



Strasbourg, 17 February 2020

GT-DT(2020)5

**EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE  
(CDDG)**

**WORKING GROUP ON DEMOCRACY AND TECHNOLOGY  
(GT-DT)**

**MEETING REPORT**

**Strasbourg, 27-28 January 2020**

**1. Opening of the meeting**

The Secretariat welcomed the members of the Working Group, who introduced themselves. The list of participants is set out in Appendix I.

**2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair**

The Working Group elected Ambassador Almir Šahović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) as Chair, and Ms Amber Mechelse (Netherlands) as Vice-Chair.

**3. Agenda**

The agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix II.

**4. Introduction: technology as a challenge and an opportunity for democracy**

Ms Claudia Luciani, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Democracy, DGII, gave an overview of current activities by the Council of Europe with regards to the impact of digital technologies on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, highlighting the work of the Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI).

Technology was constantly evolving and several bodies within the Council of Europe were working on digital transformation or specific aspects of it. The Working Group thus needed to coordinate with other bodies and identify areas where it would provide an added value. Many questions had not been explored, including the impact of digital transformation and the increasing use of technologies on political pluralism and civil participation, the issue of political micro-targeting and the role of internet intermediaries, to mention a few.

## 5. Terms of reference

Following the presentation by the Secretariat of the [terms of reference](#) as approved by the CDDG, the Working Group held an exchange of views on the overlapping between specific task i. (the study on the impact of digital transformation on democracy and good governance) and specific task ii (new technologies and the electoral process), the timeline and working methods. The Secretariat recalled that a restricted access webpage would be set up to enable members of the working group and the CDDG to share information and make progress in relation to accomplishing the specific tasks in between meetings. The Secretariat also recalled that Mr Peter Andre would participate in the meetings of the Working Group and ensure co-ordination with the CAHAI.

## 6. Study on the impact of the digital transformation on democracy and good governance (task i.)

The Secretariat presented:

- a [brief overview](#) of ongoing work by other international organisations and fora;
- a brief overview of national artificial intelligence strategies and regulatory initiatives;
- the proceedings of the [Round Table](#) on Artificial Intelligence and the future of democracy.

A preliminary discussion ensued on the scope of the study, which would go beyond artificial intelligence to cover digital transformation as a whole. Member States were invited to provide updates on national developments.

The Working Group heard presentations by:

- Mr Thorsten Thiel, Research Group Lead, Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Berlin, Germany, on *Digitalisation and democracy*, and
- Ms Gabriela Viale Pereira, Department for E-Governance and Administration, Danube University Krems, Krems a.d. Donau, Austria, on *Smart cities and good governance*.

In the ensuing discussion the following issues were mentioned: micro-targeting in election campaigns, transparency of algorithmic decision making, quality of data and data protection, open government, open data and open source, rise of populism, civil participation and democratic oversight.

The Working Group took part in the meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the Parliamentary Assembly for the discussion of the report by Ms Deborah Bergamini (Italy, EPP/CD) on *Need for democratic governance of Artificial Intelligence* and heard a presentation by Mr Dario Fumagalli, legal expert in the field of privacy protection. In the margins of the meeting, the Chair of the Working Group invited Ms Bergamini to address the next CDDG plenary meeting.

The Working Group heard contributions by its members and reviewed a draft outline for the study, which would be structured around two main chapters, respectively on democracy and governance, with specific reference to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance and examples of ways in which technologies give a positive contribution to democracy and good governance.

The Secretariat was instructed to use the information collected during the meeting to revise the outline and draft some of its chapters, to be submitted to the Working Group using online communication or via the restricted access webpage, if operational.

## **7. New technologies and the electoral process (task ii.)**

The Working Group heard a presentation by Mr Patrick Penninckx, Head of the Information Society Department (DGI), on *New technologies and the electoral process*. An exchange of views followed.

The Working Group heard a presentation from Ms Ardita Driza Maurer, expert consultant, on *New technologies in the electoral cycle. Guidance from the Council of Europe* and took note of her paper.

Mr Pierre Garrone, Head of the Division of Elections and Political parties, Venice Commission, presented the current work of the Venice Commission with regards to use of digital technology in elections and e-voting.

During the ensuing discussion, the Working Group asked Ms Maurer, in cooperation with the Secretariat, to draft a questionnaire to identify challenges and opportunities as regards the application of new technologies to the different stages of the electoral cycle and help define the member States' expectations as regards the possible Council of Europe work in this area. The Secretariat was also asked to prepare an overview of existing documents and instruments of the Organisation relevant to task ii.

The Working Group expressed the wish to involve more closely Election Management Bodies in the continuation of its work and to reach out to civil society.

The Working Group suggested inviting the President of the Venice Commission to the next CDDG meeting, and/or other high profile personalities in the area of elections.

## **8. Other business**

None.

## **9. Date and venue of next meeting**

The next meeting of the working group will be held on 21-22 September 2020 in Strasbourg.

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

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Apologised for absence / excusé

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## APPENDIX II

### AGENDA

- 1. Opening of the meeting**
- 2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair**
- 3. Adoption of the agenda** [GT-DT(2020)OJ1]
- 4. Introduction: technology as a challenge and an opportunity for democracy**  
  
 Overview by Ms Claudia Luciani, Director, of Human Dignity, Equality and Democracy, DGII
- 5. Terms of reference** [GT-DT(2020)1]  
  
 Information and discussion on the terms of reference, working methods and time-table
- 6. Study on the impact of the digital transformation on democracy and good governance (task i.)**
  - Mapping initiatives in Council of Europe member States and in other international organisations: Presentation by the Secretariat and contributions by members of the working group [GT-DT(2020)3]
  - Exchange of views with experts on: [CDDG(2019)5]
    - Artificial intelligence and democracy by Mr Thorsten Thiel, Research Group Lead, "Digitalisation and democracy", Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Berlin, Germany [CDDG(2019)6]
    - Smart cities and good governance by Ms Gabriela Viale Pereira, Department for E-Governance and Administration, Danube University Krems, Krems a.d. Donau, Austria
  - Drafting an outline for the study; planning further contributions by members of the working group [GT-DT(2020)2]
- 7. New technologies and the electoral process (task ii.)**
  - Overview by Ms Ardita Driza Maurer, expert consultant, and consideration of her expert paper [GT-DT(2020)4]
  - The work of the Venice Commission
  - Cybersecurity aspects
  - Data protection
  - Contributions by members of the working group
- 8. Other business**
- 9. Date and venue of next meeting**

