



Strasbourg, 20 May 2026

CDDEM-Bu(2026)1

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

3rd meeting

Agora, Room G05

**16 April 2026, 9.30-13.00 / 14.30-17.30 (CET)
17 April 2026, 9.30-13.00 / 14.30-17.30 (CET)**

MEETING REPORT

The Bureau of the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM/ the Committee) held its 3rd meeting in Strasbourg on 16-17 April 2026. The meeting was chaired by Katrin Kivi (Estonia), Chair of the CDDEM. The list of participants appears in Appendix 1.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE CHAIR

The 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 CHAIR

Guided by the Chair, the Bureau had a brief discussion on general updates on the work of the organisation related to the New Democratic Pact, the Reykjavik Parameters and the framework for their application. Bureau members reiterated their support for the Parameters and their use by interested member states and stressed their potential to become a substantial contribution to the deployment of the New Democratic Pact for Europe.

Bureau members also addressed the upcoming Session of the Committee of Ministers to be held in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova, on 14-15 May 2026. They supported the inclusion of references to the Reykjavik Parameters and to the protection of civil space in the Ministerial Conference's decisions.

4. INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARIAT

New Democratic Pact for Europe: state of play

The Secretariat informed the Bureau about the process of the New Democratic Pact for Europe (NDPE) which is gaining traction with more than 200 contributions so far. Areas such as combating disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference, media literacy and promoting social rights have been addressed within the Pact process. Other substantive contributions refer to the deployment and use of AI technologies and other emerging technologies and their impact in democratic systems and processes.

What is emerging so far is, firstly, issues of collective democratic foresight. A policy planning workshop is planned in July with member states to conceive foresights scenarios for Europe in cooperation with independent experts in order to design policy responses. The World Forum for Democracy 2026 will also be dedicated to democratic foresight which will add a broader perspective through the involvement of young people, civil society and generally broader segments of population. Secondly, another element emerging from the consultations of the Pact is enhancing democratic security and how to embed democratic considerations into security mechanisms.

In this context, Bureau members discussed the potential contributions of CDDEM to the Pact process and agreed that the innovation strand of the Pact could be a fertile ground for the committee to make concrete contributions towards advancing democratic innovation, building on the committee's standard-setting competences and its strength as a platform for cross-learning among member states. A Bureau member stressed the importance of fair elections when discussing innovations and encouraged the committee to also work with OECD and other organisations in this realm. Another member encouraged to look at the preventive approach to democratic security and not simply on the hard security/defence aspects. In that sense, it would be necessary for member states to future-proof democracy by balancing democratic protection, with innovation and renewal. An interrelated topic discussed by the Bureau in this context was the matter of safety in political life as democratic participation is key to future proof democratic systems. The committee could continue to contribute to enhance inclusive and safe participation through its future activities.

Upcoming events

The CDDEM will be represented by its Vice-Chair at the conference "Towards Trusted and Inclusive Electoral Processes: The Role of Observers" organised by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Venice Commission on 28-29 April in Paris. A CDDEM representative will also participate in the International Conference "Multilevel Governance Approaches to Reinforce Democratic Resilience and Build Public Trust" organised by the Congress in Chisinau (Republic of Moldova) on 29 April.

5. STANDARD SETTING

Progress of the methodological framework for the application of the Reykjavík Parameters for Democracy

The Secretariat summarised to the Bureau the discussions on the Parameters in the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM) and presented the different ways in which the Parameters could be given value by the Committee of Ministers, despite individual member states' inability to align with a few sub-parameters. The next GR-DEM meeting would take place on 27 April with the Parameters in the agenda.

The Bureau was also debriefed about the first meeting of the GT-P2 on 26-27 March. The GT-P2 meeting discussed the upcoming framework for the application of the Reykjavik Parameters based on previous CDDEM debates. It was strongly emphasised that the framework is conceptualised as a voluntary, member state-driven support tool, providing a menu of approaches rather than an additional monitoring layer or a ranking mechanism. The framework is to be prepared in cooperation with International IDEA and is dual-layered: at the Parameter (macro) level, expert opinion and desk research would generate a high-level analysis, while at the sub-parameter (micro/indicator) level, this analysis could be complemented by participatory approaches, including for example focus groups, citizen assemblies, interviews, and/or stakeholder workshops, to capture on-the-ground perspectives.

A short set of questions was circulated to CDDEM participants in order to gather initial feedback on practical experiences of democracy assessments and on deliberative tools used at national, regional or local level in member states. The feedback will inform the further development of the methodological framework for the application of the Parameters.

Bureau members expressed their willingness to encourage the Parameters' use, acknowledging the importance of flexibility and context-specific adjustments within the methodological framework and underlining that self-assessment exercises should appropriately integrate the findings of existing monitoring mechanisms without resorting to duplications. Additionally, several members mentioned the value of the Parameters and the collaboration with International IDEA to be brought even outside of the European continent.

The Bureau furthermore discussed the practical organisation of a public hearing on the Parameters back-to-back to the upcoming CDDEM plenary meeting in June 2026. Members encouraged broad participation including of civil society, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Conference of INGOs, etc.

Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of civil society organisations in Europe

The Bureau welcomed the conclusion of the work of updating Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 and expressed their expectation that it would be adopted by the Committee of Ministers at the earliest opportunity. The members also agreed to encourage the promotion of the Recommendation at national level by member states.

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

The Secretariat informed about the outcomes of the meeting of the GT-P2 on 26-27 March, where the current draft of the Guidelines was discussed. The text had received comments from several Council of Europe bodies and departments, including gender equality, anti-discrimination, youth and the Parliamentary Assembly committee on equality and non-discrimination. Several member states and non-member states have submitted examples of promising practices that could be included in the guidelines to illustrate how to address the barriers to electoral participation.

The draft guidelines address five main categories of electoral participation barriers (legal/institutional, administrative/procedural, socioeconomic, informational/educational, cultural/social), with an added section on intersectionality and a specific checklist. The Bureau members discussed the relevant terminological issues, supporting the agreed language from Council of Europe instruments, and the approach to referencing international and Council of Europe standards, research and case law, where applicable. The guidelines will be preceded by an executive summary to enable quick access to the main recommendations. The work on the guidelines is to be finalised by the end of 2026.

6. PREPARATORY WORK

Report following exchanges on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 on standards for E-voting and Guidelines on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process, involving the Venice Commission and Election Management Bodies

The Bureau provided guidance on the organisation of the event on e-voting during the CDDEM November 2026 plenary meeting, whose outcomes will inform the preparation of an implementation review report. While not many countries are using e-voting, digital technologies are increasingly employed to manage various aspects of the electoral process. The Chair alerted to the upcoming “E-Vote ID” event in Tallin in October 2026 that could be explored for inspiration and to avoid topic repetitions.

Members concluded of the need to ensure that the event is organised in the best format and to tailor to CDDEM audiences who might not possess the technical expertise on digital technology and focus rather on a few broad and topical policy questions, potentially around the issues of security and transparency of elections. Another avenue to explore is how AI is used in elections and look for synergies with the CDDEM study on the use of generative AI in public debate relating to democratic processes.

Draft Recommendation on multilevel governance

The Bureau was informed about the first meeting of the GT-GPN on 16-17 February, with participation from the OECD. GT-GPN members and participants discussed in detail the scope of the future Recommendation, as well as how to better guide MLG mechanisms in the contemporary networked society. The discussion moved beyond the vertical distribution of powers towards a shared exercise of governance that works more efficiently and manages relationships better. A first outline of the Recommendation would be shared in the coming months, to be examined at the 5th plenary session of CDDEM in June 2026. The drafting process will be assisted by external consultant(s).

The Bureau discussed the procedural and substantive approach to the Recommendation on MLG and welcomed the idea of highlighting the importance of coordinated multilevel approaches to strengthen democratic institutions and processes, rather than developing the Recommendation purely from a technical governance perspective. The Recommendation could for example include a provision on coordination mechanisms to enhance democratic resilience at local and/or regional levels and to embed democratic participatory practices through different levels of governance.

Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5 in Principles for Good Democratic Governance

The Secretariat provided information on the preliminary discussions held at the GT-GPN working group meeting regarding the implementation review report of Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5. The review is to be completed by the end of 2027.

GT-GPN participants agreed that a questionnaire to delegations would be helpful to initiate this process. Given the broad scope of the Recommendation, and in line with its provisions, members proposed focusing the review on the principle of good administration, as this was deemed to offer the greatest potential for added value from the CDDEM within the broader context of the Council of Europe's work. This approach would also help to avoid duplication with other ongoing sectoral work, such as on the prevention of corruption (GRECO). The Bureau approved this sectoral approach to the implementation review and instructed the Secretariat to prepare an initial questionnaire to gather information from member states.

Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 on deliberative democracy and/or handbook collecting best practices

The Bureau addressed the different ways in which the implementation review report could be drafted. The circulation of a dedicated questionnaire is one option, but members suggested to keep options open to complement responses through other means such as outcomes of Council of Europe projects on democratic governance, desk research or dedicated events. An existing handbook on participatory mechanisms produced in the context of a co-operation project could serve to identify deliberative mechanisms as a starting point as well. The review report is to be completed by the end of 2027.

7. EMERGING ISSUES

Instrument/practical tool to follow up the study on advantages and risks of the use of generative AI in public debate relating to democratic processes

The Bureau was acquainted with the comments to the study provided by national delegations and the Committee on new and emerging technologies (CDNET). The revised version will be circulated to CDDEM for adoption in written procedure. The Bureau reflected on the future work of the Committee for the development of an instrument/practical tool in view of the recommendations of the study and what would be the angle for CDDEM's approach to AI and democracy. The members acknowledged the work currently being developed by the CDNET on public procurement guidelines for purchase of AI systems as one element already being in development and explored topics in which democratic innovation regarding emerging technologies is a salient feature. One aspect could be innovation in electoral contexts and another one, how AI system can be used to foster citizen engagement.

8. OBSERVER STATUS

The Secretariat informed that two organisations have submitted requests for observer status to the CDDEM: Nordic Safe Cities and ASSEDEL (Association européenne pour la défense des droits et des libertés), to be examined by the CDDEM plenary on 8-10 June 2026.

9. RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

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

Members agreed to move this regular and very useful agenda item to a more prominent place in the agenda of CDDEM plenary meetings.

Update on the work of Committee of Experts on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (PC-FIMI) and the feasibility study on the matter

The Bureau members discussed the advancement of the work of the Council on FIMI and the potential for developing a binding legal instrument such as a framework convention. Firstly, members noted that it has been clear in PC-FIMI that national delegations might have different understandings of what is covered by FIMI and how to better address it, especially, as many countries are advancing with measures to address FIMI from different perspectives (preventive in most cases). Several member states participating in the PC-FIMI and some CDDEM members that had commented on the PC-FIMI draft feasibility study have advocated for using criminalisation of FIMI as a measure of last resort.

The Bureau acknowledged the different approaches and enquired about the upcoming decisions of the ministerial session of the Committee of Ministers in Chisinau where further decisions on the future work on FIMI would be adopted. Awaiting the outcomes of discussions in the Committee of Ministers, some Bureau members alerted to the importance of enhanced coordination among member states to counter FIMI, and several noted that a framework convention might be a step forward in this regard.

10. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

The Bureau welcomed the invitation to the Secretary General for an exchange of views with the Committee during its upcoming plenary meeting on 8-10 June 2026.

11. EVALUATION OF THE CDDEM ACTIVITIES

The Secretariat had prepared a draft questionnaire to gather data on the implementation of Council of Europe standards by member states but also to help identify gaps and challenges and to guide the CDDEM priorities in the future. The Bureau reflected on how to maximise the data collection, especially when several national entities need to be consulted. In order to avoid burdensome obligations, the suggestion is to circulate one questionnaire at the beginning of each year where a particular topic is in focus. The Bureau agreed to consider the fully fledged use of the questionnaire and of this approaching the next programming period starting 2028, while continuing to provide information on the implementation of Council of Europe standards when updating on their national developments.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In light of the consultations on the New Democratic Pact for Europe, Council of Europe steering committees – particularly those with workstreams relating directly to democratic principles and standards – have been asked to consider future work that could form part of the Pact's policy pillars. The Bureau held a preliminary discussion about possible issues or concrete tasks to be undertaken by CDDEM in the 2028–2031 quadrennium, to provide initial guidance on which a discussion will be held at the plenary meeting. Several Bureau members considered that the Parameters are of paramount importance as a foundation for the future work of the Committee and their use should be encouraged. Further topics to consider for future work of the committee include the safety in political life, as mentioned by one Bureau member. Other topics mentioned include policy frameworks for election observation, the protection of civic space and transnational repression, or a mechanism to certify deliberative and consultative mechanisms as compliant with Council of Europe standards. Further links to the NDPE could also be explored.

13. DATE AND FORMAT OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Bureau will take place on 27-28 October 2026 online.

APPENDIX 1**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****CHAIR / PRESIDENTE**

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.

OTHER MEMBERS / AUTRES MEMBRES

Ms Lilya AFRIKYAN, Head of the Department for Participatory and Open Governance, Prime Minister's Office.

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

Mr Beat KUONI, Legal Adviser, Federal Chancellery, lawyer in the Political Rights Section.

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.

Ms Hanneke PALM, Program manager Democracy, Democracy and Governance Division, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

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

APPENDIX 2

AGENDA

1.	Opening of the meeting by the Chair	
2.	Adoption of the agenda	[CDDEM-Bu(2026)OJ1 rev.]
3.	Information from the Chair	
4.	Information from the Secretariat - New Democratic Pact for Europe: state of play - Upcoming events	
5.	Standard setting <i>Reykjavik Parameters for Democracy:</i> - Progress of the methodological framework for the application of the Reykjavík Parameters for Democracy - Public hearing on the Reykjavik Parameters <i>Civil society and citizen participation:</i> - CM adoption of the Recommendation on the legal status of CSOs <i>Elections:</i> - Guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls, young persons and vulnerable groups - Exchange with Aurora AILINCAI, Head of Anti-Discrimination and Inclusion Department - Report following exchanges on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)5 on standards for E-voting and Guidelines on new technologies and the different stages of the electoral process, involving the Venice Commission and Election Management Bodies <i>Emerging issues:</i> - Instrument/practical tool to follow up the study on advantages and risks of the use of AI in public debate relating to democratic processes and on AI literacy for democratic life	[CDDEM(2025)13rev] [GT-P2(2026)2] [CDDEM(2025)18]

6.	Preparatory work <i>Good democratic governance:</i> - Draft Recommendation on multilevel governance: update on the first meeting of GT-GPN working group - Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5 in Principles for Good Democratic Governance <i>Participatory and deliberative democracy</i> - Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 on deliberative democracy and/or handbook collecting best practices	[CDDDEM(2025)22 and GT-GPN(2026)2]
7.	Observer status - Information of new observer applications: ASSEDEL and Nordic Safe Cities	[CDDDEM(2026)1] [CDDDEM(2026)2]
8.	Relevant developments within the Council of Europe and other institutions - Developments in member states in the field of activities of the CDDDEM - Update on the work of Committee of Experts on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (PC-FIMI) and the feasibility study on the matter - Presentation of the Reference Framework on the integration of the youth perspective and election of youth rapporteur	
9.	Exchanges of views - Invitees to be discussed	
10.	Evaluation of CDDDEM activities in 2025 - CDDDEM data collection: questionnaire for member states - Work programme for 2026	[CDDDEM(2025)5rev]
11.	Any other business	
12.	Date and format of the next meeting	