

JOINT STATEMENT:

5 recommendations for EU leadership on democracy

15 September 2019

Democracy cannot be taken for granted. At a time of fundamental technological change, climate crisis, demographic adjustments, inequalities and power shifts between continents, the EU must promote and protect its founding principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe and abroad. The desire of citizens to meaningfully participate in decision-making is universal and over 70% of EU citizens want the EU to do more to spread democracy and peace around the world.¹ Democratic governance offers us the greatest potential for achieving inclusive, sustainable development, human rights, peace and long-term stability.

We call on the new European Commission (including the High Representative), the new European Parliament as well as European governments to undertake the 5 following actions:

1. Prioritise democracy

Democracy is not just a slogan, it is a core value that must be protected and actively strengthened – often at the expense of other priorities. Foreign policy will always involve trade-offs, but overlooking democracy has become an increasingly risky endeavor. The new geopolitical reality means that democracy is even more vital for the long-term prosperity and security of European nations. This is also true for democracy within the Union itself. Democracy should therefore feature higher up the list of policy priorities of European states for reasons of principle but also self-interest.

- The European Council needs to advance democratic governance to the top of its priority list given geopolitical trends.
- The European Parliament, European External Action Service, Council of the EU, and the European Commission need to ensure that EU external action does not inadvertently support authoritarian regimes.
- The new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP) needs to stand up for democracy and be a global leader on universal values and the rules-based order.

2. Develop a democracy support policy

Despite all the talk of democracy, there is no overarching policy framework to guide the EU institutions and EU Member States in their support to democracy. In fact, there is currently only *one* EU policy document which actually has democracy as its core focus.² The policy vacuum has

¹ Eurobarometer Spring 2018, 89, QF3.4.

² "Council conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations." Council of the European Union, Brussels, 2009. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/111250.pdf

resulted in a dispersal of activities and a lack of policy coherence, which has ultimately led to more technical and depoliticised programmes that miss a wider perspective of the key obstacles to democratisation.

- The EU and EU Member States need to develop an EU policy framework detailing the strategy, objectives and approach of European support for democracy.

3. Define democracy support

Democracy support has no institutional home at the EU level, falling somewhere between human rights commitments, traditional development policy and foreign policy concerns. This makes it all the more important to have a clear understanding of what supporting democracy means. While it is difficult to agree on a common definition of democracy, the EU should define the key tenets of its support for democracy. This would help to clarify the purpose of supporting democracy in policy and help in the collection of data for learning purposes.

- EU Member States and the EU institutions need to collectively agree on a clear definition of 'democracy support' to provide greater clarity for policy-making.

4. Adapt funding rules to democratisation

Democratic development is not linear and occurs in fits and starts. This requires adaptability and patience. Donors should therefore give serious consideration to specific rules and funding for democracy support programmes. This should allow for the provision of means for extending successful programmes, long-term institutional funding to key national actors, the establishment of a mechanism for rapid response, more reasonable reporting requirements and the use of new evaluation methods.

- The European Commission and EU Member States need to adopt specific funding rules for democracy support programmes that take into consideration the nature of democratic change.

5. Put people on democracy

While democracy is mentioned as a key principle in most speeches and official documents of the EU, only a handful of people work on democracy, in the EU institutions and Member States alike. The human resources dedicated to democracy pale in comparison to those made available for dealing with issues of security, for instance.³ Expertise and staff are essential for politically informed programming, policy and programming coordination, and coherence.

- The EU institutions and EU Member States need to invest in human resources for democracy and democracy support – through the expansion of existing units, the creation of task forces on democracy in different institutions and the creation of new institutional bodies (e.g. for democracy in Europe) – in order to better coordinate democracy support programmes and policy priorities.

³ As an example, there are currently 2 staff members of the European External Action Service with a focus on democracy. By way of comparison, in the realm of security the EEAS consists of over 14 actual *divisions* (this does not include EU military staff).

SIGNATORIES

Article 19

Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights (DEMAS)

Budapest Centre for Mass Atrocities Prevention

Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)

CFI - French Media Development Agency

Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD)

Defending Democracy

Democracy International

Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD)

elbarlament

ePaństwo Foundation

EU40

European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)

European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES)

European Network for Central Africa (EurAc)

European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP)

European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)

European Students Forum - Election Observation (AEGEE)

Fondation EURACTIV

Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)

International Republican Institute (IRI)

Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

La Strada International

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC)

Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)

One World

Open Government Partnership

Open Society European Policy Institute (OSEPI)

People in Need

Political Parties of Finland for Democracy – Demo Finland

The Good Lobby

The Oslo Center

Universidade Catolica Portuguesa (UCP)

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)

World Leadership Alliance - Club de Madrid (WLA-CdM)

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

For more information, please visit www.epd.eu/standupfordemocracy/ or contact info@epd.eu