

**Greek chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

**EUROPEAN COMMITTEE on DEMOCRACY and GOVERNANCE  
(CDDG)**

**THEMATIC MEETING on  
A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**Thursday, 18 June 2020**

**SESSION 1: Multilevel governance and response to the emergency**

**Key-note address:**

**Ms Georgia VALATSOU, Permanent Secretary General, Ministry of Interior, Hellenic Republic**

Dear Secretary General,  
Dear Ministers (Deputy and Assistant Ministers),  
Distinguished Guests,  
Dear CDDG members  
Dear Participants

Goodmorning

Thank you very much for giving me the floor.

First and foremost, I would like to convey the greetings of Mr. Panagiotis Theodorikakos, Minister of Interior of the Hellenic Republic who could not be with us today due to prior engagements relating to the newly established Special Development Programme of Local Governments of A and B degree entitled 'Antonis Tritsis', which could not be postponed.

It is a great pleasure to be with you, so that we can discuss, in the context of the work of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance of the Council of Europe, focusing on multilevel governance and the response to the emergency situation caused because of the COVID –19 pandemic.

The current health crisis has been both a challenge and an opportunity for multilevel governance. The way the pandemic was addressed, within the framework of democratic governance in Greece, proved to be good practice, which was implemented under actual emergency conditions, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, proximity and proportionality .

The central government and in particular the Ministry of Interior (Mol) had a successful and thorough collaboration with all local government entities and jointly responsible agencies, at all the stages of the procedure, from the design to the implementation of the policies adopted to fight the pandemic, maintaining distinct roles for each level of government and involving their participation, proportionally and based on the responsibilities they have been assigned. Collaboration and coordination among all levels of government have been very successful; thus, the institutional interventions that were adapted led to the development of both the state and the local government authorities while the financial interventions were fully used by all the levels of government for services delivered to citizens and for the smooth operation of the institutions. The ultimate goal was and still is to have a less severe impact of the pandemic on the everyday life of citizens and achieve the best possible response to the special circumstances arisen because of the pandemic.

At this delicate and challenging time of the health crisis, the Mol, as the competent executive structure responsible for the institutional and regulatory framework governing the organization and operation of local government of the first and second degree, has already undertaken to exceptional institutional interventions/initiatives which facilitate local government authorities in exercising their roles and implementing their tasks and allow the self- government institutions to contribute to the national strategy for addressing both the

health crisis due to the coronavirus COVID -19 and the economic crisis which resulted from the measures to prevent the spread. The adopted interventions, such as the legislative interventions on local government budgets, in no way affect the democratic operation and financial independence of local authorities. Nor do they affect the local authorities response to the challenges faced in daily lives of their citizens.

The fruitful cooperation among the levels of government in order to address the crisis, led to an identification of the needs, and a relevant provision of financial resources to local authorities from the part of the MoI, so that local authorities may perform their increased social role. Within the limit of the appropriations entered in the budget this year in favor of Local Authorities (Central Independent Resources), Local Authorities of the first and second degree the grants of almost 104.660.500,00 euros (90.410.500,00 € to municipalities and 14.250.000,00 € to Regions) were allocated to address the pandemic.

In addition, the new development programme, entitled “Antonis Tritsis”, which is being presented today, while designed by the MoI, took into consideration the special circumstances due to the pandemic as well as the need for implementing civil protection actions and actions aimed at the protection of public health at the level of local government. The programme also provides for the possibility of an extraordinary grant of 100 million euro to be awarded to the MoI, through the first Axis of the programme, in case of unfavorable developments due to the pandemic.

In addition to the above stated financial support measures, it is worth mentioning that other facilities were also provided by the MoI to local authorities through a series of legislative interventions, in an effort to achieve the goal of responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and make use of available tools to develop good financial governance. Such reliefs and facilitations aim at assigning local government authorities the role of the key actor in the growth and productivity, by undertaking social and development actions at the local level, supporting local financial activity and prosperity, protecting employment and ensuring social cohesion.

Furthermore, the pandemic was a challenge which led to the adoption, for the first time, in the public sector and in the local government authorities, of new forms of work, such as teleworking/ remote work and rotation of the staff, being forms of work compatible with the current circumstances and the social needs of the staff, which ensure the protection of the health of the staff and their families. Also the pandemic led to the creation of conditions for facilitating particular groups of the staff in the public sector, conditions which did not affect at all the operation of the state and local authorities, which continued their efficient functioning, strengthening in parallel the use of digital means and tools.

The coordination of the administration levels, which is strengthened through the use of digital tools and the chain support service, that is from the Ministry (central/national level) to the local government authorities (sub- national level) and from the local government authorities to citizens and businesses highlights the successful implementation of the multi- level governance model for the establishment of a coherent strategy to address the pandemic and mitigate the effects of the crisis in the economy and the community. In line with the majority of the Council of Europe good democratic governance principles, the decision making for the implementation of actions at the local level was strengthened based on the principle of subsidiarity, in accordance with the guidelines provided by the state authorities (enhancing the role of Municipalities, through the Acts of Legislative Content). Also, the digital transformation of the state and local authorities was speeded up and successfully implemented, while at the central level the possibilities of immediate responsiveness, adaptability, innovation and leadership of the MoI, as the executive actor in relation to local government authorities were highlighted, in an effort to address the health crisis.

Thank you very much