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## Comments on Council of Europe Draft Guidelines on Participation

The Centre for Law and Democracy has prepared a set of Comments on the Council of Europe’s draft Guidelines on Civil Participation in Political Decision-Making. The Guidelines aim to set minimum standards for Council of Europe Member States in terms of ensuring participation in relation to processes of public decision-making. CLD very much welcomes this initiative – which can help improve consultation processes – but also has a number of suggestions for tightening up and improving the draft Guidelines.

*“Practices around consultation on public decision-making vary considerably not only between countries but also among different public authorities within countries,”* said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *“To the extent that these Guidelines set minimum standards for such consultations, they are very welcome indeed.”*

The first part of the Comments outlines a number of general concerns, providing recommendations to address them, while the second part provides more specific comments on individual guidelines. Some of the key points made in the first part including the following:

- The document struggles to accommodate the enormous range of public decision-making processes that exist. A clear definition of its scope is needed, along with a system for distinguishing between the different consultation obligations that pertain in the context of different types of decision-making processes.
- The document should recognise the important role of policy, in addition to legal and regulatory tools, in setting formal standards for consultation.
- More attention should be given in the Guidelines to individuals, to offline forms of participation and to marginalised groups.

CLD believes that this is an important initiative and looks forward to working with the relevant actors to continue to improve the document before it is put to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for formal adoption.

CLD’s Comments are available at: [www.law-democracy.org/live/comments-on-council-of-europe-draft-guidelines-on-participation/](http://www.law-democracy.org/live/comments-on-council-of-europe-draft-guidelines-on-participation/).

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