

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 17 June 2022

GT-BG(2022)7

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

**WORKING GROUP ON PRINCIPLES OF GOOD  
DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE (GT-BG)**

**REPORT OF THE 2<sup>nd</sup> MEETING  
9-10 June 2022, hybrid and informal meeting**

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

### 1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair, Mr. Peter Andre, opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the working group present in-person and online. The list of participants can be found in Appendix I.

### 2. Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda [GT-BG(2022)OJ2] was adopted as it appears in Appendix II.

### 3. Information by the Chair and the Secretariat

The Chair and the Secretariat recalled the drafting work since its launching in early 2022, the results of discussions held at the 1<sup>st</sup> WG-BG meeting in February and the CDDG's 15<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting in April, which had led to submissions in writing, including a detailed proposal by the United Kingdom.

### 4. Presentations by guest speakers, participants and observers.

The working group heard presentations by:

- **Ms Ayşegül Elveriş**, Secretary of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the Parliamentary Assembly, who stressed the importance and timeliness of the work in the context of backsliding of democracy in Europe. She updated the working group on recent Assembly activities of particular relevance for the group, especially the Resolution and Recommendation adopted on 28 April on "[Safeguarding and promoting genuine democracy in Europe](#)" about which the CDDG had been asked by the Committee of Ministers to provide comments.

The Resolution provided a sort of shortlist of democratic principles to follow in order to achieve genuine democracy, e.g. regarding fundamental rights, elections, the rule of law, interactions between the branches of power, the political opposition, the quality of governance etc. The Recommendation called for increased efforts, including the establishment of a platform on democracy and a warning mechanism to identify deteriorating situations at an early stage. In the ensuing discussion, it was pointed out that the future recommendation on principles of good democratic governance could become a reference framework for such a platform and the Chair invited Ms Elveris to attend the GT-BG meeting of 15-16 September.

- **Ms Joan Hoey**, Director for Europe, Editor of The Democracy Index, Economist Intelligence Unit, provided key information about the Index, some recent trends, and the methodology used, which is based on a series of 60 indicators in five different categories (electoral process and pluralism; the functioning of government; political participation; political culture; civil liberties) measuring political democracy as opposed to economic freedom as other indexes seek to do. The overall index was a simple average of the five category indexes. Based on their total score, countries are classified as full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes or authoritarian regimes.

Overall, only 6.4 % of people lived currently in a full democracy. As from 2008 – which was the year of a major global financial crisis - the Democracy Index had

shown a decline in almost every region of the world. In Europe, additional trends had been observed including the erosion of sovereignty and democratic accountability, the decline of popular confidence and trust in political institutions and politicians). At the same time, Political Participation had been observed to be the only category to experience growth since 2008.

- **Ms Seema Shah**, Head of the Democracy Assessment Team, International IDEA, informed the group about the functioning, methodology and approach of its (intergovernmental) organisation, and its general mission consisting of advancing sustainable democracy and improving and consolidating electoral processes world-wide, through cooperation and other activities. One of these has been over the last 10 years, the periodic publication, similarly to the EIU, of indicators of democracy related to representative government (clean elections, inclusive suffrage, free political parties etc); fundamental rights (access to justice, civil liberties, social rights and equality); checks on government (effective parliament; judicial independence, media integrity); impartial administration (absence of corruption, predictable enforcement); participatory engagement (civil society participation, electoral participation, direct democracy, local democracy). IDEA's current approaches were based on the principles of "Deliver(ing)" new social contracts (*inter alia* promoting participatory processes and developing evidence-based decision-making agendas), and of "Rebuild(ing)" democratic institutions. IDEA had also recently set up a new system of early warning.

In the ensuing discussions, it was observed that the above presentations had highlighted the importance of integrity, political corruption generally, social and other inequalities and economic and other crises as crucial tests for the robustness of democracy. Dan Popescu, from the Secretariat, recalled how this mirrored the content of the Secretary General's reports on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Participants commented that surveys carried out had often shown a greater trust in experts than in governments, presumably because of a disbelief on who can best deliver. However, democracy remained – in the long run – the best placed regime to deliver success in matters of economic, social, environmental and general well-being in the population, provided elected government institutions were sufficiently effective, robust and accountable to take decisions. Democracy on its own was not enough, however, to guarantee the well-being of all and to counter economic and other inequalities, hence the importance of linking it to high compliance with human rights and rule of law requirements.

The working group concluded that the similarity of focus areas of IDEA and the CDDG warranted a future exchange of views, including on closer cooperation between the two bodies, at a forthcoming CDDG meeting.

## **5. Drafting a recommendation for the Committee of Ministers on Principles of good democratic governance.**

Mr. Daniele del Bianco and Ms. Ramona Velea, scientific experts (Institute of International Sociology - ISIG), presented the revised draft recommendation on principles of good democratic governance [GT-BG(2022)5], giving an overview of the process and the incorporation of comments received at, and after the 15<sup>th</sup> CDDG plenary meeting (from

Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Norway, the Slovak Republic, the United Kingdom as well as the Conference of INGOs and the Venice Commission), and identified in the revised draft text.

The revised structure involved at present a set of 12 principles, similar in wording to “The 12 Principles” enshrined in the Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at local level of 2008, enumerated in the body of the recommendation and clustered as follows: principles relating to values, principles guiding behaviour of public institutions, principles ensuring social and economic well-being of people. They were then detailed in the annex with a series of specific guidelines / benchmarks for each principle.

The latest drafting proposals from the United Kingdom had been taken into account albeit not in full as they entailed a different approach and format (which would have made a revised version difficult to examine by the working group). The Chair and Secretariat explained that as a result, these had been made available in extenso as a separate specific draft [GT-BG(2022)6].

The United Kingdom delegation then presented these proposals, based on eight principles of good democratic governance (summarising the 12 principles), listed in the text of the recommendation and detailed in a first part of the annex to the recommendation, with specific sub-elements for the national, regional and local levels of governance. A second part of the annex would list the 12 Principles of good democratic governance at local level (in their wording from 2008).

Several participants expressed a preference for a coherent text, fearing significant redundancies of principles if the draft made specific provisions for the national/regional/local level. The working group, considering that the recommendation should build on the 12 Principles of good democratic governance at local level and not reiterate them, eventually agreed on a revised set of (12) principles, organised in four clusters, as outlined in the draft approved at the meeting and circulated for final review after the meeting (GT-BG(2022)5Rev): 1. the respect, protection and promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, 2. the observance of the highest standards of public ethics and integrity in the exercise of power and public responsibilities, 3. the practice of good administration, 4. the delivery of high-quality public services, and economic, social, and environmental wellbeing. These would be included in the annex of the recommendation, without sub-criteria or additional components, nor definitions of individual principles. Any such additional material would become part of an explanatory memorandum. Practical benchmarks would be prepared by the Centre of expertise for the purposes of its own activities, the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE etc).

## **6. Other matters, next steps, date and place of the next meeting**

The working group agreed that consultations with, or presentations by other bodies or organisations were extremely helpful but that at this stage there was no further need for this at the next meeting. It entrusted the scientific experts with the preparation of a preliminary draft explanatory memorandum – by 15 September – which would contain any details; references; examples and explanations regarding the 12 principles; the background material used in the drafting work, such as the Parliamentary Assembly’s resolution and recommendation on “genuine democracies”; earlier work of the CDDG, the specificities of the current context of distrust in governments; factors in the weakening of democracies

(fraud, corruption, manipulation which can even lead to financial crises) and how the principles to be promulgated in the recommendation – if implemented – would address these concerns; and any other information.

The working group was reminded about the call for suggestions of initiatives made by the organising team of the World Forum for Democracy and the possibility for delegations to submit proposals, ideas etc. until 15 June. Additionally, it was noted that the CDDG could contribute to the World Forum for Democracy by presenting the draft recommendation on principles of good democratic governance in case of its finalisation before the event.

The working group agreed that the draft recommendation (document GT-BG(2022)5Rev) would be circulated rapidly to all members, with a deadline of 15 July 2022 for any possible comments or further suggestions.

The working group agreed that the next meeting would be held in-person in Strasbourg on 15-16 September 2022, as originally planned.

The Chair thanked all participants and the Secretariat, and closed the meeting.

**APPENDIX 1****LIST OF PARTICIPANTS / LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS****CHAIR / PRESIDENT**

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

**BELGIUM / BELGIQUE**

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

**CZECH REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE TCHEQUE**

Mr Kristian MALINA, Ministerial Assistant Principal, Department of Coordination of Public Administration and International Relations Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic

**FINLAND / FINLANDE**

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

**GREECE / GRECE**

Mr Georgios CHRYSAFIS, Directorate of Organising and Functioning of Local Government, Ministry of the Interior, Athens

Ms Elli STILIANIDI, Expert within the independent department of International and European relations, Ministry of Interior of the Hellenic Republic, Athens

**ITALY / ITALIE**

Mr Francesco GIUSTINO, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Ufficio Attività Internazionali, ROMA

**NORWAY / NORVEGE**

Prof. Sigrid STOKSTAD, Associate Professor in the Department of Public and International Law, Faculty of Law, University of Oslo

**PORTUGAL**

Ms Tânia MOURATO, Head of Department, Directorate-General for Local Authorities, LISBOA

**SLOVAK REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE SLOVAQUE**

Ms Veronika LAKATOŠOVÁ, Local Self-Government and Foreign Affairs Unit, Department of Public Administration, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

**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

Ms Siobhan SMYTH, Senior Policy Adviser, Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Local Government & Communities Directorate, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, LONDON

Mr Matthew BRANNEN, Senior Policy Adviser, Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Local Government & Communities Directorate, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, LONDON

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

Ms Ayşegül ELVERİŞ, Secretary of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

**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, Governance Committee / Commission de la Gouvernance

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

Mr Christoph SPRENG, Representative of the INGOs Conference to the CDDG, Initiatives of Change-International

**CONSULTANTS EXPERTS / EXPERTS CONSULTANTS**

Mr Daniele DEL BIANCO, Director, Institute of International Sociology (ISIG), Gorizia, Italy

Ms Ramona VELEA, Deputy Director, Institute of International Sociology (ISIG), Gorizia, Italy

**GUEST SPEAKERS / INTERVENANTS**

Ms Joan HOEY, Director for Europe, Editor of The Democracy Index, Economist Intelligence Unit

Ms Seema SHAH, Head of the Democracy Assessment Team, International IDEA

**SECRETARIAT**

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

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

Ms Isabelle ETTER, Assistant

Ms Nino MAKHAURI, Trainee



## APPENDIX 2

### AGENDA / ORDRE DU JOUR

#### 1. Opening of the meeting

#### 2. Adoption of the agenda

[GT-BG(2022)OJ2]

#### 3. Information by the Chair and the Secretariat

#### 4. Presentations by guest speakers, participants and observers

- 10.15 Ms Aysegül Elveriş, Secretary of the [Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy](#), Parliamentary Assembly
- 10.45 Ms Joan Hoey, Director for Europe, Editor of [The Democracy Index](#), Economist Intelligence Unit
- 11.15 Ms Seema Shah, Head of the Democracy Assessment Team, [International IDEA](#)



Selection of relevant work of Congress, PA



Democracy Index 2021 Final.pdf



IDEA - gsod-indicators-and-s

#### 5. Drafting a recommendation for the Committee of Ministers on Principles of good democratic governance

Presentation of the revised draft, following the first GT-BG meeting, and the CDDG's 15<sup>th</sup> meeting: Daniele del Bianco and Ramona Velea (Institute of International Sociology - ISIG), Council of Europe experts

[GT-BG(2022)5]

Contributions by the members of the working group on the structure and content of a draft recommendation

- presentation of their written submission by the United Kingdom
- other contributions

[GT-BG(2022)6]

#### 6. Other matters

#### 7. Next steps, date and place of next meeting

Strasbourg, 15-16 September 2022 (if no unfavorable context)