



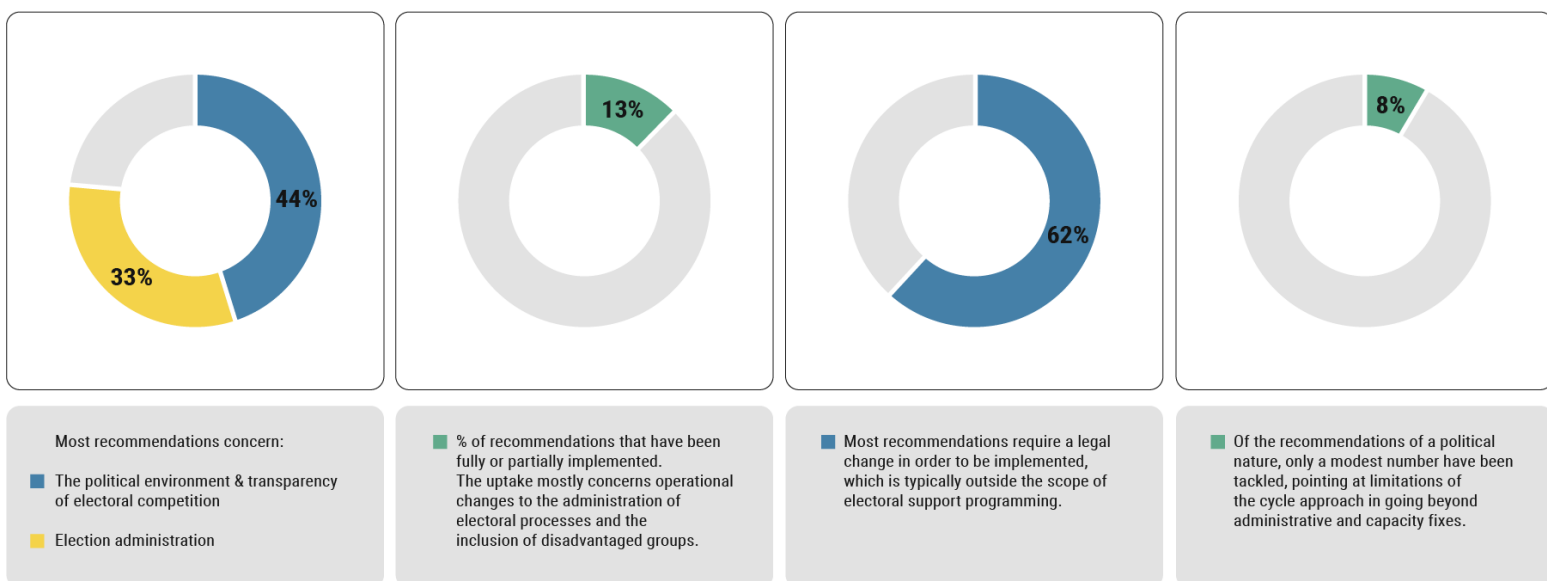
# Think AHEAD: Electoral Support for Democracy

The **Action for a Holistic Electoral Approach for Democracy (AHEAD)** is a new approach to electoral support that brings together the unique mix of skills and expertise present within the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) drawn from across the European Union (EU).

Research has shown that electoral support often remains disconnected from longer-term democracy support strategies and rooted in the notion of technical electoral processes. This often “disconnected” electoral support struggles to tackle contemporary challenges to electoral processes, including the rise of authoritarianism, lower voter turnout and disinformation. No challenge to electoral processes can be effectively addressed solely through technical support to electoral processes.<sup>1</sup>

AHEAD mobilises the wide range of expertise within EPD and its partners to provide electoral support in a holistic and innovative manner, starting from the democratic gaps identified by EU election missions.

AHEAD is informed by the extensive experience of EPD and its members in the provision of democracy and electoral support around the world as well as conclusions drawn from a thorough analysis of the status of implementation of recommendations made by EU Election Observation Missions (see Figure 1 below).

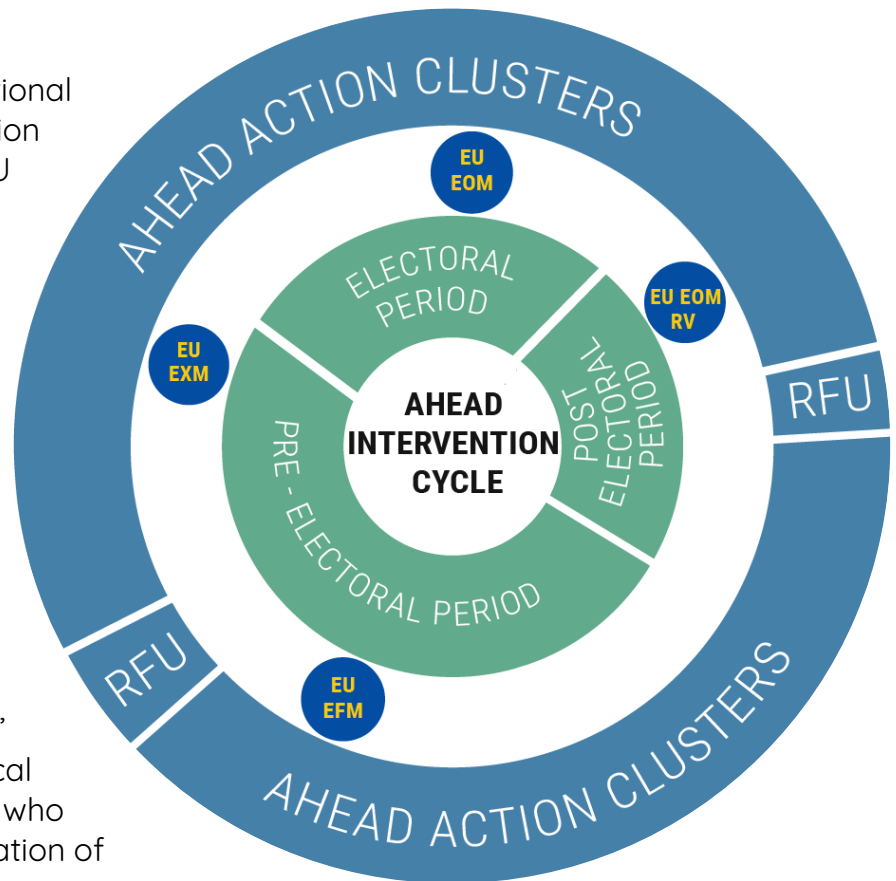


1 See more in “The need for a more democracy focused electoral cycle approach” [here](#).

While EU support to democratic elections is not confined to electoral support programmes, this evidence shows there is a growing need to align and integrate thematic support to democratic actors and processes with electoral support.

## The AHEAD intervention cycle

AHEAD capitalises on international and domestic election observation recommendations to support EU Delegations in ensuring that the evidence generated by EOM reports and the spirit of EOM recommendations provide a core component of programming of a new cycle of electoral support. To do so, it catalyses dialogue with institutional and political forces – beyond technical engagement with EMBs – to devise support actions for a sounder electoral and democratic system. Crucially, AHEAD capitalises on EPD members’ long standing relationships with local and national peers and partners, who play a central role in the implementation of AHEAD.



AHEAD is implemented through two steps:

### 1. Recommendation Follow-Up (RFU) Assessment for Democratic Opportunities

AHEAD includes a context-specific assessment that aims at translating EU (and other) EOM recommendations into practical action points for an enlarged number of stakeholders. Through interviews with electoral assistance providers, roundtables and focus groups with national stakeholders on the status of implementation of recommendations, the RFU facilitates the identification of structural recommendations that require prioritisation while mapping interests and opportunities for the formation of coalitions for change. At the same time, the RFU aims at strengthening local ownership of recommendations among key electoral stakeholders.

### 2. AHEAD action clusters

A series of comprehensive and complementary support actions to be delivered in the upcoming electoral cycle and / or across several cycles are devised based on the findings of the RFU assessment, EUD priorities in the electoral area and, when existent, the EUD

follow-up plan – depending on the electoral cycle phase at the time of launch of AHEAD. The following 4 action clusters can be combined in different ways to provide effective support:

|                       | ELECTION MANAGEMENT   | TRANSPARENCY  | INCLUSION  | LEGAL FRAMEWORK   |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|---|
| POST ELECTORAL PERIOD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Electoral performance evaluation</li> <li>- EMB reform proposals</li> <li>- Professional and systems review &amp; strengthening</li> <li>- Boundary review</li> <li>- Voter register update</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peaceful resolution of disputes</li> <li>- Campaign regulations review</li> <li>- Campaign finance audits</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Domestic observation assessment reports &amp; leveraging of recommendations</li> <li>- Reviewing and promoting inclusivity regulations</li> <li>- Media monitoring result and procedures/performance review</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Electoral &amp; constitutional legal review and reform</li> <li>- Campaign (assembly, participation, expression, and discrimination)</li> <li>- Effective remedy</li> <li>- Finance regulation</li> <li>- Right to stand</li> <li>- Universal suffrage</li> <li>- Transparency &amp; access to information</li> <li>- Women's participation</li> </ul> |
| PRE ELECTORAL PERIOD  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing &amp; consolidating standard operation procedures</li> <li>- Operational capacity and training</li> <li>- Voter registration</li> <li>- Candidate registration</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Electoral codes of conduct</li> <li>- Early warning mechanisms and mitigation measures</li> <li>- Internal party democracy &amp; candidates nomination procedures</li> <li>- Campaign finance review and disclosure</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Methodological standards and innovations in the field of observation</li> <li>- Accreditation of observers &amp; capacity building</li> <li>- Voter and civic education</li> <li>- Supply and demand for underrepresented groups</li> <li>- Update &amp; promote codes of media ethics</li> </ul> |   |
| ELECTORAL PERIOD      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Voter &amp; civic education</li> <li>- Voting, counting &amp; tabulation</li> <li>- Complaints &amp; appeals</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Candidate nomination</li> <li>- Campaigning (online &amp; offline)</li> <li>- Dispute resolution</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Media access</li> <li>- Media &amp; social media monitoring</li> </ul>  |   |

## Added value of mobilising EPD

- » Implement cohesive initiatives through a Team Europe approach, as EPD members have long-standing relations with EU Member States, their agencies and embassies across the world and are ideally positioned to implement programming that relies on the principle of working better together;
- » Leverage a comprehensive approach that seeks to improve the overall functioning of the electoral and democratic system by addressing each political actor in a single cohesive initiative;
- » Establish and capitalise on trusted long-term relationships with local electoral stakeholders to identify opportunities and promote democratic change;
- » Understand the incentives and bottlenecks for reform driving each key democratic actor;
- » Building alliances for change through pre-established links to peers;
- » Develop genuine collaboration with local partners in those areas of the political process the EU is ill-placed to observe and in empowering local partners to guide electoral reform.