

Strasbourg, 30 October 2024

CDDEM(2024)24

**STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY  
(CDDEM)**

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**2nd plenary meeting**

**(29 – 30 October 2024)**

**ABRIDGED MEETING REPORT**

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## Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM) held its 2nd meeting in Strasbourg on 29-30 October 2024 with Thomas Zandstra (Netherlands) in the Chair. Vice-Chair Vebjørn Heines (Norway) chaired the afternoon session of the meeting on 30 October. Matjaž Gruden, Director for Democracy, facilitated the meeting with the agreement of the Committee until the election of Mr Zandstra.

The agenda of the meeting is contained in the Appendix. The full report of the meeting including the list of participants is available on the CDDEM's website.

Gender distribution: 83 participants, 46 men (55%) and 37 women (45%)

## List of items for decision by the Committee of Ministers

The CDDEM invites the Committee of Ministers to:

- take note of the abridged report of the 2nd plenary meeting of the Steering Committee on Democracy (29-30 October 2024);
- take note of the Guidance Note on civil society participation in the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe adopted by the CDDEM on 30 October 2024.

## List of items for information of the Committee of Ministers

### Regarding elections

The CDDEM

#### elects

- **Thomas Zandstra** (Netherlands) as **Chair of the CDDEM** for the term of office of one year
- **Vebjørn Heines** (Norway) as **Vice-Chair of the CDDEM** for the term of office of one year

#### five members of the CDDEM Bureau

- four positions for a term of office of two years (October 2024 – October 2026)
  - **Lilya Afrikyan** (Armenia)
  - **Peter Andre** (Austria)
  - **Katrin Kivi** (Estonia)
  - **Pavel Mička** (Czechia)
- one position for a term of office of one year (October 2024 – October 2025)
  - **Silvia Negro Alousque** (Spain)

#### appoints member States' representatives to the two working groups of the CDDEM

for the seven positions in the Working Group on Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavík Principles of Democracy (GT-P), for the term corresponding to the GT-P mandate (until December 2025):

- **Georgios Chrysafis** (Greece)
- **Edwin Lefebvre** (Belgium)
- **Hester Mennes** (Netherlands)
- **Anne-Karin Ødegard** (Norway)
- **Ignasio Gil Osés** (Spain)
- **Paulius Skardzius** (Lithuania)
- **Doris Wagner** (Austria)

- for the seven positions in the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS), for the term corresponding to the GT-CS mandate (until December 2025):
  - **Peter Andre** (Austria)
  - **Georgios Chrysafis** (Greece)
  - **Anu Juvonen** (Finland)
  - **Edwin Lefebre** (Belgium)
  - **Hester Mennes** (Netherlands)
  - **Tânia Mourato** (Portugal)
  - **Alfonso Carlos Garcia Romero** (Spain)

**appointed a CDDEM representative to the Accreditation Platform of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE):**

- **Georgios Chrysafis** (Greece)

### **Regarding standard-setting activities**

The CDDEM

- took note of the update provided by the Secretariat on the work carried out by the Working Group on Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavík Principles of Democracy (GT-P) regarding the draft Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles and other relevant Council of Europe standards to promote, protect and strengthen democracy throughout the member States; examined the text of the draft Parameters as revised following the comments made by members of the GT-P at the 1st meeting of the working group, and provided guidance for the further development of the text; exchanged views with Marin Mrčela, President of GRECO, on the work of GRECO and the importance of the fight against corruption as a cornerstone of the rule of law and a key component of democracy; took note of the report of the first meeting of the GT-P (23 September 2024);
- took note of the update provided by the Secretariat on the work carried out by the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS); reviewed the draft Guidance Note on civil society participation in the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe, discussed delegations' amendment proposals, finalised the text and adopted the document; examined the draft Feasibility Study on updating Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe as revised following the comments made by members at the 2nd meeting of the GT-CS on 2 October 2024, welcomed the presentation of the potential outline of the future recommendation on the legal status of civil society organisations in Europe provided by Jeremy McBride, GT-CS expert consultant, and decided to provide further comments by 20 November 2024 and approve the Feasibility Study in written procedure; examined and approved the CDDEM contribution to the Report of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) on the review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe, consisting of the compilation of member states' replies, a summary of current work on strengthening civil society engagement in the Council of Europe and a summary overview of the opinions of the CINGO Expert Council on NGO Law for the period 2019-2024; instructed the Secretariat to represent the CDDEM at the CDDH plenary meeting on 25-29 November 2024; took note of the reports of the first and second meetings of the GT-CS (8-9 July 2024 and 2 October 2024).

### **In addition, the CDDEM**

- took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on developments that occurred since the 1st plenary meeting (13-14 May 2024) and their possible implications for CDDEM's work, in particular: the election of the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe Alain Berset (Switzerland) and his priorities following the Reykjavík Summit (2023), amongst which to deliver on the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy and introduce a Council of Europe action plan for democracy; the work of the Register of Damage for Ukraine which is to ensure accountability for the crimes committed by the Russian Federation in its war of aggression against Ukraine; the adoption of the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225) on 5 September 2024; and the ongoing work to integrate a youth perspective in the Organisation's intergovernmental and other deliberations and strengthen youth participation in decision making;
- welcomed new members from Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Poland and Slovakia who joined the Committee since its 1st plenary meeting on 13-14 May 2024;
- finalised the comments to the PACE Recommendation 2281 (2024) – “Reparation and reconciliation processes to overcome past conflicts and build a common peaceful future – the question of just and equal redress”, based on amendment proposals received from the delegations of Belgium, Germany and Türkiye, and agreed to transmit the comments to the Committee of Ministers;
- examined four applications for observer status and took note of their representatives' presentations; decided to grant the status of observer to the Democracy and Culture Foundation and to take a decision on the applications lodged by the European Center for Human Rights, the European Council of Spatial Planners and the CURE Campaign in written procedure. In the absence of any objections by 20 November 2024, the organisations will be deemed to have been granted the status of observer;
- took note of the information provided by the rapporteur on gender equality, Edwin Lefebre, on the inclusion of a gender perspective in the standard-setting documents being prepared by the Committee;
- exchanged views with Michael O' Flaherty, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, on the work of the Commissioner and some topics of concern from the human rights and democracy perspective such as the increasing pressure on civil society and civic space, the erosion of the rule of law, and a lack of education on democracy, but also on how member states can better support the Commissioner's work;
- exchanged views with Mathieu Mori, Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, on the work of the Congress related to democracy and governance and especially the current activities and initiatives of the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance;
- took note of the information provided by Niall Sheerin, Deputy Head of the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance, on the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) that is awarded to municipalities which have achieved a high level of good governance;
- took note of the information provided by Cesare Colombo, Co-Secretary of the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, on the current reports in preparation by the committee on the role of political parties in democracy, the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, violence and hate speech against politicians and elections in times of crises;
- took note of the information provided by Giulia Lucchese, Secretary to MSI-AI, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI, on the adoption of Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), its applicability to civil society, key points and the steps foreseen for its implementation;

- took note of the information provided by Marie-Hélène Boulanger, Deputy Director and Head of Unit in charge of Democracy, Citizenship and Free Movement, DG JUST, European Commission, on the recent European Union developments related to safeguarding democracy, including the Commission's recommendation on inclusive and resilient electoral processes in the Union, the Directive and Recommendation on SLAPPs and a Proposal for a Directive on Transparency of Interest Representation on behalf of Third Countries, as well as on a new initiative proposed by the European Commission, the "European Democracy Shield";
- took note of the information provided by the Secretariat about the programme of the World Forum for Democracy 2024, discussed possible themes for the Forum in 2025 and provided input on which ones might be appropriate for the Forum;
- took note of information presented by the CDDEM members from Armenia, Belgium, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Ukraine about relevant legislative and policy developments and initiatives in their states;
- took note of the members' participation in events of relevance to the CDDEM, including the CDDH Conference on the Protection and Promotion of Civil Society Space in Europe held at the opening of its 100th meeting (Helsinki, 25 June 2024) and the Congress conference on "Multilevel Governance for Ensuring Democracy and Strengthening Resilience at all Levels of Governance" (Vilnius, 25 September 2024). Maltese member Robert Tabone announced a conference on multilevel governance that will take place in Malta on 13 June 2025;
- agreed that the CDDEM Bureau would examine the possibilities for the CDDEM to participate in various initiatives aiming to promote and strengthen democracy, such as the Summit for Democracy and the Open Government Partnership;
- discussed and approved the calendar of meetings for 2025 and agreed to hold its 3rd and 4th plenary meetings in a hybrid format, in Strasbourg and online, on 12-13 June<sup>1</sup> and 27-28 November 2025 respectively;
- adopted the abridged report of the 2nd plenary meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> The committee will review the scheduling of the next meeting in light of its overlap with the conference on multilevel governance organised by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

## ANNOTATED AGENDA

Tuesday, 29 October 2024
9.30 – 11.00
<p><b>1. Opening of the meeting</b></p> <p><i>Opening remarks by <b>Matjaž Gruden</b>, Director for Democracy<sup>2</sup>, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity of the Council of Europe</i></p>
<p><b>2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business</b></p> <p>Working document: <a href="#">Draft annotated agenda [CDDEM(2024)OJ2 rev.]</a></p> <p><i>The CDDEM is invited to review and adopt the draft annotated agenda.</i></p>
<p><b>3. Statement of the Secretariat</b></p> <p>Reference documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">CDDEM Terms of Reference 2024-2027</a></li> </ul> <p><i>The CDDEM is invited to take note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the election rules and procedure and the developments that have occurred since the 1st plenary meeting (13-14 May 2024) and their possible implications for the committee's activities.</i></p>
<p><b>4. Tour de table</b></p> <p>Tour de table: interventions by newly designated members of the CDDEM</p> <p>Reference document: <a href="#">Members of the CDDEM</a></p> <p><i>Since the 1st plenary meeting (13-14 May 2024), new members joined the Committee (Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Poland, San Marino, Slovakia). After welcoming them, the acting Chair will invite newly designated members to introduce themselves.</i></p>
<p><b>5. Standard setting: Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the <a href="#">Reykjavik Principles for Democracy</a></b></p> <p>5.1. Exchange of views with <b>Marin Mrčela</b>, President of GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) (online)</p> <p>5.2. Examination of the first draft of the Parameters</p> <p>Working documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Draft Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy [CDDEM(2024)10]</a></li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Mr Gruden will facilitate the first part of the CDDEM Plenary meeting until the election of the Steering Committee's Chair.

- Report of the 1st meeting of the Working Group on the parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy [GT-P(2024)2]

*The CDDEM is invited to:*

- hold an exchange of views with Marin Mrčela on the work of GRECO and the importance of the fight against corruption as a cornerstone of the rule of law and a key component of democracy;
- take note of the update provided by the Secretariat on the discussion at the 1st meeting of the GT-P and the state of play of the Draft Parameters;
- carry out an examination on the text of the Draft Parameters as revised following the comments made by members at the 1st meeting of the GT-P on 23 September and to provide guidance for the further development of the text.

**11.30 – 13.00**

### **Continuation of item 5**

#### **6. Information from the gender equality rapporteur (GER)**

Working document: Information from the gender equality rapporteur (GER) Edwin Lefebre [CDDEM(2024)11]

*The CDDEM is invited to take note of the report prepared by the Gender Equality Rapporteur Edwin Lefebre and discuss possible ways of integrating mainstreamed perspectives (gender equality, youth, the rights of the child, rights of persons with disabilities, Roma and Travellers issues) into the work of the committee.*

#### **7. World Forum for Democracy – synergies and opportunities for introducing its conclusions into the CDDEM work**

Reference document: World Forum for Democracy 2025 – Proposed themes

*The CDDEM is invited to discuss the potential themes for the next edition of the World Forum for Democracy and provide input on which theme might be appropriate for the Forum.*

**14.30 – 16.15**

#### **8. Elections of CDDEM members for the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the CDDEM Bureau and elections of members of CDDEM working groups**

Information document: Information note “Election of members of the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM) for the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, member of the Bureau of the CDDEM and election of members of CDDEM working groups” [CDDEM(2024)12] + [CDDEM(2024)12 Addendum]

*The CDDEM is invited to:*

- elect, from among its members, the Chair, Vice-Chair and five members of the Bureau. CDDEM members who wish to submit candidatures for these positions are invited to inform the Secretariat by 23 October 2024.
- elect seven experts for the Working Group on Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy (GT-P) and seven experts for the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS). CDDEM members who wish to submit candidatures (their own or other experts) for members of the working groups are invited to inform the Secretariat by 23 October 2024.

## 9. Supporting member states to strengthen and maintain good democratic governance at all levels

- 9.1. Exchange of views with **Mathieu Mori**, Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
- 9.2. Appointment of a CDDEM member to the [European Label of Governance Excellence \(ELoGE\) Accreditation Platform](#)

### Reference documents:

- [European Label of Governance Excellence Benchmarking – Good Governance Benchmark](#)

### The CDDEM is invited to:

- *hold an exchange of views with Mathieu Mori on the work of the Congress related to democracy and governance and especially the current activities and initiatives of the Centre of expertise for multilevel governance;*
- *take note of the information on the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) that is awarded to municipalities which have achieved a high level of good governance measured against a Council of Europe benchmark and appoint a CDDEM member to the Accreditation Platform of ELoGE. CDDEM members who wish to express their interest for this position are kindly asked to inform the Secretariat by 28 October 2024.*

**16.30 – 17.30**

## 10. CDDEM Comments to PACE Recommendation 2281 (2024) – “Reparation and reconciliation processes to overcome past conflicts and build a common peaceful future – the question of just and equal redress”

### Reference and working documents:

- [PACE Recommendation 2281 \(2024\) – “Reparation and reconciliation processes to overcome past conflicts and build a common peaceful future – the question of just and equal redress”](#)
- [CDDEM Draft comments to Recommendation 2281 \(2024\) \[CDDEM\(2024\)13\]](#)

*The CDDEM is invited to examine the draft comments and amendments proposed by CDDEM members, to finalise the text and to approve the comments to be submitted to the Committee of Ministers.*

## 11. Civil society: Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs)

- 11.1. Exchange of views with **Giulia Lucchese**, Secretary to MSI-AI, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI

### Reference documents:

- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation \(SLAPPs\)](#)
- [EU: Directive \(EU\) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings \(‘Strategic lawsuits against public participation’\)](#)
- [EU: Commission Recommendation \(EU\) 2022/758 of 27 April 2022 on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings](#)

*The CDDEM is invited to take note of the information on the adoption of Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)2 and its applicability to civil society and to exchange views with Giulia Lucchese on the focuses of the recommendation and the steps foreseen for its implementation.*

**Wednesday, 30 October 2024**

**9.30 – 11.00**

**Standard setting on civil society and citizen participation**

**12. Guidance Note on civil society participation in the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe**

Working documents:

- Revised Draft Guidance Note on civil society participation in the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe [CDDEM(2024)14]
- Reports of the 1st and 2nd meeting of the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS) [GT-CS(2024)5 + GT-CS(2024)8]

*The CDDEM is invited to:*

- *take note of the update provided by the Secretariat on the discussion at the 1st and 2nd meetings of the GT-CS and the state of play of the Draft Guidance Note;*
- *carry out an in-depth examination of the draft Guidelines as revised on the basis of the comments made by the members of the GT-CS, the CDDEM, the Conference of INGOs and the relevant intergovernmental bodies of the Council of Europe, to finalise the text and to adopt the document.*

**11.30 – 13.00**

**13. Update of Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe**

Reference and working documents:

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe
- Draft Feasibility Study on updating Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 [CDDEM(2024)15]
- Reports of the 1st and 2nd meeting of the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS) [GT-CS(2024)5 + GT-CS(2024)8]

*The CDDEM is invited to:*

- *take note of the update provided by the Secretariat on the discussion at the 1st and 2nd meetings of the GT-CS and the key points and findings of the draft Feasibility Study;*
- *carry out an examination of the draft Feasibility Study on updating Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 as revised following the comments made by members at the 2nd meeting of the GT-CS on 2 October 2024 and to provide guidance for the elaboration of the draft text of updated recommendation on the legal status of NGOs/CSOs in Europe.*
- *The CDDEM will benefit from the expertise of Mr Jeremy McBride, the GT-CS consultant, who will be present for the discussion on this agenda item.*

**14. CDDEM contribution to the Steering Committee for Human Rights' (CDDH) Implementation Review Report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe**

Reference and working documents:

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe
- Compilation of member states' replies to the questionnaire on the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 [CDDEM(2024)16]
- Summary Overview of the Opinions of the NGO Law Expert Council of the Council of Europe for the period 2019-2024 [CDDEM(2024)17]
- Secretariat Summary of current work on strengthening civil society engagement in the Council of Europe [CDDEM(2024)18]

*The CDDEM is invited to approve the contribution made to the CDDH report on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 and appoint a member to represent the committee at the CDDH plenary meeting on 26-29 November 2024.*

**15. Application for observer status**

Working documents:

- Application for observer status and presentation of the Democracy and Culture Foundation [CDDEM(2024)19]
- Application for observer status of the European Center for Human Rights [CDDEM(2024)21]
- Application for observer status of the European Council of Spatial Planners [CDDEM(2024)22]
- Application for observer status of CURE [CDDEM(2024)23]

*The CDDEM is invited to examine the application for observer status and decide on granting the status on the basis of a unanimous decision. In accordance with Article 8a of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods, in the event that unanimity is not reached, the matter may be referred to the Committee of Ministers at the request of two-thirds of the members of the committee concerned.*

**14.30 – 16.00**

**16. Exchange of views with Michael O' Flaherty, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe**

*The CDDEM is invited to hold an exchange of views with Michael O' Flaherty on the work of the Commissioner related to the fields of activity of the CDDEM and in particular on "soft mechanisms" in international law and their contribution to the development of human rights and democracy principles, as well as on the strategies that can help reverse the trend of the shrinking civic space.*

**17. Update on the European Union developments and initiatives related to safeguarding democracy**

- 17.1. Information by **Marie-Hélène Boulanger**, Deputy Director and Head of Unit in charge of Democracy, Citizenship and Free Movement, DG JUST, European Commissions

*The CDDEM is invited to take note of the information on the European Union developments and initiatives related to safeguarding democracy and especially on the implementation of the Defence of Democracy Package and the new initiative proposed by the European Commission, the "European Democracy Shield" that is to strengthen the EU's capacities for countering disinformation and building resilience against information manipulation.*

**18. Update on the work of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy**

18.1. Information by **Cesare Colombo**, Co-Secretary of Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

*The CDDEM is invited to take note of the information on the current work and initiatives of the PACE Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy.*

**16.15 – 17.30**

**19. Recent developments in the areas of activity of the CDDEM**

*CDDEM members and participants are invited to present relevant developments and initiatives in member states and/or organisations in the areas of democracy, good democratic governance, elections, safe and enabling civic space and other areas of activity of the CDDEM.*

**20. Participation in events of relevance to the CDDEM**

*CDDEM members and participants are invited to report on conferences, meetings and other events they have attended in CDDEM's areas of activity.*

**21. CDDEM Calendar of Meetings for 2025**

*The CDDEM is invited to discuss and approve the calendar of its meetings for 2025. [CDDEM(2024)20]*

**22. Any other business**

*CDDEM delegations are invited to raise, prior or at the early beginning of the meeting, any other issues and present them.*

**23. Adoption of the abridged meeting report**

*CDDEM is invited to adopt the abridged report of its 2nd plenary meeting [CDDEM(2024)24]*

**GENERAL REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

Terms of reference	<i>CDDEM Terms of Reference 2024-2027</i>
CM/Res(2021)3	<i>Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods</i>