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Safeguarding and promoting genuine democracy in Europe

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2232 (2022)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2232 \(2022\)](#) “Safeguarding and promoting genuine democracy in Europe”, which it has brought to the attention of the governments of member States and forwarded to the [European Committee on Democracy and Governance \(CDDG\)](#) for comments.
2. The Committee shares the Assembly’s grave concern about democratic backsliding in Europe and echoes its view that only genuine democracies may guarantee democratic security and achieve this common goal of “the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation”, as outlined in the Statute of the Council of Europe.
3. The Committee agrees that genuine democracy requires the full implementation of the commitments entered into by States on joining the Council of Europe, and in particular guaranteeing the right to freedom of thought and expression, while combating disinformation; guaranteeing freedom of assembly and association; guaranteeing the safety of human rights defenders; guaranteeing the independence and pluralism of the media; guaranteeing an effective, impartial and independent judiciary; ensuring full respect by the executive, the legislature and any other State authority for the rule of law, including the principles of legality, legal certainty and the obligation to abide by the judgments and decisions of the courts. Genuine democracy also requires ensuring that the legislative process is as inclusive as possible; promoting equality and providing effective protection against discrimination and hatred; guaranteeing good democratic governance; including education for democratic citizenship in the curriculum from the earliest age; involving citizens in political decision making, including through consultation and other inclusive forms of participation and deliberation.
4. In order to combat democratic backsliding, the Parliamentary Assembly calls for the setting up of a permanent platform on democracy and an early warning mechanism. The Committee considers that in order to achieve tangible results and avoid any unnecessary confusion or overlaps, the purpose and terms of reference of a permanent platform on democracy should be clearly defined. Synergy with existing mechanisms and bodies such as the World Forum for Democracy and the Conference of INGOs would also need to be ensured. Setting up the early warning mechanism would require drawing up a set of standards and benchmarks against which to assess the information gathered on democratic decay in a particular State. In this respect, the Committee points out that the CDDG is currently preparing a draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on the principles of good democratic governance, which will provide a useful set of benchmarks for identifying shortcomings and deficiencies as well as desirable improvements. The Centre of Expertise for Good Governance is also planning to develop specific indicators to assist self-assessment schemes. Concurrently, the Committee may consider holding subsequent discussions to further reflect on a possible early warning mechanism based on the above-mentioned documents.
5. The Committee of Ministers notes that defending and strengthening democracy is the very essence of the Council of Europe’s work. Accordingly, if the Committee decides to hold a 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government, particular attention should be paid to the initiatives to be taken by the Organisation – possibly in co-operation with other international organisations – to combat democratic backsliding.

1. Adopted at the 1442nd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (14 September 2022).

