



Questionnaire on Democratic Security for Council of Europe intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies

Deadline 4 December 2026

Background: towards democratic security

As the New Democratic Pact for Europe (the Pact) concludes its consultation phase, it is engaging with members and secretariats of the Council of Europe's intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies. This engagement comes at a time when member States are confronted by a variety of complex and evolving challenges, such as rising democratic backsliding, increased polarization, shifting geopolitics, rapid digital and technological changes, global hybrid threats, military aggression, authoritarian interference, global environmental crisis, social inequalities and fragmentation, and growing pressures on democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law.

People are experiencing these threats firsthand and therefore have growing doubts about the benefits of democratic institutions. Yet there are reasons for hope: recent studies suggest that the democratic recession may be plateauing, and historical evidence shows that 70% of episodes of autocratisation over the past 30 years have been reversed through democratic turnarounds. There are opportunities for renewal, innovative solutions through collective intelligence and action.

The Council of Europe Secretary General's 2025 and 2026 Reports point to the need to renew democracy to rethink security and set out democratic security as the foundation of lasting peace and stability in Europe. Democratic security should therefore not be understood only as a defensive response to threats. It can offer a positive model of law-based security: a way of strengthening democratic societies, rebuilding trust, protecting citizens and institutions, and creating the conditions for lasting peace and prosperity, including at global level.

The concept of democratic security was first adopted at the 1993 Council of Europe Vienna Summit. It identified free elections, free expression, minority protection, and respect for international law as essential commitments for democratic security for a Europe at a time of reunification. In 2005, the Warsaw Summit reaffirmed this commitment and further insisted that strong democratic institutions were a foundation for peace and stability in Europe.

Today, democratic security provides the strategic rationale: the recognition that Europe's security depends on the strength and resilience of its democratic institutions, and that confronting contemporary threats requires strengthening democracy itself. The consultations under the New Democratic Pact for Europe are therefore meant to bring more granularity to the concept of democratic security in the current context by consulting experts from member States in different areas.

During the last decades, the Council of Europe's intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies have undertaken crucial work in upholding, strengthening and protecting the core aspects of democratic stability through their work on the rule of law, human rights and democracy. In this era of



complex and evolving challenges their work remains vital, at the same time needing to adapt and evolve.

The Council of Europe Ministers' Deputies Group of Rapporteurs on Democracy (GR-DEM) will discuss the concept of democratic security on 15 October 2026. The consultation of intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies should bring a complementary expert perspective and show how democratic security can be reflected in specific policy areas.

All intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies are therefore invited to fill out one consolidated questionnaire per committee and respond **by 4 December 2026**.

In support of this written consultation, an interactive in-person working session will take place on 12 October 2026 with a range of intergovernmental committees across the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI) and Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII) to address some of the questions below.

The proposals gathered during this process will feed into consultations under the New Democratic Pact for Europe to provide a policy framework for action. The aim is to translate this concept into a shared agenda, rooted in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the European Social Charter and the [Reykjavík Principles for Democracy](#), to strengthen democratic resilience and deterrence, rebuild public trust and reconnect citizens with democratic institutions. It will also feed into the parallel and wider reform process of the Council of Europe that is meant to provide the institutional capacity to deliver the tools, structures and resources needed to turn these ambitions into results. The results of the overall consultation process of the New Democratic Pact will be submitted to member States at the April 2027 Ministerial Conference.

Questions for intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies

1. What should democratic security mean in today's European context? Building on the Council of Europe's crucial work on protecting human rights, the rule of law and democracy and the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy, what should be the main objectives and priorities of democratic security? Possible areas emerging from the Pact consultations include:

- *Democratic dividends, prosperity and equality for all*: democracy and the rule of law as conditions for a level playing field, investment and sustainable economic growth based on social justice.
- *Citizens' choice and democratic governance (for example in the fields of technology or energy)*: enabling societies to agree on ethics, innovation and the allocation of space and resources, thereby strengthening legitimacy and buy-in.
- *Intergenerational and multi-level governance*: involving diverse demographics and actors and including regional and local realities in decision-making.
- *Enhanced safety and resilience of democratic actors*: create an environment in which the professionalism and independence of public institutions, civil society organisations, journalists and legal professionals can be protected and strengthened.



- *Integrity of democratic processes*: strengthening citizens' resilience to disinformation and information manipulation, contested elections, corruption and reinforcing trust in democratic decision-making.
- *Equality, inclusion and belonging*: strengthening the cohesion of society around shared values, providing support and ensuring justice for those in vulnerable situations, building inclusive public spaces, services and processes.
- Other: please describe
- Please identify which of these areas are most relevant to your committee or monitoring body and explain briefly why.

2. Between April and September 2026, internal consultations on democratic security, new challenges and emerging trends, were held with the secretariats of thirty-four Council of Europe intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies. The reflections and inputs received have informed the more specific questions below.

Which are the main challenges or pressures faced by your intergovernmental committee or monitoring body?

- Geopolitical insecurity, increasing populism, and the increased challenging of the international legal order
- Socio-economic inequalities as root causes of the backsliding and crisis of trust in democracy
- Destabilised markets and links to economic crime facilitation
- Hybrid threats to elections and the information environment,
- Challenges posed by transnational, non-state and private actors.
- Constraints on the independence and effectiveness of national institutions responsible for implementing standards
- A constricting civic space and pressure on Council of Europe's partners
- Polarisation on core values and principles underlying public policy and the inability to find solutions to build bridges and solutions.
- Increasing application of, and lack of common rules governing the use of AI tools during evaluation processes conducted by monitoring bodies
- Other: please describe.
- Please demonstrate whether these challenges affect your committee's or monitoring body's mandate, working methods, standards

3. In which of the following ways has your committee or monitoring body adapted, or could it adapt, to these challenges and the measures envisaged?

- revision of standards
- streamlining or prioritisation of standards
- methodological experimentation (for example, adapting monitoring methods or follow up procedures, and/or involvement of citizens, etc)
- clarifying, consolidating or simplifying of existing standards greater prioritisation of topics in response to emerging risks and protection gaps



- increased inter-committee cooperation on transversal topics and potential joint work
- increased focus on the peer-to-peer support and collective action for the implementation of standards
- Other possible adaptations: please describe, including any changes to stakeholder engagement, communication, digital working methods or follow-up.

4. Do you have comments on the following points?

- **Adaption and cross-thematic work:** how can committees adapt to the current ecosystem where various expertise is needed and the situations evolve rapidly, leaving little time for sequenced work from one committee to another? Is there scope of increasing cross-thematic and transversal work across bodies? How do you see your work starting in 2030? And in 2040 onwards?
- **Terminology:** Is there a tension between preserving established, sometimes contested language, and updating terms to reflect evolving contexts? What strategies would best address this tension?
- **Interacting with member States which lag behind on follow-up to recommendations:** How can intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies ensure better implementation when national interlocutors are facing obstacles to implementation or insufficient political commitment? What strategies can help support progress where reforms have stalled?
- **Mandate and scope in a changing landscape:** As private, transnational, or non-state actors are increasingly impacting democratic governance in various contexts do intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies need to adapt their mandates, working methods or forms of engagement? If so, how?
- **Council of Europe–EU Relations:** With multiple, often diverging types of relationships to the European Union in play, questions arise as to whether a unified Council of Europe position would provide clarity and leverage, or would hinder the distinct approaches across sectors. How can the Council of Europe ensure coherence in its institutional dialogue with the European Union, while respecting the distinct mandates, legal frameworks and cooperation arrangements of its committees and monitoring bodies? How do we make sure that the EU builds on existing CoE monitoring and evaluation mechanisms? what are the tools at our disposal for this?
- **Drivers of standard-setting:** What lessons can be drawn from recent standard-setting work? Is there still an appetite for new legal standards or policy on topics where there are clear protection gaps? Can these be absorbed or is there a declining interest across member States?
- **Communication and visibility:** In addition to the efforts by the media department of the Council of Europe, are there good examples of how committees have adapted their communication strategies to societal and digital evolutions to better explain the purpose and



impact of their work in the protection of human rights, the rule of law and democracy to wider audiences?

- **Other priorities: What other priorities** does your committee undertake or foresee to undertake?
- **Please identify any areas where greater co-operation between committees, monitoring bodies and other Council of Europe entities would be particularly valuable**

5. Strengthening democratic resilience – Pact work

- Within your mandate, what priorities or actions should the Council of Europe consider to strengthen democratic resilience, public trust and the effective protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law? What cooperation, tools or institutional capacity would help deliver them?
- What should be the main outcomes of the New Democratic Pact for Europe in relation to democratic security?
- Please identify up to three practical proposals that could strengthen democratic resilience, improve co-operation across Council of Europe bodies or enhance the implementation and impact of existing standards.

On the New Democratic Pact for Europe

The New Democratic Pact for Europe has been conceived as a strategic and political process of the Council of Europe to identify integrated responses to democratic backsliding. Consultations have been running since early 2025, bringing together governments, parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, international partners, civil society, academia, the private sector and citizens.

With the consultation closing at the end of 2026, the collection of contributions intensified. Key in-person consultations using foresight methodologies will be taking place to move from identifying challenges to exploring opportunities and ways in which democratic security can be strengthened.