. The Committee of Ministers also decided to strengthen the protection and promotion of the space for civil society in Europe. It further instructed its Deputies to follow-up on the proposals set out in the Secretary General's report on *Meeting the challenges ahead - Strengthening the Council of Europe* and called for addressing major and emerging challenges (human trafficking, freedom of expression, inequality and discrimination, migration, social rights, combating violence against women and domestic violence) and ensuring the sustainability of the Organisation. As regards artificial intelligence, the Committee of Ministers decided to examine the feasibility of a legal framework for the development, design and application of artificial intelligence, based on the Council of Europe's standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It was important for the CDDG to be involved in this work.

It was not clear, at the moment, whether the Russian Federation would submit a delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly and honour its financial commitments towards the Organisation. The implementation of the contingency plan, therefore, could not be ruled out.

In the ensuing discussion, Bureau members agreed that it was important for the CDDG to turn to the future and start work on emerging trends. Recourse to artificial intelligence was already a significant issue in many member States, at all levels of government. Its potential had to be harnessed in order to prevent risks. Dealing with this issue, however, would require a great level of expertise.

In concluding, Ms Luciani recalled that the declaration of the Warsaw summit had placed the promotion of democracy and good governance at the centre of the Council of Europe's priorities. 14 years later this approach had lost strength. The new Secretary General would certainly play a role in setting the priorities for the Organisation for the years to come.

5. Decisions of the Committee of Ministers of relevance to the work of the CDDG

The Bureau took note of document CDDG-Bu(2019)1 listing the decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers since the meeting of the CDDG of 28-30 November 2018 which were of relevance to the work of the Committee.

As regards Recommendations 428 and 434 of the Congress of local and regional authorities, respectively on *Fighting nepotism within local and regional authorities* and *Financial compensation of local and regional elected representatives in the exercise of their office*, the Bureau instructed the Secretariat to circulate elements for the CDDG contribution to the Committee of Ministers reply, to be approved by written procedure.

6. State of implementation of the CDDG's activities according to its terms of reference 2018-2019

6.1 Revision of Committee of Ministers' Recommendation R(98)12 on supervision of local authorities' action

The Bureau took note of the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the revised Recommendation on the supervision of local authorities' action (CM/Rec(2019)3) at the 1343rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (4 April 2019).

6.2 Public ethics

Guidelines on public ethics: revised draft

The Bureau held an in-depth discussion on the basis of document GT-EP(2019)1rev, which had been presented to the working group on public ethics at its second meeting, and document CDDG-Bu(2019)2 as revised following the second meeting of the working group. The Bureau thanked the working group and the expert, Mr Doublet, for their valuable work. It decided to transmit to the working group document CDDG-Bu(2019)2 together with some additional suggestions, recalling that the working group should finalise the draft guidelines at its next meeting, to be held on 16-17 September in Strasbourg, in view of their final approval by the CDDG on 9-11 December. The Bureau also pointed out that the final guide should be approved after the draft guidelines on public ethics, with a view to ensuring coherence.

Preparation of a feasibility study on a Council of Europe indicator framework on public ethics

The Bureau was informed of the discussions in the working group concerning the feasibility study on the preparation of a Council of Europe indicator framework. Following an exchange of views, it agreed on the text of a short questionnaire to be sent to member States.

6.3 *E-democracy*

Information on the second meeting of the CDDG working group on e-democracy (14-15 March 2019, Strasbourg)

The Bureau took note of the report of the meeting.

Guidelines on e-democracy in the form of a toolkit

The Bureau expressed the view that while guidelines should be a high-level instrument which is addressed to Council of Europe member States, the toolkit should be a practical instrument which provides 'practitioners' with guidance and includes examples and practical steps to be taken.

Review meeting on implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 on standards for e-voting

In preparation of the meeting, the Bureau instructed the Secretariat to submit a questionnaire on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 on standards for e-voting to member States. It also decided that the review meeting would be held in conjunction with the CDDG meeting in December 2019.

New technologies and the electoral cycle

The Bureau was informed of ongoing Council of Europe activities in this area and expressed support for the CDDG to start work on *New technologies and the electoral process*. If possible, this work could start in 2019. In any case it could be included in the terms of reference of the CDDG for the next biennium.

6.4 *Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance*

The Bureau took note of the oral information provided by the Secretariat on the latest developments in promoting the European Label of Governance Excellence and the implementation of ELoGE programmes in Council of Europe member States.

7. Developing tools on good democratic governance and supporting reforms

Ms Alina Tatarenko presented the state of implementation of the Strategic Plan 2017-2022 of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, briefly describing activities carried out in Albania, Armenia, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain.

Ms Sylvia Ivanova outlined the state of implementation of the programme on decentralisation in Ukraine, where the Council of Europe was the main advisor of the government in the area of territorial reform.

8. Report 2019 by the Secretary General

The Bureau took note of the report *Ready for Future Challenges – Reinforcing the Council of Europe*.

9. The European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) in 2020-2021: scope for action

Following the discussions under items 4 and 8, the Secretariat presented proposals for the terms of reference of the CDDG for the next biennium. It was not clear yet whether the contingency plan would be applied. A cautious planning of the budget was therefore required.

The Bureau supported the proposal to work on a recommendation on democratic accountability of elected officials and bodies, which would be a good way to complement Recommendation CM/Rec (2019) on the supervision of local authorities' activities.

In addition, as follow-up to the Secretary General's reports on the *State of Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law* and taking into account the outcome of the 129th session of the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki, the Bureau supported the preparation of a study on *The impact of the digital transformation on democracy and governance* and developing standards on *New technologies and the electoral process* in the form of a recommendation or guidelines.

10. Presidency of the Committee of Ministers

The Bureau took note of document CDDG-Bu(2019)6, listing the activities which had been conducted under the Finnish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers and the priorities of the French Presidency.

11. Activities of other Council of Europe bodies

The Bureau took note of document CDDG-Bu(2019)7.

12. Other business

None.

13. Date and place of the next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 24 (afternoon) and 25 (all day) October 2019 in Paris.

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APPENDIX II

AGENDA

- 1. Opening of the meeting**
- 2. Adoption of the agenda** [CDDG-Bu(2019)0J1 rev.]
- 3. Information by the Chair on recent activities**
- 4. Information on recent developments at the Council of Europe**
 - Oral information by the Secretariat
- 5. Decisions by the Committee of Ministers of relevance to the work of the CDDG** [CDDG-Bu(2019)1]
- 6. State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2018-2019**
 - 6.1 *Revision of Committee of Ministers' Recommendation R(98)12 on the supervision of local authorities' action*
 - Decision by the Committee of Ministers [CM/Rec(2019)3]
 - 6.2 *Public ethics*
 - Guidelines on public ethics: Revised draft [CDDG-Bu(2019)2]
 - Preparation of a feasibility study on a Council of Europe indicator framework on public ethics [CDDG-Bu(2019)3]
 - 6.3 *E-democracy*
 - Information on the second meeting of the CDDG working group on e-democracy (14-15 March 2019, Strasbourg) [GT-ED(2019)4]
 - Guidelines on e-democracy in the form of a toolkit [CDDG-Bu(2019)4]
 - Review meeting on implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 on standards for e-voting [CDDG-Bu(2019)5]
 - New technologies and the electoral cycle [CDDG-Bu(2019)8]
 - 6.4 *Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance*
 - Promotion of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance in member States: Update Oral information
- 7. Developing tools on good democratic governance and supporting reforms**

Centre of Expertise for Good Governance

 - Strategic Plan 2017-2022 of the Centre of Expertise: state of implementation and activities in 2019 Oral information
- 8. Report 2019 by the Secretary General**
 - Ready for Future Challenges – Reinforcing the Council of Europe [SG(2019)1]

9. The European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) in 2020-2021: scope for action

- Exchange of views

10. Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers

Activities under the Chairmanship of Finland and of France

- Ministerial Conference Helsinki, 16-17 May 2019, Helsinki, Finland

[CDDG-Bu(2019)6]

Oral information

11. Activities of other Council of Europe bodies

- *36th Session of the Congress (2-4 April 2019)*

Information by the Chair

[CDDG-Bu(2019)7]

12. Other business

13. Date and place of the next meeting