

Terms of reference of the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM)

Set up by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3-consolidated](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Category: Steering committee

Duration: 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2027

Programme: Anchoring democratic values in European societies

Sub-programme: Democratic governance and dialogue – Civil society

Main tasks

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, and bearing in mind the Council of Europe legal standards and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, the CDDEM steers the Council of Europe's intergovernmental work in the field of democracy and advises the Committee of Ministers in its field of competence. Based on the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government, the CDDEM promotes and facilitates thematic exchanges and peer reviews of experience and good practices among Council of Europe member States to develop common policy responses and standards, as well as tools, to strengthen democracy, its institutions and processes and good governance at all levels – national, regional and local; and to enhance the meaningful participation in democratic life of all members of society, notably of young persons and civil society.

In carrying out these tasks, and in close co-operation and co-ordination with other relevant Council of Europe structures, the CDDEM shall focus on current and emerging issues, assisting member States to address them in line with the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, including identifying the causes of democratic backsliding, and countering any undermining of the effective operation of democracy at all levels, including trends constraining civil society participation; addressing growing voters' disaffection from elections; making democracies more resilient to pressures undermining democratic values, including through good governance reforms; harnessing the benefits of digital transformation and artificial intelligence while tackling the risks they pose to democracies, democratic processes and civic space; assisting Ukraine in the recovery and reconstruction of democratic institutions and governance; and ensuring that the response to crises is in line with fundamental principles of democracy.

In particular, the CDDEM is instructed to:

- i. take due account of the Reykjavik Declaration,¹ in particular the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, in conducting its activities and submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers to support member States with implementation as appropriate;
- ii. contribute to the work of the Council of Europe on digitalisation and artificial intelligence in relation to democracy and governance, bearing in mind the future Council of Europe Framework Convention in this field;
- iii. take account of the relevant key findings and challenges set out in the Secretary General's annual reports on the state of democracy, human rights and rule of law² and to contribute to the process towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe;
- iv. provide input to the Committee of Ministers for regular, high-level dialogue with member States and partners on delivering on the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy;
- v. contribute to strengthening meaningful engagement of national human rights institutions and civil society in the Council of Europe work, in line with the Reykjavik Declaration and the Roadmap on the Council of Europe engagement with civil society, taking into account the views of the civil society, taking note of the possible outcomes of the Secretary General regular meeting with civil society and following up as appropriate;
- vi. continue to strengthen civil society space in Europe, including by assisting member States to support and maintain a safe and enabling environment for engagement with civil society, taking also into account the negative effects of digital transformation on civic space and the need to strengthen digital resilience and security of civil society actors;
- vii. support member States and civil society in efforts to increase voters' turnout in particular for women, girls and young persons and voters in situation of vulnerability, through targeted action based on Council of Europe standards, policy and guidelines and oversee the implementation of the relevant Council of Europe standards;
- viii. enable and encourage the setting up of participative democracy processes, including, if so desired, deliberative democracy, also through new standards when appropriate, according to Council of Europe standards and policy guidelines and the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy; ensure participation in public life, in particular of women, girls and young persons and persons with disabilities and voters in situation of vulnerability, by identifying and exchanging good practices, developing and/or implementing standards;
- ix. support member States to strengthen and maintain good democratic governance throughout the State at the national, regional and local levels in accordance with the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy and all other relevant Council of Europe standards, including through the implementation of the 12 Principles of good democratic governance;

¹ Reykjavik Declaration - United around our values.

² Cf. Secretary General's report 2025 "Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe".

- x. provide a forum for the exchange of information, views and experience and disseminate good practice, including through peer reviews and rapid response service, in the design and implementation of reforms in the area of democracy and governance, exchange information, collaborate with and be kept abreast of the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance's activities;
- xi. 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;
- xii. without prejudice to the mandates of intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe that already follow the work of monitoring mechanisms, follow the activities of the relevant monitoring and other bodies or convention mechanisms which are relevant for its mandate;
- xiii. raise-awareness about the Reykjavik principles for Democracy and Council of Europe standards and tools in its field of competence in the member States and beyond, through the neighbourhood policy and in other international and global fora where relevant;
- xiv. hold an exchange of views annually in order to evaluate its activities and advise the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General on future priorities in its sector, including possible new activities and those that might be discontinued;
- xv. take due account of the following mainstreamed perspectives in the performance of its tasks: gender, youth, children's rights, rights of persons with disabilities, and of Roma and Traveller³ issues;
- xvi. in accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, carry out, at regular intervals, within the limits of the available resources and bearing in mind its priorities, an examination of some or all of the conventions for which it has been given responsibility,⁴ in co-operation, where appropriate, with the relevant convention-based bodies, and report back to the Committee of Ministers;
- xvii. contribute to the achievement of, and review progress towards, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regards to Goal 5: Gender Equality, Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Main deliverables

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, the CDDEM is instructed to complete the following deliverables, within the following deadlines:

	Priority ▼	Deadline ▼
1. 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.	1	31/12/2024
2. Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles and other relevant Council of Europe standards to promote, protect and strengthen democracy throughout the member States	1	31/12/2025
3. Updated Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe	1	31/12/2025
4. 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 CDDH	1	31/12/2025
5. Study on advantages and risks of the use of artificial intelligence in public debate relating to democratic processes and on artificial intelligence literacy for democratic life.	2	31/12/2025
6. 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	2	31/12/2026
7. Guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls and young persons, vulnerable groups.	2	31/12/2026
8. Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5 on the Principles of Good Democratic Governances	1	31/12/2027
9. Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 on deliberative democracy and/or handbook collecting best practices	1	31/12/2027
10. Draft Recommendation on multilevel governance	1	31/12/2027
11. Framework for supporting the use of the Reykjavik Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy	1	31/12/2027
12. Instrument/practical tool to build on the findings of the study on the impact of AI systems on democratic processes and facilitate their application (in consultation with CDNET)	2	31/12/2027

Composition

• Members

Governments of member States are invited to designate one or more representatives of the highest possible rank in the relevant field, with expertise at national level for the implementation of democratic principles and/or the planning, development and implementation of policies in the field of democracy, governance, elections, civil society, civil participation in political and public life, digitalisation and other aspects of democratic institutions and processes.

³ The term "Roma and Travellers" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

⁴ Cf. relevant decisions of the Committee of Ministers (CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2) and list of Conventions in document CM(2025)132.

The Council of Europe will bear the travel and subsistence expenses of one representative from each member State (two in the case of the State whose representative has been elected Chair).

Each member of the Committee shall have one vote. Where a government designates more than one member, only one of them is entitled to take part in the voting.

In accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, in cases where there is no convention-based body including all the Parties, non-member States are invited to take part, with a right to vote, in the committee meetings pertaining to the conventions to which they are Parties.

• Participants

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and at the charge of their corresponding administrative budgets:

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- European Court of Human Rights;
- Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe;
- Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe;
- European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission);
- Gender Equality Commission (GEC);
- Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI);
- Advisory Council of Youth (CCJ);
- Committees or other bodies of the Council of Europe engaged in related work, as appropriate.

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:

- European Union (one or more representatives, including, as appropriate, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA));
- Observer States to the Council of Europe: Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico, United States of America;
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);
- Office for Democratic Institutions and Human rights (ODIHR-OSCE).

• Observers

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:

- non-member States with which the Council of Europe has a Neighbourhood Partnership including relevant co-operation activities;
- States having been invited by decision of the Committee of Ministers to participate in the negotiations;
- interested organisations from Civil Society: the Council of Europe welcomes and promotes the widest participation of civil society, in line with the Guidance note on Civil Society Participation in the Intergovernmental Work of the Council of Europe CDDem(2024)14, as Observers. Observer status may be requested in accordance with Article 8 of [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3-consolidated](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Working methods

The rules of procedure of the Committee are governed by [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3-consolidated](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods. Online participation in meetings will be available.

	Plenary meetings ▼			Bureau meetings ▼		
	Members incl. Chair	Meetings per year	Days per meeting	Members	Meetings per year	Days per meeting
2024	47	2	2	7	2	2
2025	47	2	2	7	2	2
2026	47	2	3	7	2	2
2027	47	2	3	7	2	2

The CDDem will appoint from amongst its members up to 5 Rapporteurs on mainstreamed perspectives, including a Gender Equality Rapporteur.

Budgetary information *

	Meetings per year	Days per meeting	Members reimbursed	Plenary in €K	Bureau in €K	Working groups in €K	Secretariat (A, B)
2024	2	2	47	116.1	8.8	13.0	1.5 A; 1 B
2025	2	2	47	116.1	8.8	13.0	1.5 A; 1 B
2026	2	3	47	136.7	5.0	21.8	1.5 A; 1 B
2027	2	3	47	136.7	5.0	21.8	1.5 A; 1 B

*The costs include the per diem, travel costs, interpretation, translation and document printing. These costs are calculated on the basis of standard costs.