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CDDEM(2025)15

## **STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY (CDDEM)**

### **MEETING REPORT**

3rd Plenary meeting  
(26-27 May 2025)

Strasbourg, Agora - Room G03  
(and online via KUDO)

Web: [www.coe.int/cddem](http://www.coe.int/cddem)

The Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM) held its 3rd plenary meeting in Strasbourg and online on 26-27 May 2025, with Vice-Chair Vebjørn HEINES (Norway) chairing the session in the absence of the Chair (Mr Thomas ZANDSTRA, Netherlands).

### 1. Opening of the meeting

The Vice-Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all participants, the list of which appears in [Appendix II](#) below.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business

The CDDEM adopted the draft agenda without changes, as it appears in [Appendix I](#) below. Together with the abridged and full meeting reports, the agenda is also available on the [CDDEM's website](#).

### 3. Introductory remarks

The Committee welcomed Permanent Representative of Ireland and Chair of the Committee of Ministers Rapporteur Group on Democracy ([GR-DEM](#)), Ambassador Catriona Doyle. Ambassador Doyle briefed members on the [134th session of the Committee of Ministers](#) held in Luxembourg on 13-14 May, where a number of decisions were taken that are of relevance to democratic security in Europe. Notably, the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer ([CETS no. 226](#)) was opened for signature, the ministers decided on further action in support of Ukraine, and reviewed the implementation of the [Reykjavik agenda](#) on democracy. The Ambassador welcomed the fact that democracy now figures as a high priority for the Council of Europe and pointed to the importance of the work of the CDDEM in this regard – highlighting especially the Parameters to facilitate the implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy.

### 4. Standard setting: Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy

Edwin Lefebvre (Belgium), Chair of the Working Group on Parameters for the Application and Implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy ([GT-P](#)), updated the Committee on the progress of the work since the last CDDEM plenary, during the Working group's [2nd](#) (9-10 December 2024) and [3rd](#) (6-7 March 2025) meetings, noting in particular the revised format of the document which introduces a two-tiered structure of goal-oriented parameters and indicator-style sub-parameters for enhanced usability.

The Secretariat briefed members on the substantive changes in the revised draft, noting additions and revisions made on the basis of comments received by member states as well as the relevant Council of Europe bodies and sectors. The text also includes an introduction, framing the Parameters as both a tool to counteract democratic backsliding and a forward-looking framework for building democratic resilience.

The CDDEM examined the revised draft Parameters, looking at each section in turn. Members generally agreed that the Parameters are to function as a useful, practical tool for the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles and to strengthen democracy throughout Europe. One member suggested to strengthen the background section of the introduction with more information on the current state of democracy in Europe and the concept of democratic backsliding. In this connection, [Richard Youngs](#), independent member of the GT-P, argued for further articulation of the notion of democratic resilience in the Parameters through both institutional and material elements, such as those relating to inequality and inclusion. Another member asked for further inclusion of indicators on the safety of political officeholders. Several members expressed the desire to provide further substantive comments on portions of the revised text in writing.

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<sup>1</sup> At this 3rd plenary meeting, 41 attending member states were represented by 100 participants, of which 40 women and 60 men (40% and 60% respectively).

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 text will then be released for public consultation until 5 September, and again revised before the 4th meeting of the GT-P on 13-14 October. After a final revision after the working group meeting, the Parameters are foreseen for possible adoption by the CDDEM at the 4th plenary meeting in November 2025.

The Committee also discussed a potential assessment framework for the application of the Parameters, as discussed during the [2nd](#) and [3rd](#) meetings of the GT-P. In this regard, the CDDEM heard from [Seema Shah](#), independent member of the GT-P, who presented a potential two-tiered approach, combining a state's self-assessment based on government and expert input with a participatory element. This combined approach would offer a holistic evaluation of the state of democracy that fosters democratic legitimacy and provides for the inclusion of citizens' lived experience in their democracies. Members exchanged views with Ms Shah on the aims of such assessment framework, on the best possible timeline for potentially testing it, and on the benefits and potential drawbacks of the inclusion of a participatory element.

#### **5. 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**

The CDDEM discussed the aims, scope and orientations of the upcoming 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. The study is to build on the relevant provisions Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law ([CETS no. 225](#)), examining the profound impact of AI systems on democratic institutions and processes, highlighting their benefits and suggesting possible regulatory and non-regulatory responses to some of the most serious risks. The Committee took note of the information provided by Anders Knape, Congress, on its ongoing work to prepare a report on "Strengthening the capacities of local and regional authorities in the use of AI".

[Natali Helberger](#), Professor in Law and Digital Technology, University of Amsterdam, whose team is drafting the study, presented the draft outline and proposed to restrict the scope of the study to generative AI (GenAI) specifically, noting that a study on AI more broadly would otherwise remain too surface-level. Prof. Helberger highlighted the paradigmatic shift in the capabilities of GenAI compared to other digital technologies in use, noting that the understanding of democracy as a framework for dialogue may be at risk with the rapid evolution of GenAI. Notably, the technology may be used to produce disinformation (especially deepfakes), manipulate public debate and put barriers to public participation in democratic policy-making; more broadly, it generates structural dependencies on a few powerful platforms that also develop and design GenAI tools. However, these tools also carry a transformative potential for the creation and dissemination of high-quality content, the facilitation of democratic participation, etc. The Committee members and participants agreed that the text should also highlight the benefits of GenAI, and suggested to rely on the work undertaken to feed further relevant perspectives into the study.

Members will send preliminary comments to the outline until the end of June. The study will then be circulated ahead of the 4th plenary meeting for comments and suggestions, and examined at that plenary meeting. Should there be further comments during the plenary meeting, the study can be taken note of by written procedure.

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

The CDDEM discussed a set of preliminary questions on the scope and orientations of the future Guidelines with Professor [Anna Lavizzari](#), Universidad Complutense de Madrid, the aspects to include in the study, which "groups" the study should focus on (or whether it should at all use the language of "groups", and instead speak of factors of vulnerability and potentially intersecting obstacles to participation), and what would be the most appropriate format for the deliverable.

Prof. Lavizzari noted that the guidelines should ideally cover both active and passive aspects of elections, voter turnout, the equality and safety of the election process, and both structural and formal barriers to participation. The CDDEM generally agreed that while formal aspects and regulation are important for the inclusivity of election processes, questions of a wider institutional and cultural background should also be addressed. In this regard, the mindsets and activities of political parties were particularly highlighted, and the role of nomination processes and education were highlighted. Members further noted the need to address violence in public and political decision-making, especially affecting women, as well as the inclusion of people with disabilities. Overall, the CDDEM agreed that the scope should be holistic, and the approach intersectional. Two members highlighted the importance of sharing of information and best practices concerning the application of the guidelines.

The Secretariat will develop a background document to be disseminated, and Prof. Lavizzari is to continue working along the lines discussed during the exchange.

## **7. New Democratic Pact: Exchange of views with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe<sup>2</sup>**

The Vice-Chair updated the Committee on the meeting between the Secretary General and Chairs of intergovernmental committees held on 24 April, to discuss intergovernmental contribution to the Secretary General's initiative for a "[New Democratic Pact for Europe](#)" (the Pact). The Chairs agreed that there was a need for strengthening of democratic resilience and integrity, notably by reviving trust in democratic institutions and processes. The Council of Europe should develop a global vision and reinforce its communication efforts on democracy. The Vice-Chair further informed the CDDEM that the Secretary General's had newly presented Roadmap for the Pact ([SG/Inf\(2025\)14](#)) which contains specific references to the Committee's work on the implementation of the Parameters as an integral part of the initiative.

The CDDEM discussed the committee's role and specific contributions to the Pact's implementation. Members reflected on the need to interact closely with civil society in the process – especially reaffirming the need for the protection of civil society space –, and seek synergies and cooperation with other committees, as well as outside organisations working in the same domain – for which the pact would provide a galvanising opportunity. One member highlighted especially the Parameters as providing a potential "backbone" to the process of the Pact and to the wider Council of Europe efforts on democracy – and in this regard members reflected on the possibilities for piloting of the implementation of the tool.

## **8. Election of CDDEM member for the position of member of the Bureau**

Following a mid-term vacancy, due to the resignation of Ms Silvia Negro Alousque (Spain), the CDDEM proceeded to the election of one (1) new member of the Bureau for the remainder of Ms Negro Alousque's one-year mandate which will be coming to an end in October 2025, and thus elected:

Mr [Niklas Wilhelmsson](#) (Finland).

## **9. 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**

Giorgios Chrysafis (Greece), Chair of the Working Group on Civil Society Participation ([GT-CS](#)), updated the Committee on the progress of the work on the updating of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)14](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe, noting that while much of the 2007 Recommendation is left intact in the revised text, the Working Group had discussed the appropriate terminology to frame the recommendation, the legal personality of civil society organisations, and issues related to their accountability.

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<sup>2</sup> The CDDEM was to hold an exchange of views with the Secretary General on the interaction of, and possible synergies between, the Organisation's intergovernmental work carried out in the CDDEM and the Secretary General's plans for a New Democratic Pact for Europe. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the exchange had to be postponed to a later date.

The Secretariat clarified a change in terminology from the original “non-governmental organisations” (NGOs) to “civil society organisations” (CSOs) in the text, which reflects increasingly common practice at both the Council of Europe and in other international/ intergovernmental organisations. Political parties remain excluded from this definition. Other changes in the draft reflect the previous committee’s discussions and conclusions to streamline the text, reflect the current situation and challenges to the operation of CSOs, and incorporate recent case-law of the European Court of Human Rights and other relevant standards.

[Jeremy McBride](#), Chair of the Expert Council on NGO Law of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe, expert consultant of the GT-CS, noted that newly made changes reflect points made by the Committee of Ministers in other documents. While the basic principles of the Recommendation remain unchanged, the revised text makes provisions for CSOs that exist on a purely online basis, it acknowledges the need for an enabling environment to extend beyond the legal framework, it adds a provision relating to the financing of terrorism and frames the legitimate scope of foreign funding; also, provisions on foreign CSOs have been joined into a separate section. Members provided some further comments, such as to include a provision on the functioning of CSOs during conflict, to strengthen the language on avoiding excessive burdens for CSOs, and to highlight the innovative potential of CSOs. Further comments can be sent in writing to the Secretariat.

The Committee 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 text will then be released for public consultation until 5 September and again revised before the 4th meeting of the GT-CS on 22-23 September. Following a final revision after the working group meeting, the draft Recommendation is foreseen for possible approval by the CDDEM at the 4th plenary meeting in November 2025.

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

The CDDEM welcomed Ms [Mojca Ramšak](#) Pešec, State Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration of Slovenia, who presented the country’s public administration reform. The purpose of the reform was to enable more anticipatory, adaptable and resilient responses to contexts of unpredictability, changing expectations, inequalities, and transnational challenges of global interconnections. The authorities are also making efforts to make the civil service more attractive to younger generations by increasing flexibility and focus on digital readiness. Members exchanged views with Ms Ramšak Pešec on the importance of social dialogue in public sector reform, and further discussing the importance of the attraction of information technology workers to the civil service, the need to prepare workplaces for the specific needs of older/ younger generations, the integration of AI and other emerging technologies, and the transition towards e-government and e-administration more broadly.

The Committee next welcomed Ms [Gillian Dörner](#), Deputy Director, Public Governance Directorate, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), who presented the OECD’s “[Reinforcing Democracy Initiative](#)” set up in 2021-2022. The initiative is the cornerstone of the recent public governance work carried out in the organisation, building on five pillars to reinvigorate trust in public institutions and reinforce democratic values: (1) strengthening information integrity, tackling disinformation; (2) enhancing representation and citizen participation; (3) stronger open democracies in a globalised world, responding to foreign interference; (4) governing green; and (5) transforming public governance for digital). In its work, the OECD has surveyed declining public trust in public institutions – and especially in national governments – and sought to develop ways to improve the situation, notably by addressing citizens’ perceived lack of agency and voice in political processes. The Committee exchanged views with Ms Dörner concerning the importance of policy coherence in tackling complexity in policy processes and the OECD’s “eight elements of policy coherence for sustainable development” and the dimensions of its understanding of multilevel governance (MLG) (multi-level, multi-sector/ -entities and multi-actor), which was also built upon by the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) in their [2023 report](#) on MLG. In turn, the future CM recommendation on the issue will build on the CDDG report.

The CDDEM next discussed the elaboration of the draft recommendation on MLG and considered the need to move beyond general principles and instead concretise recommendations in a specific direction. In this sense, members suggested that the recommendation might take a citizen-centred approach and that it could be linked to the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles by grounding it in the Parameters. They also stressed the need to clarify and strengthen the participation of CSOs in multi-level governance models. A potential risk of diluting the responsibilities of political representatives and officeholders was briefly discussed. One delegation expressed some doubts as to the usefulness or added value of a recommendation on MLG.

## 11. Applications for observer status

The CDDEM re-examined three applications for observer status submitted by the European Center for Human Rights (ECHR), the European Council of Spatial Planners, and the Campaign to Uphold Rights in Europe (CURE), taking note of the presentations made by the applicants' representatives. The three applications had previously been considered at the Committee's 2nd plenary meeting held on 29–30 October 2024. In written procedure following the meeting, undertaken to allow delegations sufficient time to consider individual applications, one delegation expressed a principled opposition to granting observer status to organisations, so it was agreed to re-examine the issue at the 3rd meeting of the Committee. The Committee furthermore considered an application submitted by [Pax Romana](#), an organisation that combines the representation of the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs and the International Movement of Catholic Students. Pax Romana works on human rights, democracy, education, and generally on interreligious dialogue for democratic stability.

The CDDEM examined and deliberated on the four applications for observer status but was unable to reach the unanimity required for approval. 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, pursuant to paragraph 8.a of Resolution of the Committee of Ministers [CM/Res\(2021\)3](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

## 12. Update on the European Union developments related to safeguarding democracy

The Committee exchanged views with [Marie-Hélène Boulanger](#), Deputy Director and Head of Unit in charge of Democracy, Anti-corruption, Union Citizenship and Free Movement, European Commission (DG JUST), who updated the CDDEM on the priorities and work of the European Commission related to the safeguarding of democracy, and especially on the new "European Democracy Shield" initiative. The Commission is analysing the contributions received during the public consultation of the European Democracy Shield and consulting with relevant stakeholders including the Council of Europe. The Democracy Shield will focus on several key areas of interest, with emphasis on societal resilience and preparedness as well as participation, engagement and empowerment of citizens, following a whole-of-society approach. Other key areas include the reinforcement of democratic frameworks, including free media and civil society organisations, ensuring free and fair elections, and countering threats to disinformation, information manipulation and interference. In 2023, the Commission already adopted a Recommendation [\(EU\) 2023/2836](#) on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes. Other innovative EU tools in this context include the [Citizens' Engagement Platform](#) and the [EU Youth Dialogue](#). In the context of election integrity, Ms Boulanger highlighted the relevance of the [European cooperation network on elections](#). Under the European Democracy Shield, the Commission will also work on safety in political life and equality of opportunity in elections. Looking at threats like foreign interference and disinformation, a European network of fact-checkers is to be set up, among others.

The CDDEM exchanged with Ms Boulanger on the possibility of interactions between the CDDEM, the SG's New Democratic Pact and the EU/ Commission, especially in the framework of the Democracy Shield initiative. Ms Boulanger highlighted the importance of Council of Europe standards and practices in the Commission's work on democracy, noting that the Commission is following the development of the Pact and the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy with interest.

### **13. Mid-term review for the preparation of the revised Programme and draft Budget 2026-2027**

The Vice-Chair updated Committee members on the discussion at the CDDEM's [first Bureau meeting](#) on 14-15 April, regarding changes to the Committee's Terms of reference for 2024-2027. Two new deliverables have been proposed: the development of an assessment framework for the Parameters, and follow-up work on the study examining the impact of AI democracy. Additional adjustments included postponing work on multilevel governance and the review of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2023\)5](#) on the principles of good democratic governance to the end of 2027, in line with the biennial cycle. The review of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)5](#) on e-voting standards was proposed for the next programming period, starting in 2028, with CDDEM engaging in a discussion as part of the plenary meeting in 2026,

The CM will discuss and adopt the revised Terms of reference in November, following the presentation of the new Programme and budget by the Secretary General.

### **14. Evaluation of CDDEM activities**

The CDDEM held a preliminary discussion on ways to enhance the evaluation of the impact of the Committee's activities, based on a background document circulated by the Secretariat. The evaluation of the Committee's outputs is to provide an evidence basis for its standard-setting work and to identify ways to help raise awareness of standards at the national level. This reflects a shift from a framework of activities that sees Committees' value primarily in the proliferation of standard-setting documents to a framework that instead prioritises the follow-up and assessment of the impact of existing standards. The Committee thus noted the cross-cutting relevance of this perspective for the CDDEM's work on the Parameters, its contributions to the Pact, and to the democracy landscape in Europe more generally.

### **15. World Forum for Democracy (WFD) – synergies and opportunities for introducing its conclusions into the CDDEM work**

As per its [Terms of reference](#) for the period 2024-2027, the CDDEM is to "provide inputs to the World Forum for Democracy when appropriate and engage with the Schools of Political Studies and take into account relevant proposals coming from them in its work". In preparation of the [2025 edition of the WFD](#), the Committee heard a presentation by Mr Dragan Slijivic from the WFD Secretariat. Mr Slijivic provided an overview of the Forum, whose 2025 theme will be "Democracy at risk, how can we revive it?", and which will take place on 5-7 November. Mr Slijivic invited the CDDEM to contribute to the WFD by aiding in the preparation of some of the sessions with possible lead questions the speakers might address. The CDDEM is also invited to propose a moderator for one of the Forum's "time for action" sessions.

The members exchanged with Mr Slijivic on the involvement of actors in the Forum which come from outside of Europe, and especially the global South, and offered suggestions for potential speakers and participants, as well as the possibility of synergies with other initiatives, such as the Freedom Online Coalition or the Media Freedom Coalition.

### **16. Update on the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**

The Committee heard Ms [Claudia Luciani](#), Director of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, who provided an update on the work of the Congress and of its Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance, highlighting the complementarity of the monitoring efforts and projects undertaken by the Congress, and the standard-setting work of the CDDEM. Ms Luciani spoke about MLG as a way of addressing societal resilience and resilience in the face of environmental challenges. She informed the Committee about an upcoming event in Malta on MLG and the environment organised by the Maltese rotating Presidency of the CM together with the Congress practices. In this context, Ms Luciani highlighted the importance of testing and implementation of the Parameters at local and regional level.

Finally, Ms Luciani addressed the role of the Congress in the Secretary General's New Democratic Pact. In this framework, the Congress will capitalise on the higher levels of public trust in local government to contribute to all three pillars of the Secretary General's Roadmap towards the Pact: by putting the emphasis on youth, on the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS no. 122) for protecting democracy, and on deliberative democracy and other initiatives in terms of innovating for democracy. The Congress is also seeking to provide the Secretary General with better feedback from the more peripheral states of the continent on the Pact's possible impacts.

## 17. Recent national developments in the areas of activity of the CDDEM

Members updated each other on recent developments in their countries concerning the areas of activity of the CDDEM.

GREECE reported on a recent monitoring visit from a delegation of the Congress, on the implementation of the Charter of Local Self-Government. Reforms on the legal status of elected representatives have been announced and on the legal status of the system of funding of local authorities. Work is in progress on the decentralisation of competences. Local and regional elections will take place in 2028 which will be done using an e-voting system – a first in the country's history. Greece has also started drafting a single code for local and regional administration and established a national unit for its elaboration. Further, a new system for the evaluation of the economics of local and regional administrations has been developed. Finally, the country was also part of the third round of the citizens' trust survey of the OECD.

GERMANY is in the process of re-evaluating several local competences on civil protection in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and is introducing the Danish programme of "Democracy fitness", whereby state-funded trainings on democratic competences are being offered in schools. A concept is being developed for the training of local government employees on democratic values at the workplace. Furthermore, "Be the change", a programme supporting the participation and representation of women in democracy is in progress. In Western Pomerania, a MLG approach is being enacted, aimed at enhancing democracy at the local level by providing five regional democratic centres, which are co-funded by the state, but carried by CSOs.

NORWAY commissioned the University of Oslo with a study to assess the health of its democracy in 2020. The study reflects five dimensions of democracy and considers all levels of government. It provides recommendations on strengthening democratic resilience. An English summary of the report is available. A report on AI and the 2024 super-election year was recently published as well. Furthermore, Norway has established a permanent interministerial group, involving six ministries, working on resilience against election interference.

ITALY is undergoing the United Nation's Universal Periodic Review. Furthermore, the country is in the process of drafting its first national action plan for the fight against xenophobia, racism and intolerance, based on EU standards and principles. Finally, Italy underwent monitoring in April, in the framework of the 4th monitoring cycle of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS no. 157).

UKRAINE is continuing efforts at decentralisation reform and strengthening civil society, including by reinforcing efficiency of state-CSO cooperation and policy initiatives. In March, the government adopted a new action plan for the implementation of their national strategy for civil society development 2025-2026. The document aims at improving the legal environment of CSOs in Ukraine, i.a. by facilitating online registration in difficult (conflict) conditions. Under martial law, democratic elections can currently not take place according to international standards, but beyond-election tools are continuing to be used in their absence to develop participation in decision making processes – this includes citizens' assemblies and public consultations. Regarding the process of EU accession, the government adopted a roadmap for the implementation of the negotiation chapter on function of democratic institutions.

The UNITED KINGDOM reported on the creation of the Council of Nations and Regions, a body bringing together the prime minister, the first minister of Scotland, the first minister of Wales, the first and deputy first ministers of Northern Ireland, and several mayors to ensure that authorities with devolved responsibilities work together to tackle cross-cutting challenges nation-wide. The government has recently published an English devolution white paper containing a devolution framework setting out how to formally empower local authorities on a number of areas and duties, such as housing and transport. A new Mayoral data council is to be brought forward – looking at collecting and sharing relevant data. In support of this, a devolution priority programme was launched, currently working with six parts of England.

ALBANIA informed the Committee on its recent hosting of the sixth European Political Community Summit on 16 May – one of the focusses of which was democratic security and stability on the European continent and beyond. Albania has also decided to invest ten million dollars in a startup project on AI called Thinking Machines Lab, which aims at building systems that are more ethical.

MALTA updated the Committee on the priorities of the Maltese [CM Presidency](#) (14 May-14 November) – being (1) continuing support to Ukraine; (2) placing children's rights at the centre; (3) addressing violence and discrimination through a strong intersectional lens; and (5) strengthening democracy and empowering youth. As already mentioned by Ms LUCIANI from the Congress, Malta will host a conference on MLG conference on 13 June, with the focus on increasing institutional resilience. A further conference on democratic resilience is to take place in September.

SWITZERLAND reported that the current government has defined democracy promotion as a thematic priority for its foreign policy in the coming years. Guidelines for 2025-2028 have been adopted to provide the operational foundations.

SWEDEN noted that the government has mandated the media regulation authority to create a broad education programme on media and information literacy. This programme is to include a number of stakeholders and eventually yield an e-learning tool.

FINLAND informed about an upcoming national programme to promote democracy and participation. Its preparation has included a review of Council of Europe standards. The government adopted a resolution in 2024 on civil society policy to strengthen their role (available in English). The representative of Finland also informed that the country was included in the International IDEA protecting elections programme. The report will be published during the summer. Two final updates concerned the parliament's work to implement the EU Act on political advertising and recent monitoring of CoE Congress of the recent local and regional elections.

The NETHERLANDS recently introduced a bill to the parliament with the aim of strengthening the system of political parties and balancing democracy and the rule of law. This includes provisions on financial support for local and regional parties, rules on transparency and financing, and provides the legal basis to introduce a ban on political parties by the Supreme court.

ARMENIA shared information about an event held the previous week in co-operation with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) with a high-level panel dedicated to parameters on democratic governance and integrity. The main topic of the event was on– advantages and disadvantages of AI tools on political financing. Another relevant event was the Yerevan dialogue which was taking place at the same time as the CDDEM plenary meeting.

ESTONIA has recently ratified the statute of the International Institute for Democracy and electoral Assistance (International IDEA). The country is also currently preparing its membership in the United Nations Human rights Council.

Finally, the Vice-Chair, in respect of NORWAY, noted that the government had presented in April a white paper to parliament on promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe. An English translation will be made available. Furthermore, he invited members to a seminar on the white paper and on the Norway Grants programme, taking place on 3 June.

**18. Participation of CDDEM members in events of relevance to the CDDEM**

None.

**19. Date of the next meeting**

The 4th plenary meeting of the CDDEM is scheduled to take place in hybrid format, in Strasbourg and online (via Kudo), on 27-28 November 2025. The Secretariat will circulate potential dates for the plenary meetings in 2026.

**20. Any other business**

None.

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

The CDDEM adopted the abridged report of its 3rd plenary meeting as it appears in document [CDDEM\(2025\)15](#).

## APPENDIX I

## AGENDA

<b>Monday, 26 May 2025</b>
<b>9.30 – 11.00</b>
<b>1. Opening of the meeting</b>
<b>2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business</b>
<b>Current activities</b>
<i>Implementing the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy</i>
<b>3. Standard setting: Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy</b>
3.1. Introduction by <b>Edwin LEFEBRE</b> , Chair of the GT-P, followed by an exchange of views with the GT-P independent experts, <b>Seema SHAH</b> , Head of Democracy Assessment, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and <b>Richard YOUNGS</b> , Senior Fellow, Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Europe/ European Democracy Hub (EDH) (online).
3.2. Examination of the revised draft of the Parameters.
<b>11.30 – 13.00</b>
<i>Implementing the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy</i>
<b>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.</b>
4.1. Exchange of views with <b>Natali HELBERGER</b> , Professor in Law and Digital Technology, University of Amsterdam (online).
<i>Supporting elections</i>
<b>5. Standard setting: Guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls and young persons, vulnerable groups.</b>
5.1. Exchange of views with Professor <b>Anna LAVIZZARI</b> , University Complutense of Madrid (online).
<b>14.30 – 16.15</b>
<b>6. New Democratic Pact: Exchange of views with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe</b>
<b>7. Elections of CDDEM member for the position of member of the Bureau.</b>

<b>16.30 – 17.30</b>
<i>Promoting a safe and enabling civic space and citizen participation</i>
<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>8.1. Introduction by <b>Georgios CHRYSAFIS</b>, Chair of the GT-CS, followed by an exchange of views with <b>Jeremy McBRIDE</b>, Chair of the Expert Council on NGO Law of CINGO and CDDEM consultant.</p> <p>8.2. Examination of the draft of the revised Recommendation.</p>
<b>Tuesday, 27 May 2025</b>
<b>9.30 – 11.00</b>
<i>Supporting member states to strengthen and maintain good democratic governance at all levels</i>
<p><b>9. Standard setting: work on multilevel governance, including the preparation of a draft recommendation.</b></p> <p>10.1 Presentation and exchange of views with <b>Mojca RAMŠAK PEŠEC</b>, State Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration, Slovenia.</p> <p>10.2 Exchange of views with <b>Gillian DORNER</b>, Deputy Director, Public Governance Directorate, OECD (online).</p>
<b>10. Applications for observer status</b>
<b>11.30 – 13.00</b>
<b>11. Update on the European Union developments related to safeguarding democracy</b>
<b>12. Mid-term review for the preparation of the revised Programme and draft Budget 2026-2027</b>
<b>13. Evaluation of CDDEM activities</b>
<b>14.30 – 16.00</b>
<b>14. World Forum for Democracy (WFD) – synergies and opportunities for introducing its conclusions into the CDDEM work</b>
<b>15. Update on the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.</b>
<b>16.15 – 17.30</b>
<b>16. Recent national developments in the areas of activity of the CDDEM</b>

<b>17. Participation of CDDEM members in events of relevance to the CDDEM</b>
<b>18. Date of the next meeting</b>
<b>19. Any other business</b>
<b>20. Adoption of the abridged meeting report</b>

## APPENDIX II

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS<sup>3</sup>

#### **MEMBERS / MEMBRES**

##### **CHAIR / PRESIDENT** (Apologized for absence / Excusé)

Mr Thomas ZANDSTRA, Deputy Director Democracy and Governance, Democracy and Governance Division, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

##### **ALBANIA / ALBANIE**

Ms Ardiana HOBDAI, Director, Department for International Organisations, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs

##### **ARMENIA / ARMENIE**

Ms Lilya AFRIKYAN, Coordinator of the "Open government partnership" Initiative, the Prime Minister's Office

##### **AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE**

Mr Peter ANDRE, Ministry of Interior, Senior Expert for Legal Affairs

Ms Alberina MULAJ, Legal Expert, Office of the Provincial Government, Department for European Affairs

##### **AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAIDJAN**

Ms Zhala IBRAHIMOVA, Deputy Head of Department for Cooperation with International Human Rights Institutions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

##### **BELGIUM / BELGIQUE**

Mr Grégory STERCK, Attaché, Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, Service public régional de Bruxelles, Bruxelles Pouvoirs Locaux

Mr Edwin LEFEBRE, Deputy Director, Ministry of the Flemish Community, Agency for Home Affairs

Mr Thomas APOLITO, Attaché, Cellule Election et Participation, Service public de Wallonie, SPW Intérieur et Action sociale, Direction de la Prospective et du Développement

##### **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA / BOSNIE-HERZEGOVINE**

Mr Kemal HASEČIĆ, Head of Department for the OSCE, CoC and Regional Initiatives, Sector for Multilateral Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

##### **BULGARIA / BULGARIE**

Ms Hristiana GROZDANOVA, Head of Unit for Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

##### **CROATIA / CROATIE**

Mr Dino ZORIĆ, Head of Service for political and election system at Department for political system and public administration, Directorate for political system and public administration of the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation of the Republic of Croatia

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<sup>3</sup> Participants listed *in italics* attended the meeting remotely.

**CYPRUS / CHYPRE**

*Ms Elena KAREKLA, Commissioner for Administration Officer, Ministry of Interior*

*Ms Menelaos VASSILIOU, Officer A, Ministry of Interior*

**CZECHIA / TCHEQUIE**

Ms Hana FUNGAČOVÁ, Unit of the Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

**DENMARK / DANEMARK**

Mr Søren STAUNING, Special Advisor, Governance and International Affairs with regard to Issues of Local Democracy, Ministry of the Interior and Health

**ESTONIA / ESTONIE**

Ms Katrin KIVI, Director of Division for Human Rights, Department for International Organisations and Human Rights, Ambassador at large for Human Rights and Migration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**FINLAND / FINLANDE**

Mr Niklas WILHELMSSON, Head of Unit, Ministry of Justice

**FRANCE**

M. François VANDEVILLE, Chef de la mission de la Gouvernance démocratique, Ministère de l'Europe et des affaires étrangères, DGM/DAG/GOUV

Mme Elena FLANIGAN, Rédactrice droits humains et développement, Ministère de l'Europe et des affaires étrangères, DGM/DAG/GOUV

Mme Margot LEGRAND, Attachée, Représentation Permanente de la France auprès du Conseil de l'Europe.

**GEORGIA / GEORGIE**

*Mr Giorgi DIDIDZE, Head of Department of Regional and Mountainous Areas Development, Ministry of Regional Development of Georgia*

**GERMANY / ALLEMAGNE**

Mr Christian ALDENHOFF, Policy Officer, Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, Division H III 1 "Resilient Democracy and Prevention of Extremism"

Ms Constanze LERNHART, Ministry of Regional Identity, Local Government, Building and Digitalization of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Head of Unit 302 "Local Government Tasks, Territorial Structure and Interests in Legislation and Administrative Implementation"

**GREECE / GRECE**

Mr Georgios CHRYSAFIS, expert within the Directorate of Organisation and Functioning of Local Government

*Mr Ioannis MATHIOUDAKIS, Head of the Coordination Service, Ministry of the Interior*

*Mr Nikolaos DIKAROS, Head of the Department of Planning and Development of Information System of the Directorate of Digital Governance*

*Mr Antonios KARVOUNIS, Head of the Independent Department of International and European Relations*

*Mr Dimitrios PONTIKAKIS, expert within the Directorate of Organisation and Functioning of Local Government*

*Ms Eleftheria BAFALOUKA, expert within the Directorate of Digital Governance*

#### **HUNGARY / HONGRIE**

Ms Nikolett TAKÁCS, Government Official for International Relations, Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development, Deputy State Secretariat Responsible for the Operation of Territorial Public Administration

#### **ICELAND / ISLANDE**

Apologized for absence / Excusé

#### **IRELAND / IRLANDE**

Mr Barry RYAN, Principal Officer, Franchise Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

#### **ITALY / ITALIE**

Mr Giovanni Battista IANNUZZI, Chairperson of the inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Mr Pierluigi TROMBETTA, Diplomatic advisor to the Italian Minister for Regional Affairs, Minister for Regional Affairs and Autonomies

Mr Roberto LATTANZI, Head of the Artificial Intelligence Department, Italian Data Protection Authority

#### **LATVIA / LETTONIE**

*Ms Ilona Anna EKLONA, Director of the Department for Public Administration Policy*

*Ms Inese KUŠĶE, Consultant for Good Governance Affairs, Department for Public Administration Policy*

#### **LITHUANIA / LITUANIE**

Mr Paulius SKARDŽIUS, Senior Adviser, Public Administration and Local Government Policy Group, Ministry of the Interior

#### **LUXEMBOURG**

Mr Dylan VERDIN-POL, Chargé de Mission à la Représentation Permanente du Luxembourg auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

#### **MALTA / MALTE**

Mr Robert TABONE, Head EU & International Affairs, Office of the Director General, Local Government Division

#### **REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA / REPUBLIQUE DE MOLDOVA**

Mr Andrei STRAH, Deputy Secretary General of the Government, State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova

**MONACO**

Mr Gabriel REVEL, Ambassadeur, Représentant Permanent de Monaco

Mr Gabriel CHABERT

**MONTENEGRO**

Ms Bosiljka VUKOVIC-SIMONOVIC, Head of Division for the Council of Europe, Department for the OSCE and CoE/DG for Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**NETHERLANDS / PAYS-BAS**

Ms Hanneke PALM, Policy Advisor Democracy and Governance, Directorate Democracy and Governance, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Ms Hester MENNES, Policy officer Democracy, Directorate-General Public Administration and Democratic Rule of Law, Democracy and Governance Department, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Mr Beer NEYSEN, Permanent Representation of the Netherlands

**NORTH MACEDONIA / MACEDOINE DU NORD**

Mr Igor DJUNDEV, Ambassador at Large, Special Adviser

**NORWAY / NORVEGE**

Mr Vebjørn HEINES, Policy Director for Democracy and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms Anne-Karin ØDEGÅRD, Head of Analysis and Evaluation, Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Department of Local Government

Ms Nina Britt BERGE, Senior Adviser, Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Department of Local Government

**POLAND / POLOGNE**

Mr Paweł SWIANIEWICZ, Director, National Institute for Local Self-Government

**PORTUGAL**

Ms Tânia MOURATO, Deputy Director, General Directorate of Local Authorities

**ROMANIA / ROUMANIE**

Mr Dacian Axente TOLEA, Adviser, General Secretariat of the Government, Service for Strategic Support and Cooperation with the Civil Society Organisations

Mr Daniel Stefan BELINGHER, Adviser, General Secretariat of the Government, Service for Strategic Support and Cooperation with the Civil Society Organisations

**SAN MARINO / SAINT-MARIN**

Apologised for absence / Excusé

**SLOVAK REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE SLOVAQUE**

Ms Zuzana VIZVÁRYOVÁ, General State Advisor, Self-government Unit, Department of Modernization and Coordination, Public Administration section, Ministry of Interior

*Mr Matek MIKLIAN, Ministry of Interior, Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society*

**SLOVENIA / SLOVENIE**

Ms Mojca RAMŠAK PEŠEC, State Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration

Ms Mateja PREŠERN, Director General, Ministry of Public Administration

Ms Polona KOBAL, Head of Office, Ministry of Public Administration

Mr Jurij MEZEK, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Public Administration, Directorate for local self-government, non-governmental organizations and political system

**SPAIN / ESPAGNE**

*Mr Alfonso Carlos García Romero, Sous-directeur Général des Relations Européennes et Internationales, Ministère de la Politique Territoriale et de la Mémoire Démocratique*

**SWEDEN / SUEDE**

Ms Eva HOLMSTRÖM, Deputy Head of Division, Ministry of Culture, Division for Media and Democracy

**SWITZERLAND / SUISSE**

Mr Michel BESSON, Département fédéral de justice et police, Office fédéral de la justice, Chef de l'Unité projets législatifs II

Mr Beat KUONI, Conseiller juridique, Chancellerie fédérale, juriste au sein de la Section des droits politiques

**TÜRKIYE**

Mr Eyüp ÖZDEMİR, Head of Department, Directorate General of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior

Mr Ahmet Evren BAL, Deputy to the Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Türkiye to the Council of Europe

**UKRAINE**

Ms Oksana PAVLIUK, Head of the Division for local self-government development and cooperation with Council of Europe institutions of the Department for local self-government development, territorial organisation of power and administrative-territorial structure Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine

**UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI**

Mr Tim BOWDEN, Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Local Government & Communities Directorate, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

## **PARTICIPANTS / PARTICIPANTS**

### **PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE / ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

Ms Sylvie AFFHOLDER, Head of Elections Division

### **CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONGRES DES POUVOIRS LOCAUX ET REGIONAUX DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

Ms Claudia LUCIANI, Director of the Congress

Mr Niall SHEERIN, Deputy Head of the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance

Mr Anders KNAPE, Member of the Congress

### **CONFERENCE OF INGOS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONFERENCE DES OING DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

Mr Roy VIRAH-SAWMY, Policy coordinator, European Partnership for Democracy

### **EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW (VENICE COMMISSION) / COMMISSION EUROPEENNE POUR LA DEMOCRATIE PAR LE DROIT (COMMISSION DE VENISE)**

Mr Adrià RODRÍGUEZ-PÉREZ, Legal Adviser

### **COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE / COMMISSAIRE AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

*Ms Charlotte ALTENHÖNER-DION, Adviser to the Commissioner*

## **OTHER PARTICIPANTS / AUTRES PARTICIPANTS**

### **EUROPEAN UNION / UNION EUROPEENNE**

*Ms Marie-Hélène BOULANGER, Directrice adjointe et Cheffe d'Unité chargée de la démocratie, de la citoyenneté de l'Union et libre circulation, DG JUST, Commission européenne*

### **EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS / AGENCE DE L'UNION EUROPEENNE DES DROITS FONDAMENTAUX**

*Ms Ann-Charlotte NYGARD*

### **ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) / ORGANISATION DE COOPERATION ET DE DEVELOPPEMENT ECONOMIQUES (OCDE)**

*Ms Gillian DORNER, Deputy Director, Public Governance Directorate, Paris*

## **CONSULTANT EXPERTS / EXPERTS CONSULTANTS**

Mr Jeremy MCBRIDE, President of the CINGO Expert Council on NGO Law

*Ms Seema SHAH, Head of Democracy Assessment (DA) at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Stockholm, Sweden*

*Mr Richard YOUNGS, Senior Fellow, Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Europe, Belgium; European Democracy Hub (EDH); Professor of international relations, University of Warwick,*

*United Kingdom*

*Ms Anna LAVIZZARI, Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow Department of Political Science and Administration Faculty of Political Science and Sociology Complutense University of Madrid, Spain*

*Ms Natali HELBERGER, Professor in Law and Digital Technology, University of Amsterdam*

### **GUEST SPEAKERS / INTERVENANTS**

#### ***European Center for Human Rights***

*Mr Isuf HALIMI, Director*

#### ***European Council of Spatial Planners***

*Mr Kent G. DAGSLAND HÅKULL*

#### ***Campaign to Uphold Rights in Europe (CURE)***

*Mr Harry HUMMEL*

#### ***Pax Romana***

*Mr Stéfano CECCANTI*

### **SECRETARIAT**

#### **SECRETARIAT DU CDDEM / SECRETARIAT DU CDDEM**

Ms Urška UMEK, Secretary of the CDDEM / Secrétaire du CDDEM

Ms Marta BECERRA, Co-Secretary of the CDDEM / Co-Secrétaire du CDDEM

Mr Alexander VOGT

Ms Isabelle ETTER, Assistant / Assistante

#### **OTHER SECRETARIAT /AUTRE SECRÉTARIAT**

Mr Matjaž GRUDEN, Director for Democracy / Directeur de la démocratie

Ms Irena GUIDIKOVA, Head of the Democratic Institutions and Freedoms Department / Cheffe du Service des institutions et des libertés démocratiques

### **OTHER COUNCIL OF EUROPE PARTICIPANTS / AUTRES PARTICIPANTS DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

#### ***STEERING COMMITTEE ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION / COMITE DIRECTEUR SUR L'ANTI-DISCRIMINATION, LA DIVERSITE ET L'INCLUSION (CDADI)***

Ms Charlotte GILMARTIN, Co-Secretary of the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI)

#### ***EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON LEGAL CO-OPERATION / COMITÉ EUROPÉEN DE COOPERATION JURIDIQUE (CDCJ)***

*Mr James D'AGOSTINO, Senior Lawyer, Office of the State Advocate, Malta*

**GROUP OF STATES AGAINST CORRUPTION / GROUPE D'ETATS CONTRE LA CORRUPTION  
(GRECO)**

Ms Victoria CHERNIYCHUK

**YOUTH DEPARTMENT / SERVICE DE LA JEUNESSE**

Ms Emma WEDNER, Bureau Member of the Advisory Council on Youth

**INTERCULTURAL INCLUSION UNIT / UNITE INCLUSION INTERCULTURELLE**

Ms Nichola HOWSON

**INTERPRETERS / INTERPRETES**

Ms Chloé CHENETIER  
Ms Lucie DEBURLET-SUTER  
Mr Luke TILDEN