



Strasbourg, 8 April 2022

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

MEETING REPORT

**23rd meeting, 24-25 March 2022
(Strasbourg and visioconference)**

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

Mr Paul Rowsell, the Chair of the CDDG opened the meeting and welcomed the members present online and in person. The list of participants is set out in Appendix I. The agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix II.

2. Information on recent activities and developments

The Chair and its members commented about recent developments including the war in Ukraine, the Russian Federation's expulsion from the Council of Europe, the way further support could be provided to Ukraine in the current context, and possible implications for the future of the CoE. The war had opened an opportunity for the Council of Europe to demonstrate the importance and benefits of fundamental democratic values and principles for the whole of Europe, which was one of the reasons why the Chair and Bureau had proposed the adoption of a [public statement](#) by the CDDG.

The Secretariat also informed that the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance has been supporting a series of online conferences entitled [Local Governments Unite for Welfare and Peace](#) and dedicated to discussing the emergency situation in Ukraine. The series is designed to offer an opportunity for meaningful interaction between local authorities in Ukraine and the rest of the world, including also the global media. The Bureau took note of the above information and agreed to re-examine certain matters under item 4 (see below).

3. Work Plan for 2022

Following a presentation by the Chair, the Bureau took note of the CDDG workplan with an updated timetable on meetings to be held (document *CDDG-Bu(2022)1*). Members sought clarification on the chronology of events for the drafting of the recommendation on principles of good democratic governance. They took the view that additional working group meetings to be held in June or – in the case of the GT-DD – in the end of June or in July (to avoid excessive proximity with its first meeting in May) should give an opportunity to involve guest speakers from academia, NGOs etc. The work on the first two specific tasks of the Committee (drafting a recommendation on principles of good democratic governance and a study on deliberative and participatory democracy which could lead into a recommendation)

should remain the core work in 2022.

4. 15th plenary meeting of the CDDG (21-22 April 2022)

The Bureau heard information from the Secretariat on the preliminary draft agenda [*CDDG(2022)OJ1 prov.*] and the possible participation of government members from Cyprus, Italy and Ukraine under the regular item on the sharing of experience. The Secretariat also briefed the Bureau about the prospects of presentations about the respective priorities of the Irish and Icelandic presidencies of the Committee of Ministers, and those of the current Italian presidency whose representative could refer to the launching of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in the country.

The Bureau considered that the importance of democracy and good democratic governance in the current context would warrant a discussion and general addresses, ideally by the Italian ambassador on behalf of the Committee of Ministers' Presidency, and by the Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance. It also agreed to invite at the 15th plenary Professor Beck, Kehl University of Applied Sciences in Germany to present a research project connected with the on-going rapid response service questionnaire circulated at the request of the German delegation, as well as Ms Joan Hoey to present the methodology used by the Economist Intelligence Unit for their periodic report on the state of democracy (rather than the country rankings stemming from the Index). The Bureau reiterated that the review of implementation of treaties and other legal instruments under the CDDG's responsibility should become a standard item of plenary meeting agendas.

The Bureau wished all the best to Ms Monika Kurian on the occasion of her leaving governmental functions in the Slovak Republic (and thus the CDDG Bureau) for a new job at the OECD; elections would need to be held during the 15th CDDG meeting to designate a Bureau member who would complete her term.

The Bureau took the view that it would be timely for the CDDG to resume with the practice of meetings held in-person, as a rule. Members and participants should therefore be encouraged to travel to Strasbourg to attend future CDDG meetings and it should be stressed that on-line participation cannot be guaranteed any further. It was recognised that whilst delegations should in general attend in person, the on-line facility could allow a delegation to involve say an expert from its Ministry for a particular agenda item.

5. State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2022-2023 (-2025)

- *Good democratic governance*

The Bureau heard a presentation by Mr Peter Andre in his capacity as the Chair of the Working Group on principles of good democratic governance (GT-BG) and took note of the Report of the 1st meeting of 24-25 February [GT-BG(2022)4]. It also took note of, and commented on the amended version of the draft recommendation which came out of the working group meeting [CDDG-Bu(2022)2] with various suggestions of amendments received from members following the meeting.

Those of the United Kingdom delegation, in particular, provided for a revised wording of the operative part of the recommendation and a new structure of the principles and guidelines appended to it. Members made further proposals (for instance to refer to the importance of the participation of the opposition) or to clarify some aspects of the UK proposals.

At the closure of discussions, the Bureau asked the Secretariat to produce a revised version for the CDDG plenary after prior re-submission to the Bureau members, building on the structural and stylistic drafting proposals of the United Kingdom (e.g. each principle in annex should start with "there should be...") and combining these with other proposals (e.g. from Norway), whilst leaving open the number of recommendations in the operative part. The revised draft would be presented at the plenary as a work in progress document to stimulate further discussion and comment to assist the Working Group at its next meeting (to be largely virtual) scheduled for early June,

- *Deliberative democracy:*

Following a general introduction by the Secretariat, the Bureau heard a presentation by Dr Andy Williamson who co-authored with Mr Jordi Barrat the Study entitled "Mapping Deliberative Democracy in Council of Europe Member states" [CDDG-Bu(2022)3] at the request of the Division of Elections and Participatory Democracy. The expert outlined the purpose of the study, the methodology, and some of the key findings. Bureau members commented about their country's own experience and sought further views on specific issues such as whether a specific legal framework was needed to support initiatives, the added value of IT and the digital world to support new participatory and deliberative processes, risks of misuses of such processes for populist purposes.

The Bureau took note of the above information and the Chair summarised the discussion, stressing that any text on deliberative and participatory democracy to be produced by the GT-DD and CDDG could spell out what these concepts are, how they can contribute to good democratic governance, and for deliberative and participatory democracy to function well, what are the Do's and Don'ts (or criteria) to bear in mind. Given the specificities of the subject-matter, the Bureau suggested that there was a need for a recommendation which could include a set of guidelines.

6. Exchange of views with the representatives of the Venice Commission and the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)

The Venice Commission representatives being unavailable, the Chair welcomed the representatives of CDMSI: Mr Taavo Lumiste, Chair of the CDMSI, Mr Thomas Schneider and Ms Inge Welberger, both former Chair of the CDMSI, and members of the Secretariat responsible for these activities (Mr Patrick Penninckx, head of the Department of Information Society and Ms Artemizia Chisca, Head of the Media and Internet Governance Division). After the Secretariat recalled that the purpose of the exchange was to learn from each other, and after a brief introduction of the respective responsibilities, the CDMSI representatives and the Bureau members exchanged experience and information on working methods, including:

- for the CDDG: adapting to the novelty of all-territorial levels of policy-making, the rapid response service mechanism, the system of peer reviews, the increased interactions between standard-setting and cooperation projects / operational work conducted by the Centre of Expertise;
- for the CDMSI: the evolution and balance of expertise required by the current work (media, internet, digital issues), the use of open public consultations on draft texts in the final stages, the multiplicity of roles and functions (members, experts, drafting rapporteurs, observers), the benefits of mixed working structures involving also business, academia, NGOs (where only half of participants represent member states) and at the same time the challenge of dealing with publics without institutional memory (greater turn-over) and diplomatic awareness.

The discussions also addressed the benefits and challenges of more open approaches and new working methods based on IT platforms (involving more persons and various backgrounds), the difficulties inherent in excessive politicisation and initiatives blocked in crucial areas, links between experts/participants and governments and how to deal with input from non-governmental actors etc. Several parallels were also drawn, for instance the Journalist Protection Platform and the CDDG's Rapid Response Service operate in a similar way.

The Bureau took note of the above information and thanked the CDMSI representatives for their time and valuable input.

7. Activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance

The Secretariat provided updated information about various activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, including new projects to be launched in Bulgaria (financial decentralisation, boosting of fiscal autonomy), Hungary (same subjects, in addition to capacity-building and on-going work on best practices and implementation of ELoGE), Finland (fiscal decentralisation, distribution of competencies at local and regional level, capacity building, ELoGE); ongoing activities in Lithuania (human resource management), the Slovak Republic (strategic municipal planning toolkit and local finance benchmarking, policy advice on municipal governance), Armenia, Georgia (cross-border cooperation), the Southern Mediterranean project in cooperation with the Venice Commission, new initiatives

in Cyprus and Italy. The Ministry of Regional Infrastructure of Ukraine had applied for support in the drafting of certain new regulations applicable in times of military government. The Bureau took note of the information.

8. World Forum for Democracy 2022

The Secretariat updated Bureau members about the plans for the 2022 edition of the World Forum for Democracy. The concept was being finalised around the idea of a broad theme addressing democracy in general, with a view to take stock of challenges and possible solutions, at present and in future. Members considered that the subject of democratic governance deserved to feature prominently on the event agenda and results could usefully feed into the finalisation of the recommendation on principles of good democratic governance.

9. CDDG contribution to work of the Committee on artificial intelligence

It has been noted the Bureau at this moment had at hand the elements of the framework, based on which the proposals for the CAI (Committee on Artificial Intelligence) would be prepared. Peter Andre would participate in the first Plenary meeting of the CAI in April and report to the CDDG Plenary.

10. Presidencies of the Committee of Ministers

The Secretariat indicated that the launching event for the European Label of Governance Excellence in Italy (Venice, 11 April), had become part of the agenda and events of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. With over 100 municipalities having expressed an interest in participating, it would become the largest ELoGE process ever held in a country. As for the Icelandic and Irish presidencies, it was indicated that both countries have expressed a particular interest in deliberative democracy and plans were being considered for a joint event, with the involvement of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance. The Bureau took note of the information.

11. Other business

Mr Peter Andre informed the Bureau he was unlikely to be fully available for the additional GT-BG meeting on 9 and 10 June and if so that the Vice-Chair would need to preside the discussions on the first meeting day. The Bureau took note.

12. Next meeting

The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting on 13-14 October 2022 (modalities to be confirmed)

APPENDIX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CHAIR / PRESIDENT

Mr Paul ROWSELL, Head of Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Local Government & Communities Directorate, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, LONDON

OTHER MEMBERS / AUTRES MEMBRES

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

Ms Gordana GAPIKJ-DIMITROVSKA, State Advisor, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, SKOPJE

Ms Monika KURIAN, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Public Administration Section, Head of Local Self-Government and Foreign Affairs Unit, BRATISLAVA

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

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

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

Mr Taavo LUMISTE, Chair of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)

Ms Inge WELBERGER, former Chair of the CDMSI

Mr Thomas SCHNEIDER, former Chair of the CDMSI

Mr Andy WILLIAMSON, expert of the Division for elections and participatory democracy

SECRETARIAT

Secretariat of the CDDG / Secrétariat du CDDG

Ms Alina TATARENKO – Head of the Democratic Governance Division / Secretary of the CDDG / Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Directorate General of Democracy

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

Ms Isabelle ETTER, Assistant

Ms Nino MAKHAURI, Trainee

Other Secretariat participating in the meeting /Autre Secrétariat participant à la réunion

Mr Daniel POPESCU, Head of Democracy and Governance Department / Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Directorate General of Democracy

Mr Niall SHEERIN, Democratic Governance Division / Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance / Directorate General of Democracy

Mr Markus ADELSBACH, Head of Division of Elections and Participatory Democracy, Directorate General of Democracy

Mr Patrick PENNINCKX, Head of Information Society Department, Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law

Ms Artemiza CHISCA, Head of the Media and Internet Governance Division, Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law

APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. **Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda** [CDDG-Bu(2022)OJ1]
2. **Information on recent activities and developments**, including on the recent suspension of the Russian Federation's membership and its consequences
3. **Work Plan for 2022**
 - Information by the Secretariat [CDDG-Bu(2022)1]
4. **15th plenary meeting of the CDDG (21-22 April 2022)**
 - Consideration of the preliminary draft agenda [CDDG(2022)OJ1 prov.]
5. **State of implementation of the CDDG activities according to its terms of reference 2022-2023 (-2025)**
 - *Good democratic governance:*
 - Report of the 1st meeting of the Working Group on principles of good democratic governance (GT-BG) of 24-25 February [GT-BG(2022)4]
 - Consideration of a draft recommendation [CDDG-Bu(2022)2]
 - *Deliberative democracy:* Preparation of the 1st meeting of the Working Group on deliberative and participatory democracy (GT-DD) and building on the study prepared by experts of the Division for elections and participatory democracy [CDDG-Bu(2022)3]
6. **Exchange of views with the representatives of the Venice Commission and the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)** on best practices concerning working methods and how the CDDG could benefit from this [CDDG-Bu(2022)4]
7. **Activities of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance**
 - Information by the Secretariat
8. **World Forum for Democracy 2022**
 - Preliminary information and exchange of views on a possible CDDG contribution
9. **CDDG contribution to work of the Committee on artificial intelligence**
 - Exchange of views on kinds of contributions including a possible position paper
10. **Presidencies of the Committee of Ministers**
 - [Priorities and agenda](#) of Italy (Nov 2021-May 2022)
 - Ireland (May-November 2022)
 - Iceland (November 2022-May 2023)
 - Exchange of views on possible events to involve the CDDG
11. **Other business**
12. **Next meeting** (13-14 October 2022; modalities to be confirmed)