

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 6 May 2026

GT-P2(2026)5

**STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY
(CDDEM)**

**WORKING GROUP ON
THE REYKJAVIK PARAMETERS OF DEMOCRACY - FRAMEWORK
AND METHODOLOGY FOR THEIR APPLICATION
(GT-P2)**

REPORT OF THE 1ST MEETING

(Hybrid meeting, 26-27 March 2026)

prepared by the Secretariat

The CDDEM Working Group on the Reykjavik Parameters of democracy - framework and methodology for their application (GT-P2) held its first meeting on 26-27 March 2026 in a hybrid format (in person and via videoconference on Zoom). The meeting was facilitated by the CDDEM Secretariat (Co-Secretary Marta Becerra), and, following the election of the GT-P2 Chair and Vice-Chair, was chaired by Mr Edwin Lefebvre (Belgium).

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Secretariat opened the meeting and welcomed all participants whose names appear in Appendix I to this report. The agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix II.

2. Information and discussion on the terms of reference, working methods and timetable

The Secretariat provided information on the deliverables and timeline of the GT-P2 working group for the 2025-2027 biennium: to devise a framework and methodology for the application of the Reykjavik Parameters for democracy by the end of 2027, and to finalise a set of guidelines for enhancing participation of women, girls, young people, and persons in vulnerable situations by the end of 2026. The Secretariat recalled that the working group's composition and working methods are guided by the Committee of Ministers Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods. It was reiterated that both elected and non-elected national experts were welcome to participate, particularly those with specific competences relevant to the deliverables, such as minority rights, gender equality, youth engagement, or electoral law. This diversity is sought to enrich the group's ability to address complex and intersecting democratic challenges.

Participants were further acquainted with examples of Council of Europe guidelines in different thematic areas (data protection, gender equality) and with self-assessment tools such as the methodologies used by the Council of Europe Intercultural Cities programme and by the Centre of Expertise in multi-level governance (ELOGE). These examples showcased the flexibility available to the working group in deciding on the format and content of its upcoming deliverables.

3. Tour de table

The members of the working group introduced themselves and asked about the procedures for adopting the guidelines, either by the CDDEM or the Committee of Ministers. It was clarified that, in principle, the guidelines are to be adopted by the Committee and then to be referred to the Committee of Ministers for information. However, in certain cases, such instruments have also been adopted by the latter. The members also discussed the acknowledgment by the Committee of Ministers of the Committee's final deliverable, the parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles, which were adopted by the CDDEM plenary in November 2025. The Secretariat summarised the discussion 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.

4. Elections

The working group GT-P2 elected Edwin Lefebvre (Belgium) as Chair and Tania Mourato (Portugal) as Vice-Chair.

5. Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for democracy: framework and methodology for their application.

The group discussed preliminary issues linked to the nature of the framework and methodology for the application of the Reykjavik Parameters. The discussions focused on clarifying the intended voluntary nature of the framework. Some members expressed concerns about “monitoring fatigue” and possible overlap with existing Council of Europe or other international assessment mechanisms. It was strongly emphasised that the framework is conceptualised as a voluntary, member state-driven guidance tool, providing a range of approaches rather than introducing an additional monitoring layer or ranking mechanism. In response to concerns about terminology (“assessment framework” vs “framework for application”), the Secretariat clarified that the latter is the option agreed by the CDDEM and that participation would be fully voluntary, in line with the decisions adopted at previous CDDEM plenaries.

Ms Seema Shah, International IDEA’s Head of Democracy Assessment, presented possible approaches to develop a framework and methodology for a qualitative democracy self-evaluation. The framework, as set out in document GT-P2(2026)1, was described as 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, participatory approaches – including for example focus groups, citizen assemblies, interviews, and/or stakeholder workshops – would capture on-the-ground perspectives, including from marginalised groups. The questions asked at each level would differ (e.g., efficacy of legal norms at the expert level versus lived experience of citizens at the participatory level). It was also clarified that not all parameters/sub-parameters might be suitable for a participatory evaluation. The methodology would take this into consideration. The process is envisioned as being steered by a broad-based multi-stakeholder committee to ensure political and technical legitimacy (steering committee), but adaptable to national legislative frameworks and traditions.

The members raised several questions regarding the use of such a methodology, for example the time frame for such an exercise, which is estimated at about a year, and the possibility of quantifying the results. Ms Shah’s considered that this could provide an over simplistic representation of the Parameters or sub-Parameters, especially since the aim of the exercise of self-evaluation was not to produce a ranking. The representative of the Advisory Council of Youth emphasised the importance of youth involvement. The members also discussed the issue of flexibility for leveraging existing assessment or participatory mechanisms, be it at national or Council of Europe level (monitoring processes, for example). The Secretariat and Ms Shah reiterated the framework would provide flexibility to member states and that any self-assessment would be context specific, thus eliminating the need for any parallel or redundant layer of assessment for member states. One member also mentioned the possible need for a legal basis for the self-assessment’s steering committees. In line with their voluntary state-driven nature, that would not be essential and in International IDEA’s experience, this has not been necessary in qualitative assessments based on its own methodology.

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

The working group discussed the draft guidelines as set out in document GT-P2(2026)2 in detail. The Secretariat introduced the document, providing a brief summary of the discussions at the CDDEM’s 3rd and 4th plenaries, where the initial draft had been discussed and the approach was agreed upon by the members. The Secretariat recalled the CDDEM’s decisions to adopt a broad approach in terms of target groups, passive and active voting and barriers to be included. The CDDEM also agreed that the guidelines should be a practical guidance tool and that the inclusion of promising practices or country examples would be useful for their application.

The revised draft, prepared by the Council of Europe expert, Professor Anna Lavizzari, has sought to better and more comprehensively integrate Council of Europe standards, to include the mention of the Reykjavik Parameters and the New Democratic Pact for Europe and to introduce new highlight sections where additional guidance is provided.

The draft guidelines address five main categories of barriers to electoral participation (legal/institutional, administrative/procedural, socioeconomic, informational/educational, cultural/social), with an added section on intersectionality and a specific checklist. Regarding terminology, the use of the term “persons in vulnerable situations” was clarified as shifting away from the older “vulnerable groups”. The explicit enumeration of covered groups is to be supported by footnoted references to international and Council of Europe standards, research and case law where applicable. Members debated whether to expand the list to include refugees or groups with a low socioeconomic status, ultimately deciding to treat socioeconomic issues as a cross-cutting theme, rather than as a separate target group. The need for consistency between the guidelines’ terminology and Council of Europe standards was stressed during the discussions. It was agreed that specific recommendations would be introduced with the sentence “Member States should consider the following measures”, in line with several of the examples of guidelines reviewed during the meeting.

The working group then addressed each section in turn. On the section on **legal and institutional factors**, participants discussed the voting requirements for young people, emphasising that they should not be unnecessarily burdensome. A brief exchange took place on the inclusion of the Council of Europe’s Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS 144) as reference for the extension of voting rights to long-term residents, with the decision made to include a reference to extending voting and candidacy rights to “eligible long-term residents”. It was furthermore proposed to reinforce the Council of Europe work related to positive action measures beyond the work undertaken by the Parliamentary Assembly, so as to provide further clarity on the gender equality and diversity standards related to underrepresentation and a lack of diversity in political parties and candidate lists. Examples of good practices related to diversity measures in political representation could be included to illustrate individual recommendations. The group also accepted suggestions relating to reporting on candidate diversity in every legislature. Finally, further examples of removing barriers to voting requirements were added to the good practices box.

In relation to the section **administrative and procedural factors**, the GT-P2 decided to clarify that information about voting registration should be made available also outside the period preceding elections. Participants also debated about the figure of the “person of trust” for voters with disabilities and the potential risks of interference; they agreed to offer flexibility to member states as to the choice of person to assist those voters. On the need for training electoral staff, further emphasis could be put on diversity, with some members requesting flexibility regarding this requirement. The possibility to include mandates and training on diversity for election observation missions was also discussed to be included in the revised draft.

In the section on **socioeconomic factors** the participants agreed to encourage political parties to make use of participatory measures to select candidates and to mention youth organisations and youth party organisations as having a role in supporting youth engagement.

Under the section on **information and education factors**, the GT-P2 agreed to include a reference to outreach to those furthest away from the political system beyond schools and to encourage parliaments and their members to reach out to schools, education systems and communities to explain their democratic institutional role. An addition was also agreed to encourage collaborations with youth organisations. Finally, the group decided to move the part on online violence to the section on violence and harassment and, if appropriate to the topic of electoral participation, to add a reference to the recently adopted Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.

Members expressed satisfaction with the section on **cultural and social norms**. A few wording clarifications were however agreed in the section on **intersectionality and inclusive design** and a request was made to elaborate further on the privacy requirements concerning the collection of disaggregated data.

7. Next steps

The Secretariat informed the working group that a first outline of the framework and methodology for the application of the Reykjavik Parameters would be drafted in co-operation with International IDEA before the summer. The CDDEM would receive a set of guiding questions to share their experiences on democracy assessments and participatory processes or consultations that would serve to inform the development of the framework and methodology for the application of the parameters.

The third draft of the guidelines would be finalised by the Council of Europe expert Prof Lavizzari at the end of April. The group was encouraged to send any additional country examples in particular on the areas where currently no good practices are included in the draft guidelines. Any potential feedback on the text of the third draft guidelines will be done through written procedure ahead of the upcoming CDDEM plenary meeting (8-10 June).

8. Any other business

n/a

9. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the GT-P2 will take place on 15-16 October 2026.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS / MEMBRES

CHAIR / PRESIDENT

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

AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE

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

AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAIDJAN

Mr Parviz RUSTAMOV, Head of Division, Department for Cooperation with International Human Rights Institutions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

Mr Thomas APOLITO, Attaché – Cellule Élections et Participation, Service public de Wallonie SPW Intérieur et Action sociale, Direction de la Prospective et du Développement

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

Apologised for absence / Excusé

FRANCE

Ms Armande PEMBELE, Adjointe au Représentant Permanent, Conseillère politique, presse et communication, Représentation permanente de la France auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

GERMANY / ALLEMAGNE

Ms Anja DIERYCK, Division H III 1- General Policy, Strengthening Democracy, Political Foundations, Federal Ministry of the Interior

GREECE / GRECE

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

Mr Dimitrios PONTIKAKIS, expert within the Directorate of Organisation and Functioning of Local Government

Mr Ioannis MATHIOUDAKIS, Head of the Coordination Service

Ms Argyro MERKOURI, expert within the Coordination Service

LITHUANIA / LITUANIE

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

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

Ms Lisa VAN DER KAADEN

PORTUGAL

Ms Tânia MOURATO, Deputy Director, General Directorate of Local Authorities

SLOVAK REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE SLOVAQUE

Ms Zuzana VIZVÁRYOVÁ, General State Advisor, Modernization and Coordination of Public Administration Unit; Department of Support Activities, Coordination and Modernization Public Administration; Public Administration Section

SPAIN / ESPAGNE

Mr Xavier Frances COLLER PORTA, University Professor, Political Science and Administration, Faculty of Policial Science and Sociology, UNED

UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI

Ms Coralie BLATCHFORD-NEAVE, English Devolution-Oversight and Governance, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

PARTICIPANTS**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE / ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

Ms Carolina LASÉN DIAZ, Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination / Commission sur l'égalité et la non-discrimination

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)

Mr Marcus MELAU, member of the Advisory Council on Youth

OBSERVERS / OBSERVATEURS**EUROPEAN NETWORK OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (ENNHRI) / RESEAU EUROPEEN DES INSTITUTIONS NATIONALES DES DROITS DE L'HOMME (REINDH)**

Ms Edyta TUTA-LORENZ, Senior Human Rights Officer

PAX ROMANA

Ms Begoña OCIO

MOROCCO / MAROC

Mr Abellah ANSANES, Chef de service à la Direction des Affaires Electorales Ministère de l'Intérieur

CAMPAIGN TO UPHOLD RIGHTS IN EUROPE (CURE) / CAMPAGNE POUR LE RESPECT DES DROITS EN EUROPE (CURE)

Mr Konstantin BARANOV, Team member / expert

EXPERTS / EXPERTS

Ms Anna LAVIZZARI, Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow, Department of Political Science and Administration, Faculty of Political Science and Sociology, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

Ms Seema SHAH, Head of Democracy Assessment (DA) at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Stockholm, Sweden

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 COUNCIL OF EUROPE PARTICIPANTS / AUTRES PARTICIPANTS DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**Steering Committee on anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion / Comité directeur sur l'anti-discrimination, la diversité et l'inclusion (CDADI)**

Ms Oana TABA, Programme Manager, Roma and Travellers Division

Ms Marina VASIC, Roma and Travellers Division

Division for Gender Equality / Division pour l'égalité de genre

Ms Cécile GREBOVAL

INTERPRETERS / INTERPRETES

Ms Bettina LUDEWIG QUAINÉ

Ms Lucie DEBURLET-SUTER

Mr Didier JUNGLING

APPENDIX II

AGENDA

Thursday, 26 March (9.30-17.30)		
1.	Opening of the meeting by the Secretariat	
2.	Adoption of the agenda	[GT-P2(2026)OJ1]
3.	Information and discussion on the terms of reference, working methods and timetable	[CDDEM(2025)20]
4.	Tour de table	
5.	Elections	
6.	Discussion on the Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for democracy: framework and methodology for their application. - Presentation and exchange with Seema SHAH, International IDEA, of the approach to the model framework and methodology for the application of the Reykjavik Parameters.	[GT-P2(2026)1] [GT-P2(2026)4]
Friday, 27 March (9.30-17.30)		
7.	Discussion on the guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls and young persons, vulnerable groups. - Presentation and exchange with Prof. Anna LAVIZZARI, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. - Examination of the draft guidelines. - Promising practices.	[GT-P2(2026)2] [GT-P2(2026)3]
8.	Next steps	
9.	Any other business	
10.	Date of the next meeting	