

Strasbourg, 14 May 2024

CDDEM(2024)7

**STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY
(CDDEM)**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION
(GT-CS)**

Terms of Reference of the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS)

Adopted by the CDDEM at its 1st plenary meeting (13-14 May2024)

Task

Under the authority of the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM), the Working Group on civil society participation (GT-CS) is instructed to complete the following deliverables, within the following deadlines:

	Deadline ▼
Guidance to enhance civil society participation in Council of Europe work, including as regards a Council of Europe Code of Conduct on civil society engagement	31/12/2024
Updated Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 on the Legal Status of Non-Governmental Organisations in Europe	31/12/2025
Contribution to the implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe to be prepared by the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)	31/12/2025

Timeline

The GT-CS tasks are comprised of the following steps, to be delivered within the following deadlines:

	Deadline ▼
Final Draft guidance note to enhance civil society participation in Council of Europe work (ready for CDDEM examination by 1 October 2024, to be submitted for approval at the 2 nd meeting of the CDDEM)	October 2024
Feasibility study and outline of the updated Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 (submitted for review and discussion at the 2 nd meeting of the CDDEM)	
Contribution to the implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11	
First draft of the updated Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 , following CDDEM discussion and orientations (provided at the 2 nd meeting of the Steering Committee)	February/March 2025
Revised draft of the updated Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 , following CDDEM discussion and orientations (provided at the 3 rd meeting of the Steering Committee)	June 2025

(Public) consultations on the updated Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14	June/July 2025
Final draft for CDDEM approval	October 2025

Composition

All member states can nominate representatives and/or independent experts and participate in the working group GT-CS. The Council of Europe will bear the travel and subsistence expenses of experts from seven member states, taking into account in particular relevant expertise, geographical representation, gender balance and inclusion of various legal systems. It will additionally bear the travel and subsistence expenses of two independent experts appointed to the working group by the Secretary General.

Other member states may designate representatives without defrayal of expenses. Institutions and bodies with the status of CDDEM participant or observer may also designate representatives to the working group, without defrayal of expenses.

The experts participating in the working group should have adequate specialisation in (one of) the following areas:

- mechanisms of cooperation between public authorities and civil society in the various areas (advocacy, representation of interests, charity and social support work, political and public life, elections, etc.);
- legislation related to the organisation and financing of structures and activities involving/conducted by civil society;
- the activity of ombuds-institutions dealing with freedom of association.

Candidatures for membership in the GT-CS working group, with defrayal of expenses, shall be submitted to the Secretariat. The list of candidates whose expenses are to be borne by the Council of Europe shall be communicated to the CDDEM members before the second plenary meeting of the Steering Committee. The election of working group members will be held by secret ballot at the CDDEM's second plenary meeting.

Working methods

The working group GT-CS may hold up to four meetings, in hybrid or online format: one/two in 2024 and two/three in 2025. Written consultations and additional online meetings are encouraged, as necessary. The GT-CS is furthermore encouraged to hold consultations with other bodies within and outside the Council of Europe, including non-governmental organisations. It can appoint a rapporteur, a drafting group or both, and/or rely on contributions from expert consultants.

Provisions of Resolution [CM/Res\(2021\)3](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods are applicable mutatis mutandis to the working methods of the GT-CS.

Background documents

The working group GT-CS is expected to take into account pertinent standards, reports and documents produced under the aegis of the Council of Europe and other organisations, including:

- [Reykjavik Declaration](#) – United around Our Values
- Decisions of the 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Helsinki, 17 May 2019) ([CM/Del/Dec\(2019\)129/2](#))
- Decisions of the 131st Session of the Committee of Ministers (Hamburg, 21 May, 2021) ([CM/Del/Dec\(2021\)131/2a, item 12](#))
- Secretary General's Follow-Up to the Helsinki Decisions on Civil Society ([SG/Inf/2929](#))⁸ ; Final Report ([SG/Inf\(2022\)13](#))

- [Secretary General's Roadmap on the Council of Europe's Engagement with Civil Society 2024–2027 \(SG/Inf\(2023\)28\)](#) (see also the [dedicated website](#) and the SG's follow-up report on the Regular Exchanges of Views with civil society)
- The [annual reports](#) of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- European Convention on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International Non-Governmental Organisations - [CETS N° 124](#)
- Committee of Ministers [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)11](#) on the Need to Strengthen the Protection and Promotion of Civil Society Space in Europe; [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)4](#) on the Participation of Citizens in Local Public Life; Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)14](#) on the Legal Status of Non-Governmental Organisations in Europe (see also [Committee of Ministers' Guidelines on Civil Participation in Decision-Making](#))
- Documents such as [Civil Participation in Decision-Making Processes – An Overview of Standards and Practices in Council of Europe Member States](#) and the [Toolkit on Civil Participation in Decision Making; The Legal Space for Non-Governmental Organisations in Europe](#))
- [Report by the High-Level Reflection Group of the Council of Europe](#)
- [Revised Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process](#)
- [The Hague Civil Society Declaration on Council of Europe Reform](#)