



Strasbourg, 15 July 2020

CDDG-Bu(2020)15

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

**REPORT OF THE MEETING
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE, 12 JUNE 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.

Ms Las Heras Oliete announced that she was leaving the CDDG due to a change of assignment: she was joining the Ministry of Finance to lead the Sub-directorate General for Tax and Fiscal Budgetary Reports and International Affairs as of 13 June. The Bureau thanked Ms Las Heras Oliete for her contribution to the work of the Committee and wished her all success in her new position.

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. Confinement measures had been lifted in Alsace. Council of Europe staff had returned to the office. The Committee of Ministers had held its first meeting in person. Precautionary measures were still in place within Council of Europe buildings, such as compulsory wearing of face masks and keeping social distance. It was not clear when meetings of steering committees and other bodies could resume in person. For the time being, meetings scheduled to take place in June and July would be held by videoconference, using the Kudo platform. Until now these meetings had been thematic/ad hoc. The first ordinary meeting of an intergovernmental committee online would be held in July.

Greece had taken over the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The main theme of the chairmanship was *"the protection of human life and public health in the context of a pandemic – Effectively responding to a sanitary crisis in full respect for human rights and the principles of democracy and the rule of law"*. Given the emphasis on this topic, the Greek chairmanship had decided to support the CDDG thematic meeting on *"A democratic Governance Response to Covid-19"*.

The Bureau took note of the information.

4. Thematic meeting on "A Democratic Governance Response to COVID-19", 18 June 2020

The Secretariat updated Bureau members on the state of preparation of the meeting:

- the Greek chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers had proposed that the meeting be included amongst the activities of its chairmanship. The Minister of the Interior and the Deputy Minister for Civil Protection of Greece would address the meeting. Greece would also participate with a large delegation;
- the level of participation would be high, with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Director General of DG II addressing the meeting and the Deputy Minister of Interior of Albania and the State Secretary of Local-Government of Serbia taking the floor in the context of the thematic sessions. The Minister of public administration of Croatia wished to send a video-message;
- the number of member States sending delegates would also be high, with just a few countries being unable to attend. Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations sending representatives. Permanent representations in Strasbourg were also invited;
- as already agreed, the programme would be structured around three topics: multilevel governance, frontline role of local authorities, cross border cooperation. There would be room for a general debate, followed by a concluding session;
- the replies by CDDG members to the Rapid Response Service No.38 would be included, in an abridged form approved by each sender, on the CDDG dedicated webpage on Covid-19. The replies would be included in their entirety in a CDDG document which would be made available to participants.

During the ensuing discussion, Bureau members expressed support for the proposed structure of the event and welcomed the preparatory work done despite the circumstances, especially as regards the participation of senior figures and their readiness to contribute to the meeting. Bureau members also discussed and confirmed the importance of multilevel governance, cross-border cooperation and the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance also in the context of future report which will be fed with results from the thematic meeting.

The Secretariat presented the outline for a report on *Democratic governance and Covid-19*. The report would take into account the replies to the Rapid Response Service No. 38 and the discussions to be held during the thematic meeting. It could explore topics such as:

- elections,
- horizontal distribution of powers, checks and balances, parliamentary oversight of the executive,
- vertical distribution of powers, multilevel governance, the role of local authorities,
- cross-border cooperation,
- public administration reform,
- civil participation in public decision-making and civil society initiatives.

It could include an analysis of the replies to questionnaire of the Rapid Response Service; contributions by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations and the Venice Commission; case studies drawn from the experience of member States; and information of relevant toolkits and activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance.

During the ensuing discussion, the Bureau:

- pointed out that the analysis of the replies and the case studies to be included in the report should be approved by the CDDG;
- reiterated *that the narrative of the future CDDG report should refer to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance. The narrative should not draw comparisons between different countries or contain criticisms of different countries as this is not in line with the terms of reference or the activities of the CDDG;*
- 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.

The Secretariat took note of the changes to be introduced. A revised outline would be presented at the next Bureau meeting.

5. 11th Plenary meeting of the CDDG by videoconference, 10 September (1st part) and 15 September (2nd part) 2020

At the Chair's invitation, the Secretariat presented the preliminary draft agenda for the 11th plenary meeting of the CDDG. As agreed by the Bureau, the meeting would be held over two non-consecutive days, online, using the Kudo platform. The thematic meeting of 18 June would enable members to test Kudo and familiarise themselves with it. Holding the meeting online would affect the items to be included in the agenda. The preliminary draft submitted to the Bureau included only essential items that could be easily handled online. The elections of the Chair and Bureau member(s) could take place during the November meeting of the CDDG, which would be held in person. The Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law had been consulted and confirmed that this course of action was in line with the rules.

The Bureau took note of this information and agreed to come back to this item at its next meeting.

6. Other business

None.

7. Date and place of the next meeting

The Bureau decided to hold its next meeting (by videoconference) at the end of July, at a date to be decided, in order to discuss the preparation of the 11th plenary meeting of the CDDG. 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)OJ3]
3. **Recent developments**
Council of Europe: oral information by the Secretariat
4. **Thematic meeting on "A Democratic Governance Response to COVID-19", 18 June 2020**

Draft programme
List of participants
[Website](#)

Update by the Secretariat on the state of preparation of the meeting, followed by a discussion [CDDG-Bu(2020)13]

Follow-up to the meeting: outline of a report [CDDG-Bu(2020)14]
5. **11th Plenary meeting of the CDDG by videoconference, 10 September (1st part) and 15 September (2nd part) 2020**

Consideration of the preliminary draft agenda [CDDG(2020)OJ1 prov.]
Discussion on the working methods
6. **Other business**
7. **Date and place of the next meeting**