



Strasbourg, 25 May 2020

CDDG-Bu(2020)12

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

**REPORT OF THE MEETING
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE, 12 MAY 2020**

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr Markku Mölläri, Chair *ad interim* of the CDDG, opened the meeting and welcomed members. The list of participants is set out in Appendix I.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix II.

3. Recent developments

The Secretariat updated the Bureau on the precautionary measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic as applied in France and by the Council of Europe. The lockdown had ceased on 11 May 2020 but important restrictions remained applicable in some areas, including Alsace, at least until 29 May. Gatherings of more than 10 persons should be avoided, international travel was restricted in many respects and teleworking was strongly encouraged. At the Council of Europe, the maximum proportion of staff who could be present in the office premises was 33%.

Over the last few weeks, an increasing number of Council of Europe official meetings had been organised by videoconference. Solutions had been found to arrange for online interpretation and voting via the Kudo virtual meeting platform which also provided for the possibility to display documents on screen during discussions. The CDDG could take advantage of these new technical possibilities to make progress with its work.

The Bureau took note of the information.

4. Revised work plan 2020-2021

The Secretariat presented a draft revised work plan for the period 2020-2021 (document CDDG-Bu(2020)10), with the possible and necessary adaptations dictated by the Covid-19 pandemic, recalling that the Committee should be prepared to cope with all scenarios, including the use of teleconference during the rest of the year in case of persisting travel restrictions and lockdown measures in Europe. It was suggested that the CDDG hold its next plenary meeting in an "informal" manner, tentatively for a half day on 18 June 2020, by teleconference and without taking formal decisions but with a thematic focus on sharing experience on the management of the Covid-19 situation.

This could become a test case for holding the 11th CDDG meeting by videoconference and, if necessary, also the 12th. As regards the latter, it was advisable to hold it over three days to allow meaningful progress in the implementation of the terms of reference. The thematic meeting in June could also serve as a test for the meetings of the two working groups in September 2020, should it be impossible to hold them in person.

The Chair thanked the Secretariat for such proposals. In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- using a progressive approach and a thematic meeting in June to test videoconference possibilities to prepare for a formal 11th CDDG meeting in September was an interesting proposal, provided that more time was left during that 11th meeting between the two-half days of work due to various other working constraints;
- even the 12th CDDG meeting could take place remotely given the many restrictions not unlikely to remain applicable across Europe in November;
- flexibility should apply as much as possible and in-person meetings should not be completely excluded for the Bureau and CDDG meetings in autumn;
- combined meetings (with participants being present in a meeting room and others attending via teleconference) presented a risk of unequal influence on decisions;
- the Chair and the Secretariat would be trained by the Council of Europe on the remote conferencing platform and all CDDG members would be provided with guidance in due course on the functioning of Kudo.

The Bureau discussed the dates of the two CDDG plenaries. It was advisable for the 11th CDDG meeting to take place before the working groups meetings, in view of providing guidance to them. The date of the Bureau meeting in October should be brought forward. Additional meetings of the Bureau could be organised by videoconference.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to propose in due course new dates for a Bureau meeting ahead of the CDDG thematic meeting of June, of the 11th CDDG plenary (on two non-consecutive dates) and for the Bureau meeting in October.

5. Democratic governance and Covid-19

The Secretariat presented the new Covid-19 dedicated [webpage](#) which would progressively be fed with additional information and documents. It had three parts: one on the CDDG's own work, another one on the projects and activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, and a third one on general resources. The responses from CDDG members to the questionnaire circulated via the Rapid Response Service (n°38) would be summarised and presented on the dedicated webpage.

The Secretariat also presented a memorandum (document CDDG-Bu(2020)11) giving a short overview of the first 14 replies received. The document would put emphasis on factual information and be updated as new replies were sent it and presented to the CDDG during the thematic meeting of the CDDG as a background document. At a later stage it would be expanded, to become a CDDG report.

The Bureau took note of the above and agreed that document CDDG-Bu(2020)11 would be updated and edited to be presented as a background document for the CDDG meeting in June on Covid-19.

During the ensuing discussion, its members:

- confirmed the added value of dedicated democratic governance webpages on the management of the pandemic;
- instructed the Secretariat to submit the summary of the replies to the questionnaire to the authors of the reply prior to uploading it on the webpage;
- agreed that the narrative of the future CDDG report should refer to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance and should not draw comparisons between different countries as the CDDG must continue to take care that its activity in this area does not stir up or become associated with criticisms of different countries;
- the key message in this study should be built around the way countries continued to deliver good governance despite the emergency situation, and the variety of public responses the crisis was prompting e.g. the adoption of certain laws, the strengthening of certain bodies or authorities, the variable involvement of civil society etc.

In reply to questions by Bureau members, the Secretariat also recalled that other Council of Europe bodies were closely following certain governance-related issues (Secretary General, INGO Conference, PACE), and one or more of these could be invited for an exchange of views at the 11th CDDG meeting.

6. Thematic meeting of the CDDG by videoconference

The Secretariat presented a draft agenda and concept for the thematic meeting of 18 June (document CDDG(2020)OJ1 prov.). In order to facilitate discussions, it was suggested that the event could be structured in sessions mirroring the chapters of the questionnaire and the draft report under preparation, e.g. multilevel governance, frontline role of local authorities, cross border cooperation. CDDG members, observers and participants could be asked to enrol in advance in the session under which they wished to intervene, in order to structure the discussion. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe would be invited as well, to present her new toolkit on '[Respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights in the framework of the COVID-19 sanitary crisis](#)'. Final conclusions would be drawn by the Chair.

During the ensuing discussion, Bureau members agreed the date, format and topics of the thematic meeting. They agreed that lengthy presentations should be avoided while time for spontaneous interventions should be set aside. The Bureau suggested starting the meeting at 10.30 Strasbourg time and having break in order to accommodate the needs of participants confined at home with their families.

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to finalise the draft agenda along the above lines.

7. Other business

None.

8. Date and place of the next meeting

The Bureau decided to hold its next meeting (by videoconference) prior to the meeting of 18 June, at a date to be decided, in order to discuss the preparation of the meeting. The Secretariat would get back in due course to propose a convenient date and time.

APPENDIX I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****CHAIR AD INTERIM / PRESIDENT AD INTERIM**

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APPENDIX II**AGENDA**

- 1. Opening of the meeting**
- 2. Adoption of the agenda** [CDDG-Bu(2020)OJ2]
- 3. Recent developments**
Council of Europe: oral information by the Secretariat
- 4. Revised work plan 2020-2021** [CDDG-Bu(2020)10]
- 5. Democratic governance and Covid-19**

Presentation of the webpage [webpage](#)
Overview of the replies to the Rapid Response Service no. 38 [CDDG-Bu(2020)11]
- 6. Plenary meeting of the CDDG by videoconference** [CDDG(2020)OJ1
prov.]
Consideration of the draft agenda
Discussion on the working methods
- 7. Other business**
- 8. Date and place of the next meeting**