



Strasbourg, 5 November 2020

CDDG-Bu(2020)29

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

**REPORT OF THE MEETING
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE, 8 October 2020**

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

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

2. Information on recent activities and developments

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of recent developments concerning the state of the anti-Covid precautionary measures in France and those applied by the Council of Europe. As regards the Committee of Ministers, the Secretariat informed the Bureau that the drafting of the so-called Athens declaration was still being discussed, as member States had different approaches in relation to it. Finally, the Rapporteur Group on Democracy of the Deputies' Ministers (GR-DEM) would examine the report of the 11th plenary meeting of the CDDG at its forthcoming meeting, on 20 October 2020. The Secretariat would present the meeting report on this occasion.

The Bureau took note of the information.

3. State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2020-2021

The Secretariat updated the Bureau members about the results of the second meeting of the Working Group on Democracy and Technology (GT-DT) and of the Working Group on Accountability (GT-RE), which had been held by videoconference on 23 September and on 28-29 September respectively. The Bureau was provided with advance copies of the draft meeting reports which were being finalised and of updated versions of the two documents on the progress of work in the GT-DT and GT-RE, which would be submitted for information at the 12th CDDG plenary meeting.

The Secretariat also provided an update on progress regarding the preparation of the report on Covid-19 and democratic governance. Member States had been invited to submit answers to the questionnaire and possible updates of their previous submissions by a new deadline (16 October) so that the information could be taken into account for the final version of the report which would be discussed and adopted at the 12th CDDG plenary meeting. For the time being, only very few countries had submitted additional information.

The Bureau took note of the above information. The Bureau also held a discussion on how to encourage more active participation by members of the Committee and the Working Groups during online meetings.

4. 12th plenary meeting of the CDDG

The Secretariat presented the preliminary draft agenda. The CDDG would finalise the report on Democratic Governance and Covid-19. It would also consider the progress made with the specific tasks that had been given by the Committee of Ministers for the 2020-2021 biennium. As regards the standard item on *Promoting democratic governance through shared experience*, Bureau members were invited to consider whether high level personalities from their governments would be willing to address the CDDG. In addition, in order to promote greater active participation from members, a *tour de table* would be made to allow members to brief their colleagues about ongoing reforms in their countries. Another novelty of this plenary meeting was that, in addition to the annual report of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, the CDDG would consider an annual report of the Elections and Civil Society Division.

In the ensuing discussion, Bureau members discussed the possible participation of government representatives from their or other countries. They encouraged closer cooperation with the Committee of Ministers and the Ministers' Deputies, recommending that several Ambassadors be invited to engage with the CDDG: in addition to the Swedish Ambassador (Chair of the GR-DEM) and the Estonian Ambassador (Thematic Coordinator on the Information Society), other Permanent Representatives should be contacted to participate in later meetings. The issue of the word 'chairmanship' of the Committee of Ministers was raised: Bureau members were strongly in favour of discontinuing the use of this expression, which was not gender neutral, and to replace it with 'Chair' or 'Presidency'.

5. Elections of the Bureau of the CDDG for 2021

The Secretariat recalled the information contained in the memorandum on elections of the Bureau for 2021 (document CDDG(2020)13), pointing out that new voting systems and options were being discussed and tested within the Council of Europe. Any meaningful development would be reflected in a revised information document. The Secretariat also recalled that as agreed at the 11th plenary meeting, candidates would be expected to submit information in support of their candidature.

The Bureau considered that information on candidates should be concise (half a page or one page at most) and should cover both the experience and the motivations of each candidate. It should be made available to all CDDG participants well in advance of the 12th plenary meeting, also to enable the technical team to define the parameters of the e-voting process.

6. The Rapid Response Service

The Bureau considered a memorandum by the Secretariat (document CDDG-Bu(2020)27) containing a reminder of discussions held back in 2014, information referring to the usefulness and success of the RRS as well as suggestions to promote the visibility of the instrument and to ease the accessibility of responses including to limit redundant requests.

Bureau members supported the idea of creating a dedicated webpage on the RRS and the development of a general policy that would allow responses to be more easily available to all CDDG delegations. At the same time, the system should provide individual responding countries with options such as to authorise the publication of their responses, or to keep them available only to CDDG members via a restricted access website, or to limit access only to the requesting country. A suggestion was also made that these options could concern specific chapters of the responses. Bureau members were also of the opinion that keeping earlier responses up to date would be even more unmanageable in 2020 for countries which respond regularly to questionnaires.

7. Toolkit on Teleworking

The Secretariat presented the concept of a new toolkit of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, devoted to teleworking in public administrations. Teleworking had come to prominence in the current work of the CDDG on the Covid-19 pandemic. Many Council of Europe member States had indicated recourse to teleworking as one of the main innovations in the working methods of the public administration. Teleworking had made it possible for civil servants to continue to work and deliver services to the public. However, not all member States were equally prepared for it, due to several factors, including mentality and the availability of resources. The new toolkit would help administrations, at all levels of government, to set up teleworking in the most efficient and professional manner. It would help them to implement the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, particularly principles 3, *effectiveness and efficiency*, and 8, *innovation and openness to change*. It would be finalised as soon as possible, to help member States tackle the COVID-19 pandemic in the short term, while, in a longer perspective, it would contribute to the modernisation of the public administration.

In the ensuing discussion, Bureau members expressed strong support for the new toolkit and gave their availability to actively participate in its preparation.

8. Other business

None.

9. Next meeting

The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting by videoconference on 6 November.

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

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APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. **Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda** [CDDG-Bu(2020)OJ6]
2. **Information on recent activities and developments**
3. **State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2020-2021**
 - *Democracy and technology*
 - Report of the 2nd meeting of the Working Group on democracy and technology [GT-DT(2020)8]
 - Progress of work
 - *Democratic accountability*
 - Report of the 2nd meeting of the Working Group on accountability [GT-RE(2020)6]
 - Progress of work [CDDG-Bu(2020)26]
 - *Covid-19 and democratic governance*
 - Update from the Secretariat
4. **12th plenary meeting of the CDDG**
 - Consideration of the preliminary draft agenda [CDDG(2020)OJ2 prov.]
5. **Elections of the Bureau of the CDDG for 2021**
 - Information from the Secretariat and exchange of views [CDDG(2020)13]
6. **The Rapid Response Service**
 - Consideration of a memorandum by the Secretariat [CDDG-Bu(2020)27]
7. **Toolkit on Teleworking** [CDDG-Bu(2020)28]
8. **Other business**
9. **Next meeting**