

Contribution to the review of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy

Brussels – January 2015

Introduction

The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) welcomes the opening of the revision process of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy initiated in 2014 by the European External Action Service (EEAS). We thank the EEAS and the Chair of COHOM for opening the discussion with Civil and Political Society Organisations (CPSOs) and for putting efforts in making it a genuine and open consultation process.

As a Community of Practice of democracy support organisations, EPD has chosen to contribute to the consultation by providing concrete input in the form of written contributions. With reference to our [previous written contribution](#) submitted to the EEAS in July 2014 – and in particular to those recommendations related to strengthening the dimension of democracy assistance – we have developed the following proposal, which centres on the use of inclusive and participatory dialogue as a means for supporting democratisation processes and sharing experience among democracy support practitioners.

With regards to the revision of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (beyond 2014), *EPD recommends that:*

The EU Delegations support multi-stakeholder dialogue processes as a means to identify reform targets in the 12 priority countries of the EU democracy support agenda. These processes should be inclusive and participatory, and build on the active collaboration between government and public administration, key leaders, local authorities, political parties, national parliaments, CPSOs and the media. EU technical assistance for institution-building and governance support in the 12 priority countries should be aligned to the reform agendas developed through these dialogue processes (see [specific objective 1](#)).

The EU should invite the Member States and Political and Civil Society Organisations from the democracy support sector to take part in a structured dialogue on how the EU and its Member States support democratic change. These regular exchanges should serve to share knowledge and identify existing expertise on how the EU can work with different stakeholder groups in partner countries. This thematic focus will enable the EEAS and the European Commission to design better strategies and tools that can guide the EU Delegations in designing and implementing democracy support actions, and in particular locally-led dialogue processes (see [specific objective 2](#)).

In line with these proposals, EPD recommends that the EU adopt the following set of overall and specific objectives with regard to the 'democracy dimension' of the revised Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

Objectives

Overall objective

Organise structured and regular dialogues between the EEAS, European Commission, EU Delegations, Member States and CPSOs at EU and local level to (a) identify reform priorities in transition countries (b) develop better democracy support strategies and (c) monitor and evaluate the results and impact of EU democracy support actions.

To achieve the overall objective, EPD puts forth two specific objectives and two corresponding lines of activities. Specific objective 1 proposes concrete actions in the EU 12 priority countries selected by the EU, centred on incisive and participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue. Specific objective 2 proposes EU level discussions among the community of democracy support practitioners about thematic issues – with a focus on stakeholder engagement – and the overall EU democracy support strategy. Both objectives are linked, as the experience and lessons identified in the 12 priority countries will feed the discussions at EU level, while the guidance produced by the Community of Practice will help the EU Delegations in the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan, in particular with regard to questions related to inclusive and participatory dialogue.

As a Community of Practice in the democracy support sector, EPD stands ready to support the EEAS and the European Commission in realising the aforementioned objectives, both in-country and at Brussels level.

(SO1) Specific objective 1 (geographic / in the 12 EU priority countries)

EU Delegations, in coordination with Member States, support, monitor and co-evaluate multi-stakeholder dialogue processes in the 12 priority countries.

Proposed actions

Activity 1.1 – Locally-led multi-stakeholder dialogue

EU Delegations support, monitor and evaluate locally-led multi-stakeholder dialogue processes. These processes should focus on the priority areas for democracy support put forth in the Democracy Profiles and Action Plans currently being developed by the EU Delegations in 12 priority countries¹. Ideally, there should be one dialogue process per priority area, which means that there can be as many dialogue processes, as there are priority areas in the Democracy Profiles and Action Plans.

These sector or policy-level dialogues should go beyond ‘consulting’ the government and selected NGOs. Instead, they should be established and facilitated as long-term processes that involve in a participatory way a wider group of different types of stakeholders in each of the selected policy fields, including government and public administration, key leaders, local authorities, political parties, national parliaments, CPSOs and the media.

The role of the EU Delegations would be to ensure that these processes are inclusive (involving all the key stakeholders in the targeted policy area) and participatory (generating real collaboration among those stakeholders). They should build on existing strategies and instruments such as National Human Rights Strategies and EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society, amongst others. In countries of the European neighbourhood that have already signed an Association Agreement with the EU, the EU Delegations should aim at ensuring synergy with the work of the Civil Society Platforms, whose creation is foreseen in those Agreements.

Each inclusive and participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue process should aim to achieve concrete outcomes in the form of Roadmaps for Reform and Action Plans with detailed recommendations for institutional and policy reform, jointly adopted by all the participating stakeholders. Based on these locally-owned reform agendas, the EU Delegations – in consultation with the Member States present in the country – can programme further assistance (technical assistance, capacity building support) that is aligned with the needs and priorities identified through the dialogue.

¹ Fiji, Georgia, Malawi, Republic of Moldova, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Paraguay, Tanzania, Timor-Leste and Tunisia

Activity 1.2 – Regular update of Democracy Profiles and Action Plans

A regular evaluation and update of the Democracy Profiles and Action Plans should be envisaged at country level. The review process should capitalise on the involvement of democracy support organisations and key domestic stakeholders, but first and foremost those that have taken part in the aforementioned dialogue processes.

This collective update of the Democracy Profiles and Action Plans should include the following steps:

1. Identification of priority areas through multi-stakeholder assessments and dialogue.
2. Update of Democracy Profiles and Action Plan based on the results of those processes.
3. Initiation of inclusive and participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue processes to establish more concrete recommendations for institutional and policy reform in the priority areas highlighted in the Action Plans.
4. Channelling of EU assistance to the locally identified reform priorities.
5. Evaluation and update of the Democracy Profiles and Action Plans.

Activity 1.3 – Joint assessment and lessons learned

The EEAS, European Commission and EU Delegations should capitalise on the lessons learnt from the collective assessment and dialogue cycles in the 12 priority countries and should invite EU Member States and democracy support organisations to jointly assess the chances of replicating this approach in other countries and regions; i.e. beyond the priority countries. This collective assessment should also include a review of the criteria for selecting priority countries that are to benefit from enhanced democracy support actions in the future.

Results

- Locally-led multi-stakeholder dialogue processes produce inclusive reform agendas.
- Effective alignment of EU & Member State democracy assistance with locally identified priorities.
- Collective assessment by the EU and the Community of Practice of the dialogue processes and donor alignment.
- Criteria for selecting priority countries for EU democracy support revised.

(SO 2) Specific objective 2 (thematic / at Brussels level)

A structured dialogue between the EU, its Member States and democracy support organisations produces a collective assessment of key themes related to democracy support, with a focus on stakeholder engagement.

Proposed actions

Activity 2.1 – Structured dialogue on democracy support

At EU headquarters level, EPD proposes that the EEAS and DG DEVCO initiate a structured dialogue to discuss with experts and practitioners from the democracy support community how the EU can best work with different types of stakeholder groups in democratisation processes: government and public administration, key leaders, local authorities, political parties, national parliaments, CPSOs and the media. In addition, the structured dialogue should also allow sufficient room for discussions on how the EU can promote the involvement of women, youth and other minority groups.

The structured dialogue should involve the EU institutions and organisations specialised in working with the aforementioned stakeholders, including from sectors other than democracy support such as development, peace-building and human rights. It should build on the experience and knowledge that are available inside the different communities of practice, both at international level and in beneficiary countries (especially the 12 priority countries).

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The aim is to (a) foster exchanges and discussions that can help the EU and its Member States to better understand the role that the aforementioned stakeholder groups (can) play in democratisation processes, and to (b) design better strategies for working with those groups and building their capacities.

The exchanges can build on the working papers that have been prepared by DG DEVCO B1 (such as on political parties and parliaments) as well as other state of the art research and analyses. Furthermore, EU Delegation officials in charge of the Democracy Profiles and Actions Plans and the local multi-stakeholder dialogues should be invited to share their experience of involving the different stakeholder groups in dialogue processes and aligning assistance with the outcomes of those processes.

Activity 2.2 – Annual stocktaking and planning workshop in Brussels

A stocktaking and planning workshop should be organised on a yearly basis in Brussels to assess the progress made in the implementation of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan in the 12 priority countries (geographic assessment) as well as at EU headquarters level (thematic assessment).

This annual event should involve the EU institutions including EU Delegations, along with CPSOs from beneficiary countries and experts and practitioners on democracy support. Moreover, representatives from organisations working in related sectors such as development, peace-building and human rights should also be invited to take part in the discussions to facilitate mutual learning and identify areas for coordination and collaboration.

The stock-taking and planning workshop should serve to (a) identify lessons from the 12 priority countries on how external actors can best support democratisation processes, including through facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue, (b) review the results of the Brussels-based structured dialogue on working with different stakeholder groups and establish EU guidelines in this regard, and (c) update the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan and plan follow-up activities for the coming year.

Results

- Case studies on the multi-stakeholder dialogue processes in the priority countries.
- EU guidelines on engaging different stakeholder groups in inclusive and participatory dialogue.
- EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan updated on a regular basis.

Added value

SO 1:

By promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue as a tool for facilitating the development of locally-owned reform agendas, the EU will contribute to a culture of dialogue and inclusiveness in the priority countries, thereby improving the environment for democratic development. In turn, this new approach will ensure genuine local ownership of reform agendas, which is a crucial pre-condition for effective programming of assistance.

SO 2:

Based on the experiences and lessons from the local multi-stakeholder dialogues as well as exchanges with democracy support organisations specialised in working with the different stakeholder groups involved in those dialogues, the EU can develop more effective and coherent democracy support strategies and actions.

About EPD and the Community of Practice

The European Partnership for Democracy is an independent European non-profit organisation supporting democratic transformations outside the European Union. As a network of European Civil and Political Society Organisations working on democracy assistance, EPD advocates for a stronger presence of democracy support on the European Union's agenda and facilitates the exchange of knowledge and good practices in democratic transformations around the world. We do this through innovative methodologies based on the development of effective partnerships with organisations in third countries, and the facilitation of political and social dialogue.

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The EPD network is conceived as a **Community of Practice**, i.e. a group of organisations that work together because, by doing so, they can substantially improve the way they operate in the realm of democracy support and provide a comprehensive response to the needs of populations. This notion does not only apply to EPD as a network and its institutional development, but also to all the actions and partnerships constructed under the EPD banner.

The following organisations have signed a Partnership Agreement with EPD. As per this agreement, they are represented on EPD's Board of Directors and participate as Partner Organisations in the development and day-to-day activities of the Community of practice: [Club de Madrid \(CdM\)](#), Spain; [Eastern Europe Studies Centre \(EESC\)](#), Lithuania; [FRIDE](#), Spain; [European Centre for Electoral Support \(ECES\)](#), Belgium; [Institute for Political Studies](#), Portugal; [Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy \(NIMD\)](#), Netherlands; [People in Need \(PIN\)](#), Czech Republic; [Political Parties of Finland for Democracy \(Demo Finland\)](#), Finland.

Since September 2013, EPD has been co-chairing the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) with the objective of operationalising the link between Human rights and Democracy at both a policy and a programme level.

For more information please contact communications@epd.eu.