

DG II DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER



Issue 6 – 15 June 2020 – Distributed to **DGII staff**

COVID-19 - CURRENT SITUATION WITHIN THE DGII

DGII Directorates have organised 454 virtual meetings (internal and external) between June 1st and 15 June.

Visit our specific web page : [DGII Democracy - Covid 19 Response](#) for further information on the activities related to Covid-19



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

Dear Colleagues

We have moved over the last two weeks to a hybrid *modus operandi* with face-to-face meetings that are taking back their place in our daily lives, and videoconferencing meetings that have helped us to secure business continuity and remain fully operational since the beginning of the crisis and the lockdown.

Adaptability and flexibility are the key words during this period – for both planning and implementations of our activities. What is also important is continuous training. We are experimenting every day and learning every day. This helps us enormously to enter into a "new normality", in which "telecooperation" still plays and might continue to play an important role.

We are less and less certain about what our "new normal" will look like. This is true but it can also sound as if the "new normal" is just something that will arrive and that we have to adjust to. That is *not* completely true. The future should *not* "just arrive". We should try to shape it, led by the SG and in close cooperation with our partners in all our Member States.

I have taken part in several committee meetings in recent weeks, of some I was informed, and I am very proud of the fact that all our partners appreciate our work and are equally proud of the Council of Europe's achievements. But they also have legitimate expectations and we cannot disappoint them. That is why, together with the Directors, we have embarked on an in-depth discussion on the strategies to be followed for the implementation of our work programme in the best possible conditions and results.

I am counting on you, on your expertise and dedication, but also on your adaptability to carry through our objectives and commitments until the end of this year.

Snežana Samardžić-Marković



The EDQM's "**Vaccines Task Force**" has published a first compilation of pharmacopoeial texts relevant for vaccines for human use on our website, freely downloadable, accompanied by a selection of training materials explaining the role of the Ph. Eur. and how to apply/interpret pharmacopoeial requirements. The intention is to fast track understanding of the Ph. Eur. for COVID-19 vaccine developers, many of which come from academia or are small and medium-sized enterprises (<https://www.edqm.eu/en/news/edqm-continues-support-covid-19-vaccine-developers-providing-selected-training-materials>). In parallel, the Advisory Group for Official Control Authority Batch Release (OCABR) of the OMCL network is continuing discussions on how best to prepare for OCABR testing of

future COVID-19 vaccines, which may pose a challenge due to new technology platforms used and the sheer number of batches to be tested if vaccination programs are rolled out broadly in Europe.

Weekly meetings with national pharmacopoeia authorities (NPAs) of our 39 member States as well as the monthly meetings with the World Pharmacopoeias (IMWP) have continued, providing informal platforms for experience and information exchange with the objective to identify possibilities of **concerted action and work-sharing in the pharmacopoeial response to the pandemic**. The annual meeting of NPAs, hosted by a different member State every year and originally scheduled to take place in Helsinki, brought together virtually 34 representatives from 21 NPAs and was an extremely useful opportunity to prepare for the session of the Ph. Eur. Commission in the last week of June, which will again be the Commission's first virtual session. In addition, we just had another **monthly meeting with European industry associations**. This opportunity for direct exchanges and discussion of issues and challenges the industry is facing in the current context was again very much appreciated by participants and we agreed to continue regular meetings until the end of the crisis, to be followed by a joint "lessons learnt" discussion to be prepared for future similar situations. We have also decided to hold annual plenary meetings with them in the future, in addition to the bilateral exchanges with individual trade associations we have been organising for a number of years.

As every year, we are preparing our **July training on the European Pharmacopoeia**, to take place on July 7 – 8, again as the first virtual version. The training has been split into 4 topical webinar sessions, covering topics such as the role of the EDQM in the European regulatory network, general and specific requirements of the Ph. Eur., the establishment of reference standards, our certification of suitability procedure and related inspections, our databases as well as how to contribute to the work of the Ph. Eur. and how to comment on draft texts. We already had to close registration earlier this week as the 1000 places per webinar had been booked – just for comparison, we normally have around 80 participants for the on-site training. Again, we have seen that our on-line events generate an enormous interest from all over the world and we will definitely take this into account when shaping our future events policy. As for all our trainings, presentations will be made available on our website after the event (<https://www.edqm.eu/en/news/sign-today-free-edqm-training-resources-online>).

On June 3, we had our **second virtual staff meeting**, again attended by more than half of our more than 400 staff members, to prepare for our return to the office and to explain in detail the precautionary measures put in place. It is easy to imagine that colleagues had lots of questions and that we had a lively Q & A session. As of June 8, colleagues are now gradually returning to the office, as far as the constraints posed by shared offices, flexible office spaces and unresolved issues related to child-care currently allow.

The EDQM is proud to say that we have stayed **fully operational throughout the confinement** and have progressed all our activities. Please visit our website for more information on our activities (<https://www.edqm.eu/en>).

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The first three GRETA reports under the third evaluation round of the Convention, focusing on access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking, were published, concerning **Austria, the Slovak Republic and Cyprus**.

On 12 June, the **Committee of the Parties** to the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings held its 26th meeting, in Strasbourg. The Committee adopted recommendations addressed to the authorities of **Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Monaco and the Slovak Republic**.

GENDER EQUALITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In **Georgia**, the third **Facebook live Q&A session** on COVID-19 and violence against women and domestic violence, focusing on psychological aspects of violence against women, was held on 29 May.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

On 10 June 2020, at the request of the **Lithuanian Government**, the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance held a **second discussion** with the Lithuanian Parliament on some aspects of the draft law on Regional Development.

The Centre of Expertise for Good Governance is supporting the implementation of the European Label of Governance Excellence (**ELoGE**) in **Portugal**, in cooperation with UDITE – the European Federation of Local Government Chief Executives, and ATAM – the Portuguese Association of employees of local administrations. Portuguese municipalities have until 15 September to **apply**.

CONFERENCE OF INGOs

The Conference's Standing Committee **expressed** its strong commitment to the construction of a diverse and open society, based on meaningful democratic participation. It also called on the **Hungarian Parliament** to align **legal gender recognition** with internationally recognized human rights standards and the Task Force on Migration expressed its concerns regarding the **situation of migrants and NGOs** that help them.

The Expert Council on NGO Law published its legal **Opinion on the Amendments to the Law on Association in Turkey** and the **Guidelines on Protecting NGO Work in Support of Refugees and other Migrants**. The Expert Council also contributed to the exchange of views on **the Law on Non-Commercial Organisations in Moldova**.

ELECTIONS and CIVIL SOCIETY

After only ten days since the launch event, followed online by more than 1,100 people, 329 participants, representing Drohobych citizens and local officials, have enrolled in the **online Academy of Civil Participation** that was designed as part of the CoE COVID-19 response within the project “Promoting civil participation in democratic decision-making in Ukraine”. The online course has been integrated on the website of the Drohobych City Council and will now be spread to other cities in Ukraine.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE DEVELOPMENT BANK (CEB) On 26 May 2020, the Government of Andorra deposited with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe a declaration of accession to the Bank. Andorra has thus become the 42nd member of the CEB. **<https://coebank.org/en/news-and-publications/news/ceb-welcomes-andorra-42nd-member-state/>**

ECRI, NATIONAL MINORITIES AND MINORITY LANGUAGES

On 2 June, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its sixth-cycle reports on Albania and Austria. ECRI also published its conclusions on the implementation of its interim follow-up recommendations addressed to Denmark, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine under its fifth monitoring cycle (see press release on conclusions).

A draft opinion by the Advisory Committee on the implementation by Malta of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was sent to the authorities for observations (confidential dialogue) and the final opinions on Bulgaria, Hungary and Spain were sent to the authorities concerned for final comments. The acting President of the Advisory Committee participated in the GR-H meeting on 9 June.

The dates for the on-the-spot monitoring visits of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to Cyprus and Poland in autumn 2020 are now confirmed.

ROMA AND TRAVELLERS AND INCLUSION

On 2 and 9 June 2020, the Italian Team of the EU/CoE JP JUSTROM organised an online training course on “Statelessness” in co-operation with Italian NGOs and UNHCR, to raise awareness about the fact that Roma without ID or registration documents have been very severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, since they were often denied access to medical or social care.

On 10 June 2020, the Romanian Team of the EU/CoE JP JUSTROM organised a Webinar on “Anti-discrimination and Responsible Journalism” in co-operation with the Ecological University of Bucharest, in order to highlight the role of the media in fighting stereotypes and prejudice, and to improve the portrayal of Roma in the media.

The **INTERCULTURAL CITIES PROGRAMME** has expanded its body of knowledge and resources by focusing over the past two months on gentrification and its consequences of positive interaction among diverse groups. A dedicated thematic page has been published on the ICC website on 4 June 2020 and a webinar on the same topic took place on 11 June.

The **SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI) Unit** organised three days of online Romanian national consultations as part of the ENDSOGIDISC project. The project is funded in part by the European Commission and is being carried out in partnership with Asociația Accept as Romanian national partner. Topics included hate crime, LGBTI families and legal gender recognition, as well as the execution of SOGI-related judgements in Romania.

The SOGI Unit also hosted the 2nd session of the 24th roundtable of the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network on June 4th. The session served as a platform to discuss the upcoming EU LGBTI Equality Strategy and the main findings of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) latest survey "A long way to go for LGBTI equality", with a focus on the short and long term effects that COVID-19 will have on LGBTI persons in Europe. Several national focal points from the Member States and key European Union stakeholders attended the online event.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The report of the first meeting of the **Bureau of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)** which took place on 25 and 26 May 2020 is now public. The CDENF's working group on responses to violence against children (CDENF-GT-VAE) will hold its first (virtual) meeting (23 and 24 June 2020) and discuss notably how to strengthen reporting mechanisms on violence against children in Europe and examine the nature, causes, consequences and responses to sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviours displayed by children. The CDENF will also hold on 26 June 2020 its first thematic exchange of views on “COVID-19 pandemic responses: lessons learnt from management and adaptation to ensure that children are treated as rights holders during the pandemic and beyond”.

Draft Law on Barnahus was launched for public consultation as part of the joint EU DG Reform-CoE project on Supporting the implementation on Barnahus in Slovenia, phase II. The project will continue to support the adoption of this unique law by facilitating its public consultation process in Slovenia through events, social media campaign and carrying out child consultations.

Two flagship HELP courses were launched by the project to Combat violence against children in the Republic of Moldova in June: the course on child-friendly justice for lawyers in collaboration with the Moldovan Bar Association; and the course on Family law and human rights for judges and prosecutors in collaboration with the National Institute of Justice.

The workplan of the regional project to **End child sexual exploitation and abuse@Europe** has been updated in response to priorities of covid-19 context.

ENLARGED PARTIAL AGREEMENT ON SPORT (EPAS)

A kick-off video conference on the **new EU-CoE “Child safeguarding in sport” joint project (CSiS)** took place Wednesday 10 June. Around 30 participants attended the event: representatives from all the partner countries to the project: **Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Norway and Portugal**; and experts on safe sport and “good practice owners”. The CSiS project mainly aims at guiding and accompanying the partner countries in the setting up of positions of Child Safeguarding Officers in sport.

In parallel, 20 countries have expressed interest in the **“Start to Talk”** initiative, fighting sexual violence against children in sports. There are plans to strengthen the support provided to EPAS member states in the practical implementation of Council of Europe standards in sport, as expected by the Bureau of EPAS Governing Board and supported by its member states, as shown by **Cyprus and Monaco** which have already made voluntary contributions to support the “Start to Talk” initiative.

SPORT CONVENTIONS / World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

Following virtual WADA Executive Committee meeting a number of recommendations were put forward for adoption by the WADA Foundation Board. The European position on these recommendations was agreed in the framework of intergovernmental committee – CAHAMA (Ad Hoc European Committee for the World Anti-Doping Agency. This week Ms Battaini-Dragoni, as one of five European representatives on the WADA Foundation Board, expressed her position by circulatory vote on important issues like Strategic Plan 2020-2024, changes in the nomination process to WADA governance structures and 2019 year end accounts.

What football tomorrow?

2020 is and will remain an unprecedented year for sport and football in particular. UEFA EURO 2020, a competition for which the Council of Europe had set up an ad hoc working group which met twice a year, has been postponed to 2021 and all national championships have come to a halt at mid-season. Each state must invent protocols for resuming in the best possible sanitary conditions.

The **Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Spectators Violence Convention** met by videoconference at the beginning of June and validated an international survey which was launched among all States Parties and Observers to the two Council of Europe Sports Conventions dealing with safety and security at major sporting events. The impact of this pandemic is considerable, the challenges ahead are numerous and the exchange of good practice at European level, namely in the field of sports, is more important than ever. That is now our role and priority.

EDUCATION

The CDPPE (Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice) held its second online plenary session since lockdown on 11-12 June. Discussions focused on an Education COVID response, to be further prepared for the ordinary CDPPE plenary (30 September - 2 October) by a task force.

The Bureau of the Governing Board of the European Centre for Modern Languages met online on 8-9 June to consider the challenges of delivering quality language education during and post COVID-19.

A training package for credentials evaluators on the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees was submitted and will be offered, tentatively as of September 2020.

The online meeting of the Steering Committee Education for Democracy in Moldova, was attended by the Minister of Education, Culture and Research, other high officials, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The Inception Report for the project Strengthening Democratic Citizenship Education in Albania **was well received by the donor, the** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

YOUTH

The implementing partner of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility (EYCA) joined the project Routes4U and launched a new European Youth Card Special Edition on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The card offers young people hundreds of discounts for activities on the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes in seven countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia.

Youth Centres holding or candidate for the Council of Europe's Quality Label for Youth Centres met for an online meeting on 10-11 June 2020 to exchange good youth work practices during the pandemic. Numerous measures taken have been published on the Covid-19 response section on the Youth Portal which is continuously updated and enlarged and features relevant measures taken by the youth sector, its partners and beneficiaries.

The Bureaux of the youth sector's co-managed statutory bodies met online on 4 and 5 June. As well as preparing the next meeting of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), they exchanged views with the Director General of Democracy on a future possible youth campaign, and with the Director of Democratic Participation they reviewed the current situation. The Bureaux discussed the findings of the CMJ's working group on responses to Covid-19 with the Head of the Youth Department. These findings will be supplemented with the results of a survey launched by the working group on the effects of Covid-19 on youth work and youth activities.

CULTURE, NATURE AND HERITAGE

European Landscape Convention

The Landscape Award Alliance of the Council of Europe was presented on the website of the European Landscape Convention. The Landscape Award Alliance gathers the exemplary achievements presented by the States Parties to the European Landscape Convention. They show that it is possible to promote the territorial dimension of human rights and democracy by improving the landscape features of people's surroundings.

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)

The Bern Convention engaged in discussions on its contribution to the World Forum for Democracy 2020 (which is of major interest as the theme this year is "Can Democracy Save the Environment?") and pursued consultation with DG ENV on the Pan European Action Plan for the Conservation of the Sturgeon. Follow-up was given to the advice of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas not to renew the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the Scandola Nature Reserve in France and to questions on the protection measures of wolves in Norway and Austria.

EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement (Natural and technological disasters)

EUR-OPA continued with preparations for new grant projects of its **Specialised Research Centres** that are linked to disaster risk reduction and COVID-19 response. Building resilience against natural disasters, such as droughts and desertification, is crucial to mitigate disaster risk.

EPA Cultural Routes

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes held an exceptional online Bureau meeting opened by the Director General of Democracy, to discuss the current situation and upcoming events (2 June). A Cultural Routes dialogue webinar for France and Monaco was also held (4 June), as well as a training week for networks interested in the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” certification in the framework of the 2020-2021 certification cycle (9-12 June).

EURIMAGES

Preparations also continued for the Fund’s virtual participation in events such as the Cannes Online Market, which is due to replace the physical event this year as of next week. The Eurimages Secretariat will actively participate in events online organised by the Cannes Online Market or other entities within the framework of the online market. This year, 6 films supported by Eurimages feature in the CANNES 2020 selection, announced on 3 June: “Druk” de Thomas Vinterberg, “In The Dusk” de Sharunas Bartas, “Des hommes” de Lucas Belvaux, “Passion simple” de Danielle Arbid, “February” de Kamen Kalev and “Si le vent tombe” de Nora Martirosyan.

NORTH-SOUTH CENTRE

Since 1 June the NSC’s team is back in the office on a 50% rotation basis.

On 3 June the Executive Director launched the call for nominations for the positions of Chair of the Executive Committee and Bureau members for the mandate 2020-2021. Nominations are open until next 15 June.

The NSC hosted its first pilot activity in **Hopin**: a meeting of international stakeholders active in the youth field. The meeting gathered 40 participants from Council of Europe and other organisations such as the African Union, European Commission, UN Alliance of Civilizations, Anna Lindh Foundation, League of Arab States, Union for the Mediterranean, European Youth Forum, Pan African Youth Union, UNOY Peacebuilders, and others.

The purpose was to exchange insights, perspectives and information about the impact of the COVID-19 crisis in their work to set the ground for future cooperation and a common message to preserve the centrality of youth policies and of the role of young people to build a strong multilevel global governance.

The #SolidAction campaign is moving on to its next phase that seeks a greater involvement of decision makers and will be presented to the Deputies in the GR-EXT meeting next 16 June.



Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists

Over the past two weeks, the Platform has recorded 10 new alerts, state replies, 2 updates and 2 follow-ups. In addition, the Platform's partners decided to close 2 cases on the basis of the positive developments observed.



18/06/2020

On 18 June, the **European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG)** will hold a thematic videoconference meeting on *A democratic governance response to Covid-19*, under the auspices of the Greek chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The information collected during this meeting will contribute to a publication.

22/06/2020

GRETA's ad hoc working group on trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation will hold an online meeting in the week of 22 June.

22-23/06/2020

In light of the cancellation of the Spring Session of the **Conference of INGOs**, a **short Online Session which will consist of four topical webinars is planned for 22 and 23 June 2020**. All webinars will be livestreamed online. Council of Europe Staff and Staff of Permanent Representations of the member States are invited to follow these debates.

25-26/2020

The **GREVIO will hold its 21st meeting** online on 25-26 June. Among other issues, it will discuss the draft reports on Andorra and Malta, as well as the final report on Belgium.

22-26/06/2020

The **EURIMAGES Fund is also preparing to hold its 159th meeting of the Board of Management** online, with interpretation via the KUDO software and digital voting. Recommendations made during the course of the meeting will be submitted to the Member States of the Fund by digital written procedure, in line with the legal opinion provided by the DLAPIL.

29/06/2020

Preparations for holding **GRETA's 37th plenary meeting**, to be held online in the week of 29 June, are underway. GRETA will inter alia discuss and adopt six draft reports.

30/06/2020

The **Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP)** will hold an on-line meeting on 30 June to discuss a possible contribution to the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights: a draft Manifesto on Arts, Culture, Cultural Heritage and Freedom of Expression in the Digital Era, and a concept for a Council of Europe digital #Exhibition. It will also prepare the ground for the face-to-face plenary session on 12-13 November that will include two dedicated thematic sessions on AI and on sustainable development in relation to culture, heritage and landscape policies. The agenda for the CDCPP meeting can be found [here](#).

DIVISION CENTRALE

Colleagues from the central division are gradually returning to the office. They are at your disposal for any questions relating to IT or web, human resources or finance. We invite you to respect physical distance and barrier gestures. To do so, we invite you to leave all files in the pigeonholes rather than bring them into the offices instead. They will be picked up on a regular basis. If you have any questions, please send an email or call instead of visiting the offices. If necessary, a meeting time can be arranged.



DG Democracy on FACEBOOK



DG Democracy on TWITTER

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/democracy>