

A CALL TO DEFEND

DEMOCRACY:

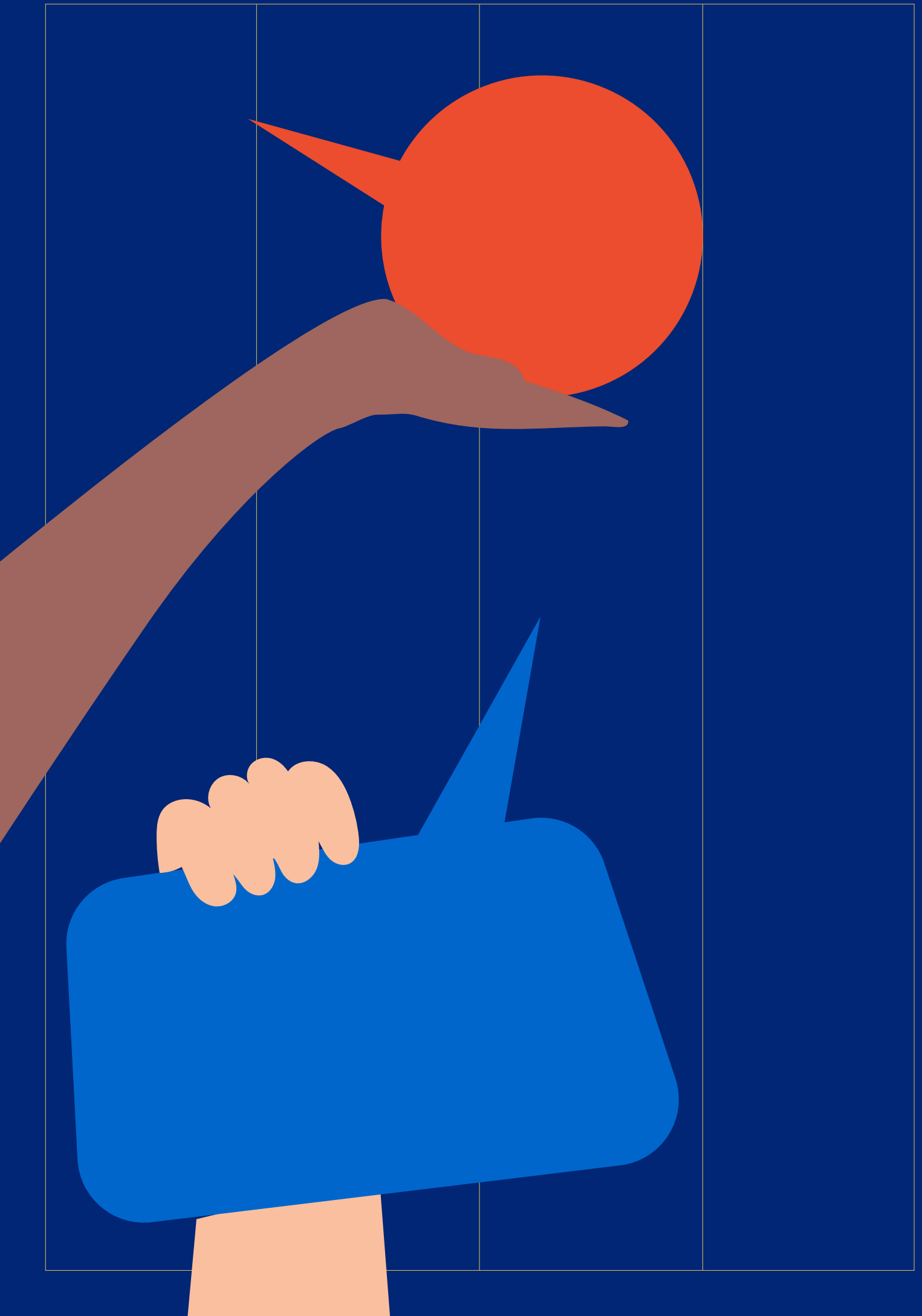
REVIVING DEMOCRACY

SUPPORT UNDER

THE EU'S INCOMING

LEADERSHIP





CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
TEN IDEAS FOR EXTERNAL DEMOCRACY POLICY	3
FIVE IDEAS FOR DEMOCRACY WITHIN EUROPE	14
CONCLUSION	18
ANNEX	19

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INTRODUCTION

A European Leaders' Call to Defend Democracy has recently urged the EU to accord stronger priority to supporting democracy in the next institutional term that will begin after European Parliament election in June. This statement – which is included in the annex - makes the general case for why democracy support is important and calls on the EU to adopt a number of policy commitments. Building on the leaders' call, this policy brief offers more detail on some potential policy ideas for operationalizing democracy commitments.

Despite much stirring rhetoric in particular around the Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU's record on democracy support during last institutional term that started in 2019 was mixed at best. In many areas it was not especially strong and if anything weakened relative to other EU strategic priorities. Many new European initiatives - the Democracy Action Plan, the Defence of Democracy package and many others - were introduced and yet the general shift was away from proactive democracy support.

Standard rhetorical commitments to democracy will predictably be heard from new leaders taking office later in 2024. These will ring hollow if the EU is not prepared to take some bold steps forward to reverse the atrophy in its democracy strategies witnessed in the last several years. This policy brief suggests what such bold steps might entail in very specific forms. It outlines 10 ideas for improving European external democracy support and 5 ideas for the internal democracy agenda. These proposals deliberately go beyond simply fine-tunes of current policy instruments with a view to catalysing more far-reaching debate about the future of EU democracy strategies.

TEN IDEAS FOR EXTERNAL DEMOCRACY AGENDA

The scope for improving external democracy support relates to issues of political will, resources and diplomatic leverage, but also the more qualitative EU perspectives on democratic agency.

1. EU DEMOCRACY SUPPORT COMMISSIONER OR SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

International democracy support has for many years lacked one clear champion among the EU leadership, a figure with the competences and institutional weight to raise the profile of this policy area.

None of the EU High Representatives over the last twenty years have given unequivocal priority to democracy support and have rather positioned themselves as champions of more security-oriented policy developments. External democracy support gets caught in the cracks between the many Commission directorates and institutions that have some hand in it. Many parts of the EU machinery have some role in or relevance to international democracy support, but none have clear leadership or the incentive to accord it clear priority.

The EU should consider creating a commissioner for democracy support. This will not be a panacea for better quality democracy support, of course. There are already many proposals for new commissioners for increasingly specific policy themes, and clearly not every issue can have a dedicated commissioner. Yet, the democracy issue is especially in need of a figure with political acumen and high standing to drive it forward. The commissioners for Values and Transparency and for Demography and Democracy have added a useful boost to democracy policies inside the EU, and the commissioner for International Partnerships covers governance funding within development aid. Yet there is no single figure working internationally to advance the high politics of European democracy support. If not a full commissioner, a special representative for democracy might help at least coalesce the multiple strands of current policies and responsibilities into a more joined-up and coherent strategy. The EU's special representative for human rights lacks the mandate to cover democracy issues as opposed to more tightly drawn human rights dialogue.

2. DEMOCRACY AID TARGET

EU external funding for democracy continues to be relatively modest in scale. Moreover, figures for democracy aid are opaque and only compiled one or two years after the year in which they are allocated.

While leaders talk in assertive and bold terms about their commitments to democratic values, they then decline to make available sufficient resources to back up such commitments. In the current institutional term, there has been much focus on member states' increased levels of defence spending, with governments making clear and specific commitments to hike military budgets to 2 or even 3 or 4 per cent of GDP. The lack of any equivalent set of democracy aid targets has become even more conspicuous.

The EU and member state donors need a democracy aid commitment with the same kind of clarity as their defence commitments. They should commit to spending at least 5 per cent of their development assistance on democratic institutions, civil society, human rights and free media projects including combating disinformation. This is a relatively modest target but would mark an important advance. Crucially, the EU institutions and member states should agree to collecting and making public accurate figures for such democracy spending, which at present they refuse to do – despite this area of policy being ostensibly aimed at political transparency and accountability. If member states can devise a multi-billion euros scheme for weapons under the European Peace Facility they should be able to do the same for democracy – supposedly the cornerstone of the union's whole engagement with international partners.



3. BETTER **DEMOCRATIC** **CONDITIONALITY**

The EU needs to update its definition and use of democratic conditionality in a way that clarifies the place of democratic standards in its foreign policy for the new geopolitical age.

The EU will continue to engage with authoritarian regimes for security reasons; this is inevitable in such a tense geopolitical era. But, in the last several years a sharply rising share of European aid has been going to authoritarian regimes that are among the most repressive in the world, and the union needs to draw at least some red lines and boundaries around the types of funding it provides to these governments.

The EU's use of democratic conditionality cannot realistically be far-reaching, severe or sweeping – a range of policy priorities will require it to provide aid and trade benefits to non-democratic regimes. Yet the EU can do more to ensure it is not actively rewarding anti-democratic developments as has been the case in recent years and to prevent so much European funding going direct to the most repressive parts of authoritarian regimes like security and border-control forces. The European Commission is currently proposing tighter conditionality on cohesion funds within member states so that extra aid goes to those implementing reforms: the EU should consider a similar kind of exercise do the same on external aid – including funds mobilised through its Global Gateway initiative (see below).

4. REINFORCED DEMOCRACY SUPPORT IN CANDIDATE STATES

As a revived enlargement process advances with new candidate states in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the EU needs to tighten the link between accession and democracy support. Of course, pre-accession processes give the EU much leverage through conditionality attached to political reforms. But the lesson of the last twenty years suggests that enlargement has not worked well as a democracy promotion tool.

But the lesson of the last twenty years suggests that enlargement has not worked well as a democracy promotion tool. The EU needs to revisit the way it deploys democracy conditionality related to enlargement. It should replace the 20-year-old Copenhagen criteria with an updated and more balanced democracy-reform template. The new criteria should complement the existing

focus on formal institutional change and be more oriented towards qualitative change at the level of civic democratic engagement; they should also examine how to use the notion of reversibility as an incentive for democratisation.

The EU also needs to do a lot more proactively to support democratic reformers as part of the accession processes and should not tie support so tightly to EU harmonisation rules, aiming instead to improve wider democratic quality in candidates. In addition, the EU needs to find ways to make the accession process more open, plural and participative. The lesson from long-stalled accession processes is that the EU has been too narrow and technocratic in the way it has piloted and sought to control enlargement. One idea might be for the EU to fund and facilitate citizen assemblies in candidate states around the challenges and opportunities of enlargement; the European Parliament has begun some work on such initiatives that merits fuller support from other EU institutions and member states. In this way the process of accession can itself be a means to deepen democratic engagement.

5. MORE CONSEQUENTIAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

Many see the EU's role in election observation missions around the world as a relative strong point in its external democracy support. Yet, election observation is facing a crisis, as it fails to deliver tangible results, as fewer governments are willing to invite in EU election observation missions (EOMs) and as regimes are becoming bolder in their dismissal of EOM recommendations. The EU has in many cases offered increased aid, trade and strategic benefits to third-country governments guilty of blatant electoral manipulation and obfuscation of EU election observation.

In the next institutional term, the EU needs to make some bold moves to prevent election observation running out of steam entirely and ceasing to have tangible purpose. The EU insists it has improved its EOM methods and tightened its focus on follow-up measures after elections. But electoral conditions virtually never condition EU policy towards third countries in any clearly identifiable way; there is a more or less complete disconnect between EOMs and EU foreign-policy diplomacy. The EU cannot, of course, let election criteria define its whole engagement with other countries, but it should move to make at least some kind of connection. The union could, for example, link EOM access and recommendations to the release of new tranches of aid.

6. RETHINKING SANCTIONS

After three years in operation, the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime needs to move into a new phase. This regime has been used to target individuals for specific rights abuses, but it has not been relevant to the wider democracy agenda – indeed, if anything it has diverted attention from the latter. In its next phase of development, the sanction regimes could be widened to include some themes more relevant to democracy and rules to ensure that it does not cut across democracy support efforts.

This does not mean that sanctions should become a frequently used tool in democracy support – evidence on the effectiveness of highly punitive measures is mixed. The EU should, however, do more to link its sanctions against individuals to countries' wider democratic problems. The way the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime is currently defined excludes political-institutional issues and this undermines EU democracy support. The EU should commit to a more holistic use of sanctions in a way that fuses human rights and democracy concerns in a more mutually reinforcing fashion.

Civil society should be given a formal role in making recommendations for sanctions listings and regimes' attacks on civil society should be included as a criterion that triggers restrictive measures. Many have criticised the EU for being arbitrary in its use of the sanctions regime; there is no obvious or objective rationale for why the EU has imposed measures in some cases but not in others. The union should be a lot more transparent in accounting for its sanctions decisions and ensure these are based on more objective grounds.



7. DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL GATEWAY

The EU could commit to and facilitate an independent democracy audit of Global Gateway investments. This would be important because the Global Gateway is increasingly becoming the vehicle through which the EU channels the largest part of its infrastructure investments around the world.

At present, the initiative is providing huge amounts of such investment directly to many authoritarian governments. The EU claims that the Global Gateway is a democratic alternative to the Belt and Road Initiative, but it is difficult to identify how exactly this is the case. The EU needs to move urgently to mitigate the tensions between its democracy agenda and its infrastructure investments.

This is not to say that Global Gateway investments should only go to democracies – this is of course not realistic. However, the EU needs to devise the means of any mitigating negative political impacts and seeking ways of using its investments to nudge open at least some islands of plural political space. The EU can do more to match infrastructure investments with new democracy funding in each recipient country. Some kinds of democracy, media or civil society components could be built into Global Gateway investments in a way that the EU has so far declined to do. The EU should also offer greater transparency of information about Global Gateway investments and allow for civil society engagement in these projects.



8. DEMOCRATIC FLEXIBILITY

Criticism has grown in recent years that the EU is not sufficiently open to different forms of democracy. While European diplomats feel this perception is unjustified, an increasing backlash against democracy support has proven problematic and is in part related to this widespread feeling that EU democracy supporters need to be more receptive to variations in democratic forms. This has led to a curious situation: the EU's democracy agenda has become weaker in many senses and yet many criticise it for being overbearing and inflexibly assertive.

This is not a new issue, but it has grown in significance and in its impact in recent years. It is a complex issue as the EU needs to be more open to democratic variation without this change entailing support for illiberal forms of democracy. Still, the EU does need to make concrete moves to allay the gathering resistance to certain types of democracy support. The EU could create and fund a new initiative or centre on supporting democratic flexibility. This should be driven by local actors rather than donors. It could also be a means of improving EU engagement with non-Western countries like Brazil and South Africa on democracy support. This step could also usefully draw on the work of organisations like International IDEA and the Open Government Partnership that include non-Western members. media or civil society components could be built into Global Gateway investments in a way that the EU has so far declined to do. The EU should also offer greater transparency of information about Global Gateway investments and allow for civil society engagement in these projects.

9. SUPPORT FOR CIVIC MOVEMENTS

It is widely recognised among democracy-promotion organisations that the nature of democratic agency is changing as new forms of civic movements emerge around the world. As these movements take some reform-oriented dynamism away from traditional civil society organisations (CSO), external funders have struggled to keep pace with this fundamental shift.

New informal civic movements have pioneered distinctive forms of community organisation and often led the democracy protests that have been spreading in greater intensity around the world. While some non-governmental funding mechanisms have sought ways of engaging with movements involved in such mobilisations, the EU has been more cautious in doing so. It could still do a lot more to help new community organisations and protestors achieve their goals of democratic opening and to ensure that protests

translate into long-term mainstream democratic politics. The Union could do more to prioritise hyper-localist, grassroots engagement and to back protests with more enthusiasm.

Support for the most informal kinds of civic movements will not be the major element of EU democracy support and the project funding models that work for CSOs will not be applicable to them. Yet, the EU does need a way of factoring such movements and their protest activity into its strategy. This may not entail the same kind of project-based financial support as the EU gives to formal civil society organisations, but rather other kinds of advice, network building and political guidance. Even if outside support will not be a major factor in such emerging agency, it can do more to amplify its potential, and the EU certainly needs to move beyond its tendency to downplay the significance of informal movements or mass revolts or even to see these as events to be controlled more than encouraged. Such an approach should be based on a new policy paradigm: the degree of recognition that is given to government structures should be given in parallel to whole of the society.

10. A DEMOCRATIC TURNAROUNDS STRATEGY

While general global trends have been adverse for democracy over the last decade, moments of potential democratic opportunity do frequently appear. Examples of countries where the tables have turned in a more promising direction in recent years includes the likes of Armenia, Brazil, Montenegro, Gambia, Guatemala, Senegal, Thailand and Zambia.

This does not mean such countries have moved successfully onto a plane of democratisation or re-democratisation; but it does highlight that they have experienced points of possible turnarounds after years of moving in a more authoritarian direction. The dominant narrative of democratic regression has become so prevalent that such possible breakthroughs risk getting lost from sight and somewhat neglected in democracy-strategy planning.

The EU and its member states have not responded effectively to such opportunities, and they lack any equivalent to the US Bright Spots initiative. They may have welcomed them rhetorically but have failed to move faster in mobilising the full array of policy instruments and resources in a way that maximises the potential of such democratic turnarounds. Such partial openings or democratic windows can close again very easily and quickly if they are not skilfully utilised. The EU and its member states have declined to create an overarching strategy to focus on such contexts that matches the US's Bright Spots strategy. In the next institutional term, the EU should correct this omission and create a dedicated framework, set of decision-making processes, early detection mechanisms and unique policy instruments to assist in a more systematic way draw out the full potential of democratic turnarounds.

FIVE IDEAS FOR DEMOCRACY WITHIN EUROPE

While this brief is concerned primarily with external European democracy support, this cannot be held separate from the EU's internal democracy challenges; there is a pressing need for more effective democracy policies internally as well as externally, and these two levels of policy are related to each other. The toolbox for internal EU democracy is, of course, very different from external democracy support, and is not relevant to the remit of funders like EED and others. Yet, the internal dimension is of concern to all democracy funders as problems within Europe can undermine the effectiveness of those bodies engaged in external democracy support.

The EU has introduced a great deal of new legislation and many recommendations relevant to democracy challenges inside Europe in recent years. Initiatives like the Rule of Law Mechanism, the Democracy Action Plan, Digital Services Act, AI Act, Defence of Democracy Package and measures related to political party funding, advertising and disinformation have received much attention. Yet, the EU needs to do a lot more if it is to have a tangible impact on real-world political trends. The current surge in the far-right is just one factor that makes the need for such a strategy increasingly urgent.

Member states already have dozens of policy initiatives related to democracy within their own borders; this policy brief focuses only on ideas that are relevant to the EU level and that draw from or intersect with the external dimensions of democracy support. A key emerging theme is the increasing overlap between internal and external democracy policies. This is a frequently made observation and yet the EU has done relatively little to give the internal-external link any tangible substance in its policy initiatives. Five ideas could begin to do so.

1. FROM RULE OF LAW TO DEMOCRACY MECHANISM

The EU could usefully bring its internal conditionalities more into line with its external democracy conditionality. While many have welcomed the Commission's use of the Rule of Law conditionality mechanism as a significant step forward – although others are more dismissive – this focuses on a relatively narrow range of issues.

These issues are related to the detailed management of judicial sectors and in particular to the way that EU funds are used or the way that domestic legislation affects the functioning of EU policies. While it is logical that the EU should concern itself primarily with such matters as these are so integral to the union's own governance, there are many other serious democracy challenges that have fallen outside the scope of this focus. The Commission's rule of law efforts are of primary importance, but need to be complemented by a stronger and more joined-up strategy to tackle other elements of the EU democratic malaise. The EU should draw from the far wider democratic conditionality and diplomatic leverage within its external policies to inform the development of a broader democracy strategy internally. In very precise terms, the next institutional term could usefully upgrade the Rule of Law Mechanism into a Democracy Mechanism, making this an article 2 process.

2. INDEPENDENT FUND FOR DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

A glaring imbalance is that there is no 'domestic' equivalent of the European Endowment for Democracy - the EED's mandate covers democracy support outside the European Union. There are strong grounds for creating an EED-style organisation charged with funding initiatives related to democratic reform within Europe itself.

The Commission runs a number of funding programmes relevant to democracy – like the CERV programme - but this funding lacks the ability to provide very targeted support when democratic values are under threat and when emergency support is needed for independent media and civil society. It lacks the agility and political flavour that is needed, and which has become at least somewhat more apparent in external democracy assistance. Some Commission and member state funding could be pooled within a new Democracy in Europe Foundation. This could adopt some of the approaches pioneered by funders like the EED, the Norway Funds and national democracy foundations, and help move internal democracy funding to a higher level.



3. DEMOCRACY AND THE HARD-RIGHT

Whatever the results of the European Parliament elections, the relationship between the far-right – or broader category of hard-right - and democracy needs to be more deeply explored and tackled.

There are many facets to this challenge, and these go beyond the current tendency simply to focus on the need to contain or defeat hard-right parties. The read-over from the hard-right surge to democracy is a thorny one.

Some parts of the far-right have clearly authoritarian tendencies; it is less clear that the hard-right as a whole is intrinsically anti-democratic. Much of the hard-right insists it is

concerned with reviving democracy or developing alternative models of democratic engagement and with taking power away from unaccountable elites, but then when such parties participate in government, they rarely do much to follow through on such promises. An inclusive initiative could help in fostering dialogue and public sensitisation on such issues and to establish guardrails to keep hard-right parties within core democratic parameters and also to reduce the prospect of them undermining EU external democracy support. Beyond concerns about their various regressive policy positions on the EU, climate change, migration and other issues, working to keep these parties to core democratic norms should be seen as an overarching priority that requires active policy engagement.

4. EXTERNAL DEMOCRACY SUPPORT INTO EUROPE

While the EU offers many kinds of support to democratic reformers around the world, it has no mechanism to receive pro-democratic influence and leverage. European leaders have come ritually to talk about democracy challenges being shared between Europe and the wider world and yet have done nothing to enshrine this sentiment in concrete policy initiatives.

There are many useful lessons in democratic renewal, resistance and rebuilding in other regions from which EU reformers could usefully draw – and this is not about accepting illiberal forms but rather taking seriously the innovations of civic activists seeking to deepen and improve liberal norms around the world. In the next institutional term, European democracy organisations should set up a formal system for democratic reformers and civic leaders outside the EU to assess on a regular basis the quality of European democracy policy and for them to press the union into adopting better and appropriate democracy-protecting strategies. As a clutch of Western organisations present yearly indices on the state of global democracy, the EU and/or European democracy organisations could support a team of diverse non-Western experts to present a high-profile annual assessment of European democracy and its shortcomings.

5. DEMOCRATIC SENSITISATION OF SECURITY COMMUNITIES

The geopolitical era is here to stay and this is leading to a greater role of security experts and policymakers in EU strategy. The democracy community needs to accept this and try to work with the new security-oriented context.

And in turn, the security community needs to be more aware of issues related to democracy support, which it has often dismissed as being of minor importance. Democracy organisations cannot hold back the tide of security initiatives but they can push to make these more 'democracy sensitive'. The EU could deploy democracy support organisations and experts to design and initiate a well structured programme of democracy sensitisation with the units, departments, agencies and institutions at the forefront of the new focus on European security policy. The positive correlation between democracy and security in Europe is scientifically well evidenced.

CONCLUSION

While every five years, incoming EU leaders ritually commit to supporting democratic norms both internationally and domestically, in practice few of them have in recent years attached clear priority to democracy policies.

The EU has turned its attention to other priorities, even as the imperative for a focus on democracy has become more compelling. The EU and more widely, Europe's network of democracy support organisations have policy instruments and resources at their disposal and the incoming EU leadership in late 2024 can usefully fine-tune these existing tools. However, bolder moves are also needed to redesign and upgrade democracy support in more ambitious and fundamental ways if the democracy agenda is to gain traction and effectiveness. The ideas suggested in this policy brief aim to stimulate such fresh thinking as a way of preventing European democracy support fading into marginality just when it is needed more urgently than ever before.



ANNEX

A Call to Defend Democracy: 10 Priorities for the EU

On June 6-9, 2024, European voters representing nearly 450 million European citizens will participate in the European Parliament elections. These elections will reaffirm the European Union's foundational commitment to democratic values and its vital role as a pole of democratic development in an increasingly authoritarian world.

Today, democracy faces an array of grave challenges, globally as well as within the EU's own borders. EU institutions, custodians of the most successful multi-national project ever attempted to uphold the values of democracy, peace, sustainable development, and multilateralism, bear a historic responsibility at this critical juncture.

We, leaders from different countries and walks of life, thus call upon the next EU leadership to consider these ten priorities to place democracy, at home and abroad, at the top of the policy agenda in the Union for the duration of their mandates and beyond.

Democracy is under threat

There is abundant evidence that democracy is, by far, the preferred form of government by most people in the world, as the best guarantor for human development and a vibrant and pluralist civic space. Yet, growing socio-economic inequalities, corruption, polarization, disinformation, and the acute uncertainties created by the climate crisis and disruptive digital technologies have eroded satisfaction with democratic institutions in many countries. This process has coincided with large geopolitical shifts in which the influence and boldness of some authoritarian regimes, as well as the coordination among them, have visibly grown.

The global weakening of democracy has gone hand-in-hand with a rise in global conflict, which has intensified migration flows, energy shortages, and trade disruptions, while imposing large defence investments for many years to come. For most countries in the world – certainly for the EU—the global erosion of democracy has become a pressing threat to their security.

These converging challenges have created a real risk that in this global election year, EU member states as well as some of its key partners may see the ascent of anti-democratic political actors. This has already happened in some EU countries, where basic tenets of democratic governance, fundamental rights, and the rule of law have been steadily declining for several years. These pressures undermine not only the EU's founding democratic values, but also the credibility of its efforts to strengthen democracy around the world.

The EU as a democracy leader

The EU has emerged as a global leader on democratic support. For decades, the EU's external policies have advanced democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in all continents. Today, the EU and its member states are the biggest provider of democracy support globally. Despite the Union's internal challenges to the rule of law, citizens around the world still consider the EU an indispensable actor to defend universal democratic values, such as human rights and accountable governance. Moreover, the EU's role as a global norm-setter on new democracy areas such as data protection, digitalization, and the governance of digital platforms and technologies (e.g. Artificial Intelligence) has further strengthened its ability to support citizens fighting autocratic control. The EU has demonstrated a laudable appetite for trialing democratic innovations to better connect its institutions with European citizens, as well as encouraging the involvement of citizens in policymaking among its member states.

A call to prioritise democracy

Ensuring strong democracies in European Member States is the basis for combating challenges such as the rise of extremism, election interference, the spread of manipulative information and threats to journalists.

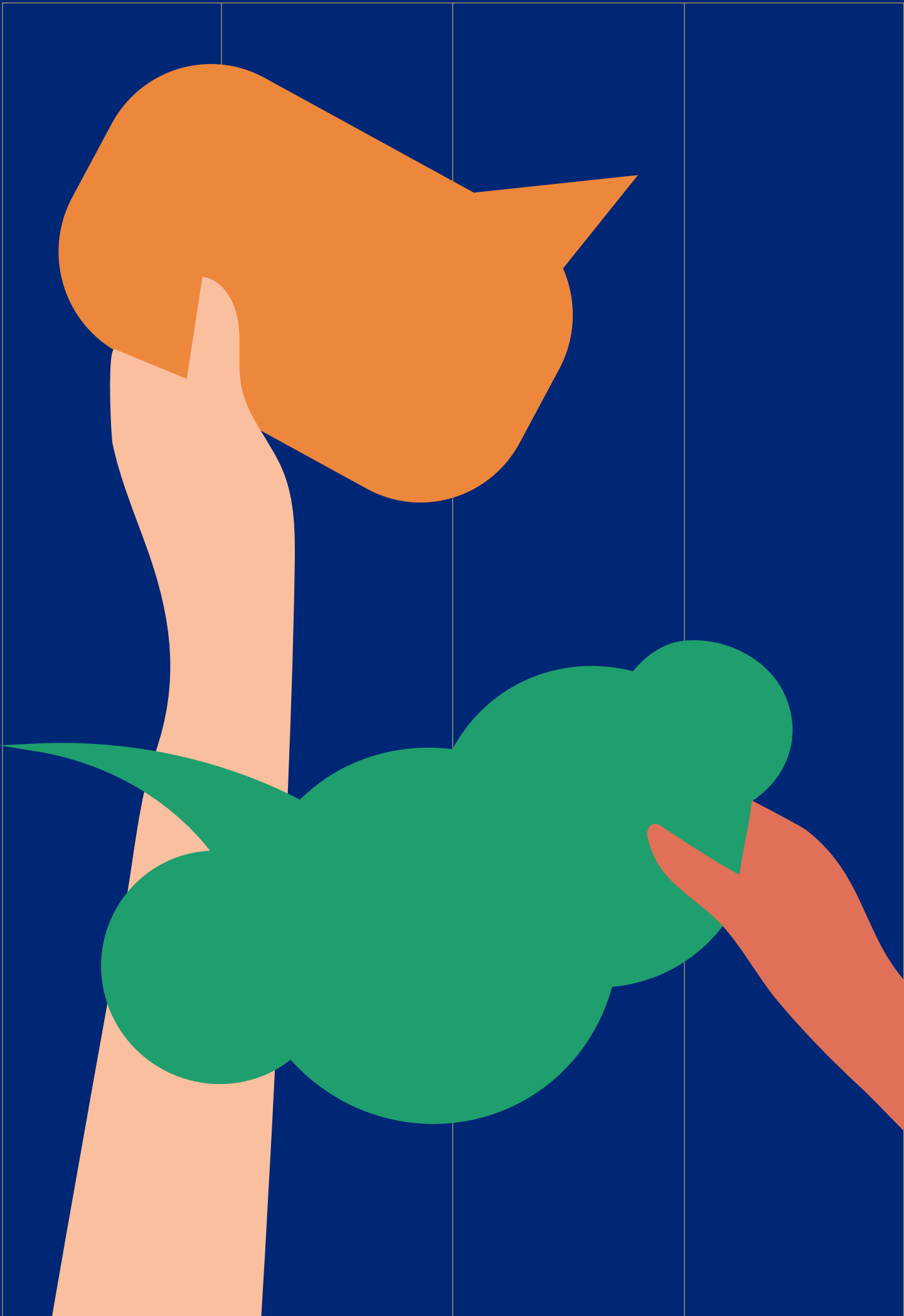
Safeguarding democracy at home, moreover, also maintains the EU's legitimacy abroad. We suggest the following priorities to better uphold democracy and the rule of law within the EU:

1. Integrating democracy as an ambitious work programme in the EU's regional funds, agricultural policy, and recovery funds, all of which are served by a more democratic union.
2. Expanding the EU's toolbox to uphold the rule of law within its borders, using it consistently, transparently and in full protection of the EU's financial interests, while continuing efforts to reconnect citizens with democracy.
3. Preserving and enhancing the European Commission's efforts to combat disinformation, to promote media freedom and pluralism by supporting journalists and human rights defenders, and to regulate the role of money in politics.
4. Putting democracy and human rights considerations at the heart of the regulation and enforcement of new and emerging digital technologies, and providing better data access for monitoring by experts.
5. Increasing support to representative democratic institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, independent media, and citizen participation both inside and outside the EU, including through mechanisms to report unlawful restrictions on them, and discouraging its member states from legislation and activities that undermine civic space and fundamental rights.
6. Vesting the responsibility to support democracy with an EU Commissioner that has the necessary profile and democracy track-record and is endowed with sufficient resources to effectively pursue this crucial mandate.

Externally, we expect to see the EU uphold its founding values in the face of security, migration, energy and trade pressures. We expect it to place democracy at the heart of these agendas and acknowledge that the Union's interests are better protected in a more democratic world. We thus call for the adoption of the following priorities by the EU:

7. Mainstreaming democracy in its trade and investment agendas, such as its flagship Global Gateway infrastructure programme, in ways that are measurable and help showcase that democracy can deliver for the wellbeing aspirations of citizens.
8. Prioritizing the protection of electoral integrity worldwide, including by renewing the EU's guidelines on electoral support and strengthening EU election observation.
9. Placing democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights at the top of EU concerns in its current drive for enlargement ('fundamentals first'), this being the single most effective and proven mechanism to accelerate accession talks, and to contribute to a fact-based debate on enlargement.
10. Allocating increasing resources to programmes and staff dealing with democracy and civic space, both in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and globally, for reasons of principle and because a more democratic world serves the EU's broader security, trade and migration interests.

With these ten priorities, we call upon the future authorities of the European Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission to seize the opportunity of these European elections to defend and support democracy as the hallmark of the EU's existence. Only by practicing its foundational values will the EU maintain its credibility as a global champion of democracy.



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