



Joint Statement on the Role of Democracy Support in EU External Action and Recommendations for NDICI 2021-2027



DEMOCRACY SUPPORT IN EU EXTERNAL ACTION

In 2019, the main EU institutions and their renewed leadership showed a commitment to democratic governance and to improving democracy within the EU and outside its borders. The focus on democracy in several Commissioner mandates, the new Council Conclusions on Democracy and the plan to deepen European democracy through the organisation of a Conference on the Future of the European Union are among the initiatives that show the emerging momentum for pushing democracy to a higher EU policy level.

The European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP), European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) jointly underline the enabling role of democratic governance for the achievement of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and call on EU leadership to support this democracy vision worldwide with adequate financial instruments in the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027.

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). The New European Consensus for Development includes the need to support these principles with adequate instruments and actions.^[1]

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

Supporting democratic development can take on many forms. The EU has a large toolbox at its disposal, going from engaging in political dialogue on democracy and observing elections worldwide to supporting in-country projects. Extra leverage is created where respect for democratic principles becomes part of accession, trade or development support negotiations through the application of the conditionality principle.

While governments – especially if democratically elected – remain the obvious first partner, civil society organisations, political parties, parliaments, central and local authorities, branches of the public administration and the judiciary and others are equally crucial in advancing democracy. Under the MFF, several funding instruments aim at strengthening civil society and other non-governmental actors crucial to a healthy democracy.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2021-2027

In a global context where the phenomenon of eroding democracies is worsening and where various stable democratic states take a turn towards limiting democratic spaces, a clear commitment to the European founding principle of democracy becomes more important than ever.

Therefore, we call upon EU decision-makers to consider the following recommendations during the negotiations on the NDICI, as well as in the future programming in the framework of this instrument:

- 1. Allocation of at least 20% of the geographic programmes to good governance issues, including democracy support.** Good governance, democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights are the basis for sustainable development and they are at the core of the European values, as well as they are a precondition for the successful implementation of the Agenda 2030 and SDGs. In the current Development Cooperation Instrument, at least 15% of the budget is allocated to good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights (see Regulation No 233/2014, Annex IV). Considering that NDICI includes also the European neighbourhood where these issues are of even higher priority, we recommend an allocation of at least 20%.
- 2. The Commission proposal on NDICI foresees that “Budget support [...], shall be based on country ownership, mutual accountability and shared commitments to universal values, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and aims at strengthening partnerships between the Union and partner countries” (Art. 23.3). We call upon the EU institutions to ensure that the eligibility criteria are formulated in a way that **only democratically elected governments subject to effective parliamentary control receive budget support.** 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.**
- 3. Allocation of 50% of the budget of the thematic programme on Human Rights and Democracy to democracy support.** With this budget, a wide range of possible actions and actors should be supported. Without human rights, there can be no democracy worthy of the name. In turn, human rights can only be protected effectively in a democratic environment. Both components are mutually reinforcing and should be supported equally in EU’s external action. This restored balance should also be reflected in the next EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.
- 4. Civil society, including the media have an important role in advancing democracy and should be involved in **consultation and implementation processes** of thematic and geographic NDICI programmes.** They should be considered as an equally important target group in the thematic programme on democracy and human rights along with political parties, parliaments, central and local authorities, branches of the public administration and the judiciary.
- 5. The practice of country-based support schemes (CBSS) under EIDHR has proven effective and should be maintained** at least at its current level in the framework of the thematic programme “Human Rights and Democracy”. Only the thematic programmes on Human Rights and Democracy as well as the programme on Civil Society are exempt from the need of consent of the governments of the third countries concerned (Art. 10.2, NDICI proposal). Sensitive issues related to democracy and human rights on national level can therefore be best addressed via these thematic programmes. In view of maintaining the possibility to address country-specific matters, it is recommended to at least uphold the current practice of CBSS with clear financial allocations per year and per country. This would also allow organisations active in the field of democracy and human rights to better anticipate funding opportunities. (Reference in Art. 4.5 of the NDICI proposal)
- 6. Make full use of existing possibilities within NDICI,** in particular the emerging challenges and priorities cushion and the rapid response pillar, **to support sudden democratic transitions.** When political events and processes trigger democratic transition in partner countries, they can bring about a momentum for democratic breakthrough. Some cases in the past years showed that EU delegations often lack the possibility to provide support to projects responding to sudden democratic developments and support the building or reinforcement of democratic institutions and processes. The new MFF and the NDICI instrument provide an opportunity to address this matter.

Endnotes

- [1] “The EU and its Member States will promote the universal values of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and human rights for all, because they are preconditions for sustainable development and stability, across the full range of partnerships and instruments in all situations and in all countries, including through development action”, Paragraph 61, The New European Consensus on Development “Our world, our dignity, our future”

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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 15 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), Article 19, Club de Madrid, Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD), 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), Oslo Center, People in Need, Political Parties of Finland for Democracy (Demo Finland), Universidade Catolica Portuguesa, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

www.epd.eu

ABOUT ENoP

The European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) serves as a platform for dialogue and exchange between the European political foundations, civil society organisations, active in the fields of democracy support and sustainable development, and the institutions of the European Union.

ENoP brings together 55 member foundations from 22 EU Member States and the United Kingdom. The members are affiliated to 6 political party families represented in the European Parliament, namely: ECR, EPP, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL, Renew Europe and S&D. Our members are active in over 100 countries around the world, where they bring civic education, support democratic processes and sustainable development through work with 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 a set of common objectives of a Strategic Partnership to:



Promote an enabling environment for political foundations, civil society and political parties;



Encourage participation in policy-making processes through political foundations, their partner organizations and political parties;



Strengthen the capabilities of political foundations in promoting democracy and developing pluralistic societies.

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