COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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STEERING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY

(CDDEM)

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

REPORT OF THE 2nd MEETING

(Online meeting, 15-16 October 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 second meeting on 15-16 October 2026 in an online format (with the Chair in person and via videoconference on Zoom). The meeting was chaired by Edwin Lefebre (Belgium).

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Chair welcomed participants – whose names appear in Appendix I – and thanked the Secretariat and the experts, Seema Shah and Anna Lavizzari, for their work. The agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix II.

2. Discussion on the Parameters for the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for democracy: framework and methodology for their application

Seema Shah, an independent expert from International IDEA, presented the draft three-part, voluntary framework for reviewing democracy in a given member state (as set out in document GT-P2(2026)6). Part I (institutional review) involves reviewing relevant laws and constitutional provisions, policies, programmes, standards and working arrangements between public authorities, including through the consultation of government agencies and public institutions. Part II (participatory review) aims to explore how people experience those arrangements in practice, including through consultation with citizens, civil society, media, academia and other relevant groups. The two strands are brought together in Part III: analysis, validation, policy recommendations and a roadmap for reform. The aim of the review framework is to obtain a holistic, evidence-based account of democratic strengths, gaps and trends, but is not meant to deliver a score or ranking.

In order to steer the process, a steering committee (SC) is suggested to be set up. The SC should provide oversight and quality control, define the scope, timeline and budget, and engage the research team. The research team's role would be to adapt data-gathering questionnaires and to analyse the evidence collected. In co-operation with the SC, the research team would draft the findings (Part III). A well-planned review should typically take about a year, though countries may narrow its scope according to resources, priorities, vulnerabilities or anticipated reforms. Parts I and II may take place in either order at the choice of the member state. Seema Shah provided further detail on the participatory review. Public input can be gathered through surveys, workshops, focus groups or assemblies, depending on the context, time and budget. She stressed the importance of participants' inclusion – particularly hearing from people in vulnerable situations and from marginalised groups – and validating findings with stakeholders before publication of the recommendations/roadmap.

A question was raised whether the proposed methodology had been tested. Seema Shah replied that this exact version had not, but that International IDEA had used a similar State of Democracy assessment in more than 20 countries, with reports available on their website.

Following the presentation of the methodological framework, the Secretariat provided an update of the first meeting of the Reykjavik Parameters piloting hub (13-14 October). The Secretariat clarified that the piloting hub is a separate activity supporting the work on the future application of the Reykjavik Parameters, and part of a co-operation project to be deployed in 2027. The hub task is not to make decisions about the methodological framework – which is to be drafted by the CDDEM with support of International IDEA – but to support peer exchange about practical considerations when running a self-review and support country-specific piloting of the Parameters. In this way, its work may be of interest to CDDEM.

The piloting hub's funding is provided by the New Democratic Pact for Europe and its task is to provide support to piloting states focusing on the participants' experience with running democratic self-reviews in practice. Its participating countries are Estonia, Finland, France, the Netherlands and Portugal. The first country to pilot the Parameters will be Estonia in 2027.

The hub's initial discussions highlighted that the strongest benefits for engaging in a self-review exercise lie in evaluating existing legislation, policies and practices, and as a way to increase resilience of democratic institutions. These benefits are linked to the main criteria suggested for determining the scope of the self-review: its relevance to current democratic challenges and national priorities. Members of the hub highlighted as well the importance of turning recommendations into policy change. Participants in the piloting hub favoured a SC that includes external stakeholders and independent institutions, while remaining small enough to provide strategic direction.

The United Kingdom delegate proposed that the GT-P2 consider expanding the draft framework to cover important considerations when seeking to apply the Parameters, linked to Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 on deliberative democracy, with the current draft text included with the framework as a practical example of how a deliberative application could be adopted. The UK explained that the group could model the draft framework on the recommendations in Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 as they may be interpreted for an application of the Parameters. The UK subsequently provided its proposal in writing, however the working group did not have time to discuss it in detail; written comments were thus invited from the members. Furthermore, the Bureau would be consulted on the different modalities for applying the Reykjavik Parameters, to provide guidance on the matter.

After the exchanges, the GT-P2 proceeded to examine the draft methodological framework in detail. A question arose regarding the application of ethical safeguards and the group agreed to include in the draft that ethical requirements apply to all human-subject research, while noting that countries have different review standards. A data protection section can be added as well, including clarification that responses would be anonymised. The group furthermore discussed the scope of the review and the composition of the SC, emphasising the importance of balanced representation and broad stakeholder consultation, while recognising the need for flexibility to accommodate different national contexts. The discussion also clarified that a professional research team would collect and analyse relevant data, working in co-operation with the SC on scope and choices, while retaining professional judgment over research methods. The GT-P2 supported providing model terms of reference to clarify the SC and researchers' roles and protect research independence.

Participants also discussed whether the institutional and participatory parts of the review could be undertaken in either order, and suggested renaming the parts so as not to establish a pre-determined order. With regards the participatory part, some members proposed consolidating and reducing the numbers of lenses.

Participants moreover discussed scope and timing: a comprehensive review would take about a year, sometimes up to 15 months, while a narrower exercise could take less. On this, the GT-P2 agreed that the framework could indicate a time range dependent on the scope of the review. Adaptations related to the choice of parameters to focus on, priorities, phasing of the review and participation are possible, without hindering the core of the methodological framework itself.

The item was concluded with the final product (Part III) of the review. GT-P2 members favoured accessible communication, such as a plain-language summary or video, while recognising that some detailed or sensitive findings might not be made public. Transparency was considered as the default, subject to what is appropriate.

3. Discussion on the guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls and young persons, vulnerable groups

The Secretariat introduced the updated draft of the guidelines, providing a summary of the main changes introduced after the CDDEM Plenary in June 2026. The terminology had been standardised, in particular in relation to the target groups, sources had been added for definitions and factual claims, and listed practices are now described as examples of practices, considering that the text does not set out criteria for determining good practices. The draft had also strengthened the components on girls' participation in political life and for elections.

Supported by the CDDEM consultant Prof. Anna Lavizzari, University of Pisa, the working group discussed and finalised the draft guidelines as set out in document GT-P2(2026)2rev2.

Regarding the reference to **national minorities**, the group discussed the terminology used in the draft. Following consultation with the Secretariat of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, it was proposed to retain the references to persons "affiliating with" along with "belonging to" national minorities, in line with recent Council of Europe practice, subject to agreement at the CDDEM plenary meeting. One member requested replacing the term "affiliating with" with the term "belonging to national minorities" in line with the language used in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Regarding the summary of **key principles and actions**, proposed final amendments included broadening references to minorities, adding gender to the list of barriers to electoral participation, changing "prevent and address" harassment to "prevent and combat," to align with Council of Europe instruments and mentioning AI-generated deepfakes as a form of online violence. The group also agreed to add other entities responsible for electoral management (for member states with bodies different to Electoral Management Bodies) and the use of "encourages" in relation to political parties, to respect their independent operation. One member requested the insertion of a footnote relating to their use of the term "gender".

Regarding the **aim and scope**, a reference to the existence of varying democratic systems and their implications for national implementation was agreed.

Under **candidacy and voting requirements,** the inclusion of "gender" among potential grounds for exclusion from electoral participation was discussed, with differing views expressed.

Regarding **representation and diversity in political parties and candidate lists**, the group considered the necessity of special measures to ensure balanced representation. A wording was suggested that these measures can "foster" balance representation and supporting evidence will be provided for this conclusion.

On **monitoring and enforcement of equality and gender equality standards**, monitoring of diversity of candidates may prove difficult due to data protection constraints in some countries; therefore the drafting was adjusted to reflect that preliminary measures may be necessary to enable monitoring.

On **training of electoral and observation staff,** the group agreed to remove the reference to the diversity and inclusivity of electoral and observation staff in the heading but included a reference to free and fair selection procedures that encourage diversity.

On the part on **financial resources for voter transportation and candidacy**, the reference to lower income background was kept but the reference to the specifics of women with such backgrounds was removed.

The GT-P2 exchanged on how to best reflect the needs of girls under **civic education in schools and communities** and agreed to reference the existence of gender stereotypes and lack of role models as a distinct barrier for the empowerment of girls.

Also, additional Council of Europe standards and resources were proposed and added to the Annex I of the Guidelines.

Finally, it was confirmed during the discussion that the Guidelines would be submitted to the CDDEM plenary for possible adoption at its meeting in November 2026, in accordance with the planned timetable as set out in the Committee's terms of reference.

4. Next steps

The Chair gave the participants a deadline of **26 October** for written comments on the draft Methodological framework and on the draft Guidelines. Revised drafts for both documents will be circulated to all CDDEM members ahead of its 6th Plenary meeting on 18-20 November 2026.

The work on the Methodology for the application of the Parameters is expected to be finalised following its piloting in Estonia through the REVIVE co-operation project that will conclude at the end of 2027. The draft Methodology will be refined through both the feedback from the piloting project and the work of GT-P2 in 2027. The final draft is foreseen to be adopted by CDDEM's 8th plenary meeting before the end of 2027.

5. Any other business

Participants raised no other business.

6. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of GT-P2 will take place on 22-23 March 2027 (tbc).

APPENDIX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CHAIR / PRESIDENT

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

AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE

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

BULGARIA / BULGARIE

Svetlana STAMENOVA, Human Rights Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

CYPRUS / CHYPRE

Giorgos KAOULLA, Officer of Interior, Elections Department, Ministry of Interior

Giorgos STYLIANOU, Elections Department, Ministry of Interior

GERMANY / ALLEMAGNE

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

GREECE / GRECE

Georgios CHRYSAFIS, expert within the Directorate of Organisation and Functioning of Local Government

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

LITHUANIA / LITUANIE

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

NETHERLANDS / PAYS-BAS

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

PORTUGAL

Tânia MOURATO, Deputy Director, General Directorate of Local Authorities

ROMANIA / ROUMANIE

Ursula NICOLAE, adviser, General Secretariat of the Government, Service for Strategic Support and Cooperation with the Civil Society Organisations

SLOVAK REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE SLOVAQUE

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

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

SWITZERLAND / SUISSE

Beat KUONI, Conseiller juridique, Chancellerie fédérale, juriste au sein de la Section des droits politiques

UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI

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

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

Olga BURUIANA, Project Teams

OBSERVERS / OBSERVATEURS

PAX ROMANA

Begoña OCIO

MOROCCO / MAROC

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)

Konstantin BARANOV, Team member / expert

INDEPENDENT EXPERTS / EXPERT·ES INDEPENDENT·ES

Anna LAVIZZARI, University of Pisa, Italy

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

SECRETARIAT

CDDEM SECRETARIAT / SECRETARIAT DU CDDEM

Urška UMEK, Secretary of the CDDEM / Secrétaire du CDDEM

Marta BECERRA, Co-Secretary of the CDDEM / Co-Secrétaire du CDDEM

Maria ASENSIO VELASCO, Senior Policy Officer / Chargée des politiques senior

Isabelle ETTER, Assistant / Assistante

OTHER COUNCIL OF EUROPE PARTICIPANTS / AUTRES PARTICIPANTS DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Group of States against Corruption / Groupe d'États contre la Corruption (GRECO)

Anne WEBER, Senior Legal Adviser

INTERPRETERS / INTERPRETES

Katia DI STEFANO
Remy JAIN
Marie DELUMEAU

APPENDIX II

AGENDA

Thursday, 15 October (9.30-17.30)		
1.	Opening of the meeting	
2.	Adoption of the agenda	[GT-P2(2026)OJ2]
3.	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	[CDDEM(2026)6] [CDDEM(2026)6 addendum] [GT-P2(2026)6]
Friday, 16 October (9.30-13.00)		
4.	Discussion on the guidelines on enhancing participation in elections of women, girls and young persons, vulnerable groups - Presentation and exchange with Prof. Anna LAVIZZARI, University of Pisa - Examination of the draft guidelines - Promising practices	[GT-P2(2026) 2rev2] [GT-P2(2026) 2rev2 addendum]
5.	Next steps	
6.	Any other business	
7.	Date of the next meeting	