

March 2019

## Democracy abroad: Different European approaches to supporting democracy

*A comparative review of the democracy support policies of different European states.*

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# Executive Summary

Political dynamics in Europe have increased concerns that overseas development assistance will lose public support in the future while also highlighting the very real danger of reduced support for assisting democracy abroad. At the same time, democracy is on the tip of the tongue of numerous political commentators and the need for improvements in democratic decision-making are a salient issue around the world. This paper is a contribution towards a series of research papers by the European Partnership for Democracy reviewing European democracy support at a time of increasing challenges to democracy worldwide. The research makes clear that if European states are steadfast in their determination to support democracy around the world in the face of such trends, then there is a need to update policies to underline this resolve.

The year 2019 marks the 10th anniversary of the EU 'Agenda for Action' on Democracy Support that was agreed to by all EU member states. At the same time, European Parliament elections and negotiations on a new EU budget (post-2020) are likely to lead to a substantial reshuffle in policy and programming in Brussels over the coming months. It is therefore the appropriate moment to take stock of where the EU and European states stand in terms of supporting democratic governance around the world.

European states and the European institutions are key providers of development assistance and by extension democracy support. Through a comparative approach, the study explores the state of democracy support in policy and funding of 12 European countries: the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The paper looks specifically at the policy documents of the aforementioned countries to assess where democracy fits within foreign policy priorities, what the logic is behind a country's support for democracy, and how the funding dedicated to democracy abroad is structured. Whilst democracy is regularly mentioned as a critical value for external action, very few European countries have separate policies for democracy support. Most of the countries under review have incorporated democracy support into their development cooperation policy (to varying degrees). Often, these policies lack a clear definition of democracy. Instead, there is a noticeable focus on good governance in the policy documents of key donors that is borne out in official spending, highlighting the top-down/state centered approach typically taken in supporting democracy. Certain countries also suffer from a lack of consistency between policy and practice, pointing to the need to update policies or review programming.

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# Introduction

European democracy support is largely shaped by democracy support policies and activities of individual member states of the European Union (EUMS). Not only do EUMS have prominent roles internationally but they also help shape the policies of the European Union (EU). EUMS are the largest provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA)<sup>1</sup>, while the EU institutions are the fourth largest donor<sup>2</sup> themselves, following the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom.

This paper analyses the different policies and activities of European states through a comparative study of European countries' approaches towards democracy support. More specifically, the study compares the state of democracy support in development cooperation policy and funding of 12 European countries.<sup>3</sup> This selection was made to include the largest donors, younger donors, a non-EU MS (Norway) and smaller countries, so as to capture the full spectrum.

The research was divided into three areas in order to examine different elements of

democracy support.<sup>4</sup> The three areas look at the official policy documents of European countries, the logic behind a country's support for democracy and the funding dedicated to democracy abroad.

The research on each country focused on the same core questions in each area:

1. Democracy support policy

*Does the country have a separate democracy support policy? What official documents mention democracy? Where does democracy support fit in the foreign policy priorities of the country?*

2. The logic underpinning democracy support

*How is democracy defined? What language is used to describe it? What is the rationale given for supporting democracy abroad?*

3. Democracy support priorities in numbers

*How much funding is allocated to democracy support projects? What type of support is*

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. Press Release: EU remains the world's leading donor of development assistance: €75.7 billion in 2017. 10 April 2018. Web. [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-3002\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-3002_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Donor Tracker: European Union. Updated March 2018. Web. <https://donortracker.org/country/eu>

<sup>3</sup> Twelve countries selected for comparison: the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> The three areas loosely follow the three interconnected dimensions of democracy support as set out by Wetzel, Orbie & Bossuyt, 2017.

*prioritised? What kind of programmes and projects are funded?*

As the paper compares findings for a few selected European countries, it is designed to be a concise summary of policy documents and funding figures. The paper does not delve into the plethora of political and informal factors that may ultimately impact a country's track record on democracy support, such as reactions to conflicting priorities with other European countries or with other national priorities (in trade, security, etc.) or the use of foreign policy instruments that could function as positive or negative incentives for reform (sanctions, aid conditionality, etc.).

The information gathered consists of primary sources from the governments of the European countries under study as well as secondary sources such as policy papers, articles, journals and Ministry of Foreign Affairs portals.

This paper considers democracy support to encompass a range of different sectors (and therefore political actors). This includes support to electoral processes, parliaments, political parties and the party system, free media, regional government, civil society support, civil and political rights, the rule of law, human security, peace processes and political governance. Although there are important arguments for not doing so, this paper has elected to include 'governance' as an element of democracy support in order to capture as much relevant information as possible.

1.

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# Democracy support policy

Democracy support may fall within the scope of development priorities or foreign policy objectives of a particular country. The existence of particular documents and the content of those documents provides the basis for analysing democracy support and the importance accorded to democracy within foreign policy more generally.<sup>5</sup> The analysis focuses on the policies themselves on *paper*, leaving the matter of *practice* for further discussion.

The countries in the sample with a *separate democracy support policy* are Spain, Denmark and the Czech Republic. Denmark has the most comprehensive democracy support policy, elaborating on the political nature of democracy support, the risks that come with it, the need for a long-term approach, and the types of activities and actors that are to be supported. Likewise, the Spanish democracy support policy explores different types of

democracy and civic participation that can be supported, as well as the risks of supporting political changes and the difference between internalised democratic values and formal democracy. Both state's policy documents elaborately consider the concept of democracy and the types of actors and activities that need to be strengthened and assisted in order to achieve this. They also consider the challenges of supporting such change and the necessary components for mitigating risks and having an impact. Interestingly, these policies were published in 2008 and 2009, when there was momentum for such activities at an EU level as reflected in the EU's 2009 Council Conclusions.<sup>6</sup> The Czech Republic and its foreign policy aspiration to promote human rights and democracy is also expressed through a separate democracy support policy and in greater detail through a special *Transition Promotion Program*, which was created to contribute to building and

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<sup>5</sup> This research on EU democracy support in the countries under review does not cover the position of national parliaments or sub-national authorities. The research is based on the appraisal of policy documents released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other executive bodies.

<sup>6</sup> Council conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations. Retrieved from [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/111250.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/111250.pdf).

strengthening democratic institutions. It is based on the concept of sharing the Czech experience of transition to democracy with other countries, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.<sup>7</sup>

Three countries fall under a second category that links democracy support to *development cooperation policy*. Sweden streamlines democracy support throughout its development policy and incorporates participation in politics into the definition of development cooperation. Within its overall development cooperation policy, Sweden provides a great deal of detail on its definition of democracy and on its strategy for democracy support. Similarly, supporting democracy is subsumed under development cooperation in Poland. Nevertheless, the strategy for supporting democracy is dealt with in far less detail than in Swedish policy documents. This is also the case for Estonia, where support to the area of democracy, rule of law, good governance and human rights is part of the development cooperation policy and humanitarian aid of the country. The Estonian government's objectives in the field of democracy are highlighted through "The Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2016-2020", where support to the development of democracy is one of the main objectives of development cooperation.

A third category of countries is formed by those that do elaborate on democracy in *separate strategy documents* (that are not part of the main policy documents). Finland has a two-pager on democratic and effective societies, which is one of four priority areas of development cooperation. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs also has a general analysis document that summarises Finnish democracy support with the goal of creating "as coherent and effective a democracy support policy as possible."<sup>8</sup>

The Netherlands has a theory of change on security and the rule of law which consists of several elements that would typically be seen as critical for democracy, e.g. inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making is considered as a driver of good governance. Norway has a white paper on promoting human rights in development cooperation, which details democracy as one of three priority areas.

A final category of countries in the sample includes those that feature democracy within a policy that focuses on *governance*.<sup>9</sup> This is the case of France, which does not have a democracy support policy and does not mention democracy in its new Human Rights Strategy.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the UK and Germany have governance support policies, while references to democracy feature only fleetingly in policy documents. In the case of Germany, this is particularly

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<sup>7</sup> Human rights and transition promotion policy concept of the Czech Republic September 2015. Human rights and transition promotion policy concept of the Czech Republic September 2015. [https://www.mzv.cz/public/98/7c/e8/2239165\\_1648851\\_Human\\_rights\\_and\\_transition\\_promotion\\_policy\\_concept\\_of\\_the\\_Czech\\_Republic\\_.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/public/98/7c/e8/2239165_1648851_Human_rights_and_transition_promotion_policy_concept_of_the_Czech_Republic_.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Information retrieved from: [https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/ministry\\_for\\_foreign\\_affairs\\_\\_democracy\\_support\\_policy](https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/ministry_for_foreign_affairs__democracy_support_policy)

<sup>9</sup> The differences between governance and democracy support are discussed in section 2 of this report.

<sup>10</sup> France diplomatie. Human rights – France's international strategy (10 December 2018). <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/human-rights/events/article/human-rights-france-s-international-strategy-10-12-18>



surprising given the well institutionalised support that the German federal government gives to political foundations that support democracy around the world.

## Prioritisation of democracy support

While some EUMS include democracy support as one of several key priorities among their development objectives (along with, *inter alia*, poverty, economic and social development, environmental protection, human rights and good governance), other countries express democracy support through other priorities.

On the one hand, for Denmark, Finland and Estonia, democracy support is *one of several priority areas*. This is valid also for Norway, Spain and Czech Republic, where democracy is expressed through human rights priorities. For instance, Norway explicitly refers to democracy in the white paper which describes the country's human rights priorities in its foreign and development policy: "ensuring a coherent approach to Norway's international human rights efforts, with a particular focus on three priority areas that highlight the links between democracy, the rule of law and human rights."<sup>11</sup>

A democratic and accountable society that promotes human rights is one of the four priorities areas in the development policy of

Finland<sup>12</sup>. Democracy support is therefore prioritised through development policy even if Finnish government documents make it clear that democracy is also a major factor in advancing human rights, the rule of law and conflict-prevention.<sup>13</sup>

The Czech government also mentions 'good democratic governance' in its development strategy and it is highlighted as a first priority, followed by four other priorities which reflect the core objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: sustainable management of natural resources, economic transformation and growth, agriculture and rural development and inclusive social development. Polish development policy features democracy in thematic priorities and horizontal issues. It includes democracy and human rights as a unique priority which is characterised by "democratic election processes; human rights and civic freedoms; strengthening civic society organisations and civic dialogue".<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, some countries take a more technical, *apolitical governance approach*, like Germany, France and the UK. The UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office has a programme on human rights, democracy and the rule of law that mentions democracy: 'Key workstreams include promoting development of democracy, including through the work of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy'.<sup>15</sup> In a similar

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<sup>11</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Opportunities for All: Human Rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation*. Retrieved from <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/261f255d028b42cab91ad099ee3f99fc/en-gb/pdfs/stm201420150010000engpdfs.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Goals and principles of Finland's development policy. Retrieved from <https://um.fi/goals-and-principles-of-finland-s-development-policy>

<sup>13</sup> Information retrieved from: [https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/ministry\\_for\\_foreign\\_affairs\\_\\_democracy\\_support\\_policy](https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/ministry_for_foreign_affairs__democracy_support_policy)

<sup>14</sup> Information retrieved from: [https://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/download/files/Dokumenty\\_i\\_Publikacje/Program\\_wieloletni\\_2016-2020/WPWR\\_2016-2020\\_ENG\\_broszura.pdf](https://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/download/files/Dokumenty_i_Publikacje/Program_wieloletni_2016-2020/WPWR_2016-2020_ENG_broszura.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Information retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/official-development-assistance-oda-fco-programme-spend-objectives-2017-to-2018/human-rights-democracy-and-rule-of-law-objectives-2017-to-2018#fco-objectives-on-human-rights-democracy--rule-of-law>

fashion, Germany refers to German political foundations and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) as channels for democracy support and as “important partners in these efforts [of promoting democratisation]”.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, democracy is also described as one of the fields where efforts to promote good governance take place. German policy also mentions rule of law and free media as the main aspects of democracy, which are considered indispensable for both democratic societies and democratic participation.

France makes little reference to democracy support, but lists governance as one of 10 priority areas. In policy documents, the French government often refers to “democratic governance”, which is translated through the commitment “to freedom of expression, belief and information, the fight against the death penalty, and the universal decriminalization of homosexuality, strengthening of free and independent media, civil society and NGOs”.

The Netherlands mentions governance, rather than democracy, in the updated policy document on foreign trade and development cooperation policy, which is promoted and expressed through the priority of Just and Peaceful Societies. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs mentions cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG International) with respect

to the support of the professionalisation of political parties and parliaments, 'so that they become more receptive to the voices of women and young people'.<sup>17</sup> In addition, governance is part of the crosscutting theme in the field of security and rule of law. In Dutch policy, the key condition for long-term security is development which is, in turn, safeguarded by the rule of law.

Taken together, the development cooperation policies of Germany, the UK and France, and to a lesser extent the Netherlands, focus predominantly on governance support, rather than democracy support. This is rather significant given the size of these countries' funding (see part 3 below). It is also possible that certain policies in the 12 countries under study are outdated compared to current practice. The policies remain relevant in terms of official documentation but are overtaken by political events to become obsolete. While the priorities of European governments are not solely expressed through finances, there is still likely to be a discrepancy between certain policy documents on democracy support, development policy and political priorities. Both Spain and Poland are a tangible example of this for differing reasons.

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<sup>16</sup> Information retrieved from: <https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/demokratie/arbeitsfelder/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Investing in global prospects, For the World, For the Netherlands Policy Document on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation May 2018. <https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/policy-notes/2018/05/18/investing-in-global-prospects/Investing+in+Global+Prospects.pdf>

Table 1. Democracy support policy

Country	Democracy support policy	Prioritisation of democracy support
Denmark	Separate democracy support policy	Democracy one of 4 key priorities (thematic or cross-cutting)
Spain		Democracy expressed through human rights priorities
Czech Republic		
Estonia	Part of development policy	Democracy one of 7 key priorities (thematic or cross-cutting)
Sweden		One of key priorities (thematic or cross-cutting)
Poland		Democracy one of 6 thematic priorities (separate from good governance)
Norway	Part of separate strategy document	Democracy one of 4 key priorities (thematic or cross-cutting)
Finland		
Netherlands		
France	Governance policy / strategy, little detail on democracy	Governance as priority
UK		
Germany		



## 2.

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# The logic underpinning democracy support

As democracy itself is (arguably) a contested term, the words used in policy documents to describe it are illustrative of the approach to democracy support in different states. This section therefore looks into whether policy records contain a definition of democracy and what language is used to describe the type of democracy that is supported.

Sweden defines most clearly what type of democracy it supports and what is understood as critical activities and actors in democratic societies. Its definition of *representative democracy* entails support for free, fair, pluralist and transparent election processes, parliaments, political parties, civil society, and transparent and effective institutions that operate under the rule of law. This specific definition and straight-forward language give clear direction to the activities that Sweden wants to support in its programmes.

Spain, Denmark and the Czech Republic use more ambitious, elaborate and rich vocabulary in speaking of and defining democracy. Spain and the Czech Republic speak of *representative and participatory* decision-making and political pluralism, whilst Denmark, being even more ambitious, talks of deepening democracy and supporting a redistribution of power. Yet, a clear and concise definition like that of Sweden is not present in any of these countries' policy documents. Rather than a short definition, they provide a comprehensive discussion of all the necessary components for a functioning democracy. In contrast, Poland, France, the UK and Estonia do not have any definition or description of democracy. As identified in part 1, several states opt for the traditionally more technically minded idea of governance in places where the term democracy may have otherwise figured. Indeed, what emerges most from this

comparison is the confusion between governance and democracy, be it deliberate or not. Both terms are at times used interchangeably, and usually governance is understood as encompassing democracy. For instance, the German good governance policy references democracy frequently, but most of the actions described must be understood as supporting governance, given the institutional and state-centered focus. Similarly, France defines *democratic governance* with a list of critical elements for effective governance, rather than democratic decision-making.

Finland takes a holistic approach to democracy, which is “inextricably associated to human rights, rule of law, good governance and to anti-corruption”<sup>18</sup> and considered as a precondition for socially sustainable development. A very different case is the Netherlands, which only mentions democracy three times in its development policy and does not mention the word at all in its theory of change for the rule of law and security, as well as in the updated foreign trade and development cooperation policy, where instead the adjective ‘democratic’ is used twice. Yet, as mentioned above, this same theory of change speaks of participatory, representative, inclusive and accountable political processes, which can be seen as a definition of democratic decision-making.

Overall, the type of language and definitions of democracy are in line with the position of democracy support in the development cooperation policies described in the previous

section. There is clear and strong support for democracy in the policy documents of Sweden, Spain, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Finland and Norway which is mirrored in the definitions and language used to describe democracy. The exception here is Poland, where democracy is part of the policy definition of development cooperation, but is not described or defined in the policy itself.

As mentioned above, France, the UK and Germany refer to governance rather than democracy, although it is evident that both terms are used interchangeably and relate to each other in ways which are not explicitly defined in policy documents. This overall ambiguity is further exemplified by Estonia and the Netherlands, who fall somewhere in between these last two categories (democracy and governance).

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<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland: Supporting Democracy. Retrieved from [https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/supporting\\_democracy\\_\\_\\_the\\_finnish\\_experience](https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/supporting_democracy___the_finnish_experience)

Table 2. Definition of democracy

Country	Type of Democracy	Type of Language Used to Describe Democracy
Sweden	Representative Democracy	Short and concise definition
Spain	Representative and participatory democracy	Ambitious, elaborate and rich vocabulary
Czech Republic		
Denmark		
Poland	Part of definition of development	Not clear, vague
UK	No clear description of democracy. Use of the word governance instead of democracy	
France		
Germany		
Estonia		
Netherlands	Use of terms associated with democracy but no definition	Non-exhaustive
Finland	Holistic understanding of democracy linked to human rights, rule of law, governance and anti-corruption	Clear with use of specific wording
Norway	Democracy described as a prerequisite for the realisation of human rights	Clear

## The rationale of democracy support

Closely related to the importance of democracy support in development and the language used to define democracy is the rationale behind supporting democracy. This rationale reflects the thinking of a particular country about democracy support in relation to sustainable development and foreign policy interests. Most policies exhibit a mixture of instrumental and intrinsic arguments, with three distinct angles along which one can roughly categorise the different countries under review.

A clear *human rights angle* is taken by the Czech Republic, Sweden, Denmark and Norway, who justify democracy support by the intrinsic value of democracy as a fundamental human right. The aforementioned countries consider democracy and human rights as inextricably connected. Czech policy states that “democracy, the rule of law and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of human dignity”.<sup>19</sup> Denmark and Norway clearly recognise democracy as an important factor in the realisation of human rights and that the commitment to democracy must occur in line with the fulfilment of human rights. The white paper of Norway focuses specifically on the civic and political rights that

are necessary for democracy, underlining that the promotion of human rights creates a safer and open world and guarantees democratic society. This is also the case for the Swedish government and is expressed by a new strategy for human rights, democracy and rule of law whose objective is that of contributing to “secure, just and inclusive democratic societies that protect and respect the equal rights of all”.<sup>20</sup>

The *instrumental value of democracy for achieving development* is stressed by the majority of the countries under review and most specifically by the Netherlands, France, Finland, Poland and Denmark. These countries see democracy through a *developmental angle*, rather than a human rights angle - i.e. democracy as a precondition for development. For these countries it is essential to act based on “democracy, human rights and good governance principles”<sup>21</sup> in order to eradicate poverty in all its forms and to achieve sustainable development. This is also evident in Estonia’s development policy that states that “just as peace and security, an effective democratic system and rule of law, low level of corruption and guaranteed human rights are important prerequisites for the development of a country”.<sup>22</sup> The same developmental angle is taken by Germany and Spain who stress good governance as a precondition for development.

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<sup>19</sup> Human rights and transition promotion policy concept of the Czech Republic September 2015.

[https://www.mzv.cz/public/98/7c/e8/2239165\\_1648851\\_Human\\_rights\\_and\\_transition\\_promotion\\_policy\\_concept\\_of\\_the\\_Czech\\_Republic\\_.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/public/98/7c/e8/2239165_1648851_Human_rights_and_transition_promotion_policy_concept_of_the_Czech_Republic_.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Government Offices of Sweden: A new strategy for human rights, democracy and the rule of law 2018–2022.

[https://www.government.se/49b9d3/contentassets/9f1870ad998f4b53a79989b90bd85f3f/rk\\_strategi-for-sveriges-utvecklingssamarbete\\_eng\\_webb22.pdf](https://www.government.se/49b9d3/contentassets/9f1870ad998f4b53a79989b90bd85f3f/rk_strategi-for-sveriges-utvecklingssamarbete_eng_webb22.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Poland: Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for 2016-2020. Retrieved from:

[https://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/download/files/Dokumenty\\_i\\_Publikacje/Program\\_wieloletni\\_2016-2020/WPWR\\_2016-2020\\_ENG\\_broszura.pdf](https://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/download/files/Dokumenty_i_Publikacje/Program_wieloletni_2016-2020/WPWR_2016-2020_ENG_broszura.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> The Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2016–2020. [https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/development-cooperation/2016\\_2020\\_arengukava\\_eng\\_kodulehele\\_0.pdf](https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/development-cooperation/2016_2020_arengukava_eng_kodulehele_0.pdf)

Spain, in particular, mentions the quality of democracy, representative and participatory democracy as well as political pluralism as the cornerstone of development.<sup>23</sup>

The *third angle is peace and security*, which frames democracy support through the prism of conflict and national security. This perspective is taken by UK where policy states that “building democracy and civil society can strengthen peace and provide an effective mechanism for allocating political power and managing conflict”.<sup>24</sup> This approach stems from considering conflicts and violence as a consequence of the lack of development and good governance. To a certain extent, the peace and security angle is also reflected in the policies of Finland, the Netherlands and Norway (which are formally categorised in the ‘angles’ identified above). For each of these countries, violent conflicts, wars and global crisis highlight the need and interest in promoting democracy in order to initiate peace processes. While Finland’s policy documents primarily view democracy through a development lens, they also specify that lasting peace is possible only through support to the pillars of democracy. This includes a well-thought out list of different characteristics, namely an independent judiciary, freedom of expression, association and assembly, organisation and monitoring of free and fair elections, democratic functioning

of political parties, accountability of central and local government, and freedom for civil society.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, one can see from policy document, that the Finnish government has reflected significantly on the importance of democracy for other foreign policy objectives.

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<sup>23</sup> Estrategia de Gobernabilidad Democrática, Participación Ciudadana y Desarrollo Institucional. Retrieved from [http://intercoonecta.aecid.es/Documentos%20de%20la%20comunidad/Estrategia\\_Gobernabilidad.pdf](http://intercoonecta.aecid.es/Documentos%20de%20la%20comunidad/Estrategia_Gobernabilidad.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Building Stability Overseas Strategy. Retrievable at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/32960/bsos-july-11.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32960/bsos-july-11.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Finland’s Development Policy and Development Cooperation in Fragile States. Retrieved from: [https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/finlands\\_development\\_policy\\_in\\_fragile\\_states](https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/finlands_development_policy_in_fragile_states)



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### 3.

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## Democracy support priorities in numbers

The translation of policy guidance into financing for democracy is essential to understanding the type of democracy support that is provided by donors. A detailed definition may not translate into ambitious programmes on the ground, for instance. As a result, this section looks at the policy implementation through the lens of OECD statistics of spending. Such data provides an overview of how the democracy support policies are reflected in funding priorities, notwithstanding the issues of reliability of Official Development Assistance (ODA) data. A comparative analysis of different donors' programmes would be very insightful, but is beyond the scope of this paper. It should also be underlined that despite the problems with ODA data, it is the only dataset available that can allow for such comparison.

The data under review is the share of ODA

allocated to the sector Government and Civil Society<sup>26</sup>, and the amounts dedicated to the different subsectors within Government and Civil Society spending. Table 3 shows the percentages of Government and Civil Society support as a share of total ODA for all countries under review. For most countries, the amounts of funding are consistent with their policy documents, but some countries' discrepancies do stand out.

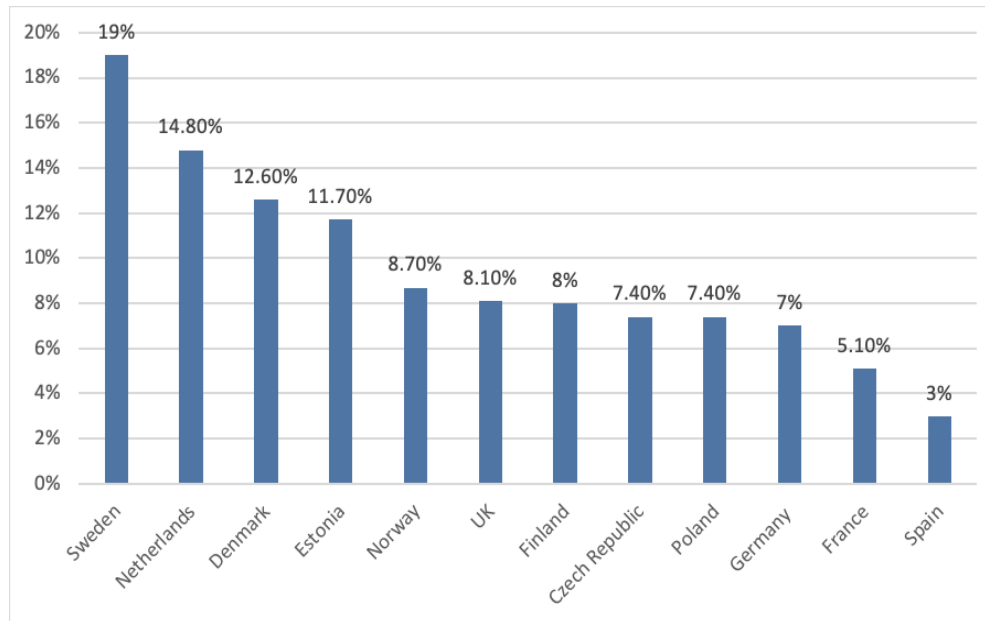
First of all, two of Europe's largest donors, Germany and France, are amongst the lowest supporters of government and civil society as a percentage of their overall ODA. As the two countries make up roughly 36% of the total ODA of the EU and its member states combined<sup>27</sup>, this is significant. That being said, Germany is still the largest provider of Government and Civil Society ODA in real terms, followed by the UK and Sweden.

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<sup>26</sup> General grouping without the "Conflict, Peace and Security Grouping".

<sup>27</sup> Total ODA for the EU and the EU member states in 2016 was 75.5 Billion Euro (European Commission Press Release, 2017). Total ODA for 2016 for France and Germany combined is 27,437,381,044 Euro.

Table 3. Share of Government and Civil Society support out of total ODA (OECD, 2016)



Secondly, Spain’s detailed democracy support policy is not funded as much as would be expected from the policy. With only 3% of total ODA, Spain ranks lowest among the countries under review. Comparing current funding with data from 2008, when Spain’s democracy support policy was established, shows that this sector was subject to major cuts. Funding for the Government and Civil Society sector went from nearly 450 million USD in 2008 to 86 million USD in 2016. A similar trend in Polish funding puts into perspective the discrepancy between policy and funding there. Democracy support was part of the very definition of development cooperation in 2011, but has since nearly halved, mirroring internal political developments in Poland. The policy documents do not therefore reflect the current political climate in the country.

## Breaking down the numbers

Government and Civil Society funding can be broken down into 12 subsectors that are defined by specific DAC codes.<sup>28</sup> To allow for a clearer comparison, these 12 subheadings have been divided into three categories of support: governance support, democracy support and human rights assistance. Governance support includes support to the public sector and administrative management, anti-corruption initiatives, decentralisation, taxation and the judiciary. Democracy support includes efforts to strengthen civil society, civic participation, elections, parliaments and political parties. Human rights assistance includes support to human rights defenders, women’s organisations and ending violence against women (Table 4).

<sup>28</sup> That is when the subheadings that would classify as peacebuilding are left out.

All of these subsectors are critical to any functioning democracy and the division is imperfect in that it reflects ideal types that are blurry in practice. However, a breakdown is instructive as it gives an indication of the types of actors' programmes engage with. The type of support is also quite different in nature. Governance support targets institutions of the state and public servants, whereas human rights support typically works mostly with civil society actors although it can also include state institutions. The subsectors categorised here as 'democracy support' can be expected to form a

mix of state institutions, civil society and political actors. It should also be noted that human rights and democracy support are often seen as more controversial sectors of development cooperation, as opposed to state-directed governance support, as they signify a different type of engagement in a country.

This breakdown of Government and Civil Society funding into subsectors of democracy support provides interesting insight into specific priorities of European donors.

Table 4: Funding subsectors

SECTOR	SUBSECTOR
<b>Governance support</b>	Public sector, policy and administrative management (15110)
	Public finance management (15111)
	Decentralisation and support to subnational government (15112)
	Anti-corruption organizations and institutions (15113)
	Domestic revenue mobilisation (15114)
<b>Democracy support</b>	Legal and judicial development (15130)
	Democratic participation and civil society (15150)
	Elections (15151)
	Legislatures and political parties (15152)
	Media and free flow of information (15153)
<b>Human Rights assistance</b>	Human rights (15160)
	Women's equality organisations and institutions (15170)
	Ending violence against women and girls (15180)

Table 5. Share of Government and Civil Society ODA to governance, democracy and human rights (OECD, 2016)

	Sweden	Netherlands	Denmark	Estonia	Norway	UK
<b>Governance</b>	17%	21%	43%	46%	34%	73%
<b>Democracy</b>	50%	60%	10%	29%	6%	12%
<b>Human Rights</b>	33%	19%	17%	25%	60%	15%

	Finland	Czech Rep	Poland	Germany	France	Spain
<b>Governance</b>	26%	42%	7%	38%	92%	25%
<b>Democracy</b>	27%	49%	87%	53%	6%	17%
<b>Human Rights</b>	47%	9%	6%	9%	2%	58%

First of all, governance support makes up a very large share of the Government and Civil Society funding for France (92%) and the UK (73%), and over a third of funding for another 5 countries under review (Table 5). Given the size and share of funding from France and the UK and to a lesser extent Germany, these percentages reflect very large amounts in real terms. This means the bulk of European democracy support goes to governance support, which is more uncontroversial, technical and developmentalist in nature. Support to the public sector, policy and administrative management is particularly salient among nearly all donors under review, with only Sweden and Poland as exceptions. The prominence of governance and its ambiguous usage in policy documents described above is thus well reflected in the large share of funding that goes to governance support.

More specifically, Denmark and the Netherlands stand out for an apparent inconsistency of funding and policy. Whilst governance support can certainly be valuable, it is not necessarily the type of programmes that serve to ‘deepen

democracy’ in the sense that the Danish policy prescribes. It therefore appears that government policy is more ambitious than the funding in the case of Denmark. The opposite is true for the Netherlands, where the very sporadic usage of the word democracy is contrasted with 60% of all Government and Civil Society ODA going to democracy support.

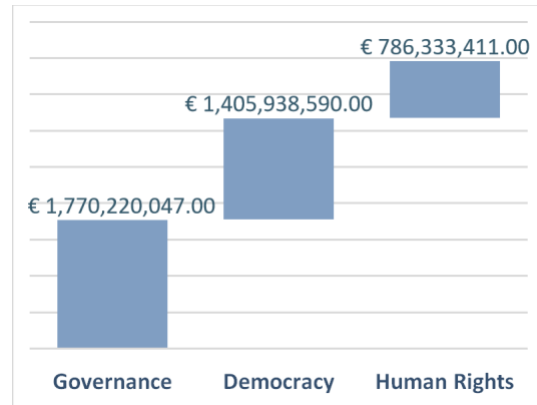
Secondly, democracy support receives nearly half of the government and civil society funding from 5 out of 12 countries, including the aforementioned case of The Netherlands. Similarly, Poland and the Czech Republic are consistent with their policies in terms of funding to democracy support activities, rather than more apolitical governance support.

It is worth zooming in specifically on Germany, as it is the largest out of all donors under review. Over half of German ODA in the Government and Civil Society sector goes to democracy-oriented activities. Democratic participation receives the bulk of funding, followed by support to independent media and freedom of information. Just under half of the funding is allocated to

governance programmes, which is consistent with official policy documents. Areas of cooperation that are funded particularly generously are administrative management, local government and decentralisation, and judicial development. Only a small share of funding goes to human rights support.

Contrasting Germany are the Scandinavian countries and Spain, who give a lot of weight to human rights and women’s rights in particular. As it is beyond the scope of this paper to compare all the microdata, it is unclear how much of this is directed at the civic and political rights that are typically seen as vital for democratisation.

Table 6. Share of Government and Civil Society ODA to governance, democracy and human rights (OECD, 2016) <sup>29</sup>



<sup>29</sup> Total of governance: 1,770,220,047; total of democracy: 1,405,938,590; total of human rights: 786,333,411



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# Conclusion

This comparative analysis has shown that there is great variation between European countries in their democracy support policies, approaches and funding priorities. Only a few of the countries under review have separate democracy support policies and even fewer clearly define democracy. At the same time, several countries consider democracy support as a priority area within their development agenda. While the lack of clear and comparable data is a major hindrance in evaluating democracy support at a macro level, the study points to interesting patterns within OECD data rather than extrapolating further comparisons with policy documents - except in cases where there is a glaring discrepancy.

## 1. *Democracy vs governance*

One recurring element is the weight placed on governance as opposed to democracy support. Policy documents from the countries under review have revealed a lack of conceptual clarity between democracy and governance. Definitions of governance mentioned all key features of democracy, and at times both terms were used interchangeably. The largest donors also displayed a clear preference for

governance support and more technical, apolitical language. This is reflected in the OECD data on government and civil society funding. The bulk of this funding goes to governance support, and mostly to public sector, policy and administrative management. There is a clear differentiation between the democracy-oriented donors and the governance-oriented donors. The Scandinavian countries and Spain fund human rights support most generously while the Netherlands and some of the smaller donors under review focus clearly on democracy support in funding. Still, the largest donors like the UK and France are clearly developmentalist in nature, promoting governance support over the more controversial arena of democracy support. It should be noted that Germany is more ambiguous in its policy and funding, by supporting both governance and democracy support.

Considering the fact that authoritarian regimes may benefit from governance support, this remains a rather murky area in both policy and research. There is a need to disaggregate such data to analyse if it is directed at 'democratic governance' or simply to 'good governance' in a technical sense.

## 2. *Policy documents vs funding*

Some inconsistencies between policy and funding also became apparent. While certain countries like Spain and Denmark have ambitious and detailed democracy support policies, their funding is not as generous or ambitious in terms of programmes as would be expected from the policy. Both Spain and Poland saw a major reduction in funding for democracy support in the last decade, as explained by internal political changes and funding priorities. In contrast, Germany and the Netherlands are less ambitious in their policies and focus mostly on governance support on paper. However, the numbers show they are very generous in funding democracy support activities. These countries might thus benefit from updating the policy documents under review so as to reflect the realities as expressed by the data.

## 3. *Consistency*

Overall, Sweden is the most consistent in policy and funding. The policy gives clear guidance of what democracy is and how to support it, but it is not as elaborate and ambitious as the Spanish and Danish policies. However, the policy most accurately reflects the importance of democracy support within overall ODA and still gives clear guidance to the type of activities that are supported. In other words, the policy is consistent with the political priorities of the country and is evident in ODA data.

## 4. *Data limitations - difficulty of finding reliable data*

The study encountered major difficulties in assessing the funding for democracy support. The OECD figures under review do not actually correspond to member states' own figures - underlining the lack of reliable data. Many donor agencies do a range of civil society, rule of law and other work that falls outside the OECD category and this makes it exceedingly difficult to readily compile data on democracy. Future analysis would benefit greatly from a more consistent and reliable mechanism for recording EUMS funding for democracy support. This should be explored in future - if one is to properly learn from the past it is vital to have information that is trustworthy and comparable.

The picture that emerges from the review is one of substantial variation between different European countries' policies, approaches, definitions, language and funding for democracy. A developmentalist, governance-orientation is clear amongst a majority of donors, especially the larger ones. Yet at the same time, policies and funding for democracy-oriented activities are certainly not negligible. Interesting insights can be gained from the ambitious policies from some countries, even if these appear inconsistent with funding. The review provides a useful starting point of comparison to understand how different European countries think about strengthening democracy and to which priorities they allocate their funding. It also highlights the need for additional research focused on specific country contexts around the world where European governments support the development of democratic societies.

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As a result, EPD and its members are conducting a participatory review of European democracy support over the course of 2018-2019. The research is designed to take stock of European democracy support by focusing on the policies of practitioner organisations, the European Union and European governments in order to draw lessons for the future.

This paper forms part of a series of research papers by EPD that informs this review process.



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