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

**WORKING GROUP ON E-DEMOCRACY  
(GT-ED)**

**REPORT ON THE THIRD MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP  
12-13 SEPTEMBER 2019, COUNCIL OF EUROPE, STRASBOURG**

Secretariat Memorandum  
prepared by the  
Directorate General of Democracy  
Democratic Governance Department

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## **Introduction**

The Chair of the Working Group on E-Democracy (GT-ED), Ms Gordana Gapikj-Dimitrovska (North Macedonia), opened the meeting. The agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix I. Appendix II contains the list of participants.

The Chair welcomed the participants and in particular Ms Sonia Sirtori, Head of the Good Governance Division and Secretary to the CDDG, who had taken up her functions in May.

The working group took note of the report of its second meeting on 14 and 15 March 2019 [document GT-ED(2019)4].

## **Issues raised by the working group at its meeting on 12-13 September 2019**

In the general discussion, the members reiterated the need to ensure that the Guidelines would be a genuine toolkit, intended to complement Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)1, and that they should set out practical measures and relevant best practice examples from Council of Europe member states.

The Working Group then examined the draft text. It was agreed that, in general, short explanations should be provided on the different sections and how they should be used, a glossary should be added, and all the case studies should appear in Part B.

As regards the specific sections of the draft Guidelines, the changes that were agreed included:

- In the Preamble, redrafting the consideration about direct democracy, as well as the passages about 'advanced' digital technology, and adding a reference to society expectations;
- in Part A:
  - o a short introduction should be added clarifying the relationship between the present guidelines and Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)1 on electronic democracy,
  - o instead of 'definitions', Part A should state the purpose of the present guidelines and what e-democracy is today,
  - o instead of 'prospects', the present guidelines should explain the 'opportunities' that e-democracy can offer in various areas, in particular, in terms of promoting inclusion of different groups, including young people,
  - o 'responsiveness' should be explained and expanded,
  - o Under the section 'what is required for e-democracy' a variety of tools should be mentioned,

- e-enabled elections, e-voting, e-referenda and e-petitions could be addressed with e-participation (without giving the impression that member states should introduce e-voting but providing key requirements for states who might wish to do so),
  - in the stakeholders' section, the wording should be less prescriptive and focus on the authorities' responsibilities. In addition, the order should be changed,
  - the section on artificial intelligence should be amended to reflect the ongoing Council of Europe work in this area;
- As regards Part B:
    - to the extent that it is practical, the structure should be aligned with that of Part A;
    - the introduction should be revised to set out the enabling factors and include the considerations for the decision-makers in terms of what actions are needed, the impact of existing legislation and practices and the impact of proposed changes/actions;
    - the fact that local (and regional) governments in co-operation with civil society could play an important role in developing and testing new e-democracy initiatives and piloting innovations should also be mentioned specifically;
  - Part C should be substantially redrafted and simplified to be used as a checklist for member states. As a follow-up to the present Guidelines, this checklist could be developed into a benchmark of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance.

Member States and members of the Working Group were invited to submit to the Secretariat further practical examples in relation to e-democracy initiatives or projects to be included in the Guidelines. The Secretariat was instructed to include the changes that had been agreed to in the meeting, as well as the additional examples that would be received and to submit the final text of the Guidelines on e-democracy in the form of a toolkit to the members of the Working Group for final approval.

### **E-Voting**

The Working Group examined the overview of member States responses to the questionnaire which indicated that very little feedback, if any, was available on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 on standards for e-voting.

The Working group suggested that the CDDG Bureau consider the following possible options:

- to hold the review meeting of CM/Recommendation (2017)5 in conjunction with the CDDG meeting in December 2019 and, on this occasion, take stock of the experience of member States on the basis also of additional information that they would provide;
- to consider organising workshops on e-voting, e-enabled elections and referendums for interested member states;
- to consider whether additional work could be done on how to ensure that e-enabled elections take into account cybersecurity and transparency concerns.

The Chair of the Working Group closed the meeting.

**APPENDIX I****REVISED AGENDA**

- 1. Opening of the meeting**
- 2. Adoption of the agenda** [GT-ED(2019)0J2]
- 3. Report of the second meeting of the working group** [GT-ED(2019)4]
- 4. Guidelines on e-democracy in the form of a toolkit**  
*Draft guidelines*
  - Presentation of the guidelines by the expert [GT-ED(2019)5]
  - Case-studies of e-democracy initiatives submitted by member States
  - Exchange of views
  - Drafting proposals by the working group
- 5. Review meeting on Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)5](#) on standards for e-voting** [GT-ED(2019)6]
  - Results of the questionnaire on e-voting
- 6 Council of Europe activities in relation to disinformation, social media and elections: oral information by the Secretariat**
- 7. Other business**

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