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Foreign interference: a threat to democratic security in Europe

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2292 (2025)

Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2292 \(2025\)](#) “Foreign interference: a threat to democratic security in Europe” and has forwarded it to the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM), the Venice Commission and the Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY) for information and possible comments. It welcomes the Parliamentary Assembly’s efforts aimed at promoting democratic security in Europe.

2. The Committee of Ministers shares the Parliamentary Assembly’s concerns over current threats to democratic processes, including to the cornerstone of democratic participation – elections – stemming from different factors such as interference from foreign powers and/or their proxies. Attempts to disseminate disinformation, erode public trust in institutions and elections and to ultimately destabilise democratic systems require a firm commitment by member States to our core shared values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as expressed at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government in Reykjavík (16-17 May 2023), as well as concrete and purposive action to protect democratic norms in Europe.

3. In this connection, the Committee of Ministers has engaged in in-depth discussions exploring possible future standard-setting work aimed at countering disinformation and foreign interference, notably by means of criminal law responses (e.g. identification of offences, criminalisation, sanctions, redress and support for victims, international co-operation). The Assembly will be kept informed of the following steps.

4. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the New Democratic Pact for Europe which sets out a forward-looking vision for stronger and more inclusive democratic systems. The activities undertaken under the Pact are to provide a comprehensive and innovative framework for countering democratic backsliding and revitalising democracy. The Committee of Ministers calls on the Parliamentary Assembly, together with other Council of Europe bodies and institutions through their respective work and activities, to contribute as appropriate to this endeavour and its implementation.

5. The Committee of Ministers, underlining the importance of sustained efforts to reinforce democratic resilience, recalls the work under way by the CDDEM to develop a set of parameters to facilitate the implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy and other relevant Council of Europe standards to promote, protect and strengthen democracy across member States and welcomes the Parliamentary Assembly’s contribution to this work. The parameters are intended as a practical tool to help member States identify and address gaps and vulnerabilities in their democratic systems, including those arising from disinformation and foreign interference in electoral processes. The Committee of Ministers would encourage the Parliamentary Assembly to assist in raising awareness of the parameters and supporting their use at national level.

6. The Parliamentary Assembly is also informed of the relevance of the work of the CDDEM in preparing an updated Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the legal status of civil society organisations in Europe, with the aim of facilitating a safe and enabling legal and institutional environment for the creation and continued functioning of civil society organisations. Civic space is a

1. Adopted at the 1542nd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (7 November 2025).



cornerstone of democratic societies, ensuring that citizens and civil society can engage freely, hold public authorities accountable, and actively participate in public life. In this regard, the Committee of Ministers underlines that measures aiming to address foreign interference should not stigmatise or penalise legitimate objectives and activities of civil society organisations that are consistent with the requirements of a democratic society.

7. The Committee of Ministers would also draw attention to the work of the Venice Commission which this year has started a comprehensive study on foreign interference which aims at identifying a legal definition of foreign interference in its member States and at compiling and analysing an inventory of the legal tools in its member States to counter foreign interference. The objective is to adopt a systemic approach to this matter, and to examine all areas in which such issue has arisen, including as concerns transparency requirements and funding of NGOs, foreign grants, lobbying, financing of political parties and electoral campaigns, financing of public media, political advertising, online disinformation, financing of religious/ethnic communities, etc. The Commission is aiming at elaborating guidelines in this field, which should contribute to responding to the recommendations made by the Assembly.

8. Finally, the Committee of Ministers would also bear in mind in this context the framework of the Convention on Cybercrime which may be useful to investigate and prosecute and engage in co-operation on such foreign interference where it involves offences against computer systems or data or the need to collect evidence on computer systems of such interference.