

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 12 July 2023

GT-A(2023)7

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

**WORKING GROUP ON GREEN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
(GT-A)**

MEETING REPORT

of the informal online meeting of 27 June 2023

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the
Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity
Democratic Governance Division

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair, Mr Markku MÖLLÄRI (Finland), opened the meeting and welcomed all participants, who introduced themselves. The list of participants is set out in Appendix I.

2. Agenda

The agenda was adopted as it appears in Appendix II.

3. Draft report on Green Public Administration

The working group heard and discussed a presentation by Mr Louis MEULEMAN, Director, Public Strategy for Sustainable Development, and took note that he would act as expert-consultant to the working group in preparation of the draft report. In his presentation, Mr Meuleman underlined that sound policy and effective governance needed each other. While policy was about the what and when, governance was about the how and who. Policy gave the direction, however, to get things done, "ultimately, it was all about governance". With regards to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he pointed out that SDGs 1-15 were mainly about policy, while SDGs 16+17 were mainly about governance.

He stressed that one of the central challenges today was to combine 'fast' crisis management and 'slow' complexity governance. Governments needed to find ways to address the tendency of a crisis-focus to pull away, and at times partially undermine, resources from complexity governance. In the current era of poly-crisis, public administrations at all levels should be able to use a balanced set of tools and mechanisms, mixing capacity of collaboration with more traditional forms of maintaining the rule of law and law making.

The discussion centred around the interlinkage between policy, governance and democracy, including the question of participation; the relationship between governance and administration; different styles of governance (hierarchical, market, network); the role of leadership in steering the transition, and what type of leadership would be most suited; and the risks of undermining democratic legitimacy through overreliance on crisis management.

The working group then heard and discussed a presentation by Ms Maija FAEHNLE, Finnish Environment Institute (Syke), on examples of (cross-) administration from Finland. For instance, the Towards Carbon Neutral Municipalities (Hinku) network brought together municipalities, businesses, citizens and experts to create and carry out solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; the Circwaste project produced a tool for municipalities aimed at making it easier for municipalities to promote circular economy between different sectors on a large scale. Experience gained in the municipality of Riihimäki with circular economy audits would be used to develop the tool further. There was also a dedicated online portal to disseminate information. She also stressed the importance of developing collaboration capacities, in particular training for public managers.

The discussion centred around division of responsibilities between levels of government, and how these levels interact; the role of regional and medium-to-large local governments in the green transition; just transition, among others.

Thereafter, Ms Natalia KOBYLARZ, Senior lawyer and Environment Coordinator at the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights, presented the Court's evolving case law on environment and nascent case law on climate change. In her presentation she focused on aspects concerning decision making. Her presentation is online.

Among others, the discussion touched on questions related to the intersection of economy and environment and how to balance these competing interests; how the Court weighed the competing interests of a given measure with a protected right; whether the Court was ahead of or lagging behind societal developments and law making; the positive role played by the Court in affirming the linkages between human rights and the environment and ensuring access to relevant information.

The Secretariat presented the **draft report on green public administration** (GT-A(2023)5). Overall, the working group welcomed the draft and its structure. For the executive summary and the conclusion, it was agreed to review them once the draft report was more evolved.

For the **introductory chapter**, the working group suggested to better articulate the interlinkage between policy, governance, and democracy, framing the report accordingly; to include the concept of just transition; to mention the hierarchy between the SDGs; and to make reference to biodiversity.

For the **second chapter**, the working group agreed to change the title to 'Implementing green policies at all levels of government', instead of all levels of administration. There was consensus that in light of the different institutional cultures and set-ups of member States, there was a need to develop clear language, as concept such as regulation might mean different things in different countries. While there was consensus that the report did not deal specifically with questions of emergencies/war, reference to the impact on the environment brought about by the war on Ukraine should be made. Furthermore, the working group suggested to:

- expand and develop further the sections on impact assessments, incentives and innovation, and cross-border cooperation;
- bring out more clearly multi-level governance throughout the report;
- explore further the challenges faced by public administration in each sub-chapter;
- possibly include a sub-chapter on 'Greening public sector workforce', highlighting need for capacity building and skill development;

- make reference to the importance of dialogue, as a means to involve the public;
- consider adding issues related to resilience, security, and foresight;
- mention role of court, however, not focus on a rights-based approach;
- highlight the key role of local and regional level in decision making for the green / just transition;
- make reference to Congress Handbook on Environment and to Congress' commitment to green working methods;
- focus on positive results and on what could be achieved through better action on climate and the environment.

For the **third chapter**, the premise that considerations of green issues were an essential dimension in the pursuit of Good Democratic Governance at all levels would be the starting point. Thus, the chapter should first define what characterises green public administration and then identify practical steps, possibly in the form of a checklist, specifying what needed to be done to deliver effective green administration, and thus ensure a healthy living space for all. Among others, guidance should mention availability of effective legal frameworks; importance of access to good (reliable, verifiable) information; benefit of learning from each other's experience; need for cross border cooperation.

Furthermore, the working group recalled that the report should be short, concise, practical, and written in clear language; have an added value and not repeat work done in this field by other organisations or bodies within the Council of Europe; and that the guidance was addressed to member States (not to local level).

The Secretariat also provided an overview of the information provided by the replies to the questionnaire. The working group took note of the information and agreed to extend the deadline for responses in order to gather further information from a broader range of countries, especially from outside the EU.

4. Conference on Green Public Administration and Reykjavik Summit

The Secretariat provided information on the conference on "Green Public Administration in the Context of Good Democratic Governance: Exchange of Good European Practice", which was organised by the European Committee on Democracy and Governance in cooperation with the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers and had taken place on 26 April 2023 in Strasbourg. The conference provided several interesting case studies to be included in the draft report. Furthermore, the conference participants had stressed that positive examples were more effective in bringing about change than an apocalyptic narrative. A recording of the conference was available [online](#). The [conclusions of the conference](#) were also available online.

The Secretariat referred to the [Fourth Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government](#) (Reykjavik, Iceland, 16-17 May 2023) and the importance of the final declaration and, in particular, the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy for future work of the CDDG. The heads of state also affirmed that human rights and the environment were intertwined and that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment was key to the full enjoyment of human rights. The Committee of Ministers thus was currently assessing whether a new Committee on Environment would be established and if so, what its scope would be. The draft report on green public administration could be useful for such a committee. The working group took note of the information.

5. Tour de table

The Ukrainian delegation presented the devastating impact the war had on the environment, leading to loss of biodiversity, forestry, and water and air pollution, amounting to an ecocide being committed on Ukraine's territory. Among others, Ukrainian authorities were dealing with the consequences of the flooding due to the destruction of the Kakhovka dam, including how to ensure nuclear security at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. In addition, as Ukraine intended to incorporate climate considerations when preparing to re-build the country, the draft report could provide a useful and inspiring resource.

6. Next steps

The working group entrusted the Secretariat to send out a reminder of the Rapid Response Service No. 55 to CDDG delegations in order to collect further case studies to ensure regional diversity. The deadline for responses should be mid-July. At the next meeting after the summer, a revised report would be presented by the expert consultant, with a view to finalise the report by the end of the year.

7. Any other business

None.

8. Date of the next meeting

The 2nd regular (in-person) meeting would be held on 2 and 3 October 2023 in Strasbourg.

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

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

BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

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

CZECH REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE TCHEQUE

Ms Tereza ŠTALCEROVÁ, Senior administrative advisor, Department for Strategic Development and Coordination of Public Administration

GREECE / GRECE

Ms Desponia NASAINA, Ministry of Interior

ITALY / ITALIE

Mr Pierluigi TROMBETTA, Diplomatic Advisor to the Ministry for Regional Affairs and Autonomy, Presidency of the Council of Ministers

UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI

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

UKRAINE

Ms Oksana PAVLIUK, Head of the Unit, Department for local self-government development, territorial organisation of power and administrative-territorial structure; Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development

PARTICIPANTS**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE / ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

Mr Armen GEVORGYAN, General Rapporteur on Local and Regional Authorities, Member of the Social, Health and Sustainable Development Committee

**CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
/ CONGRES DES POUVOIRS LOCAUX ET REGIONAUX DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

Mr Roman CHLAPAK, Secretary of the Governance Committee

**CONFERENCE OF INGOS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONFERENCE DES OING
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

Apologised for absence

VENICE COMMISSION / COMMISSION DE VENISE

Apologised for absence

GUEST SPEAKERS / INTERVENANTS

Mr Louis MEULEMAN, Director, Public Strategy for Sustainable Development

Ms Natalia KOBYLARZ, Senior lawyer and Environment Coordinator at the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights

Ms Maija FAEHNLE, Senior researcher, Finnish Environment Institute (Syke), Finland

SECRETARIAT

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

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

Ms Judith ORLAND, Democratic Governance Division – Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance - Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity

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

APPENDIX II

10.00 1.	Opening of the meeting	
2.	Adoption of the agenda	[GT-A(2023)OJ2]
4.	Conference on Green Public Administration and Reykjavik Summit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on takeaways of conference • Discussion on outcomes of Summit 	Link Link
10.15	Intervention by experts followed by discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louis Meuleman, Director, Public Strategy for Sustainable Development • Maija Faehnle, Senior researcher, Finnish Environment Institute SYKE, Finland (15min) • Natalia Kobylarz, Senior lawyer and Environment Coordinator at the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights (15 min) 	
3.	Draft report on Green Public Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of current state of play and draft report • Compilation of responses from rapid response questionnaire no. 55 • Discussion 	[GT-A(2023)5] [GT-A(2023)6]
13.00-14.30	Lunch break	
5.	Tour de table <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members / participants present their proposals 	
3.	Draft report on Green Public Administration (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion cont. 	
6.	Next steps	
7.	Other business	
8.	Date of the next meeting (2-3 October 2023)	