



ENoP POSITION PAPER | THE ROLE OF DEMOCRACY SUPPORT IN EU EXTERNAL ACTION & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NDICI 2021-2027

DEMOCRACY SUPPORT IN EU EXTERNAL ACTION

Respect for democracy is one of the fundamental values on which the EU is founded. Also the European external action *“shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms”* (Art. 21 TEU).

A democracy can only thrive if citizens fully understand their democratic rights and duties, government power is restricted through effective checks and balances including a level playing field for different political parties, if the media can play their information and oversight role in an unrestricted way, in which the rule of law enables the judiciary to professionally and independently provide justice and in which fundamental rights are protected.

Supporting democratic development can take on many forms. The EU has a large toolbox at its disposal. Some examples are discussing democracy issues on diplomatic level, including democracy principles as a pre-condition for EU accession and applying the conditionality principle when it comes to funding as it is for example the case in the European Neighbourhood (“more for more” principle). The EU observes also elections in many countries of the world as an indirect support to democracy.

While the central government – especially if democratically elected – is the obvious first partner, civil society organisations, political parties, parliaments, local authorities, branches of the public administration and the judiciary and others are also crucial in advancing a democracy. The EU also supports these local actors in their efforts to improve the conditions for a functioning democratic system. Under the current multiannual financial framework (MFF), several funding instruments aim at strengthening civil society and other actors crucial to a healthy democracy, e.g. the thematic instrument on Civil Society and Local Authorities. In the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, one out of five objectives is the support to democracy worldwide (objective 3).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2021-2027

ENoP notices that during the discussions and negotiations on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) in the upcoming MFF, democracy support does not seem to play a major role.

In a global context where the phenomenon of eroding democracies is worsening and stable democratic states turn to limit democratic spaces, a clear commitment to the European founding principles, above all to democracy, seems more important than ever.

ENoP calls upon the decision-makers to take the following recommendations into account during the negotiations on NDICI, as well as in the programming in the framework of this instrument:

- Budget support should only be granted to democratically elected governments. If a government does not respect basic democratic principles, the allocated funding should be diverted to civil society or other actors who strive for (re-) democratisation.

- We recommend allocating 50% of the budget of the thematic programme on democracy support. The budget should support a wide range of possible actions and actors.
- We furthermore recommend the allocation of a considerable part of the geographic programmes to good governance issues, including democracy support. Given its central nature and in line with Art. 21 TEU, this should be on average at least 20%.
- Civil society as well as other local actors contributing to a more democratic society should be included in the consultation as well as the implementation process of all programmes – thematic as well as geographic. Furthermore, they should be considered as main target group in the thematic programme on democracy and human rights as well as in the programmes on good governance in the geographic pillar.
- The current practice of country-based support schemes has proven effective and should be maintained. For organisations active in the field of democracy and human rights, it allowed a certain predictability due to its multiannual programming per country.

ABOUT ENoP

Established in 2006, the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) brings together 51 member foundations and three affiliated entities, coming from 22 countries within the EU and serves a platform for these political foundations to exchange with the EU institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs) and research institutes about democracy support, development cooperation and political dialogue.

The members are ideologically close to six party families – ALDE, ECR, EPP, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL, S&D – represented in the European Parliament and belonging to the democratic spectrum, but independent in their decision making and financing of international projects.

The activities of political foundations members of ENoP 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, acknowledging the important role of the Network in the fields of development cooperation and democracy support. This FPA marks the set of common interests and objectives of a Strategic Partnership to:

1. Promote an enabling environment for political foundations, civil society and political parties
2. Encourage participation in policy making processes through political foundations, their partner organizations and political parties
3. Strengthen the capabilities of political foundations in promoting democracy and developing pluralistic societies

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