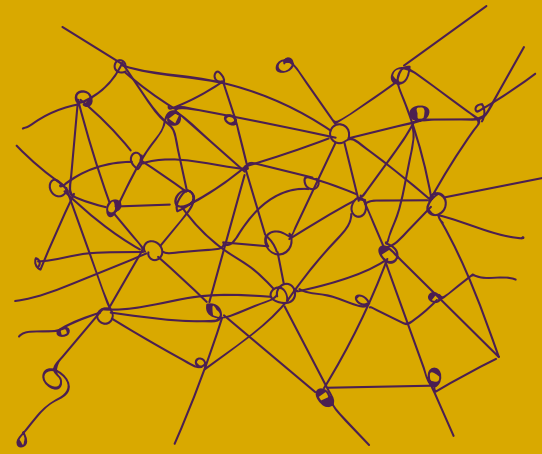




EU Team Europe Approach – Improving Effectiveness and Impact of Worldwide Democracy Support



BACKGROUND

Democracy is under threat worldwide. This is the assessment of numerous analyses that observe democratic recession and decay and describe how democracy is on the decline. During the period 2014–2019, EU member states and institutions spent around €14 billion in support of democracy in partner countries. In November 2021 the European Commission launched the Team Europe Democracy Initiative which aims to provide a coordinated response to key components of the global democracy deficit. According to the European Commission the initiative will operationalise an information exchange network, and support global and local projects with research and expertise. It will help develop common approaches to transparency and accountability, and improve support to partners in transitioning to democracy. The initiative as it stands now has three focus areas:

- Accountability and Rule of Law
- Political and Civic Participation
- Media and Digital

This initiative has to be seen in the broader framework of a more harmonised approach to development where the EU, the EU member states, local partner organisations work together to increase the impact and effectiveness of their cooperation on the ground.

The following ENoP recommendation paper will reflect on the current shortcomings of EU Democracy support approaches and instruments as well as ways to effectively operationalise the Team Europe Democracy in partner countries.

REFORM OF THE EUROPEAN INSTRUMENT FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS (EIDHR)

The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2020–2024, adopted by the Council, is the new policy framework for the EU's external action in this field. Built upon the achievements of the previous Action Plans, the new Action Plan commits, by identifying priorities and key actions for the next five years, to ensure that the EU plays a greater role in promoting and defending human rights and democracy throughout its external action. The multi-annual indicative programming for the thematic programme on human rights and democracy follows the structure of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020–2024 with its five overarching priorities:

01. Protecting and empowering individuals;
02. Building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies;
03. Promoting a global system for human rights and democracy;
04. Harnessing the opportunities and addressing challenges of new technologies;
05. Delivering by working together.

Current Shortcomings of the Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy

Due to the high number of countries involved, limited funds, low amounts of maximum co-funding for projects and the selection of couples of small projects, not connected and not complimentary to each other, in the best case they can provide only a small contribution to the capacity building of CSOs and their interaction with political institutions. In many cases the sustainable impact of these small projects on the development of democratic life and structures in the respective countries or on the consolidation of democracy is limited – especially when they act without European partners, which can support them by protection against non-conductive authorities and by capacity-building through dialogue, know-how transfer and best-practice exchange.

ENoP Recommendations

The suggestions presented here shall provide the EU with the opportunity, to effectively contribute to the development and consolidation of democratic life and structures in countries, in which such efforts can make a real difference in a special situation. The elements which have to come together, in order to achieve such a visible and measurable impact are:

- The selection of the projects along the criteria of contributing to a concrete “Democracy Development/Democracy Consolidation Strategy” (by country), designed in a participatory process coordinated by the EU Delegations in the respective country with national and international stakeholders;
- The size and duration of the projects and the multi-annual inclusion of each selected country in this line;
- The complimentary nature of the different projects in each selected country, the organized communication and cooperation between them and the annual updating of the strategy with the respective objectives and priorities on the basis of the evaluation of the situation in the country and the ongoing projects;
- The targeting of civil society as well as political society/ democratic actors through the projects;
- The obligatory cooperation of national stakeholders and experienced European counterparts. The main impetus of the Team Europe approach is to create synergies and better coordination between the development policies of the European Commission and of individual member states. European Political Foundations and CSOs have a deep understanding of both EU and national democracy support strategies, are oftentimes financially supported or co-funded by individual EU member states and can therefore act as credible bridge-builders between the national and EU level. Within the framework of the envisioned projects, European counterparts not only “Europeanise” their work in third countries, but also effectively merge EU funds and funds from EU member states into new projects that thereby perfectly reflect the Team Europe approach.
- The implementation of the calls for proposals and the management of the program by the EU Delegations in the respective countries, after the selection of the countries and the earmarking of the funds for projects in these countries has taken place on EU level.

A specific tool has to be added for the systematic and compact assistance for democratic developments and consolidation in selected countries.

This shall address:

- A.** Countries in which after years or decades of authoritarian rule an opening process offers windows of opportunities for the development of democratic awareness, structures and procedures;
 - B.** Countries in which democratic structures and procedures have suffered a backlash but which are still open for actions supporting the consolidation of the democratic life and the strengthening of democratic awareness in the population;
 - C.** Countries with a democratic constitution and democratic institutions in which – due to lack of democratic awareness in the population or weakness of the pluralistic party system – democratic controls and democratic change do not function already for many years.
- The budget for this new line shall be at least 30,000,000 Euro per year, co-funding projects in maximum **10 to 15 selected countries**.
 - The selection of the countries shall be decided yearly by the EC after consultation of relevant European Networks and civil society actors in worldwide democracy assistance in agreement with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the EP and the Council. One country shall be included in the list for a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 years.
 - For each country included a **“Democracy Development/ Democracy Consolidation Strategy”** shall be designed with involvement of the respective national and the European CSOs involved in democracy building or democracy consolidation activities in this country. This strategy shall define the fields, objectives and priorities of democracy assistance to be co-funded by the EC.
 - The projects selected for co-funding in yearly calls for proposals in each of these countries shall be complementary in covering the fields and achieving the objectives of the **“Democracy Development/Democracy Consolidation Strategy”** of the respective country. Each project shall include at least one national and one European CSO as applicants/ partners. The duration of the single projects shall be between 24 and 48 months. The co-funding from the EC shall cover up to 80 % of the total budget of the project, with a minimum of 100,000 and a maximum of 1,000,000 Euro.

- Further to CSOs, **elected councils or parliamentary bodies** in the respective countries shall be eligible as partners in the projects, **whenever the elections have been free and fair**. The objectives of the calls shall include, further to the strengthening of the interaction between civil society and political structures, also – where relevant – **the strengthening of the pluralistic democratic political party-structures**.
- The non-partisan character of the whole program in each country shall be ensured either by the selection of different projects providing assistance and capacity building for the different relevant democratic forces in the country or by the selection of projects involving a broad spectrum of democratic forces.
- The respective EU Delegation shall ensure a regular communication and – where relevant – direct cooperation between the different projects under this tool in each country in order to promote synergies and to increase the total impact on democratic development/consolidation in each country.
- Through yearly evaluations in each country the EC shall try to use experiences and results from the projects under implementation for the formulation and the adaptation or fine-tuning of the objectives and priorities in the new calls for proposals.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONALISATION OF THE OTHER GEOGRAPHIC AND THEMATIC INSTRUMENTS IN THE FIELD OF DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

- 1 The different European Stakeholders in worldwide democracy assistance should develop a joint European approach for their programs, projects and activities in this field.**

This joint approach should assess the following issues/questions:

- *What are substantial elements of democracy, independent from cultural, historical and social framework and situation in a country?*
- *What priority should be given to democracy support in the development agenda of a country in relation to security, stability and poverty alleviation?*
- *What preconditions have to be in place for democratic development in a country?*
- *What role should different internal and external actors play in developing democratic culture, democratic institutions and democratic procedures in a country?*

- 2 Democratic awareness-building and civic education have to be included in all bi-lateral cooperation programs between the EU and partner countries.**

A relevant amount of funds in the respective country programs has to be earmarked for this purpose. The drafting and implementation of programs and projects in this field has to include Non-State Actors (NSAs) from the respective countries and organisations/institutions with experience both in civic education and in development cooperation from the EU.

- 3 Democratic political forces and institutions – namely the parliaments and elected councils from local and regional level – have to be involved in the design and implementation of programs and projects on the improvement of democratic governance, the development of democratic structures and institutions and the consolidation of the democratic process.**

- 4 Furthermore in all these programs addressing issues of governance, democratic development and democratic consolidation, concrete actions on the strengthening of the interaction between civil society and political institutions have to be included.** In the design and implementation of such activities, NSAs from the respective countries and experienced counterparts from European countries have to be involved.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The drafting of a realistic and effective joint European approach to democracy assistance/support is more urgent than ever. ENoP therefore strongly welcomes the Team Europe Democracy Initiative. In order to promote the establishment and development of democratic institutions, structures and procedures in a country, the first question to be answered is

the question on the key meanings and substantial elements of democracy, independent from its realization in a specific country at a specific moment of history. Based on the answers to this question models can be designed taking in account the characteristics of the country in question.

Funding of Democratic Awareness-Building and Civic Education

It goes without saying, that only a system can be considered as being a democracy, in which the substantial elements of democracy are not only written in laws and legal regulations, but are to a certain extent present and concrete in the daily reality of life in the respective country. This does not only depend on the willingness of the ruling persons or political forces to allow for democratic life. It also depends on the awareness and attitude of the population with regard to democratic participation and culture.

Democracy is as much a form of life as it is a set of institutions.

It is relatively easy to help install some structural components of democracy like free elections and democratic institutions. But we know by now that they will not prosper and can even generate adverse effects, if not accompanied by changes in the people's hearts, minds and attitudes. However, effecting such changes through outside intervention is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, much can be done in order to facilitate its advancement.

Democratic cultural change only comes about by engaging with others, assuming responsibility in collective efforts and addressing shared problems. In such processes people's attitudes towards others may change, they may experience trust and increase their civic engagement.

This will enable them to address other and more complex problems and engage in major collective efforts; lastly, the contributing to a vital democracy. A realistic approach of democracy assistance and promotion – this is the conclusion of the projects and experiences of Political Foundations from European Member States worldwide – has to take into account these general limitations and orientations for exogenous interventions with the purpose of promoting the development of a democratic culture.

In many country strategies and programs under the different foreign assistance instruments of the EU the improvement of democratic governance and the development or strengthening of democratic institutions or procedures are important fields of cooperation. However, in many cases communication and cooperation of the EU in these fields is restricted to the respective partner government department or agency.

Given the control function of parliaments and other elected bodies, the deficiencies of the democratic process in many of these countries and the necessity to involve democratic political forces as well as civil society in such efforts in order to achieve some impact, as a standard procedure parliaments and other democratically legitimated institutions as well as civil society have to be included in the design and implementation of such democracy relevant programs and projects.

Furthermore the involvement of experienced Non-State-Actors from Europe as counterparts of civil society actors in the respective countries and as moderators can contribute substantially to the effectiveness and sustainability of the reform processes.

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 53 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 organisations and political parties;



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



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