



EUROPEAN  
PARTNERSHIP FOR  
DEMOCRACY

ENoP  
EUROPEAN NETWORK  
OF POLITICAL  
FOUNDATIONS

## **JOINT STATEMENT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRACY SUPPORT IN THE EU MULTI-ANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (MFF 2021-2027)**

**The Office of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) to the European Union, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), and the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) welcome the European Commission's resolve to develop a new Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) that will contribute to a safe and secure, prosperous, competitive, sustainable and socially responsible European Union (EU), and provide the capacity for the EU to play a leading role in global affairs. We support an MFF that brings more simplicity, flexibility and agility, as well as greater efficiency, to the EU's external action instruments.**

Democracy is under threat, both globally and at the European level. A clear trend of democratic backsliding in some EU Member States and neighbouring countries can be observed - shrinking democratic space, restricting fundamental freedoms such as freedom of press and expression, curbing of civil society action, and the demolishing of the rule of law and systems of checks and balances. To counteract this global spread of illiberalism and authoritarianism, which could also affect the EU, an increased effort in democracy support and democratisation is needed to protect and make democracy resilient. The EU, being a prominent guardian of democratic values and norms, and the world's biggest provider of external assistance, is well positioned to play a key role in addressing these challenges.

Democracy building is a long-term and non-linear process in which circumstances and priorities may change quickly and unexpectedly. Pursuing a strategic and overarching approach to democratisation and external democracy support, contributes to the strengthening of EU values and interests globally. Having the possibility to respond promptly to emerging opportunities, through established and transparent mechanisms, will be fundamental for the EU and its partners in external democracy support.

In recent years, the EU has been faced with a number of interlinked external and internal challenges that put most EU External Action Instruments, adopted in 2014, under financial pressure. To address some of these challenges, various Trust Funds, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and the European Fund for Sustainable Development were established to provide the EU with flexibility and leverage capacity.

The multitude of internal and external political and socio-economic challenges also influence the EU's internal democracy landscape and the Union's external democracy support. Internally, the EU has to deal with a clear democratic regression in some of its Member States, a declining trust in political parties and EU institutions, and a disconnect with citizens. The EU's external democracy support has been impacted by policy shifts due to a number of crises (migration, refugee, and climate change), terrorist threats and security concerns, geo-political power alignments and economic turmoil, instability in the EU neighbourhood and

beyond, the rise of authoritarianism in some partner countries, and as a consequence, the shrinking democratic space.

Many challenges to democracy are directly related to security threats that impact the EU. Continued EU leadership on democracy, promotion of human rights, rule of law, and inclusive governance is both a reflection of our values and a critical way of addressing EU priorities. This should be manifested in the next MFF 2021-2027. In line with the EU's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there can be no sustainable development without democratic governance and respect for human rights. The new guiding policy approach of principled pragmatism and the wish for greater flexibility in the EU's external activities, should not negatively affect the EU's support for democracy globally. It is in the EU's strategic interest to foster long-term stability and sustainable peace in its neighbourhood and beyond.

While acknowledging the advantages related to the European Commission's proposed creation of a single External Instrument<sup>1</sup> in the next MFF, we are concerned that it could lead to:

- A less strategic approach to democracy support by reducing the importance and centrality of democracy support, loss of expertise on democracy programming resulting in a less targeted, strategic and long-term democracy support, and difficulty in balancing EU strategic interests and values;
- Reduced financial resources for democracy support;
- Less predictability and fewer unique specificities in funding for democracy and human rights as currently vested in the EIDHR; and
- Reduced accountability, transparency and oversight of democracy support funding.

As actors in democracy support and partners of the EU, we would like to make the following **recommendations** in relation to democratisation and external democracy support in the next MFF 2021-2027:

**i) Increase the funding for the external action component compared to the current EU budget to reflect the importance of external relations on the long-term interests of the Union and its citizens.**

The impact of internal and external issues, some of which are mutually reinforcing, on the EU is widely recognised. Increased funding would also demonstrate EU commitment to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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<sup>1</sup> Merging of 12 existing External Action Instruments [*Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI); European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI); Partnership Instrument for Cooperation with Third Countries (PI); European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR); Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP); Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC); European Development Fund (EDF), excluding the European Peace Facility (EPF); EDF-ACP Investment Facility; European Fund for Sustainable Development; External Lending Mandate; Guarantee Fund for External Action; and Macro-Financial Assistance*] to create a single External Instrument with a prominent neighbourhood window, strong focus on Migration, 20% reserve (unallocated share of Instrument), provision for Macro-Financial Assistance, and an increased share of non-OECD DAC actions.

**ii) Guarantee that all current operating modalities for external democracy support under the EIDHR are maintained and further improved.**

This would be best achieved through maintaining the unique operating modalities of the EIDHR in the new MFF. To this end, greater predictability in funding, the ability to provide support without partner government consent, maintaining a worldwide operational coverage, ability to address sensitive political issues in restrictive contexts, comparatively low co-funding rate requirement, and the possibility to include co-applicants without nationality restriction, are indispensable enabling tools of the EIDHR for effective democracy support. In addition, the key oversight role of the European Parliament in democracy and human rights support should be maintained, and greater internal coordination on democracy support ensured.

**iii) Expand funding and ensure long-term financial commitment to external democracy support in line with the scope of current and emerging challenges.**

Additional funding is necessary for addressing key challenges to democracy worldwide. These challenges include, inter alia, the shrinking democratic space, restricting media freedoms, challenges to the integrity of the electoral process, declining trust in political parties and disengagement of the electorate, especially young people, state capture, corruption, unchecked infusion of money in politics and elections, and the negative consequences of the rise in the use of modern communication technologies. A special focus should be given to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Making available increased resources for, and ensuring long-term financial allocation to democratisation and democracy support, would illustrate the EU's continued commitment to democracy and fundamental freedoms in the EU and globally.

**iv) Simplify and streamline the rules and procedures of external action instruments.**

There is a need for improving existing rules and procedures of external action, particularly for those implementing EU-funded programmes. EU procedures should aim, wherever possible, to promote flexibility, transparency, predictability, accountability, and the efficient disbursement of funding to ensure effective delivery of EU assistance.

**v) Ensure wide consultation, coordination and policy coherence among EU Institutions, EU Member States, and with democracy support actors.**

The EU institutions, its member states and democracy support actors all have a role to play in addressing the challenges to democracy around the world. This can only be achieved in cooperation, through clear coordination mechanisms and enhanced policy coherence. In this regard, the development of an overarching and strategic democracy support policy is recommended.

**The Office of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) to the European Union, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), and the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) reiterate our commitment to collaborate with EU Institutions and EU Member States on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework to ensure strategic, well-resourced, effective and accountable EU democracy and external democracy support.**

**Brussels, 23 May 2018**

## **International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)**

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

What do we do?

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work. International IDEA provides analysis of global and regional democratic trends; produces comparative knowledge of good international democratic practices; offers technical assistance and capacity-building on democratic reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convenes dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

Where do we work?

Our headquarters are located in Stockholm, with regional and country offices in Africa, the Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

<http://idea.int>

## **European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)**

The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) is a non-profit organisation supporting democracy and good governance worldwide. The EPD network brings together 13 organisations from around the European Union (EU) that specialise on different sectors of democracy support, including support for political parties, parliaments, elections, media development, local democracy, human rights, executive leadership and ICT.

The EPD network collaborates on programmes and shares experiences and lessons learned, in order to contribute more effectively to democratisation around the world. In addition, EPD contributes to improving democracy support policies through its advocacy efforts in Brussels.

Our members are: Agence Française de Coopération médias (CFI), Club de Madrid, Eastern European Studies Centre (EESC), Elbarlament, European Association of Local Democracy (ALDA), European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC), Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), One World, People in Need, Political Parties of Finland for Democracy (Demo Finland), Universidade Catolica Portuguesa, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

[www.epd.eu](http://www.epd.eu)

## **European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP)**

The *European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP)* consists of 51 member foundations and three affiliated entities, coming from 22 countries within the EU. The members are ideologically close to six party families - ALDE, ECR, EPP, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL, and S&D - represented in the European Parliament and belonging to the democratic spectrum.

The Network also serves as a platform for political foundations in Europe to exchange with the EU institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs) and research institutes about democracy support, development cooperation and political dialogue.

The activities of political foundations in the fields of democracy support and development cooperation, include civic education, public campaigning and awareness building, advocacy directed towards institutions as well as decision-makers in their respective home countries. ENoP members work actively in over 100 countries across the world, where they implement projects, aimed at enhancing democratic grassroots structures, strengthening civic participation, consolidating political institutions, and bridge existing gaps between civil society and political actors.

In 2016, ENoP has signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission, aimed at enhancing the cooperation between the two actors in: 1) promoting enabling environment for political foundations, CSOs and political parties; 2) encouraging participation in policy-making through political foundations, their partner-organisations and political parties; and 3) strengthening the capabilities of political foundations in supporting democracy and developing pluralistic societies.

[www.enop.eu](http://www.enop.eu)