

DECENTRALISED GOVERNANCE

Joint online training programme hosted by CMI and Eurac Research provides fresh insights on decentralisation and the Gagauz context

In summer 2020, in partnership with Eurac Research, the Gagauzia Dialogue project developed an innovative online capacity building programme "Decentralised Governance" to strengthen stakeholder understanding of topics related to autonomy issues.

The programme was delivered by CMI experts and senior Eurac researchers via four online sessions across July 2020, presenting both international and local experiences to provide a comparative perspective. Almost 40 participants from Comrat and Chisinau attended the sessions, including representatives of the Government of Moldova, the Moldovan Parliament, the Executive Committee of ATU Gagauzia, the Parliamentary Working Group on Gagauzia, and the Gagauz People's Assembly. These stakeholders were joined by international and local experts, and additional experts from CMI.

The first session "Decentralisation: Concepts, Dimensions, Forms" was an introduction to decentralisation, autonomy and good governance, presented from an interdisciplinary perspective. Delivered by Elisabeth Alber, Senior Researcher at Eurac Research, the session focused on the link between minority protection and good governance in decentralized governance, including terminological issues and global examples.

The second session "Decentralisation in Europe: a

comparative overview" examined the division of powers, multilevel government, and conflict regulation from the constitutional law perspective, delivered by Martina Trettel, Senior Researcher at Eurac Research.

The third session, "Gagauz-Yeri Autonomy: centre-autonomy relationships and institutional arrangements" was delivered by Zdenka Machnyikova, international expert in human rights law and protection of minorities, and Ion Beschieru, national expert on local governance and decentralisation. The training program concluded with a discussion on "Theory and Practice of Intergovernmental Relations and Conflict Regulation" with Professor Francesco Palermo, director of the Eurac Research Institute for Comparative Federalism.

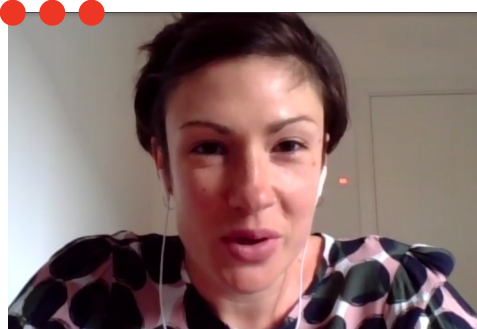
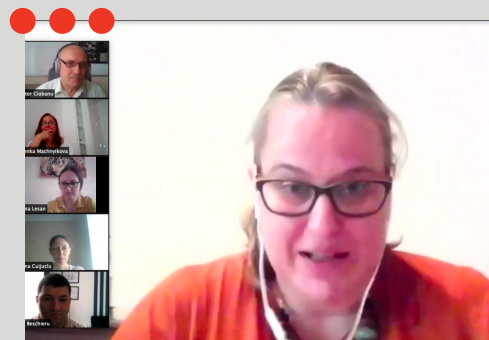
Following the conclusion of the training series, Steve Young, Manager of the CMI Office in Moldova, said "these webinars form a sound basis for informing and expanding understanding of decentralisation and the place of the autonomy in Moldova. We are committed, along with all our partners, to providing advice, guidance and technical input to better inform all, including civil society, about decentralisation and the positives and benefits that a properly functioning autonomy can bring to Moldova as a whole".

Decentralised Governance Seminars 2020

Key insights on Decentralised Governance from Eurac Research and CMI experts

Political decentralisation affects all levels of government. If practiced as an incremental and multi-directional process of capacity-building, it enables citizens' participation in politics, and it leads to an increase in good governance. Its effectiveness depends not only on the way decentralised institutions are designed and work, but also on the dynamics that govern the relations between different stakeholders horizontally – within a territorial unit and between territorial units – and vertically – across governmental levels.

Elisabeth Alber, Senior Researcher, Eurac Research

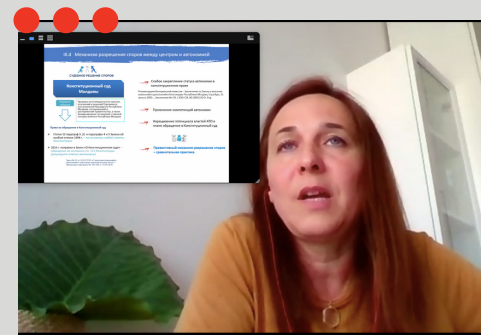


The process of decentralisation is a complex undertaking, taking on different meanings in different contexts. This is why it is important to keep in mind that there is no “one size fits all” solution. For example, there are various techniques to divide and share competences between governmental levels. Regardless of the instrument chosen, conflicts can never be totally avoided, but clear rules in intergovernmental relations can help to handle them in a transparent and fair way.

Martina Trettel, Senior Researcher, Eurac Research

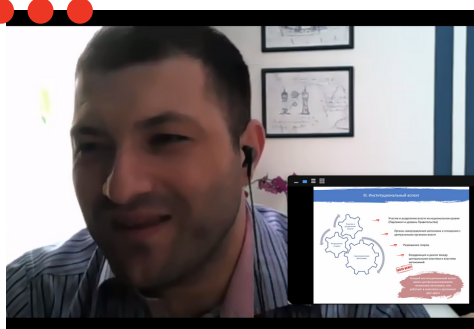
The emergence of an autonomy as a new actor in the multilevel governance of Moldova has called increased attention to the setup and design of institutional systems dedicated to the management of these relations. The political and institutional channels enabling the autonomy to participate in national policymaking and in managing governance in the region require the effective functioning of structures for centre-autonomy relations. The relatively high level of institutionalisation of inter-governmental arrangements often plays down and defuses the level of politicisation of the inter-governmental relations processes.

Zdenka Machnyikova, international expert in human rights law



Ensuring effective channels for participation, co-operation and coordination among the executive levels would greatly contribute to the sustainability of the existing Gagauz-Yeri Autonomy arrangement. Institutionalising mechanisms for addressing complex multi-layered governance, where competencies are shared, could provide an effective instrument for a functional autonomy and clarification of competencies.

Ion Beschieru, national expert on local governance and decentralisation



Decentralised Governance Seminars 2020



Francesco Palermo: Decentralisation is an instrument to improve quality of life for all



The programme on Decentralised Governance concluded on July 28 with a discussion between Steve Young, Manager of the CMI office in Moldova, and Francesco Palermo, Director of the Eurac Research Institute for Comparative Federalism, titled "Theory and Practice of Intergovernmental Relations and Conflict Regulation". Participants also had the opportunity to ask key questions from Professor Palermo.

The discussion touched on key issues at the heart of the Gagauzia Dialogue process, providing inspirational perspectives, new

knowledge and expertise to inform the next stage of the process.

Steve Young agrees with these insights. "The work of the Gagauzia Dialogue project covers [the topics discussed] in many ways. The Parliamentary Working Group is a key platform for dialogue and discussion, as well as building trust and understanding between institutions. The Policy Development Task Force addresses local needs in both Chisinau and Comrat, and the Expert Group will address capacity differences and develop a mechanism to resolve issues or problems that may arise".

Five key perspectives from Professor Francesco Palermo



Decentralisation: an instrument to improve quality of life

The first area explored in the discussion was the concept of decentralization as an instrument to improve the quality of life of all citizens, and a tool to enable areas of territorial complexity (such as in the Gagauz context) to thrive.



The balance between trust and legal specificity

Professor Palermo then examined the question of trust, and how it impacts the way competences are divided between a centre and an autonomy. He noted that when there is higher trust between parties, there is less need for legal specificity in the definition of each territory's competences, and vice versa.



The importance of well-functioning procedures

The discussion highlighted how procedures are the key to successfully devolved governance, and that well-functioning procedures require two things: both the mechanism itself, and the development of the policies that surround it to reflect the needs of the population.



Sustainable dialogue - an opportunity for all parties to be heard

Engagement, consultation and dialogue are not one-off events – they are a continual process. Professor Palermo reminded participants that an established space for all parties to raise concerns, such as a sustained dialogue platform, is necessary at all stages of a centre-autonomy relationship, irrespective of the changing political climate.



Communication, Capacity and Commitment

Professor Palermo concluded by underlining the importance of the 'Three Cs' to a dialogue process: Communication (maintaining clear flows of information); Capacity (providing the knowledge and tools to enable stakeholders to do the work); and Commitment (of all stakeholders in the process).

Decentralised Governance Seminars 2020



Participants inspired to sustain dialogue, build trust, and continue path to permanent mechanisms for good governance

"The session with Prof. Francesco Palermo was the most valuable: consultative mechanisms, the importance of the experts' role, and their participation in settling legal disputes – all these are extremely interesting to learn especially from the practical perspective. It triggers the thinking regarding our local context and the need to figure out our own way to establish the permanent consultative mechanisms between Comrat and Chisinau".

Alexandr Tarnavschii,
Deputy Chairperson/Speaker of the Gagauzia People's Assembly and PWG Member

"[This training has made clear that]...we need a continuous dialogue, which is meaningless without mutual respect. It is necessary to maintain this dialogue in different ways (formal-informal), but there is also a need for an institutionalized mechanism, which enjoys respect in society. There is no point in continuing with a "zero sum" scenario- only the paths and the mechanisms that lead you to a "win-win" solution are worth the effort".

Oazu Nantoi, MP and PWG Member

"The CMI team found a very efficient way to continue communications between legislators from Chisinau and Comrat during the pandemic. The experts made a thorough analysis of the peculiarities of our centre-autonomy relations, addressed questions from members of the Parliamentary Working Group, and facilitated a useful discussion. In my opinion, this allows us to say that there is more understanding of how to move forward and where to direct efforts for both sides".

Ecaterina Jecova, Member of the Gagauzia People's Assembly and PWG Member

"If CMI was not in Moldova, we would have had to bring it! We learned a lot of information relevant to the work of an MP, and ... the knowledge is based on the experience and practice of many generations of diplomats, politicians ... [This training] fits perfectly with the needs of politicians to gain knowledge and experience in a very short time, in our case, for settling possible conflicts between the central power and the autonomy".

Vladimir Bolea, MP and PWG Member

"CMI offered a consistently built cycle of seminars, attracting highly professional international and national experts, and organised accessible (verbal and visual) support. I learned a lot, especially in terms of the international experience regarding autonomy governance, which was followed by an interesting analysis on centre-autonomy relations in the case of Moldova and Gagauzia, and an interactive and practical discussion with Francesco Palermo. I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to participate in these seminars, and to emphasize the coherence and professionalism of the CMI project team! I am confident in the future productive and useful cooperation for Gagauzia!"

Tatiana Spatarenco, Deputy Head of the Department for Economic Development and Tourism, ATU Gagauzia

Gagauzia Dialogue



"Supporting Inclusive Dialogue and Strengthening Capacities for a Better Functioning Gagauz Autonomy in Moldova" or 'Gagauzia Dialogue' is a three-year project bringing together representatives of the government, legislators, experts and other interested parties from Chisinau, Comrat and across Moldova to find joint solutions to common issues related to the Gagauzia autonomy.

The project runs from 2019-2021, facilitated by CMI and funded by Sweden.

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