

Strasbourg, 3 February 2025

GT-P(2024)4

**STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY  
(CDDEM)**

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**WORKING GROUP ON PARAMETERS FOR THE APPLICATION AND  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REYKJAVÍK PRINCIPLES FOR DEMOCRACY  
(GT-P)**

**REPORT OF THE 2nd MEETING**

**(Strasbourg and online via Zoom, 9-10 December 2024)**

Secretariat Memorandum  
prepared by the  
Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity  
Democratic Institutions and Civil Society Division

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The Steering Committee on Democracy's (CDDEM) Working Group on Parameters for the Application and Implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy (GT-P) held its 2nd meeting on 9-10 December 2024, in Strasbourg and online via Zoom. The morning session of 9 December was facilitated by the CDDEM Secretariat (Co-Secretary Ms Marta BECERRA) with the approval of the Group, pending the election of GT-P Chair and Vice-Chair during the afternoon session of that day. Mr Edwin LEFEBRE (Belgium) was elected as Chair and Mr Georgios CHRYSAFIS as Vice-Chair.

### **1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**

The Secretariat opened the meeting and welcomed all participants, the list of which appears in Appendix I of this report. The agenda was adopted as it appears in Appendix II.

### **2. Tour de table**

This being the first meeting of the GT-P following the election of its permanent members at the 2nd plenary meeting of the CDDEM on 29-30 October 2024, the Working Group took the opportunity to engage in a short tour de table so that members might introduce themselves. Two independent experts – Ms Seema SHAH, Head of Democracy Assessment at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), and Mr Richard YOUNGS, Senior Fellow in the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Europe/ European Democracy Hub – have also joined the GT-P since its last meeting, and were introduced.

### **3. Elections**

The GT-P held elections for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Working Group, and to this end elected Mr Edwin LEFEBRE (Belgium) to the position of Chair, and Mr Georgios CHRYSAFIS (Greece) to the position of Vice-Chair, both with a duration of mandate corresponding to that of the GT-P (end of 2025).

### **4. Statement by the Secretariat**

The Secretariat provided an overview of the discussions that were held at the CDDEM's 2nd plenary in October, which concerned several open questions regarding the form and content of the Parameters: namely, the level of abstraction; the use(s) of the Parameters; potential procedural aspects; the mainstreaming of transversal issues; future-proofing democracy through the document; potential peer-to-peer support and experience-sharing mechanisms to be envisioned in the Parameters and a methodology for their assessment and follow-up. The Secretariat also related general feedback provided on the draft Parameters by various Council of Europe sectors and independent experts with whom they had been in touch during the drafting of the document. GT-P members provided their views on these general questions during the revision of individual parameters.

As a way of presenting possible uses of tools such as the future Parameters, Ms Seema SHAH presented International IDEA's qualitative democracy assessment tool and its methodology – the State of Democracy (SoD) Assessment Framework – developed for public use around the world and applied in some 20 countries since its launch in 2000. Following Ms SHAH's presentation, the GT-P reflected on possible ways for the assessment of the application and implementation of the Reykjavík Principles through the Parameters to take inspiration from this and other such assessment tools and methodologies.

Moreover, the Secretariat presented the GT-P with an attempt to adjust the format of the Parameters and make it more practical, dividing the tool into more general (abstract and narratively framed) "parameters" and breaking them down into more concrete "indicators" to facilitate the use of the tool. This option could allow the document to tackle some of the concerns that had arisen over the course of the development of the Parameters, such as their level of abstraction, and their methodical assessment. The GT-P discussed the possibility of using this mock-up as a basis for reformatting the Parameters and its potential usability for the development of a potential assessment tool.

## **5. Discussion of the 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**

The GT-P reviewed the latest draft of the Parameters as amended by the Secretariat following the first meeting of the GT-P, general remarks made during the 2nd plenary meeting of the CDDEM, and written comments from the members of the Working Group, from other sectors of the Council of Europe, and from independent experts.

The general structure and content of the document was considered to meet the requirements set out in the Terms of reference of the CDDEM. The members invited the Secretariat to proceed with the reformatting of the document as discussed, the decision on this matter being relegated to the next meeting of the GT-P, after members will have had enough time to examine the implications of the adjusted structure.

The Working Group then reviewed each parameter in turn, discussed the proposed revisions, and proceeded to a slight redrafting of the document, following delegations' comments. The participants discussed the merits of certain provisions of the Parameters as they reflect the legitimate differences in the functioning of different member states' democracies. The GT-P reflected once again on the necessity of distinguishing between elements considered to be fundamental for a functioning democracy – which are to be included in the Parameters –, and those that are not essential and thus not to be imposed if perceived to be overly burdensome or contentious.

Similarly, the participants discussed the merits of certain formulations over others, for example the level of exhaustiveness in the covering of certain provisions concerning, e.g., minorities. The possibility of providing clarifications about the purpose and use of the Parameters in a future introductory part of the document was discussed, as a way of dealing with transversal issues to be considered in the use of the document as a whole. Overall, the GT-P agreed that the development of the document was well advanced and that it was now a matter of finetuning certain formulations, rather than adding substantial portions to the text. Nevertheless, some additions in terms of “safeguarding a democratic future” and guaranteeing “democratic resilience” were noted to be desirable.

Desiring a shared understanding of the Parameters, but mindful of a potential undue restriction of legitimate variation of the functioning of democracies–, the GT-P discussed the merits and potential dangers of including a set of definitions or a glossary in the document.

As for the use(s) of the parameters, the GT-P discussed the need to produce a practical tool that guarantees the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles through assessment without leading to the addition of further monitoring mechanisms and procedures.

Any further comments by the members of the Working Group and other participants will be sent to the Secretariat in writing.

## **6. Next steps**

The members tasked the Secretariat with drafting and circulating an informal roadmap for the next steps to be circulated early in 2025. The Secretariat was also asked to circulate among the GT-P and the CDDEM the new version of the Parameters document as amended during the meeting.

The Secretariat was also tasked with drafting an introductory text to accompany the Parameters in the resulting publication, and which is to include elements that answer the questions of *what*, *who*, and *how* concerning their application. In this task, the Secretariat will be assisted by Mr Richard YOUNGS from the European Democracy Hub.

The Secretariat further proposed to present the Working Group with a number of alternative options concerning a possible methodology and model assessment tool for the application of the Parameters, to be sent to the GT-P for consideration before its next meeting. In this task, the Secretariat will be supported by Ms. Seema SHAH from International IDEA.

**7. Any other business**

None.

**8. Dates of meetings in 2025**

The 3rd meeting of the GT-P is scheduled for 6-7 March 2025 and the 4th for 13-14 October 2025. The 3rd and 4th plenary meetings of the CDDEM are scheduled for 26-27 May and 27-28 November respectively.

**APPENDIX I****LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****MEMBERS / MEMBRES****AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE**

Ms Doris WAGNER, Directrice générale de l'éducation et de l'enseignement professionnel au sein du Ministère fédéral de l'Éducation, des Sciences et de la Recherche

**BELGIUM / BELGIQUE**

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

Ms Anne-Laure HOGGE, Service public de Wallonie, SPW Intérieur et Action sociale

**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

**CYPRUS / CHYPRE**

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

**DENMARK / DANEMARK**

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

**GERMANY / ALLEMAGNE**

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

**GREECE / GRECE**

Mr Georgios CHRYSAFIS, expert within the Department of Organisation and Functioning of Second Level of Local Government

Ms Argyro MERKOURI, expert within the Coordination Service

**IRELAND / IRLANDE**

Mr Paris BEAUSANG, Assistant Principal Officer, Franchise Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

**LITHUANIA / LITUANIE**

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

**NETHERLANDS / PAYS-BAS**

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

**NORWAY / NORVEGE**

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

**ROMANIA / ROUMANIE**

Mr Dacian TOLEA

**SPAIN / ESPAGNE**

Mr Ignacio Gil OSÉS (Spain), Senior Advisor, International Relations Unit, Ministry of Territorial Policy and Democratic Memory

**SWEDEN / SUEDE**

Ms Sofia BLID, Desk officer, Ministry of culture, Division för media and democracy

**SWITZERLAND / SUISSE**

Ms Sarah VITTOZ, Collaboratrice scientifique, Département fédéral de justice et police DFJP, Office fédéral de la justice OFJ, Domaine de direction Droit public, Unité Projets législatifs II

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

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

**ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH / CONSEIL CONSULTATIF SUR LA JEUNESSE (CCJ)**

Ms Anja JOKIC, member of the Advisory Council on Youth

Mr Marius SCHLAGETER, Policy Advisor

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

Ms Sophio GELASHVILI, Head of Unit, Legal Co-operation, European Committee on Legal Co-operation

Ms Julie DEVYS, European Committee on Legal Co-operation

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

Ms Anne WEBER, Senior Legal Adviser

**VENICE COMMISSION / COMMISSION DE VENISE**

Mr Nikolaos SITAROPOULOS, Head of Division

**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

Mr Guillaume GROS, Trainee / Stagiaire

**OTHER SECRETARIAT / AUTRE SECRÉTARIAT**

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

**INDEPENDENT EXPERTS / EXPERTS INDEPENDANTS**

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

## APPENDIX II

## AGENDA

Monday, 9 December (9.30-17.30)		
1.	<b>Opening of the meeting</b>	
2.	<b>Adoption of the agenda</b>	[GT-P(2024)OJ2]
3.	<b>Tour de table</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction by the GT-P members</li> </ul>	
4.	<b>Elections</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Election of Chair and Vice-Chair</li> </ul>	
5.	<b>Statement by the Secretariat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feedback provided to the draft Parameters at the 2nd CDDEM plenary meeting and input by various Council of Europe sectors and independent experts</li> <li>- Other relevant developments in the Council of Europe</li> </ul>	[CDDEM(2024)6]
6.	<b>Discussion of the 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</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examination of the revised draft Parameters</li> <li>- Discussion of the introductory elements</li> <li>- Presentation of selected existing methodologies for the assessment of democracy</li> <li>- Discussion of possible uses of the Parameters</li> </ul>	[GT-P(2024)3]
Tuesday, 10 December (9.30-17.30)		
7.	<b>Continuation of Item 6</b>	
8.	<b>Next steps</b>	
9.	<b>Any other business</b>	
10.	<b>Dates of meetings in 2025</b>	