



Strasbourg, 1 December 2025

CDDEM-Bu(2025)3

**BUREAU OF THE  
STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY  
(CDDEM)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> meeting**

**Agora, Room G06**

**3 November 2025, 9.30-13.00 / 14.30-17.30 (CET)  
4 November 2025, 9.30-13.00 / 14.30-17.30 (CET)**

**MEETING REPORT**

The Bureau of the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM/ the Committee) held its 2nd meeting in Strasbourg on 3-4 November 2025. The meeting was chaired by Vebjørn Heines (Norway), Vice-Chair of the CDDEM, in the absence of the CDDEM Chair, Thomas Zandstra (Netherlands). The list of participants appears in Appendix 1.

**1. OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE VICE-CHAIR**

The Vice-Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all members.

**2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix 2.

**3. INFORMATION FROM THE VICE-CHAIR**

**High-Level Conference on Building Democratic Resilience to Disinformation – organised by the Council of Europe's Presidency of Malta**

The Vice-Chair debriefed the Bureau about the high-level Conference on Building Democratic Resilience to Disinformation in Kalkara, Malta, on 17 September 2025 where he represented CDDEM. Discussions framed the phenomenon of disinformation against the backdrop of foreign interference, social media, and societal vulnerabilities to all these challenges combined. A large majority of citizens, as was cited at the conference, identify disinformation as a threat to democracy.

The Vice-Chair noted that many conversations focused on how to build resilience through media literacy initiatives, support to editorial media and focus on education. In his intervention, he highlighted CDDEM's contribution through the parameters and stressed the importance of strong democratic institutions for building resilience. Where people trust courts or electoral systems, local government and other institutions they would be less vulnerable to disinformation.

Other members of the Bureau present at the event shared their views and agreed on the importance of education and media and AI literacy and that disinformation and democratic backsliding go hand in hand. Another member highlighted the role of social media for political advertising, especially for independent candidates with less resources. In this sense, Meta decision to allow political advertising could be concerning.

The importance of trust in democratic institutions to build resilience was also highlighted by the Maltese Presidency under which the conference was organised. In this latter aspect, international cooperation is relevant even though the impact might be felt at local level, and the Council of Europe has a clear role to play.

The Bureau had a brief discussion on updates on the work of the organisation related to disinformation and foreign influence, referring among other to the Venice Commission's work on foreign funding and foreign influence and freedom of expression and to the possible future legal instrument on combatting foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). Bureau members expressed their trust that CDDEM will be engaged in this work.

#### **4. INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARIAT**

##### **Programme and budget 2026-2027: state of play**

The Secretariat provided information about the discussions at the meeting of GR-DEM on 9 September related to the suggested changes of CDDEM deliverables for the upcoming biennium 2026-2027. Several member states posed questions and comments during the GR-DEM, including a request to clarify the meaning of the new deliverable related to the "assessment framework" of the parameters and further explanations on the follow up of the study on AI during the next biennium. The Secretariat clarified that the intention of the committee is to keep the parameters high on the agenda and the framework is intended as a tool to help member states in using the parameters. Regarding the AI study, the Secretariat clarified at GR-DEM that it would focus on the practices and considerations related to generative AI and public debate along with policy recommendations. One delegation asked about the postponement on the review of the e-voting recommendation (CM/Rec (2017)5). The Secretariat explained that an event to garner new developments is planned for 2026 ahead of the full review. A last delegation enquired about the recommendation on multi-level governance and expressed reservations about the framework assessment of the parameters.

The Bureau concurred with the relevance of continuing the work on the Reykjavik parameters and expressed support to a tool (assessment framework) to help implement them in member states. Members expressed their support for the committee to explore collaboration with other organisations to develop it. Related to the parameters, they highlighted their clear connection to the New Democratic Pact for Europe but also their potential usefulness for other organisations including outside Europe. The possibility to pilot the assessment framework was welcomed by the Bureau following the Secretariat's presentation of the Council of Europe project REVIVE.

Several members expressed their wish for the event linked to the review of the e-voting recommendation to be inclusive within the Council of Europe (Venice Commission, PACE, Congress) but also externally with the presence of electoral management bodies, OSCE-ODIHR, International IDEA etc. The Bureau found this approach useful for the purposes of the review of the Recommendation.

## **New Democratic Pact for Europe**

The Bureau had an exchange with Tatiana Monney, Policy Advisor for the New Democratic Pact. Ms Monney presented briefly the pillars of the Pact to foster cooperative work, find connections between different areas and arrive at interconnected solutions. Whereas all intergovernmental committees have a place in the Pact, the CDDEM has a special place. She informed that PACE has established an *ad hoc* committee to contribute to the Pact concretely, and the Organisation is also looking to reach out to relevant networks to act as multipliers.

Members welcomed the possibility of the exchange and to discuss more details about the Pact and expressed their wish for an opportunity for the committee to exchange with the Secretary General as its scheduled intervention at the CDDEM 3rd plenary had to be postponed. The Bureau members also stressed the importance to build on the foundation of the existing standards and work on democracy even beyond the Council of Europe and on bringing the perspective of civil society to the Pact and to promote a supportive civic space. Ms Monney agreed on the need to build on what already exists and stressed the importance of peer-to-peer exchanges and cooperation with other organisations to foster a new paradigm for democracy. On civic space, Ms Monney welcomed the support of Council of Europe members states gathered within the Group of friends of civil society. Finally, the Bureau highlighted that the Reykjavik Parameters can be used to provide evidence and good practices to the Pact. The Vice-Chair concluded this item by inviting the Secretary General and his Pact team for further exchanges with CDDEM on the Pact.

## **Upcoming conference on civic space**

The Secretariat provided information about the organisation of a high-level conference on strengthening civic space on 2-3 February 2026 organised by the Democratic Institutions and Civil Society Division which will look at options for a more coherent and streamlined approach to civic space protection facilitated by the Council of Europe.

## **Practical guidelines for engaging with civil society and the implications for committee work**

The Secretariat updated the Bureau on the development of a set of internal practical guidelines to support the staff of the Council of Europe in their engagement with civil society as follow-up to the Guidance Note adopted by CDDEM in 2024 on civil society participation in the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe.

## **Conference of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – Resilient Europe through deliberative democracy: Cities and regions in action!**

The Bureau members were informed about conference on deliberative democracy that the Congress is organising on 26 November in Strasbourg. The Congress has invited a CDDEM representative to participate in one of the panels. The Bureau agreed to circulate the invitation to the CDDEM members, drawing attention to the fact that the conference coincides with the first day of the CDDEM plenary meeting.

## **5. STANDARD SETTING**

### **Progress of the Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy and the framework for their use**

The Secretariat debriefed the Bureau about the state of the development of the Parameters, feedback received from the public consultation of the draft, the outcomes of the GT-P working group meeting on 12-13 October and the preparations for the adoption of the document in the plenary.

The Bureau discussed open issues and differences in individual delegations' positions that followed from the GT-P discussion; it provided guidance on the process for the adoption of the Parameters at the plenary, especially on sub-parameters where a clear consensus could not be reached during the working group meetings. Members discussed the possibility to produce a Bureau endorsed version of the parameters aiming at trying to bring together conflicting positions. This version would be presented at the CDDEM plenary meeting on 26-28 November.

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

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau about the state of the development of the revised Recommendation and the results of the public consultation. The final draft text of the revised recommendation was approved by the GT-CS on 22-23 September including a change in terminology, from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to civil society organisations (CSOs). The text was circulated by the Secretariat for final comments to be received before 20 October. The Bureau was informed that there were no major outstanding substantive issues, however, several delegations have provided wording suggestions and modifications that would be decided at the CDDEM plenary meeting.

#### **Guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls and young persons, vulnerable groups**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau about the first draft guidelines to be presented at the plenary. Members reviewed this first draft and agreed that further work is needed in particular to make a clearer link to the existing Council of Europe (and other) standards in the area of electoral participation. The Bureau furthermore agreed that the draft could benefit from good practices from member states and that these should be as practical as possible. The drafting process was agreed to be overseen by one of the CDDEM working groups to be established for 2026-2027 and to be finalised by the end of 2026.

### **6. PREPARATORY WORK**

#### **Work on multilevel governance, including the preparation of a draft recommendation**

In the process of review of the terms of reference of CDDEM for the upcoming biennium (2026-2027), it has been proposed to extend the deadline for finalising the draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on multi-level governance from the end of 2026 to the end of 2027 to align standard-setting work with biennial cycles. The Bureau was briefed about the outcome of the discussions at the GT-CS meeting on 22-23 September regarding the preparation of the recommendation. The GT-CS had an exchange on the topic based on the Report on multilevel governance prepared by the former European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG(2023)12) and on a background note prepared by the Secretariat (GT-CS(2025)5) which provided some points of reflection both in terms of procedure and of substance. The GT-CS participants favoured the setting up of a working group for preparing the draft recommendation.

The Bureau provided orientation for work on the draft recommendation, discussed the need to ensure that this work provides concrete practical value in this field, recommended to identify good practices and to coordinate with other organisations, notably the OECD. Additionally, the members highlighted the importance of including civil society when discussing multi-level governance arrangements. The Bureau also had an exchange on the composition of the working group that would prepare the draft, which could include independent experts along with member states representatives.

### **7. 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 Bureau was informed about the state of advancement of the study which is developed in co-operation with the University of Amsterdam. Unfortunately, the Secretariat had not received yet a draft in a format that allows to be shared. This would be done shortly after the Bureau meeting. The study is

focused on generative AI and how it is impacting democratic institutions and processes. Its first part deals with three issues: impact of new technologies in media and journalism and perceptions or attitudes of users of AI tools; impact in elections and democratic participation; and AI infrastructure. Then the study analyses the impact in human rights, political participation and democratic principles and then AI governance and regulation, including the AI Framework convention, and where are the gaps. There are as well short and long-term recommendations.

The Bureau agreed that the CDDEM could have in the future an overarching/advisory role regarding the risks and opportunities of AI, building on the recommendations of the study. The committee should also serve as a forum for exchanges and discussions. Furthermore, future opportunities for CDDEM work on AI should also be explored in light of other committees' mandates and tasks, in particular the Steering Committee on New and Emerging Technologies (CDNET), which would be discussed at the November plenary meeting.

In terms of procedure, the Bureau noted that the study will be presented at the plenary but will have to be finalised through written procedure after the 4th plenary meeting and agreed to provide for 4 to 6 weeks deadline for potential comments or suggestions from member states.

## **8. ELECTIONS OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR, ONE/THREE BUREAU MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF WORKING GROUPS (2026-2027)**

The Bureau discussed the rules and procedure for the elections of its governing structures and agreed to create two working groups for the next biennium (2026-2027): GT-P2 (to work on the framework assessment of the parameters but also the guidelines for enhanced electoral participation) and GT-GPN (to work on the draft recommendation on multi-level governance). Bureau members considered that for these working groups, there could be not only elected state representatives but also independent experts.

## **9. OBSERVER STATUS**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers decision CM/Del/Dec(2025)1538/2.5 of 24 September 2025 to admit the European Center for Human Rights, the European Council of Spatial Planners, CURE Campaign, and Pax Romana as observers to the Steering Committee on Democracy.

The Bureau discussed the rules of engagement for the participation of observers in CDDEM work and agreed that observers would be able to take the floor and provide proposals in meetings and in written form, in accordance with the procedure set out in the Appendix to Resolution CM/Res(2021)3. For the committee to consider an observer's proposal, it would have to be endorsed by a member. Observers will also need to comply with other procedural and substantive rules, such as those on the confidentiality of documents. In this connection, the Bureau referred also to the ongoing process in the Organisation to define clearer and more concrete rules on engaging with external actors.

One Bureau member informed that the Open Government Initiative (OGP) was interested in applying for observer status. The Secretariat would have to process quickly such application if it was to be presented at the upcoming plenary meeting, as it has to be circulated to CDDEM at least three weeks in advance.

## **10. RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

### **Developments in member states in the field of activities of the CDDEM**

Members suggested to bring this point on exchanges and updates among member states earlier in the agenda. The Bureau also agreed that it would be interesting for CDDEM to bring the key takeaways of the World Forum for Democracy to inform the upcoming work of the committee. The CDDEM Bureau members present at the Forum would report back to the committee.

## **11. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS**

### **Secretariat of the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention)**

The Secretariat of the Tromsø Convention asked for an exchange with CDDEM to explain the convention's requirements and explain their monitoring procedure.

## **12. EVALUATION OF THE CDDEM ACTIVITIES**

In accordance with their Terms of Reference, intergovernmental committees are asked to evaluate their activities, including the application of adopted standards across member states. There are several practices used by different committees (questionnaires, events, etc). Bureau members exchanged views on how best to carry out such evaluations, suggested that online questionnaire could be a resource-efficient way to gather information from member states and instructed the Secretariat to provide some ideas for a methodology to measure the impact of CDDEM work and to include this point in the next Bureau meeting agenda.

## **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Bureau concluded with a brief discussion on confidentiality of committee documents. According to the CM/Res (2021)3 working documents are not publicly available but some committees have decided to upload online their preparatory work. The Directorate of Internal Oversight is conducting an evaluation of the Council of Europe policy on access to documents and transparency policy which would produced a more streamline approach to the access to CDDEM documents.

## **14. DATE AND FORMAT OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The Secretariat will prepare a calendar with potential date proposals for 2026 to be discussed at the plenary meeting in November.

## APPENDIX 1

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

#### CHAIR / PRESIDENT

*(Apologised for absence)*

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

#### VICE-CHAIR

Mr Vebjørn HEINES, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Norway to the Council of Europe

#### OTHER MEMBERS / AUTRES MEMBRES

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

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

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

Mr Pavel MIČKA, Head of the unit of the Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

Mr Niklas WILHELMSSON, Head of Unit, Ministry of Justice

#### 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

Ms Isabelle ETTER, Assistant / Assistante

##### OTHER SECRETARIAT / AUTRE SECRÉTARIAT

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

Ms Tatiana MONNEY, Adviser for the New Democratic Pact for Europe / Conseillère pour le Nouveau Pacte Démocratique pour l'Europe

## APPENDIX 2

## AGENDA

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                    |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | <b>Opening of the meeting by the Chair</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                    |
| 2. | <b>Adoption of the agenda</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | [CDDM-Bu(2025)OJ2] |
| 3. | <b>Information from the Chair / Vice-Chair</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High-Level Conference on Building Democratic Resilience to Disinformation (Kalkara, Malta, 17 September 2025)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                    |
| 4. | <b>Information from the Secretariat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme and budget 2026-2027: state of play</li> <li>- New Democratic Pact for Europe: state of play</li> <li>- Upcoming conference on civic space</li> <li>- Practical guidelines for engaging with civil society and the implications for committee work</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                    |
| 5. | <b>Standard setting</b> <p><i>Parameters for Democracy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progress of the Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy and the framework for their assessment</li> </ul> <p><i>Civil society and citizen participation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Updating Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe</li> </ul> <p><i>Elections:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls and young persons, vulnerable groups</li> </ul> <p><i>Emerging issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Study on advantages and risks of the use of AI in public debate relating to democratic processes and on AI literacy for democratic life</li> </ul> |                    |
| 6. | <b>Preparatory work</b> <p><i>Good governance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work on multilevel governance: preparation of a draft recommendation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                    |
| 7. | <b>Emerging issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Study on advantages and risks of the use of AI in public debate relating to democratic processes and on AI literacy for democratic life</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                    |



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| 8.  | <b>Elections of Chair and Vice-Chair, one Bureau member and members of working groups (2026-2027)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working groups' terms of reference</li> <li>- Profiles of working groups' members</li> </ul>                        |  |
| 9.  | <b>Observer status</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The status of the four applications referred to the Committee of Ministers</li> </ul>                                                                                                              |  |
| 10. | <b>Relevant developments within the Council of Europe and other institutions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developments in member states in the field of activities of the CDDEM</li> <li>- Takeaways from the World Forum for Democracy</li> </ul> |  |
| 11. | <b>Exchanges of views</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secretariat of the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention)</li> </ul>                                                                                  |  |
| 12. | <b>Evaluation of CDDEM activities in 2025</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accomplished activities and plans for their implementation at national and subnational levels</li> <li>- Work programme for 2026</li> </ul>                                 |  |
| 13. | <b>Any other business</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
| 14. | <b>Date and format of the next meeting</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |