



## OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw, 11-22 September 2017

### Contribution by the Good Governance Division

#### Democratic Governance

Responsive, transparent and accountable institutions are the bedrock of democracy. Council of Europe member States are committed to the fundamental principles of political democracy – individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law – and engage in dialogue and action in favour of “the maintenance and further realisation of these ideals and in the interests of economic and social progress”.

Through its European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Council of Europe has laid the foundations of solid local self-government standards across Europe. To date, all 47 Council of Europe member States have subscribed to the principles of the Charter, are implementing it and are subject to the regular monitoring by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. In order to promote transparent and responsive local democracy, the Charter was supplemented in 2009 by an Additional protocol that fosters citizen participation in public life at local level. The Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2008, encourages member States to implement the twelve principles of good democratic governance through targeted action at local level with the direct involvement of local authorities themselves.

In the field of democracy and governance, the **intergovernmental Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG)** acts as a forum where member States can exchange information and good practice and engage in constructive partnerships through peer reviews, direct assistance and the development of new standards.

One of the major fields of action continues to be the design and proper implementation of legislation and policy for central, local and regional government reforms, including in respect of territorial administrative reforms, competencies and resources of local authorities, governance of metropolitan areas and transfrontier co-operation. The CDDG deals more generally with administrative reforms aiming at improving democracy and governance at all government levels. At present, it focuses on the development of guidelines and standards to promote the participation of citizens and NGOs in democratic decision-making processes, e-governance and public ethics.

The Council of Europe's **Centre of Expertise for (Local) Government Reform** develops and implements programmes aimed at supporting legal reforms and the strengthening of the capacities of local, regional and central authorities throughout Europe.

The Centre has a repertoire of 17 capacity-building tools which take inspiration from the European standards and best practice in five areas: democratic participation; modern and effective human resource management and leadership; institutional capacity and quality public services; sound financial management; territorial and cross-border cooperation. All country-specific capacity-building activities are implemented in close cooperation with a broad spectrum of relevant national partners, including various governmental agencies, associations of local authorities and institutes.

Moreover, the Council of Europe continues to encourage the implementation of the **Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level**. It is based on assessments of how local authorities conduct their affairs with regard to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, the identification of possible changes to be made and measures to be adopted and the establishment of partnerships between central (regional) authorities and local authorities (their associations) to promote good governance at every level. An ETool on Good Governance is being currently developed. This eLearning course is intended as a learning platform for the staff of local authorities striving to perform in accordance with the standards of good democratic governance in fields such as public ethics, rule of law, efficiency and effectiveness, transparency, sound financial management and accountability.

The Council of Europe attaches great importance to the establishment of effective synergetic **partnerships with other international Organisations** and other institutions that pursue objectives similar to those of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe and the OSCE have a framework agreement of co-operation on local and regional democracy, aimed at streamlining and coordinating each Organisation's work on the promotion of sound and democratic decentralisation in south-east European countries. ODIHR attends CDDG meetings as observer and co-ordination meetings with ODIHR and OSCE field missions enable assessment of ongoing co-operation, exchange of information on the respective country projects and discussion of emerging issues with a view to identifying opportunities for joint action. The Council of Europe's network of partnerships in the field of good governance and democracy with international actors includes also the EU, UN, OECD and bodies such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the European Association for Local Democracy and the European Association of Local Chief Executives etc.

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