

Strasbourg, 22 May 2024

CDDEM(2024)8

**STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY
(CDDEM)**

**ABRIDGED MEETING REPORT OF THE 1st MEETING
(Strasbourg, 13-14 May 2024)**

Adopted in written procedure on 21 May 2024

Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Steering Committee on Democracy held its 1st meeting in Strasbourg on 13-14 May 2024 with Mr Matjaž Gruden, Director for Democracy, as Chair with the agreement of the committee pending the election of the CDDEM Chair at the next meeting.

The agenda of the meeting is contained in Appendix 1. The full report of the meeting including the list of participants is available on the CDDEM's website.

List of items for decision by the Committee of Ministers

Take note of the abridged report of the 1st plenary meeting of the Steering Committee on Democracy (13-14 May 2024).

List of items for information of the Committee of Ministers

The CDDEM

- welcomed the address by Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and intervention by Mr Domenik Wanger, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the Council of Europe and President of the Ministers' Deputies;
- took note of the information provided by the Chair and the Secretary of the CDDEM on the committee's Terms of Reference, the rules of procedure and working methods of intergovernmental committees as set out in Resolution [CM/Res\(2021\)3](#)¹, and Council of Europe bodies and sectors dealing with various dimensions of democracy;
- held a tour de table where the CDDEM members introduced themselves, presented their governments' priorities and indicated their expectations for the work of the committee;

Regarding the implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy:

- took note of the key findings and concerns outlined in the Annual report of the Secretary General on State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law 2023: An Invitation to Recommit to the Values and Standards of the Council of Europe presented by the Chair;
- exchanged views with Mr Erik Wennerström, Judge of the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Sweden, and Mr Roberto Stefan Foa, Co-Director of the Cambridge Centre for the Future of Democracy, on the challenges for democracy, evaluations of democratic performance and the contribution of the European Court of Human Rights to democracy in Europe through the protection of human rights;
- welcomed information from Ms Marja Ruotanen, Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity, on the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy and the CDDEM task of developing parameters to facilitate their application and implementation, to be completed by 31 December 2025;
- exchanged views with Ms Claire Bazy Malaurie, President of the Venice Commission², and Mr George Papandreou, General rapporteur for Democracy at the Parliamentary Assembly, regarding the work and activities of relevant Council of Europe bodies and existing standards to consider in the elaboration of these parameters for the implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy;

¹ Committee of Ministers' Resolution [CM/Res\(2021\)3](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

² European Commission for Democracy through Law.

- held a discussion in groups on the objectives, priorities and format of the parameters, on the basis of the background note³ prepared by the Secretariat and with expert input from Secretariat members of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Venice Commission, Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC), Youth Policy Division, Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI);
- welcomed information from Ms 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 initiatives and instruments on democracy, and in particular the Defence of Democracy package which includes a Proposal for a Directive on transparency of interest representation carried out on behalf of third countries⁴;

Regarding civil society engagement in public life and Council of Europe activities:

- discussed the objectives, priorities and timeline (by 10 November 2024) for the task of providing guidance to enhance civil society participation in Council of Europe's work, including as regards a Council of Europe Code of Conduct on civil society engagement, based on the background note⁵ prepared by the Secretariat;
- discussed the objectives, priorities and timeline (by 31 December 2025) for the task of updating Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)14](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe, based on the background note⁶ prepared by Mr Jeremy McBride, President of the CINGO⁷ Expert Council on NGO Law, and exchanged views with Mr McBride;
- discussed the task of contributing to 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, which was assigned to the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)⁸, and exchanged views with Ms Krista Oinonen, Chair of the CDDH;
- welcomed the presentation by Ms Yasemin Cag, Head of Section at the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, on recent European Court of Human Rights case law on freedom of assembly and association, as well as measures taken by member states to execute the Court's judgments;
- welcomed information about the participation of civil society in the Council of Europe work from Ms Margo Vorykhava, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), Ms Sofia Calabrese, Digital Policy Manager at European Partnership for Democracy, CINGO participant in the CDDEM, and Mr Danijel Kalezić, Executive Co-Director of the ERA-LGBTI Equal Rights Association;

Regarding innovative technologies:

- discussed the task of preparing a study on advantages and risks of the use of artificial intelligence in public debate relating to democratic processes and on artificial intelligence literacy for democratic life and exchanged views with Mr Mario Hernández Ramos, Professor of Constitutional Law and Head of Spanish delegation and Bureau member of the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI);

³ Background Note on the implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy (CDDEM(2024)1).

⁴ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing harmonised requirements in the internal market on transparency of interest representation carried out on behalf of third countries and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937 (COM/2023/637 final).

⁵ Towards a Guidance Note on civil society participation in Council Of Europe Work (CDDEM(2024)4).

⁶ Some issues for consideration when updating Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe (CDDEM(2024)2).

⁷ [Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations](#) (INGOs) of the Council of Europe.

⁸ In terms of the timeline for the CDDEM contribution, a draft report will be prepared following the CDDH Conference on the Protection and the Promotion of Civil Society Space in Europe which is taking place in Helsinki, Finland, on 25 June 2024. The CDDEM is to provide a contribution to the draft report, to be adopted at the CDDH 101st plenary meeting in November 2024.

Regarding liaising with relevant Council of Europe structures and activities:

- welcomed information about the World Forum for Democracy and exchanged views with Ms Claude Bernard, Unit for Democratic innovation, World Forum for Democracy and Schools of Political Studies, on opportunities to build synergies between the CDDEM and the World Forum for Democracy as a forward-looking global venue where the committee can exchange with a diverse range of experts, solicit contributions from interested stakeholders and promote its work;

Regarding the Committee of Ministers' follow-up to the adopted texts of the 46th Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (26-28 March 2024):

- agreed to provide comments to the Congress Recommendation 502 (2024) "Local and regional authorities as actors and guarantors of the rule of law" by 10 June 2024, based on a text prepared by the Secretariat by 22 May 2024, for transmission to the Committee of Ministers.

Regarding working methods:

- adopted the Terms of Reference for the two working groups for the biennium 2024-2025, which will prepare, respectively, the 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 (GT-P)⁹ and the deliverables relating to civil society participation (GT-CS)¹⁰;
- appointed Mr Edwin Lefebvre from Belgium as Gender Equality Rapporteur and Mr Thomas Zandstra from the Netherlands as Youth Rapporteur, both with a two-year term of office;
- agreed to elect at its next meeting the Chair, Vice-Chair, Bureau members and seven members of each working group whose travel and subsistence expenses would be borne by the Council of Europe;
- adopted the criteria and procedure for granting the status of observer¹¹ to concerned civil society organisations, associations of public institutions, authorities and communities, representatives of business, as well as technical, professional and academic communities;
- agreed that the Secretariat, with the assistance of an expert consultant, would prepare an outline and draft Study on advantages and risks of the use of artificial intelligence in public debate relating to democratic processes and on artificial intelligence literacy for democratic life, with the CDDEM providing guidance for the study's development;
- agreed to hold its 2nd plenary meeting in Strasbourg on 29-30 October 2024;
- adopted the abridged report of the 1st plenary meeting in written procedure.

Resource implications

The financing of the activities described in this report is assured.

⁹ CDDEM(2024)6E-Terms of Reference_GT-P

¹⁰ CDDEM(2024)7E-Terms of Reference_GT-CS

¹¹ CDDEM(2024)5E-Observer criteria



Strasbourg, 26 March 2024

CDDEM(2024)OJ1

STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY (CDDEM)

**1st Plenary meeting
Strasbourg, Palais de l'Europe, room 11**

**13 May 2024, 9.30-13.00 / 14.30-17.30 (CET)
14 May 2024, 9.30-13.00 / 14.30-17.30 (CET)**

REVISED AGENDA

- 1. Opening of the meeting by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe**
- 2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business**
- 3. Information by the Secretariat: the role of the CDDEM and its place in the Council of Europe**
 - 3.1. Introduction of Council of Europe's intergovernmental work
 - 3.2. CDDEM [Terms of reference](#) and Rules of Procedure
 - 3.3. Tour de table of the CDDEM members
- 4. Challenges for democracy in Europe**
 - 4.1. Findings from reports of the Secretary General on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law
 - 4.2. Presentation of contemporary challenges facing European democracies and the relevant case-law of the [European Court of Human Rights](#)
- 5. Reykjavik Principles for Democracy and the parameters to facilitate their application and implementation**
 - 5.1. Introduction of the aims pursued by the operationalisation of the [Reykjavik Principles for Democracy](#)
 - 5.2. Relevant work of the [European Commission for Democracy through Law](#) (Venice Commission)
 - 5.3. Relevant work of the [Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe](#)
 - 5.4. Brainstorming on the objectives and format of the parameters and related workplan

6. Freedom of association, shrinking civic space and meaningful participation in public life

- 6.1. 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
- 6.2. Relevant work of the following entities and organisations:
 - [Department for the Execution of Judgments](#) of the European Court of Human Rights
 - [CINGO Expert Council on NGO Law](#)
 - [Advisory Council on Youth](#)

7. Enhancing civil society participation in the work of the Council of Europe

- 7.1. Current practice of civil society engagement in the Council of Europe
- 7.2. Draft guidance on enhancing civil society participation in Council of Europe work

8. The role of artificial intelligence in public debate relating to democratic processes

- 8.1. Study on the use of AI in public debate

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

10. Working Methods of the CDDEM

- 10.1. Establishment of working groups:
 - on 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
 - on civil society participation
- 10.2. Planning of [elections](#) of CDDEM Chair, Vice-Chair and Bureau
- 10.3. Appointment of CDDEM Rapporteurs on mainstreamed perspectives
- 10.4. Participation of [observer organisations](#) and criteria for observer status

11. Date of the next meeting

12. Any other business

13. Adoption of the abridged meeting report