

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 27 May 2025

CDDEM(2025)15

**STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY
(CDDEM)**

3rd plenary meeting

(26-27 May 2025)

ABRIDGED MEETING REPORT

Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM) held its 3rd meeting in Strasbourg on 26-27 May 2025, with Vice-Chair Vebjørn Heines (Norway) chairing the session in the absence of the Chair.

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: 100 participants, 60 men (60%) and 40 women (40%)

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 3rd plenary meeting of the Steering Committee on Democracy (26-27 May 2025);
- decide, on the basis of Paragraph 8.a of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods on admitting European Center for Human Rights, the European Council of Spatial Planners, CURE Campaign, and Pax Romana as observers to the Steering Committee on Democracy.

List of items for information of the Committee of Ministers

The CDDEM

Regarding standard-setting activities:

- took note of the update on the work carried out by the Working Group on Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavík Principles of Democracy (GT-P) on **draft Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy** and other relevant Council of Europe standards provided by Edwin Lefebvre, Chair of GT-P, independent experts Seema Shah and Richard Youngs and the Secretariat; examined the text of the draft Parameters as revised following the comments made by GT-P members and relevant Council of Europe's bodies and sectors, expressed support for the structure and the overarching substance taken by the document, while suggesting revisions to particular provisions, and provided guidance for the further development of the document. The Committee provisionally agreed to submit the draft Parameters for public consultation during the summer, following a further revision of the text based on the comments to be received in writing by 20 June. The text will be revised by 1 July, after which members will have until 11 July to approve it via silent procedure. The Committee also discussed the preliminary idea for a model assessment framework for the application of the Parameters and took note of the report of the 2nd and 3rd meetings of the GT-P (9-10 December 2024 and 6-7 March 2025).
- took note of the update on the work carried out by the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS) on **updated Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the legal status of civil society organisations in Europe** provided by Georgios Chrysafis, Chair of GT-CS, expert consultant Jeremy McBride and the Secretariat; examined the revised draft Recommendation and its explanatory memorandum, expressed support for the overall framework and directions of the document, and provisionally agreed to submit the draft Recommendation for public consultation during the summer, following a further revision of the text based on the comments to be received in writing by 20 June. The text will be revised by 1 July, after which members will have until 11 July to approve it via silent procedure. The Committee also took note of the reports of the 3rd meeting of the GT-CS (17 and 18 February 2025).

- held a preliminary discussion, with the participation of expert consultant Anna Lavizzari, on the development of the **Guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls, young persons, and vulnerable groups** based on questions circulated by the Secretariat; instructed the GT-P to continue the work by developing the background elements for the guidelines, their scope and main orientations, including the target groups to be included therein.
- held a preliminary discussion on the added value and potential focuses of the **future Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on multi-level governance**, based on a questionnaire circulated by the Secretariat, and in this context held an exchange of views with Mojca Ramšak Pešec, State Secretary at the Ministry of Public Administration of Slovenia, and Gillian Dorner, Deputy Director in the Public Governance Directorate of the OECD.

In addition:

- elected Niklas Wilhelmsson (Finland) as Bureau member due to a mid-term vacancy (May 2025–October 2025);
- welcomed new CDDEM members from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, France, United Kingdom, Spain and Türkiye;
- took note on the introductory remarks by Ambassador Cairtriona Doyle, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe and Chair of the Group of Rapporteurs on Democracy (GR-DEM), on the conclusions of the session of the Committee of Ministers' meeting in Luxembourg on 13-14 May 2025, a visit of the GR-DEM delegation to Ukraine on 21-22 May 2025 and the benefits of the Council of Europe's work on the ground;
- took note of the information provided by the Vice-Chair on the 3rd Meeting of the Secretary General with Presidents of the Intergovernmental Committees of the Council of Europe;
- in view of the postponement of the exchange of views with the Secretary General, discussed the importance of synergies and the contribution of the CDDEM to the Secretary General's initiative for a New Democratic Pact for Europe, expressed strong support for the Pact and willingness to support its implementation, including at a national level;
- reviewed the outline of the Study on advantages and risks of the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in public debate relating to democratic processes and on AI literacy for democratic life, with the participation of expert consultant Natali Helberger; discussed the main orientations and issues to be covered in the study and instructed the Secretariat to work with the expert consultant and present a draft for adoption at the 4th plenary meeting;
- took note of the revised proposal for the adjustment of its deliverables for the biennium 2026-2027 in the context of the mid-term review of intergovernmental committees' quadrennial terms of reference and discussed the future work of the Committee;
- examined four applications for observer status and took note of the presentations made by the applicants' representatives. In view of the lack of unanimity and following a proposal by the Vice-Chair supported by several delegates, the Committee decided by a two-thirds majority to refer the decision about granting observer status to the European Center for Human Rights (35 votes in favour out of 37), the European Council of Spatial Planners (35 votes in favour out of 37), the CURE Campaign (34 votes in favour out of 37) and Pax Romana (34 votes in favour out of 37) to the Committee of Ministers;

- held an exchange of views with Claudia Luciani, Director of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, on the work of the Congress related to democracy and good governance, the opportunities to engage with the work of the CDDEM and especially the future Recommendation on multilevel governance and the Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, and the Congress' contribution to the New Democratic Pact for Europe;
- held an exchange of views with Marie-Hélène Boulanger, Deputy Director and Head of Unit in charge of Democracy, Citizenship and Free Movement, DG JUST, European Commission, on the ongoing work of the European Union in the scope of the "European Democracy Shield";
- took note of themes of this year's World Forum for Democracy provided by Dragan Šljivić, Senior Project Officer, Unit on Democratic Innovation, World Forum for Democracy and Schools of Political Studies; discussed the possible CDDEM input to the Forum, including through a contribution to a debating session on assessing the health of democracies, and instructed the Secretariat to provide more information on the Forum in writing;
- took note of information presented by the CDDEM members from Greece, Germany, Norway, Italy, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Albania, Malta, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Armenia, Estonia, about relevant legislative and policy developments and initiatives in their states;
- took note of two conferences organised under the auspices of the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, the upcoming International Conference on Multilevel Governance Approaches to address Environmental Challenges (13 June 2025), where CDDEM members Peter Andre and Edwin Lefebre will participate, and a conference on building democratic resilience to disinformation (September 2025);
- discussed effective mechanisms for collecting and exchanging information about the impact of the Committee's work and the implementation of Council of Europe standards in member states;
- discussed the calendar of meetings for 2026 and agreed that the Secretariat would circulate the possible dates for the 5th and 6th plenary meetings;
- adopted the abridged report of the 3rd plenary meeting.

ANNOTATED AGENDA

Monday, 26 May 2025
9.30 – 11.00
<p>1. Opening of the meeting</p> <p>Welcome by the CDDEM Vice-Chair Vebjørn HEINES, Policy Director for Human Rights and Democracy Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p>
<p>2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business</p> <p>Working document: Draft annotated agenda [CDDEM(2025)OJ1 rev.].</p> <p><i>The CDDEM is invited to review and adopt the draft annotated agenda.</i></p>
<p>Current activities</p> <p><i>Implementing the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy</i></p> <p>3. Standard setting: Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.1. Introduction by Edwin LEFEBRE, Chair of the GT-P, followed by an exchange of views with the GT-P independent experts, Seema SHAH, Head of Democracy Assessment, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and Richard YOUNGS, Senior Fellow, Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Europe/ European Democracy Hub (EDH) (online).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.2. Examination of the revised draft of the Parameters.</p> <p>Working documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy [CDDEM(2025)1]. - Assessment framework for the Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy [CDDEM(2025)13]. - Report of the 2nd and 3rd meeting of the Working Group on the Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy [GT-P(2024)4 and GT-P(2025)3]. <p><i>The CDDEM is invited to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>hold an exchange of views with the GT-P independent experts on the contribution of the Parameters to operationalise the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy and reinforce democratic resilience in Europe;</i> - <i>take note of the update provided by the Secretariat on the discussion at the 2nd and 3rd meeting of the GT-P and the state of play of the draft Parameters;</i>

- carry out an examination on the text of the draft Parameters as revised following the comments made by members at the 2nd and 3rd meetings of the GT-P and provide guidance for the further development of the text;
- discuss the possible assessment framework for the Parameters as revised following the comments made by members at the 3rd meeting of the GT-P and provide guidance for its further development;
- decide on the submission of the draft Parameters for public consultation.

11.30 – 13.00

Implementing the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy

4. Emerging issues: Study on advantages and risks of the use of AI in public debate relating to democratic processes and on AI literacy for democratic life.

4.1. Exchange of views with **Natali HELBERGER**, Professor in Law and Digital Technology, University of Amsterdam (online).

Reference document: Preliminary outline [CDDEM(2025)6].

The CDDEM is invited to:

- take note on the update provided by the Secretariat on the advancement of the study;
- hold an exchange of views with Professor Natali HELBERGER and discuss the main orientations and strands of work to be covered in the study.

Supporting elections

5. Standard setting: Guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls and young persons, vulnerable groups.

5.1. Exchange of views with Professor **Anna LAVIZZARI**, University Complutense of Madrid (online).

Reference document:

- Preliminary questions for debate [CDDEM(2025)2].

The CDDEM is invited to:

- take note on the update provided by the Secretariat on the advancement of the work;
- hold an exchange of views with Professor Anna LAVIZZARI and discuss the main orientations of the guidelines based on the preliminary questions sent by the Secretariat.

14.30– 16.15

6. New Democratic Pact: Exchange of views with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

*Introduction by CDDEM Vice-Chair **Vebjørn HEINES**, including a brief report on the meeting between the Secretary General and the Chairs of the intergovernmental committees on 24 April 2025*

Address and exchange of views with **Alain BERSET**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Reference document: [SG Inf(2025)3].

The CDDEM is invited to exchange with the Secretary General on the New Democratic Pact and the synergies with the work of CDDEM.

7. Elections of CDDEM member for the position of member of the Bureau.

Reference document: [CM/Res(2021)13], article 13.e and [CDDEM(2025)7 and CDDEM(2025)7 Addendum].

Following a mid-term vacancy, the CDDEM is invited to elect one member of the Bureau to complete their predecessor's term until the end of 2025.

16.30 – 17.30

Promoting a safe and enabling civic space and citizen participation

8. Standard setting: Updating Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe.

8.1. Introduction by **Georgios CHRYSAFIS**, Chair of the GT-CS, followed by an exchange of views with **Jeremy McBRIDE**, Chair of the Expert Council on NGO Law of CINGO and CDDEM consultant.

8.2. Examination of the draft of the revised Recommendation.

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].
- Draft of the updated Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the legal status of non-governmental organisations [CDDEM(2025)12 and draft Explanatory Memorandum CDDEM(2025)14].
- Report of the 3rd meeting of the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS) [GT-CS(2025)3].

The CDDEM is invited to:

- *take note of the update provided by the Secretariat on the discussion at the 3rd meeting of the GT-CS and the state of play of the draft;*
- *hold an exchange of views with CDDEM consultant, Jeremy McBRIDE, on the draft revised Recommendation;*
- *carry out an examination of the draft of the updated Recommendation as revised following the comments made by members at the 3rd meeting of the GT-CS and to provide guidance for the further development of the text;*
- *carry out an examination of the draft Explanatory Memorandum to the updated Recommendation as prepared by the CDDEM consultant Jerney McBRIDE;*
- *decide on the submission of the draft Recommendation and its Explanatory Memorandum for public consultation.*

Tuesday, 27 May 2025

9.30 – 11.00

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

9. Standard setting: work on multilevel governance, including the preparation of a draft recommendation.

10.1 Presentation and exchange of views with **Mojca RAMŠAK PEŠEC**, State Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration, Slovenia.

10.2 Exchange of views with **Gillian DORNER**, Deputy Director, Public Governance Directorate, OECD (online).

Reference documents:

- Report on multi-level governance [CDDG(2023)12].
- Work on multilevel governance: questionnaire for member states [CDDEM(2025)3].

The CDDEM is invited to:

- *hold an exchange of views with Mojca RAMŠAK PEŠEC and Gillian DORNER and discuss the main orientations and focus of the CDDEM work on multi-level governance.*
- *Discuss the development of the future recommendation based on the CDDG Report on multilevel governance and the replies to the questions circulated by the Secretariat.*

10. Application for observer status

Working documents:

- Application for observer status of the European Center for Human Rights [CDDEM(2024)21 and CDDEM(2025)9].
- Application for observer status of the European Council of Spatial Planners [CDDEM(2024)22 and CDDEM(2025)10].
- Application for observer status of CURE [CDDEM(2024)23 and CDDEM(2025)11].
- Application for observer status of Pax Romana [CDDEM(2025)8].

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.

11.30 – 13.00

11. Update on the European Union developments related to safeguarding democracy

11.1. Information by **Marie-Hélène BOULANGER**, Deputy Director and Head of Unit in charge of Democracy, Citizenship and Free Movement, DG JUST, European Commission (online).

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 European Democracy Shield.

<p>12. Mid-term review for the preparation of the revised Programme and draft Budget 2026-2027</p> <p><i>The CDDEM is invited to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>take note of the proposal for the adjustment of its deliverables for the biennium 2026-2027 in the context of the mid-term review of intergovernmental committees' quadrennial terms of reference.</i>
<p>13. Evaluation of CDDEM activities</p> <p>Reference document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of CDDEM activities [CDDEM(2025)5]. <p><i>Based on the background paper prepared by the Secretariat, the CDDEM is invited to outline a methodology for collecting and exchanging information about the impact of its work and the implementation of Council of Europe standards in member states.</i></p>
14.30 – 16.00
<p>14. World Forum for Democracy (WFD) – synergies and opportunities for introducing its conclusions into the CDDEM work</p> <p>14.1. Information by the WFD Secretariat, Division of Democratic Institutions and Civil Society</p> <p>Reference document: World Forum for Democracy 2025 concept note.</p> <p><i>The CDDEM is invited to discuss the potential input of the CDDEM to the next edition of the World Forum for Democracy.</i></p>
<p>15. Update on the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.</p> <p>15.1. Information by Claudia LUCIANI, Director of the Congress.</p> <p><i>The CDDEM is invited to take note of the information and annual report of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.</i></p>
16.15 – 17.30
<p>16. Recent national developments in the areas of activity of the CDDEM</p>
<p>17. Participation of CDDEM members in events of relevance to the CDDEM</p> <p><i>CDDEM members and participants are invited to report on conferences, meetings and other events they have attended in CDDEM's areas of activity.</i></p>
<p>18. Date of the next meeting</p>
<p>19. Any other business</p> <p><i>CDDEM delegations are invited to raise, prior or at the early beginning of the meeting, any other issues and present them.</i></p>
<p>20. Adoption of the abridged meeting report</p> <p><i>CDDEM is invited to adopt the abridged report of its 3rd plenary meeting.</i></p>

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>