



Strasbourg, 12 May 2020

CDDG-Bu(2020)9

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

**REPORT OF THE MEETING
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE, 20 APRIL 2020**

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr Markku Mölläri, Vice-Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed members. He recalled that Ms Monika Filipová had resigned from her role as Chair, after being appointed State Secretary for Education of the Slovak Republic. He welcomed Mr Christophe Speckbacher, who had joined the Secretariat of the CDDG.

The Bureau thanked Ms Filipová for her contribution to the work of the Committee and wished her all success in her new assignment. The Bureau also thanked the Vice-Chair for chairing the Committee *ad interim*.

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 informed the Bureau of the precautionary measures applied by the Council of Europe. It was unlikely that a plenary meeting of the CDDG could be held before the summer in person. The Secretariat was looking into the possibility of holding a meeting of the CDDG by videoconference. Another intergovernmental committee – the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDEPP) – would do so on 24 April. After this test, the Secretariat would brief the Bureau. Should the CDDG hold only one plenary meeting in person in 2020, it was recommended that this should be a three-day instead of a two-day-meeting to allow for greater progress to be made with the implementation of the terms of reference.

A discussion ensued during which the Bureau agreed to come back to this issue after the meeting of the CDEPP. The Bureau was of the opinion that, should the meeting be held by videoconference, it should be limited to items for discussion, without decisions being taken.

4. Guidelines on e-democracy in the form of a toolkit

The Secretariat introduced the topic by thanking the three Rapporteurs, who had done a remarkable job modifying the structure of the guidelines, simplifying the text and making it more readable. Additional changes should be made as a formal preamble was not necessary given that the guidelines would not be submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption but would remain a CDDG document. Furthermore, the part on artificial intelligence should be updated with the inclusion of the latest Council of Europe developments and the case studies presented by Austria should be added. In the context of the emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of public officials had announced that their countries should reconsider electronic or remote voting as an option to ensure the holding of elections. With this consideration in mind, the paragraphs on e-voting and e-enabled elections could be expanded by adding case studies and putting a greater emphasis on the safeguards set out by the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)5](#) on standards for e-voting.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- the new structure and the inclusion of additional case studies had greatly improved the guidelines,
- the passages on e-voting could be expanded as suggested but should not become too dominant,
- the growing importance of remote meetings in the context of the response to Covid-19 to ensure continuity in the work of the public administration and local authorities as well as the active engagement of civil society should also be mentioned,
- an expert should review the text, as already decided, and the language should be edited.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to revise the guidelines in the form of a toolkit in line with this discussion and to submit a final draft version to the Bureau, ahead of the adoption by the CDDG at its next plenary meeting.

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

5.1. Overview

The Secretariat referred Bureau members to document CDDG-Bu(2020)3, which provided information on the progress achieved for each of the specific tasks assigned to the CDDG for the terms of reference 2020-2021.

5.2. *Public ethics*

Update of the Guide "Steps to implementing public ethics in public organisations"

The Bureau supported the addition of new case studies to the Guide "Steps to implementing public ethics in public organisations", as they appeared in document CDDG-Bu(2020)6. The final decision should be taken by the CDDG.

Draft toolkit on public ethics addressed to national authorities

Mr Alan Doig, expert consultant, presented a draft of the new toolkit on public ethics of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, addressed to central authorities. To be viable the toolkit should respond to certain criteria: it should be general enough to be relevant for all Council of Europe member States; it should be linked to the Guidelines and the Guide on public ethics while it should be a stand-alone document; it should be easy to use. Suggestions from Bureau members on how to improve the draft would be welcome.

A discussion ensued during which the following points were raised:

- the toolkit should better reflect the significance of the Guidelines;
- the principles as set out in the Guidelines should be the starting point and should shine through the toolkit;
- the description of the principles should be followed by an explanation of what the toolkit is for and how it should be used;
- a similar explanation is necessary for the benchmark;
- the link between the Guidelines, the toolkit and the benchmark should be better explained;
- some inaccuracies/discrepancies with the final version of the Guidelines should be corrected.

The Bureau agreed to transmit additional comments in writing through the Secretariat in writing by 4 May 2020 so that Mr Doig could take them onboard in the redrafting and submit a new version.

The Secretariat recalled that this toolkit of the Centre of Expertise was of great importance, being one of the few which were addressed to central authorities. Even if formally the CDDG was not asked to approve the toolkit, its support and endorsement were crucial given its oversight role over the activities of the Centre of Expertise.

6. Multi-level governance and emergency preparedness

The Secretariat presented a memorandum on democratic governance and the response to Covid-19 (document CDDG-Bu(2020)8). Despite differences in the policies introduced in different countries and sometimes within the same country, the response to Covid-19 had involved actions by all levels of government. It also rested on the frontline role of local authorities as those who are the closest to citizens and their needs and on the active participation of civil society. In an information document which had been sent to all members of the CDDG, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe had underlined that, in responding to the emergency, member States should comply with fundamental principles of democracy. Compliance with standards of good democratic governance as set out in the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance was equally important to ensure that, in all member States, citizens and civil society at large could continue to benefit from the provision of essential services and have trust in the authorities.

As a forum for exchange of experience amongst Council of Europe member States, the CDDG is the best placed to collect and share information on legal and policy developments, case studies and good practices in the response to Covid-19, in its areas of competence and expertise. To this end, a questionnaire could be circulated via the Rapid Response Service, underlying that the information would be made public on a specific webpage to be set up.

The Secretariat also briefed the Bureau about the initiatives undertaken by the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, namely the development of a module on Leadership at times of crisis in the context of the Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) and a new toolkit aimed at helping local authorities to self-assess their preparedness and resilience in emergency situations. The Secretariat referred to a report by the ISIG, the think tank that had been hired to develop the new toolkit, which had been sent by e-mail prior to the meeting.

A discussion ensued during which the following points were raised:

- collecting and sharing case studies and information would have an added value;
- however, the questionnaire should be shortened, not to overburden colleagues who were very busy tackling the emergency and interim or partial replies should be perfectly acceptable;
- sharing of information by member states should not be for the purpose of drawing any negative comparison between the approach that is taken by any level of government in their response to the crisis;
- the webpage should not include only 'best practice'. This was difficult to define in the present crisis. Practical solutions and challenges could be shared as well;
- the website should be able to capture the evolution of the response over time. As a result, CDDG members should be invited to transmit updates and information also after the expiry of the deadline for replying to the questionnaire;

- the CDDG should work hand in hand with the OECD, ensuring synergies and avoiding duplications.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to revise the questionnaire and submit it to the Bureau in writing. It agreed to the final questionnaire being circulated to CDDG members via the Rapid Response Service along the lines mentioned in the discussion.

7. World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 16-18 November 2020)

Ms Mary-Ann Hennessey, Head of the Democratic Innovation Division, informed the Bureau that this year's World Forum for Democracy (WFD) would explore relations between democracy and the environment. The topic was relevant for democratic governance at all levels: international, national, regional and local. The response to the Covid-19 pandemic would certainly be addressed. The concept note was still under preparation and would be sent to Bureau members in due course. The call for initiatives would be launched at the end of April. The members of the Bureau had a key role to play in disseminating information and ensuring the broadest possible participation in the WFD. They were also invited to propose high-level speakers and initiatives for workshops.

8. Decisions by the Committee of Ministers of relevance to the work of the CDDG

The Bureau took note of the memorandum prepared by the Secretariat (CDDG-Bu(2020)1).

9. Activities of other Council of Europe bodies

The Bureau took note of the memorandum prepared by the Secretariat (CDDG-Bu(2020)7).

10. Other business

None.

11. Date of the next meeting

The Bureau decided to hold its next meeting by videoconference at a date to be decided.

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)0J1]
- 3. Recent developments**
Council of Europe: oral information by the Secretariat
- 4. Guidelines on e-democracy in the form of a toolkit** [CDDG-Bu(2020)2]
Review of the state of preparation
- 5. State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2020-2021** [CDDG-Bu(2020)3]
 - 5.1 *Overview by the Secretariat*
 - 5.2 *Public Ethics*
 - Update of the Guide "Steps to implementing public ethics in public organisations" [CDDG-Bu(2020)6]
 - New toolkit of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance [CDDG-Bu(2020)6]
New Toolkit
 - Exchange of views with Mr Alan Doig, expert consultant
- 6. Multi-level governance and emergency preparedness** [CDDG-Bu(2020)8]
Presentation by the Secretariat and exchange of views on possible work
- 7. World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 16-18 November 2020)**
Presentation by Ms Mary Ann Hennessey, Head of the Democratic Innovation Division, DG2
- 8. Other business**
- 9. Date and place of the next meeting**

ITEMS PROPOSED WITHOUT DEBATE		
10.	Decisions by the Committee of Ministers of relevance to the work of the CDDG	[CDDG-Bu(2020)1]
11.	Activities of other Council of Europe bodies	[CDDG-Bu(2020)7]