



Strasbourg, 9 April 2021

CDDG-Bu(2021)10

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

**REPORT OF THE MEETING
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE, 29-30 March 2021**

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

Mr Markku Mölläri, Chair of the CDDG, opened this first meeting of the Bureau in its new composition 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

Ms Claudia Luciani, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, stressed the importance of the work currently carried out by the CDDG, namely the study on the impact of digital transformation on democracy and governance, the draft *Guidelines on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process*, and the draft *Recommendation on accountability of local and regional elected officials and bodies*. As from 2022, the terms of reference of steering committees would cover a period of 4 years, in line with the new 4-year Strategic Framework presented by the Secretary General. The input from members of CDDG in the definition of priorities to be included in the terms of reference would be very welcome. In so far as possible, they should be in line with the priorities issues set out in the Strategic Framework. Ms Luciani also recalled the importance of the CDDG's support to the ongoing work leading to the elaboration of European standards on artificial intelligence, aimed at ensuring that the perspective of democracy and democratic governance is taken into account.

In the course of the ensuing discussion, Ms Luciani and the Secretariat explained that, two years into the new terms of reference, the Committee of Ministers would hold a mid-term review aimed at adjusting tasks if necessary. Having 4-year terms of reference implied a greater capacity to anticipate challenges and identify ways to respond to the needs of member States. Dealing with a higher number of new issues, for instance the green agenda, would require bringing in expertise from a variety of fields. The use of a hybrid format for meetings of the CDDG and its structures would make it easier for external experts to participate. The Centre of Expertise should also diversify the offer of its toolkits and cooperation activities, in line with the mandate of the CDDG.

3. Revision of the Work Plan for 2021

The Secretariat presented proposed adjustments to the workplan for 2021 (document CDDG-Bu(2021)9, taking into account the progress with the implementation of the tasks and the savings due to the use of videoconferencing. It was proposed to have an informal consultation of the working group on democracy and technology (GT-DT) with Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in May and a meeting of the working group on accountability (GT-RE) in June. The exact dates would be communicated to the CDDG during the 13th meeting.

The Bureau supported this revision and took the view that additional meetings or online consultations were desirable also as regards the Bureau.

4. 13th plenary meeting of the CDDG

The Secretariat presented the draft agenda of the upcoming 13th plenary meeting of the CDDG document CDDG(2021)OJ1 prov), and provided information on the state of preparation. It drew the Bureau's attention to the possible participation of a representative of the Venice Commission, a senior member of Government of Serbia, the chair of the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM), among other guest participants and speakers.

The Bureau took note of the information.

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

The Secretariat provided updated information on the activities of the working group on democracy and technology (GT-DT), including its fourth meeting (document GT-DT(2021)3).

The Bureau examined the draft study on digital transformation (task i, document CDDG-Bu(2021)1 which was ready for final adoption at the 13th meeting. Following the request from Bureau members to be able to submit some final amendments, a deadline for such submissions was set on 7 April noon.

As regards the draft guidelines on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process (task ii, document CDDG-Bu(2021)3 + Addendum), the Secretariat presented a draft structure. The Bureau considered that it went in the right direction, covering all important elements. Although it was not meant to duplicate existing work on e-voting, some elements of the electoral process (e.g. e-counting) deserved additional attention given their frequency.

The Secretariat provided updated information on the activities of the working group on accountability (GT-RE), including its third meeting (document GT-RE (2021)2) at which a preliminary draft of the Recommendation for the Committee of Ministers on democratic accountability of elected officials and bodies at local and regional level (document CDDG-Bu(2021)3 + addendum) had been examined. The Secretariat presented the structure of the draft new instrument and the results of the first discussions held in the GT-RE. In the ensuing discussion, Bureau members shared the views expressed by the GT-RE, including the importance of definitions; the need to place emphasis on ethics; the need for a systematic approach as regards the persons / body concerned and the relationship resulting between those in the accountability relationship; the importance of publicity, consultations and delegations of responsibilities; the need for specific and precise guidelines in the appendix to the future Recommendation.

6. Introduction of a 4-year strategic framework: implications and possible priorities for 2022-2025

The Secretariat provided information on the 4-year Strategic Framework 2022-2025 recently presented by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. This would have implications on the definition of the Committees' terms of reference (which should thus cover four years). The active input of members of steering committees in the identification of future priorities was to be welcome. The Secretariat presented a preliminary list of six core subjects and tasks which could be addressed/implemented by the CDDG in the years to come (as outlined in document CDDG-Bu(2021)4).

The Bureau held an exchange of views and supported the proposals, pointing to issues and subject-matters which deserved particular attention, including: keeping standards up-to-date, referring to the complementarity of the various tools and activities of the CDDG and the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, pursuing the work on digital democracy/transformation including – as the case may be - artificial intelligence, ensuring continuity on the issue of elections – including the review meeting foreseen in Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 -, striking the right balance between work on multilevel governance and on local democracy, and strengthening interactions with other Council of Europe bodies.

7. Activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance

Ms Alina Tatarenko, Head of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, gave an overview of the ongoing projects and activities managed by the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, concerning countries such as Greece, Lithuania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. Requests for support projects had recently been submitted for Albania, Estonia, Malta and the Republic of Moldova. Overall, toolkits on best practice, risk management, strategic municipal planning enjoyed broad support from project countries. The Centre would soon embark on a revision of its Strategy, taking into account the priorities identified by the Secretary General in her strategic framework, as the current Strategy would end in 2021.

The Bureau took note of the above information and sought clarification of certain aspects. The example of a company offering consultancy services to the local authorities in Iceland and providing a digital toolkit on amalgamation was mentioned. Its experience would be useful for the Centre of Expertise

8. Contribution to the World Forum for Democracy

Ms Mary-Ann Hennessey, Head of the Division for Democratic Innovation, provided an overview of monthly working subjects scheduled for discussion in the context of the ongoing 12-month campaign – “Can Democracy Save the Environment?” conducted under the aegis of the 9th edition of the World Forum for Democracy (document CDDG-Bu(2021)5).

The Secretariat pointed out that the campaign offered a timely opportunity for the CDDG to contribute by means of short webinars on “the concept of 15-minutes cities” (April 2021), “public private partnerships for green city solutions (July 2021) and “green public administrations” (September 2021).

Bureau members supported the proposals. It was suggested that interactions should be sought with international initiatives planned in the Autumn such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference - COP 26 (Glasgow, November 2021) or the joint event for political leaders organised by France and the United Kingdom (Nancy, October 2021).

9. Contribution to the work of the CAHAI

Mr Peter Andre (Austria) provided an update on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence and his contribution (document CDDG-Bu(2021)7). As the CDDG rapporteur on democracy and technology, he supports the work of the CAHAI in the fields of AI in the public sector and democracy. The involvement had been intensive given the number of working groups. He thanked the Secretariat for its support.

The Bureau took note of the information.

10. Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers

The Secretariat provided a brief overview of recent events taking place under the Presidency of Germany of the Committee of Ministers (November 2020-May 2021). The detailed list could be found on a dedicated Council of Europe [webpage](#). Turkey had recently decided to withdraw from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). This unprecedented development in the history of the organisation had prompted a joint declaration by the German Presidency, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

The Bureau took note of the information.

11. Activities of the Committee of Ministers and other Council of Europe bodies

The Secretariat presented a document providing an overview of activities and initiatives by other Council of Europe bodies in areas of interest to the CDDG given its terms of reference (document CDDG-Bu(2021)7).

The Bureau took note of the information.

12. Gender mainstreaming in the work of the CDDG

The gender equality rapporteurs, Mr Edwin Lefebre (Belgium, Flanders) and Ms Siobhan Smyth (United Kingdom), and the Secretariat presented a set of draft internal guidelines on gender mainstreaming in the work of the CDDG (document CDDG-Bu(2021)8), for possible approval by the Committee at its 13th meeting.

The Bureau expressed its support for the initiative and the proposals included in the guidelines. The Bureau also agreed that the Rapporteurs be given the opportunity to present to the CDDG an overview of their activities and the Committee's contribution to gender equality through its work.

13. Other business

None.

14. Next meeting

The next Bureau meeting would be held on 14-15 October 2021. Prior to that date, informal consultations (via BlueJeans) may be organised by the Secretariat, as required.

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

Mr Markku MÖLLÄRI, Ministerial adviser, Department for Local Affairs and Regional Administration, Ministry of Finance, HELSINKI

OTHER MEMBERS / AUTRES MEMBRES

Mr Peter ANDRE, Ministry of Interior, Senior Expert for Legal Affairs, Wien, Austria,

Mr Francesco GIUSTINO, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, D.A.R.A. - Ufficio Attività Internazionali, ROMA

Ms Albana KOÇIU, Director of the Department of Public Administration

Mr Edwin LEFEBRE, Ministry of the Flemish Community, Agency for Home Affairs, BRUSSELS

Mr Paul ROWSELL, Head of Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, LONDON

Ms Stefanía TRAUSTADÓTTIR, Senior Advisor, Local Government, Department of Local Government and Regional Policy, Ministry of Transport and Local Government, REYKJAVÍK

OTHER PARTICIPANTS / AUTRES PARTICIPANTS

Ms Siobhan SMYTH, Senior Policy Adviser, Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, LONDON

Ms Gurpal CHEEMA, Policy Adviser, Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, LONDON

SECRETARIAT

Ms Claudia LUCIANI, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Directorate General of Democracy

Ms Sonia SIRTORI, Head of the Democratic Governance Division – Secretary of the CDDG - Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, Directorate General of Democracy

Mr Christophe SPECKBACKER, Administrator – Democratic Governance Division / Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Directorate General of Democracy

Ms Alina TATARENKO – Head of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance / Democratic Governance Division / Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Directorate General of Democracy

Ms Mary Ann HENNESSEY, Head of the Democratic Innovation Division / Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Directorate General of Democracy

Mr Stefan STANKOVIC, Democratic Governance Division / Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Directorate General of Democracy

Ms Isabelle ETTER - Assistant

Mr Adrian Waters – Trainee

Interpreters / Interprètes

Ms Katia DI STEFANO
Ms Elisabetta BASSU

APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. **Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda** [CDDG-Bu(2021)OJ1]
2. **Information on recent activities and developments**
3. **Revision of the Work Plan for 2021**
 - Information by the Secretariat [CDDG-Bu(2021)9]
4. **13th plenary meeting of the CDDG**
 - Consideration of the preliminary draft agenda [CDDG(2021)OJ1 prov.]
5. **State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2020-2021**
 - *Democracy and technology*
 - Report of the 4th meeting of the Working Group on democracy and technology [GT-DT(2021)3]
 - Examination of the draft study on digital transformation (task i) [CDDG-Bu(2021)1]
 - Consideration of the outline of the draft guidelines on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process (task ii) [CDDG-Bu(2021)2 + Addendum]
 - *Democratic accountability*
 - Report of the 3rd meeting of the Working Group on accountability [GT-RE(2021)2]
 - Consideration of a preliminary draft recommendation for the Committee of Ministers on democratic accountability of elected officials and bodies at local and regional level (task iii) [CDDG-Bu(2021)3 + Addendum]
6. **Introduction of a 4-year Strategic Framework: implications and exchange of views on possible priorities for 2022-2025** [CDDG-Bu(2021)4]
 - Strategic Framework of the Council of Europe [SG/Inf(2020)34]
7. **Activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance**
8. **Contribution to the World Forum for Democracy** [CDDG-Bu(2021)5]
9. **Contribution to the work of the CAHAI** [CDDG-Bu(2021)6]
10. **Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers** [Events]
11. **Activities of the Committee of Ministers and other Council of Europe bodies** [CDDG-Bu(2021)7]

12. Gender mainstreaming in the work of the CDDG

[CDDG-Bu(2021)8]

13. Other business

14. Next meeting

14-15 October 2021 (modalities to be confirmed)