

## 135<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee of Ministers (Chişinău, 15 May 2026)

### 3. New Democratic Pact for Europe

#### c. From Reykjavík to the Pact: strengthening democratic resilience

##### Reference documents

CM/Del/Dec(2026)1559/2.1, SG/Inf(2026)13, CM/Del/Dec(2024)133/2b, CM/Del/Dec(2025)134/3, CM(2025)194-add, CM/Rec(2026)4, CM/Rec(2026)1, CM/Rec(2026)2, CM/Rec(2026)3

#### *Decisions*

The Committee of Ministers

#### **Support for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of member States**

1. in addition to its decisions adopted with respect to the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the Committee of Ministers took note of the position of national delegations and of the work conducted by the Council of Europe with respect to other conflicts and crises in Europe. The Committee of Ministers reiterated its call on the Russian Federation to comply with its international obligations and to immediately withdraw completely and unconditionally its forces from Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova; it reasserted its unwavering support for their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, within their internationally recognised borders;

2. recalled the set of decisions adopted in relation to the conflict in Georgia at the 1559<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Deputies (CM/Del/Dec(2026)1559/2.1) and took note of the 33<sup>rd</sup> consolidated report of the Secretary General on the conflict in Georgia (October 2025 – March 2026) (SG/Inf(2026)13), as well as statements of member States on this matter;

3. with respect to the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, recalling its decisions adopted at the 133<sup>rd</sup> and 134<sup>th</sup> Sessions (CM/Del/Dec(2024)133/2b and CM/Del/Dec(2025)134/3), welcomed the Joint Declaration by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, also signed as a witness by the President of the United States of America, on the outcomes of their meeting held in Washington D.C., United States of America, on 8 August 2025, as well as the initialling of the Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan by the Foreign Ministers of both countries, and subsequent progress made by the parties towards further consolidation and institutionalisation of peace, including through implementation of confidence building measures;

#### **System of the European Convention on Human Rights**

4. recalling its unwavering commitment to the system of the European Convention on Human Rights and mindful of the need to preserve its integrity as the cornerstone of the protection of human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Europe, welcomed the continuation of co-ordinated efforts undertaken by Council of Europe bodies and institutions to assist member States with the implementation of the Convention at the national level, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and margin of appreciation;

5. emphasised the importance of the principle of subsidiarity and the margin of appreciation for the implementation of the Convention at the national level by the High Contracting Parties, reinforced by the entry into force of Protocol No. 15, as well as the concept of shared responsibility among the High Contracting Parties, the Court, and the Committee of Ministers to ensure the proper functioning of the Convention system;

6. reaffirmed the importance of taking into account the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in a way that gives full effect to the Convention and the unconditional obligation of member States to abide by the final judgments of the Court in any case to which they are Parties and underlined the fundamental importance of the execution of the Court's judgments and the primary role of the Committee of Ministers in the effective supervision of that process; recalled further the need to continue improving the effectiveness of the supervision mechanism;

7. reiterated the Russian Federation's ongoing legal obligation to implement judgments and decisions of the Court, including the payment of just satisfaction, also in interstate and interstate related cases and, in this context, recalled in particular the Grand Chamber judgment in the case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* delivered on 9 July 2025;

8. welcomed the decision taken, in full respect for the independence of the Court and the binding nature of its judgments, to extend the format of the exchange of views of the Committee of Ministers (Deputies) with the President of the Court held twice a year to include one supplementary afternoon exchange each autumn on developments in the Convention case law and principles;

### **Rule of law**

9. reaffirmed once again its, and member States', commitment to protect, strengthen and promote the rule of law at all levels, and to ensure that legal professionals, including the judiciary and lawyers, can exercise their functions free from threats, attacks or coercion;

10. welcomed and endorsed the Updated Rule of Law Checklist adopted by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) at its 145<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session (Venice, 12-13 December 2025);

11. encouraged its wide use by parliaments, governments and other State authorities, local and regional authorities, civil society and international organisations, as a tool for assessing the rule of law from the viewpoint of constitutional and legal structures, legislation in force and existing case law and as an instrument for resilient democratic institutions;

### **Strengthening democracy**

12. took note of the Parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavík Principles, as they appear in document CM(2025)194-add;

13. encouraged member States to make use of these Parameters in conformity with their constitutional order and national legislation;

14. recalled that the Parameters are meant to help member States identify their strengths as well as to improve their responses to potential vulnerabilities in the field of democracy and noted that a methodological framework to support their application is currently being developed;

### **Democracy, freedom of expression and safety of journalists**

15. recalling its strong commitment to securing and strengthening democracy and good governance at all levels, and stressing the importance of impartial election observation as a cornerstone in safeguarding electoral integrity and reinforcing public trust in democratic institutions, took note of the "Paris call to Action on Election Observation"; also recalled the importance for member States to give appropriate follow-up to the findings and conclusions of international election observation missions;

16. reiterated the Council of Europe's leading role in setting standards on freedom of expression, including in the digital sphere;

17. welcomed the recent Recommendation on online safety and empowerment of users and content creators (CM/Rec(2026)4) and the Guidelines on the implications of generative AI for freedom of expression, as well as new policy documents providing guidance for more strategic and effective efforts to safeguard the integrity of information and strengthen media and information literacy among European citizens;

18. encouraged member States to implement Council of Europe standards in this field, including through co-operation activities, capacity building and awareness-raising;
19. welcomed the progress of the “Journalists Matter” campaign, now in its third year, and reaffirmed the need to consolidate key achievements, such as the network of national focal points, national co-ordination mechanisms for the safety of journalists and dedicated national action plans, and called on member States to strengthen efforts to address threats against journalists and other media actors, including those identified through the Platform for the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, more effectively and combat impunity for crimes committed against them;

### **Social rights and social justice for democratic resilience**

20. underlined the importance for the States Parties to the European Social Charter and its monitoring procedures for the protection of social and economic rights of citizens across Europe and reaffirmed the collective duty to respect, promote and further develop social rights and social justice, which are essential for democratic resilience, stability and security; welcomed the Chişinău Declaration adopted at the High-level Conference on Social Rights – The European Social Charter, organised by the Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, and in the context of the New Democratic Pact for Europe, as well as the steps taken by several member States to broaden their commitments under the European Social Charter;
21. encouraged member States, as appropriate, to consider accepting additional provisions, and for those who have not yet done so to consider ratifying the Additional Protocol providing for a system of collective complaints and ratifying the revised European Social Charter;
22. also welcomed the organisation of the next High-level Conference on Social Rights – the European Social Charter to take place in 2029 under the auspices of the Portuguese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers;

### **Inclusive societies and non-discrimination, including all forms of intolerance**

23. reiterated that discrimination, on any ground, must be prevented and combated; underlined the important role of the Council of Europe in this regard and reaffirmed the commitment of member States to continue strengthening efforts towards inclusive societies;
24. reiterated that the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is a key aspect of human rights protection, democratic participation, and inclusive societies, and encouraged member States to continue to implement Council of Europe standards in this field;
25. welcomed the Council of Europe Strategy for Roma and Traveller<sup>1</sup> inclusion (2026–2030), as well as the work and engagement of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights with Roma and Traveller communities;
26. welcomed and further encouraged the work of the Secretary General's Special Representative on antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and all forms of religious intolerance (SRSG); in light of the rising levels of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred across Europe, reaffirmed the importance of the SRSG's mandate in fostering inclusive societies by combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, in line also with relevant Council of Europe standards; encouraged synergies with other Council of Europe bodies and co-operation with relevant international organisations and national bodies working in this field, in order to strengthen efforts to address these alarming trends and foster living together, including through interreligious dialogue; invited, to this effect, the SRSG to pursue and strengthen this co-operation through dedicated annual co-ordination meetings;

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

## **Equality and gender equality**

27. underlined that equality, gender equality, diversity and inclusion are powerful tools for protecting democracy and reinforcing democratic resilience, benefiting society as a whole by strengthening stability, safety, security, trust, creativity and prosperity; emphasised that the effective embedding and mainstreaming of equality across all policy areas, with a whole-of-society approach to decision making, are crucial for ensuring the adaptive and resilient democracies of tomorrow;

28. welcomed the recent Recommendations on equality and artificial intelligence (CM/Rec(2026)1) and on accountability for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (CM/Rec(2026)2), as well as the ongoing work to provide policy guidance to member States in their efforts to foster equality and to combat all forms of discrimination;

29. encouraged member States to continue implementing Council of Europe standards in these fields; to prevent and combat violence against women and girls, including by ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention); and to ensure the full, equal, and meaningful participation in democratic and public life for all, paying particular attention to women and girls;

## **Youth participation**

30. recalled the Final Declaration of the 10<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth entitled 'Young People for Democracy: Youth Perspectives in Action', held in Malta in October 2025, which highlighted the role of the Council of Europe as a key driving force in developing youth policy in Europe, owing to its pioneering co-management system and core instruments, and welcomed the follow-up steps taken, which charted the way ahead for the Organisation's youth policy;

31. welcomed all the actions undertaken to engage young people at European level in practicing, learning, innovating and defending democracy, in particular the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)3 on the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life; the Council of Europe Reference Framework on a Youth Perspective and the steps taken by the Secretary General to integrate youth perspectives across the Council of Europe's work; as well as the work under the Presidency of the Republic of Moldova of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, on young people's access to rights in an age of disinformation; underlined that these efforts contribute to democratic resilience by supporting meaningful youth participation, including through co-management mechanisms, fostering safe and inclusive civic spaces, and ensuring that participation mechanisms remain responsive in times of crisis, conflict and recovery; all these actions represent a significant contribution to the New Democratic Pact for Europe in the field of youth;

32. welcomed the organisation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Ministers responsible for youth by the Luxembourg authorities in 2028;

## **Civil society**

33. considering that "civil society is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy" as stated in the Reykjavík Declaration, recalled the value of fostering meaningful and effective engagement between civil society, including human rights defenders, and the Council of Europe and reiterated its commitment to the full implementation of the "Road map on the Civil society engagement with the Council of Europe 2024-2027";

34. reaffirmed the importance of an enabling environment for the functioning of civil society and of national human rights institutions and, in this context, welcomed the second edition of the Council of Europe High-level Conference with Ombudsperson Institutions and National Human Rights Institutions (ON Forum), held on 12 and 13 March 2026 in Strasbourg and invited its Deputies to reflect on the possibility of institutionalising the ON Forum as an annual platform;

35. remained committed to ensure that safeguarding civic space in member States remains at the forefront of its agenda, while promoting the implementation of Council of Europe and other relevant international standards on freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression;

36. reaffirmed its engagement for the work of the Contact Group on co-operation with Belarusian democratic forces and civil society and reiterated the need to find ways to enhance co-operation with Russian and Belarusian human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media and independent civil society who are fully committed to the Organisation's values, principles and goals, and welcomed the initiatives undertaken in this respect by the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional authorities, as well as the recent inauguration of a Council of Europe Information Point for Belarusian people in Vilnius (Lithuania).