

Information Documents

SG/Inf(2025)21

5 June 2025¹

Detailed budgetary proposal to implement the Roadmap towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe

¹ This document has been classified restricted until examination by the Committee of Ministers.

BACKGROUND

1. At the 2023 Reykjavik Summit, the Heads of State and Government committed to fighting democratic backsliding and strengthening democratic security to address current and future challenges and to secure peace and prosperity in Europe. Resolute common action is required to build a resilient, inclusive and agile democracy.
2. With its unique structure, tools and partnerships, the Council of Europe is well placed to lead this action, and the Secretary General has identified democracy as one of his priorities, through the process towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe.
3. When adopting the 2025 adjusted Budget, the Committee of Ministers decided to set aside €3.05 M, of which €2.35 M from the adjusted budget for 2025 and €0.7 M from the 2024 Ordinary Budget, to be used for the New Democratic Pact for Europe, subject to the discussion and approval by the Committee of Ministers of a detailed proposal to be presented by the Secretary General.²
4. The Secretary General presented his “Roadmap towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe - Building a resilient, inclusive and agile democracy” in April 2025 (cf. SG/Inf(2025)14). At its 134th Session in Luxembourg, the Committee of Ministers welcomed the roadmap and invited the Secretary General to implement it and to report back on progress at its next Ministerial Session.³
5. This document presents the detailed proposal of the Secretary General regarding the use of the funds set aside to implement the Roadmap towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe.

² Cf. CM/Del/Dec(2024)1513/11.2-Part1.

³ Cf. CM/Del/Dec(2025)134/2b.

IMPLEMENTING THE ROADMAP TOWARDS A NEW DEMOCRATIC PACT FOR EUROPE

“What we are experiencing is not just another crisis. It is a crisis of the order itself. Our institutions, our freedoms, and our values have become the targets. That is why we need a New Democratic Pact for Europe — a pact that protects not only against war, but against the slow, silent, daily erosion of who we are”.

Secretary General Alain Berset, 134th Session of the Committee of Ministers

6. The overall objective of the New Democratic Pact for Europe is to restore citizens' trust in democracy and show that democracy is the best system to ensure peace, equality and prosperity in Europe. It will not aim to reinvent democracy, but rather to reinforce its foundations, amplify its benefits, and innovating its form to make it resonate with all citizens, in particular with younger generations. It will focus on practical, interconnected goals that highlight democracy's advantages and various facets, foster alliances within and beyond Europe, and craft a compelling new narrative of hope and relevance for all Europeans.
7. The New Democratic Pact for Europe will be fuelled by **a broad and inclusive consultation process**. The main events to be undertaken in this process are listed in Appendix to the Roadmap. The outcomes of all events and innovative methodology reflections will be consolidated at the end of the process to guide how the Council of Europe will address the challenges in the next few years.
8. Many actions foreseen in the Roadmap are already included the Programme and Budget 2024-2027. While a certain level of funding is secured in the Ordinary Budget and through extra-budgetary resources, it is proposed to use part of the funds set aside to increase their relevance, visibility and impact, by securing more high-level speakers, attracting broader audiences – including young people and civil society representatives – and ensuring wider media coverage. To innovate, generate new ideas, increase the dynamic and visibility of the process, it is also proposed to support new actions, such as hackathons; prospective workshops and thematic seminars to be co-organised with civil society, think-tanks, universities, and international bodies. Developing a robust foresight approach is essential to ensuring that democracy in Council of Europe member states remains adaptable and resilient in the face of diverse and evolving situations. Some member States are in a position to share promising practices in this area.
9. The details of the actions and their budgetary implications are presented below, articulated around the three pillars of the New Democratic Pact for Europe: (1) learning and practising democracy, (2) protecting democracy and (3) innovating for democracy.

Pillars	Amount (€K)
Learning and practising democracy	305.6
Protecting democracy	439.3
Innovating democracy	1 096.7
Communication and management	688.5
TOTAL	2 530.1

10. It is also proposed to allocate the remaining balance of **€519.9 K to support democratic post-war elections in Ukraine**. One of the objectives of the Council of Europe Action Plan “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction” 2023 – 2026 is to provide support with a view to ensuring that European standards are applied to the electoral law and practice, including with regarding to referenda. The resources provided will support targeted assistance to the Ukrainian national authorities, primarily, the Central Election Commission, to prepare and organise democratic, free, fair and safe post-war elections whereas electoral rights of Ukrainian voters, both within and outside Ukraine, will be duly respected and ensured.

Learning and Practising Democracy

11. This pillar fosters democratic engagement through formal and informal learning, while advocating for inclusion and dialogue across political, generational, cultural, and digital divides. Throughout the process, the aim will be to:
- promote dialogue across divides – political, cultural, generational – and ensure space for dissent, critical thinking, and diverse voices;
 - develop a shared understanding of democracy on the basis of democratic values enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Reykjavík Declaration and its 10 Principles of Democracy, placing human dignity and pluralism at the centre and promoting cultural and historical awareness; the CDDEM Parameters will also be crucial to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles;
 - invest in civic education, including digital and media literacy;
 - elevate youth voices and foster civic engagement, using innovative tools and inclusive narratives to connect younger generations to democratic processes.
12. It is proposed to allocate **€0.3 M** for actions in 2025-2026 contributing to this pillar as follows:

Event / action	Costs (€K)
Annual conference of the Gender Equality Commission (17-18 September 2025, Malta)	
The conference will address the pressing issue of violence and sexism against women in politics, with a specific focus on combating such challenges within political parties and institutions, in line with the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029 and the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, which call for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the promotion of equal political participation. The resources provided will enhance the visibility and relevance of the event through additional high level speakers and a social media campaign; add a creative and accessible dimension to the event thanks to the participation of a graphic artist to create live drawings, which will provide visually compelling content for the outcome document and follow-up communication; and contribute to the exhibition on the progress achieved by Council of Europe member states regarding women's participation in politics.	25.1
Youth event at the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (8-9 October 2025)	
The conference "Young People for Democracy: Youth Perspectives in Action" will bring together ministers, youth representatives, and key stakeholders to assess progress in youth policy since 2012 and set strategic priorities for the years ahead. Building on the Reykjavik Declaration and the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030, the conference will focus on strengthening youth participation in democracy, promoting youth rights, fostering inclusive societies, and supporting youth work. In this context, the youth event will provide a space for youth representatives to understand and plan the follow-up to the Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, notably in respect to the implementation of a youth perspective in member States and the key issues raised in the Declaration to be adopted by the Ministers. It will also enhance networking and advocacy capacity of the participants. The resources provided will support the organisation of the youth event that will gather some 85 participants (46 youth representatives, members of the national delegations for the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth; members of the Advisory Council on Youth; representatives of international youth organisations, and Maltese youth civil society).	30.5
Thematic seminar on education and civic participation in the digital age (Autumn-Winter 2025)	
Event to be co-organised with civil society, think-tanks, universities, and international bodies	100.0
Thematic seminar on equal participation in democracy (Autumn-Winter 2025)	
Event to be co-organised with civil society, think-tanks, universities, and international bodies	100.0

Event / action	Costs (€K)
Human Rights Institutions in Focus: meeting of NHRI and Ombudsperson institutions (April 2026)	
This meeting will bring together National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and Ombuds institutions to explore their vital role in protecting democracy through rights-based monitoring and intervention. The event will address: - the role of ombuds/NHRIs in addressing actions that undermine democratic processes, including electoral interference (misinformation and false narratives), and erosion of checks and balances (e.g. emergency laws, security legislation). - reinforcing the Rights-Democracy Nexus, by exploring the intrinsic connection between fundamental rights and democracy, with special attention to freedom of expression, opinion, and assembly. The event will highlight how protecting these rights strengthens democratic resilience and how their weakening serves as an early warning of democratic decline. The resources provided will support the organisation of the event that will feature presentations from the Council of Europe bodies, panel discussions with practitioners, and interactive workshops where participants can share best practices for monitoring democratic health, developing early warning systems, and creating effective intervention strategies when fundamental rights that underpin democracy are threatened.	50.0
Sub-total	305.6

Protecting Democracy

13. This pillar focuses on rooting democracy in the rule of law, safeguarding the structural integrity of democratic systems while addressing the socio-political roots of disillusionment, extremism, and polarisation. Throughout the process, the aim will be to:
- strengthen trust in democratic institutions through transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and responsiveness to citizens' needs and concerns;
 - promote social rights and address the impact of socio-economic inequalities on the lack of trust in what democracy can offer to all, leaving no one behind;
 - safeguard the independence of the judiciary, ensure electoral integrity and uphold the rule of law as a non-negotiable pillar of democratic governance;
 - intensify the fight against corruption, which undermines public trust and weakens democratic institutions from within;
 - counter disinformation and protect the integrity of public debate, ensuring that citizens can access accurate, trustworthy information in a free and pluralistic media environment;
 - advance equality and combat all forms of discrimination, ensuring full participation and representation of women and marginalised groups in democratic life.
14. It is proposed to allocate **€0.4 M** for actions in 2025-2026 contributing to this pillar as follows:

Event / action	Costs (€K)
Conference on Media and Disinformation (17 September 2025, Malta)	
The Conference will bring together government representatives, members of Parliaments and regulatory authorities, civil society actors, experts and representatives of the technology sector to discuss effective approaches to building democratic resilience against disinformation. The aim is to discuss the multifaceted threats posed by disinformation to democratic institutions, values, and public trust, while identifying comprehensive responses involving public authorities, including election authorities, as well as institutions and actors in the fields of culture, education, youth, and foreign relations, but also media, platforms and other private stakeholders, as well as the civil society and individuals/citizens themselves. The additional resources will serve to invite representatives of media and digital services regulators from member states, as well as representatives of governments and journalists, to work together on a joined-up approach to combatting disinformation. These additional participants will not only help address the issue in a more transversal, comprehensive manner, but will also allow to kick off work under a project on disinformation which will start later this year. The outcomes of the Conference will also feed into future work, such as a possible convention on disinformation and foreign influence.	25.2

Event / action	Costs (€K)
High Level Conference on the European Social Charter (19 March 2026, Republic of Moldova)	
Following on from the Reykjavik and Vilnius Declarations, the High-Level Conference will aim to increase the commitments of member States to the Charter system. A treaty event will provide an opportunity for States to accept additional Charter provisions, the collective complaints procedure and even the Revised Charter for those who have not yet done so. The resources provided will be used to increase the visibility, outreach and impact of the event, including through live streaming and transcription of the sessions, publication of thematic articles before and after the event, as well as the on-site participation of journalists from prominent European media outlets. The working group dealing with the preparation of the event will look at the participation of internationally renowned speakers, new formats for some sessions and pilot innovative actions relating to stakeholders and youth.	25.0
Elections: rights of domestic observers and turnout at elections (Spring 2026)	
Joint actions will be organised by PACE, Congress and Venice Commission on the rights of domestic observers to help better identify their needs both in terms of legislative frameworks (missing in a number of countries) and of training needs. Lessons learned from PACE and Congress observation missions will be identified and shared on how to promote high levels of voter participation, including by minorities / women / young people - and how to encourage a high number of candidates to stand for election.	100.1
Thematic seminar on rule of law and judicial independence (Spring 2026)	
Event to be co-organised with civil society, think-tanks, universities, and international bodies	100.0
Democratic Resilience & Election Integrity (Joint actions PACE-Congress-Venice Commission) (March-May 2026)	
Democratic Resilience and Election Integrity are essential to safeguarding democracy against rising threats such as disinformation, polarisation, and external interference. Strengthening these areas ensures that democratic systems remain legitimate, responsive, and capable of adapting to evolving challenges. Joint actions will be organised by PACE, Congress and Venice Commission with a view to identifying the applicable standards, their practical implementation and gaps that have emerged in light of the changing political environment and technological innovation.	88.3
No hate speech week (June 2026)	
Debates, creative campaigns, and public conversations drive forward the effort to make democracy a space of respect, inclusion, and trust. The No Hate Speech Week, organised around the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, aims to provide a space to exchange on recent legal and policy developments and good practices of implementation, innovations and foster synergies between key partners. The presence of different stakeholders provides networking opportunities that can enable a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach to preventing and combating hate speech in the member states.	80.0
Support to develop effective public information on the risk of hate speech and hate crime	
Workstream to support member states develop effective public information activities for general public and groups targeted to inform of the risks of hate speech and hate crime and available redress mechanisms in cooperation with the EU	20.7
Sub-total	439.3

Innovating for Democracy

15. By designing inclusive spaces and participatory systems, as well as promoting a positive use of digital technologies, this pillar ensures innovation is harnessed to broaden access, increase transparency, and restore citizens' trust in democracy especially those underrepresented and digitally excluded. Throughout the process, the aim will be to:
- promote a positive use of digital technologies, including AI, for the good of humanity, and fight against their malign use;
 - encourage democratic innovation and engage citizens, leveraging deliberative and participatory models to renew and adapt democratic systems to current challenges;
 - highlight democratic promising practices globally, including from the Global South;
 - address the triple planetary crisis – climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss – and its impact on democracy;
 - use new collective intelligence methodologies to enhance innovative ideas, such as foresight workshops.
16. It is proposed to allocate **€1.1 M** for actions in 2025-2026 contributing to this pillar as follows:

Event / action	Costs (€K)
Hackathon on democracy (20 June 2025)	
Online disinformation is one of the biggest threats to democracy today. It erodes trust, fuels polarisation, and distorts elections — and it's getting “smarter”. The Democracy's firewall hackathon is a dynamic, youth-driven innovation sprint where participants will design tools, strategies, and campaigns to fight disinformation and protect democratic integrity online – turning digital spaces into strongholds for truth and civic engagement.	214.5
The resources provided will support the organisation of the event, where participants will design bold, scalable solutions that expose fake accounts and disinformation networks; improve transparency in content moderation algorithms; boost access to reliable, pluralistic information; and build public resilience through education and critical thinking. They may also support the implementation of the winning project	
Support for methodology, training, creativity	
Four sessions (targeting Council of Europe Secretariat, Permanent Representations, representatives of PACE and Congress) will be organised to develop a reflection on an innovative methodology on the change of paradigm. Participants will reimagine democracy through narrative coaching, systems thinking, and imagination — crafting visionary alternatives grounded in practical change.	55.9
World Forum on Democracy 2025 / 2026	
The World Forum for Democracy is a unique platform for political decision-makers and activists to debate solutions to key challenges for democracies worldwide. By identifying and analysing experimental initiatives and practices, the Forum highlights and encourages democracy innovations at the grassroots and their transfer on a systemic level in order to strengthen the foundations of democratic societies. The Forum thus contributes to the evolution of democracy towards more participatory and inclusive structures and institutions.	80.1
The resources provided will be used to increase the media impact of the World Forum for Democracy in 2025 and 2026, by attracting high-level speakers and renown artists. A greater number of civil society and youth representatives could be invited, in order to strengthen the Forum’s civil society outreach across member states. In addition, an art installation or another artwork will be prepared to launch the Council of Europe’s Platform on artistic freedom, during the World Forum for Democracy 2025.	
Hackathon on democracy (June 2026)	
Civic Tech in Action: The second Hackathon Democracy turns ideas into concrete projects – this time even bolder and better connected	266.3
Youth-led event (2026)	
Event to be co-organised by the Council of Europe youth sector with the European Youth Forum (project Youth Revitalising Democracy).	100.0

Event / action	Costs (€K)
Deliberative democracy - regional hubs	
Democratic processes can be enhanced through deliberative democracy. Such exercises are mostly implemented at local level and the Congress has extensive experience of implementing deliberative democracy processes. Projects in Georgia, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina have proven very successful over the last 10 years. The New Democratic Pact for Europe could benefit from this extensive experience. The resources provided will be used to promote the creation of regional hubs to share knowledge and best practices with local governmental officials. This initiative would be complementary to the launch of the new European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (to be launched during Malta presidency of the Committee of Ministers) and would support the integration of a youth perspective.	30.0
Pilot methodology based on the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy	
A testbed for democracy diagnostics is proposed, with a pilot methodology based on the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy contributing to the implementation of Parameters for self-assessment of democracy health by member States. Citizen panels and participatory evaluations will inform future national democracy pacts. The resources provided will serve to test the methodology for assessing the state and vulnerabilities of national democracy systems, based on the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy and their Parameters. The methodology is currently being developed by CDDEM. Its purpose is to help member states evaluate their state of democracy, reveal where weaknesses lie, and take steps to enhance democratic resilience (possibly in the form of national democracy action plans or even national democracy Pacts. The pilot(s) would include the organisation of citizen panels (or another form of deliberative democracy), as involving citizens in the assessment of the state of democracy and in developing solutions, will ensure greater public support and trust in the process.	150.0
Build an understanding on influence of culture on democratic developments: update of the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy	
Updating the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy is meant to provide a contribution to developing an empirical general and country-specific understanding on influence of culture on democratic developments (interconnections) – it is seen as a tool for measuring cultural policies and trends.	100.0
Innovative publication - interactive guide	
The publication will compile the outcomes of the process and of the initiatives outlined in the Roadmap. It will serve as a foundation for shaping how the Council of Europe addresses democratic backsliding and revitalises democracy in Europe. Such outcomes will provide guidance in the next Programme and Budget.	100.0
Sub-total	1 096.7

Communication and management

17. It is proposed to allocate **€0.7 M** for the communication strategy, the Secretary General's democracy tour and the management of the process.

Description	Costs (€K)
The Communication Strategy for the New Democratic Pact for Europe will be launched in September 2025 to mark a vital step in our collective effort to revitalise democracy across the continent. At a time when democratic values are being tested by rising authoritarianism, disinformation, polarization, and public disillusionment, we cannot take democracy for granted. This Pact is not just a vision – it is a commitment to rebuild trust, participation, and accountability at all levels of European society. But reform and renewal alone are not enough – communication will be crucial. Through this strategy, we aim to engage the right audiences – from citizens and youth to policymakers and media – with a clear, inspiring, and honest message: democracy delivers, democracy matters, and democracy needs you.	200.0
Secretary General's Democracy tour includes exchanges with students, civil society etc in the framework of official visits in the 46 member States.	115.0
Human resources to coordinate and support the implementation of the Roadmap: - 1 Project manager (B5) - 18 months - 1 Communication officer (B5) - 18 months - 1 Project assistant (B3) - 18 months	373.5
Sub-total	688.5

Appendix: Detailed costs by types of expenditures (in € K)

Type	TOTAL	Learning and Practising Democracy	Protecting Democracy	Innovating for Democracy	Communication and Management
Travel	163.1	17.7	119.8	25.6	
Per diem	157.7	32.1	108.4	17.2	
Official journey staff	139.4	10.0	6.8	7.6	115.0
Consultants	219.5	11.0	32.5	176.0	
Interpretation	57.5	7.5	28.0	22.0	
Translation	23.6		3.6	14.0	6.0
Publications/documents	48.4	5.1	5.0	38.3	
Audiovisual service	16.0	1.0		15.0	
Service contracts	906.5	197.5	118.0	591.0	
Communication/ visibility	214.9	5.2	12.2	3.6	194.0
Catering/ reception	125.5	15.5		110.0	
Cultural event/ exhibition	54.5	3.0	5.0	46.5	
Prize	30.0			30.0	
Staff	373.5				373.5
TOTAL	2 530.1	305.6	439.3	1 096.7	688.5

Detailed costs per pillar and actions:

LEARNING AND PRACTISING DEMOCRACY						
Type	TOTAL	GEC annual conference	Youth event at the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth	Thematic seminar on education and civic participation in the digital age	Thematic seminar on equal participation in democracy	Human Rights Institutions in Focus: meeting of NHRI and Ombudsperson institutions
Travel	17.7	3.6	1.5			12.6
Per diem	32.1	2.0	21.2			9.0
Official journey staff	10.0			5.0	5.0	
Consultants	11.0	8.0				3.0
Interpretation	7.5					7.5
Publications/ documents	5.1	4.5				0.6
Audiovisual service	1.0					1.0
Service contracts	197.5		5.5	95.0	95.0	2.0
Communication/ visibility	5.2	4.0				1.2
Catering/ reception	15.5		2.3			13.2
Cultural event/ exhibition	3.0	3.0				
TOTAL	305.6	25.1	30.5	100.0	100.0	50.0

PROTECTING DEMOCRACY

Type	TOTAL	Conference on Media and disinformation	High Level conference on the European Social Charter	Elections: rights of domestic observers and turnout at elections	Thematic seminars rule of law and judicial independence	Democratic Resilience & Election Integrity	No Hate Speech Week	Support for effective public information on the risk of hate speech and hate crime
Travel	119.8	16.2	4.8	37.4		37.4	17.0	7.0
Per diem	108.4	9.0	3.5	26.5		26.5	31.2	11.7
Official journey staff	6.8				5.0		1.8	
Consultants	32.5		4.5	8.0		8.0	10.0	2.0
Interpretation	28.0			14.0		14.0		
Translation	3.6			1.2		2.4		
Publications/ documents	5.0						5.0	
Service contracts	118.0			13.0	95.0		10.0	
Communication/ visibility	12.2		12.2					
Cultural event/ exhibition	5.0						5.0	
TOTAL	439.3	25.2	25.0	100.1	100.0	88.3	80.0	20.7

INNOVATING FOR DEMOCRACY

Type	TOTAL	Hackathon 2025	Support for methodology, training, creativity	World Forum for Democracy 2025/2026	Hackathon 2026	Youth led event	Deliberative democracy - regional hub	Pilot methodology based on the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy	Update of the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy	Interactive publication
Travel	25.6		4.0	18.0				3.6		
Per diem	17.2		3.9	12.1				1.2		
Official journey staff	7.6					5.0		2.6		
Consultants	176.0	5.0	48.0	20.0	10.0		30.0	3.0		60.0
Interpretation	22.0				10.0			12.0		
Translation	14.0	5.0						3.0		6.0
Publications/ documents	38.3				1.3			3.0		34.0
Audiovisual service	15.0	15.0								
Service contracts	591.0	116.0			160.0	95.0		120.0	100.0	
Communication/ visibility	3.6	2.0						1.6		
Catering/ reception	110.0	50.0			60.0					
Cultural event/ exhibition	46.5	6.5		30.0	10.0					
Prize	30.0	15.0			15.0					
TOTAL	1 096.7	214.5	55.9	80.1	266.3	100.0	30.0	150.0	100.0	100.0

COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT				
Type	TOTAL	Communication Plan	Secretary General's Democracy Tour	Staff
Travel				
Per diem				
Official journey staff	115.0		115.0	
Consultants				
Interpretation				
Translation	6.0	6.0		
Publications/documents				
Audiovisual service				
Service contracts				
Communication/ visibility	194.0	194.0		
Catering/ reception				
Cultural event/ exhibition				
Prize				
Staff	373.5			373.5
TOTAL	688.5	200.0	115.0	373.5