Terms of reference of the

Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)

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 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Category: Steering committee
Duration: 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2027[1]
Programme: Anchoring democratic values in European societies
Sub-programme: Freedom of expression and information – Safety of journalists

Main tasks

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, and bearing in mind the Council of Europe legal standards, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the findings and recommendations of the relevant monitoring mechanisms, the CDMSI steers the Council of Europe's work in the fields of freedom of expression, media, digital governance and other information society-related issues. The CDMSI advises the Committee of Ministers and takes part in standard-setting activities on all questions within its area of expertise, including freedom, independence, pluralism and diversity of media, safety of journalists, support for professional journalism, protection and promotion of human rights, in particular freedom of expression as protected by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, both online and offline. The CDMSI facilitates and promotes co-operation among Council of Europe member States by developing common policies, reviewing their implementation and fulfilling any other activity which might be assigned to it by the Committee of Ministers.
In particular, the CDMSI is instructed to:

i. take due account of the Reykjavik Declaration[2] in conducting its activities and submit proposals for its implementation as appropriate;
ii. take account of the relevant key findings and challenges set out in the Secretary General's 2023 Report on the state of democracy, human rights and rule of law "An Invitation to Recommit to the Values and Standards of the Council of Europe";
iii. evaluate, plan and carry out standard-setting activities in areas within its expertise, including review and consolidation of existing instruments, in the light of the digital transformation;
iv. promote and facilitate awareness raising on Council of Europe standards and their implementation by member States in its fields of competence;
v. identify emerging issues and challenges to member States in areas within its expertise, conduct studies and legal analyses on freedom of expression and media-related issues, with a special focus on the challenges arising for freedom of expression from digital transformation and undue influence on democratic processes, and make proposals to the Committee of Ministers;
vi. ensure follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society (10-11 June 2021), and Committee of Ministers' decisions taken subsequent to the Ministerial Conference;
vii. oversee the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors: promote and disseminate the Implementation Guide to the Recommendation as a supporting tool to boost concrete measures and initiatives; co-ordinate a comprehensive campaign to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and support corresponding campaigns at national level; for the purposes of the campaign, provide guidance for the elaboration of national action plans on the safety of journalists and other media actors and facilitate best practices sharing in the field;
viii. support the implementation of the documents adopted by the Council of Europe in the sphere of the freedom of expression and digital technologies, in the light of the most recent developments in the field;
ix. co-operate with other relevant Council of Europe bodies such as the T-PD and the CDCJ in field of the protection of personal data and the right to private life where relevant;
x. follow and, as appropriate, contribute to the substantive aspects of co-operation programmes with Council of Europe member States and support activities within national initiatives in the field of the media and information society;
xi. take into consideration in its thematic work the European Convention on Human Rights and the evolving case law of the European Court of Human Rights;
xii. follow the implementation of the non-binding instruments that it has prepared as well as conventions for which it has been given supervision by the Committee of Ministers; 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;
xiii. orient and oversee the activities carried out by its subordinate bodies, notably the Committee of Experts on online safety and empowerment of content creators and users (MSI-eSEC) and the Committee of Experts on the implications of generative AI for freedom of expression (MSI-AI) (cf. separate terms of reference);
xiv. provide input to the Committee of Ministers in view of the regular, high-level dialogue with member States and partners on delivering on the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy;
xv. raise-awareness about 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;

[1] These terms of reference are approved for the first biennial period 2024-2025. For the second biennial period 2026-2027, they are approved on a provisional basis, subject to confirmation upon the adoption of the budget for 2026-2027.
[2] Reykjavík Declaration - United around our values.

xvi. 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;
xvii. 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 Roma and Traveller[3] issues;
xviii. where relevant, contribute to strengthening meaningful engagement with civil society organisations and national human rights institutions in its work;
xix. 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;
xx. 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 and Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong;
xxi. where relevant, take account of, and propose effective responses to, the challenges posed in its field of competence by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Main deliverables

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

	Category ▼	Priority ▼	Deadline ▼
1. Draft Recommendation on online safety and empowerment of content creators and users (cf. MSI-eSEC terms of reference)	C	1	31/12/2025
2. Draft Guidelines on the implications of generative artificial intelligence for freedom of expression (cf. MSI-AI terms of reference)	C	1	31/12/2025
3. 10 steps to counter disinformation - Strategy and practical tools based on existing Council of Europe standards and other instruments	C	1	31/12/2025
4. Feasibility study on immersive reality applications and their implications for freedom of expression	C	2	31/12/2025
5. Indicators for media and information literacy (MIL) strategies at national level: practical and actionable guidance on how to enact MIL strategies at a national level to effectively implement Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership and to provide guidance for co-ordination amongst different actors, funding, reach audiences that are more difficult to reach and operationalise existing MIL standards	C	2	31/12/2025
6. Campaign to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and support corresponding campaigns at national level	A	1	31/12/2027
7. Draft Recommendation on a diverse and competitive online media environment beyond competition regulation	C	1	31/12/2027
8. Report on disinformation campaigns/information operations attributed to foreign governments, their methods and impacts and possible remedies	C	2	31/12/2027
9. Draft Guidelines on defamation in the media, based on the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (to further develop the Guidelines on safeguarding privacy in the media)	A	1	31/12/2027
10. Report on social media and other platforms' impact on self-determination, freedom of thought, choice and action – the power of platforms to shape public opinion, trends and challenges	A	2	31/12/2027
11. Compilation of promising practices at national level and tools for the implementation of relevant aspects of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 on combating hate speech at national level (in co-operation with CDADI)	A	2	31/12/2027
12. Review report on the implementation of relevant aspects of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 on combating hate speech (in co-operation with CDADI)	B	2	31/12/2027
13. Practical media and information literacy tools to help adult media users understand the digital media environment and navigate their media choices, in engaging formats and user-friendly language	A	1	31/12/2027
14. Draft Recommendation on the role and functions of media regulators in a platform-based media and communication environment (subject to co-ordination with EPRA)	C	1	31/12/2027

Key
A: deliverable under preparation (2022-2023 terms of reference or Committee of Ministers' decision) or deliverable foreseen in the terms of reference provisionally approved for 2024-2025 and reviewed where relevant in the framework of the preparation of the draft Programme and Budget 2024-2027
B: review of implementation/re-examination foreseen by the recommendation/protocol/convention
C: newly proposed deliverable

[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(2023)132.

Composition

- Members

Governments of member States are invited to designate one or more representatives of the highest possible rank in the fields of freedom of expression, media, safety of journalists and digital governance.
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;
- Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI);
- Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT);
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI);
- European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ);
- Consultative Committee of the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data (T-PD);
- Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY);
- Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH);
- Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU);
- Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM);
- Joint Council on Youth (CMJ);
- European Audiovisual Observatory;
- 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 Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE);
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);
- Organization of American States (OAS);
- UN agencies (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO));
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

- 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;
- European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA);
- Article 19;
- Association of European Journalists (AEJ);
- Black Sea Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities (BRAF);
- Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE);
- Conférence Permanente de l'Audiovisuel Méditerranée (COPEAM);
- Committee to protect journalists (CPJ);
- European Broadcasting Union (EBU);
- European Digital Rights (EDRi);
- European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF);
- European Youth Forum (EYF);
- International Media Support (IMS);
- International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX);
- Internet Rights and Principle Coalition (IWF);
- Internet Society;
- Internet Watch Foundation;
- Online/More Colour in the Media (OL/MCM);
- News Media Coalition (NMC);
- Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

Observer status may be requested in accordance with Article 8 of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 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 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

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

The CDMSI will appoint from amongst its members up to 5 Rapporteurs on mainstreamed perspectives, including a Gender Equality Rapporteur.
Subject to the agenda, the chairs of its subordinate structures may be invited to attend CDMSI's Bureau and/or plenary meetings.

Subordinate structure(s)

The CDMSI co-ordinates, supervises and follows the work of its subordinate bodies:

- (2024-2025) Committee of Experts on online safety and empowerment of content creators and users (MSI-eSEC) (cf. separate terms of reference);
- (2024-2025) Committee of Experts on the implications of generative artificial intelligence for freedom of expression (MSI-AI) (cf. separate terms of reference).

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	3	47	126.3	12.8	-	2 A; 1 B
2025	2	3	47	126.3	12.8	-	2 A; 1 B
2026	2	3	47	↔	↔	-	↔
2027	2	3	47	↔	↔	-	↔

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