Programming for democracy:

A how-to guide for supporting democratic governance

EUROPEAN
PARTNERSHIP FOR
DEMOCRACY

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Introduction

Support for democratic governance is key to unlocking the potential of international partnerships and long-term sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of effective leadership, transparency and accountable government in moments of crisis but the lessons are no less relevant for the long-run. Indeed, the case can easily be made that democratic governance is even more important when thinking long term. It is increasingly hard to imagine effectively dealing with key challenges such as enhanced digitalisation, climate change or growing inequality without robust mechanisms that promote transparency, accountability and inclusion.

This factsheet series brings together insights from the field to provide a simple overview of the different themes that are important for democratic governance. It is designed as a one-stop-shop for understanding the options available to policy-makers, donors and development practitioners when engaging in support.

Each of the thirteen factsheets was developed with the input from a specialist organisation or independent experts. We have drawn upon the expertise of our member organisations across Europe as well as direct experience from donors and policy-makers in compiling each factsheet.

The series is by no means a definitive guide to all of the options available to organisations wanting to support democratic governance but rather a first-port-of-call. How can an EU delegation support journalists and media actors? What options are available for strengthening a Parliament? How to reinforce the role of women in decision-making? What policies support local-level change? These are some of the questions you can find answers to in these pages. Each factsheet also contains links for further reading for more detailed information on a theme.

For more information on the series or on individual factsheets, please contact info@epd.eu.

Policy Dialogue

What is policy dialogue?

In the last two decades, 'policy' has progressively taken centre stage of international cooperation and is nowadays considered by the EU as the cornerstone of its development programming. Situated in the middle-ground between politics and public management, policy dialogue is an ideal vehicle for addressing the diverse and multi-faceted interests of different groups in society and for promoting the culture of dialogue.

Policy dialogue is not the same as political dialogue. In French and Spanish, the terms *politique* and *politica* refer to both 'policy' and 'politics' which has led to some confusion over understandings of policy dialogue at European level. Political dialogue refers to strategic discussions between states, political party negotiations or political debate. Policy dialogue refers to discussions and debate centred on a policy issue and the decision-making process associated with that policy.

Traditionally, most policy dialogue by international institutions and donors has been conducted on a bilateral basis with a nation state – yet this has often run into problems, including the lack of consensus around the scope and content of policy reforms. In recent years, the focus has shifted towards attempting to include a **more diverse group of actors** into those policy dialogues that underpin budget support programmes and other forms of donor support. When conducted effectively, policy dialogue can nurture trust and mutual understanding amongst confronted actors in polarised societies. External actors can play a crucial role in this regard, even if the majority of the actors involved must be citizens of the country in question.

> *"Policy dialogue refers to discussions and debate centred on a policy issue and the decision-making process associated with that policy."*

How to be effective?

Any engagement on policy dialogue should be founded on the **twin principles of inclusion and participation**. Enhancing the inclusiveness of policy-making is not only a matter of justice or legitimacy, but also of outright efficiency, as policies that have been elaborated taking into account different interests and viewpoints are more likely to resist sudden changes in the balance of power than policies that benefit only a small ruling elite. The increased resilience of inclusive policies will naturally improve the sustainability of international aid programmes aimed at promoting good governance. The participation of different groups in policy dialogue contributes to increased buy-in, but also to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the choices and dilemmas underlying a specific policy decision.

Beyond changes to policies themselves, first-hand experience from multi-stakeholder policy dialogue shows that it can **deliver four main types of change** among the different stakeholders active in the policy arena, from government officials to civil society representatives. Even if a policy dialogue process does not result in a change to actual policy, it can lead to a) greater cooperation between specific interest groups, b) improved clarity and knowledge on a specific policy area, c) increased transparency in public management, and d) the promotion of an environment of evidence-based policy-making and policy-monitoring.

Effective policy dialogue must draw heavily on the **evidence base in a specific policy area**, bringing in experts to feed the discussions with reliable evidence in order to arrive at common positions on specific issues. But along with technical knowledge, **working on policy requires political skills** to grasp the chances of success and to identify the champions and spoilers of any given reform.

How to support policy dialogue?

Political will

Donors can help open the space for dialogue by making use of their convening power, a very valuable asset in polarised political environments, where opposed factions are reluctant to meet and interact constructively. However, for the sake of local ownership donors should refrain from moderating or facilitating the dialogue by themselves, delegating those tasks to a local actor –an NGO, a think-tank, academic institution or a similar non-governmental entity– that is perceived in the policy arena as an honest and impartial broker.

Expertise

Policy making is almost always uncertain and often feels like venturing into unknown territory. One of the most appreciated means of support for policy-makers across the world is to get direct access to similar experiences in other countries so as to learn, compare and adapt those aspects that may fit into their own institutional and cultural context. Embedding "technical assistance" into policy dialogue, can increase the relevance and impact of technical exchange.

"Any engagement on policy dialogue should be founded on the twin principles of inclusion and participation".

Tailored incentives

Policy dialogue does not move at a linear speed but is dependent on the interests of the different players involved, their political calculations and the electoral cycle. The outcomes of a policy dialogue strongly depend on the stage of the policy cycle that it seeks to influence (agenda-setting, formulation, implementation or evaluation). Taking all these factors into consideration may add layers of complexity to decision making, but it also helps to better understand the interests at play and to identify the incentives that may lead to the consensus needed for policy reform to be sustainable in the long run.

Measuring and tracking

Measurement frameworks are vital for tracking policy progress. Without clear indicators and the corresponding data needed to measure progress, decision-makers lack the necessary evidence to correct, change or discontinue those aspects of a policy that are not working as expected. However, measuring progress in a given policy is not the same as measuring progress in a dialogue around that policy. Experience shows that the most appropriate way to measure progress in policy dialogue itself is to focus on the changes in the attitudes and behaviour of the actors involved (along with the subsequent policy changes themselves). In other words, to look at the policy field not only from a "structural" standpoint, which is usually rather static, but also through the lens of "agency".

Further reading

- Eropean Commission (2014) DEVCO Tools and Methods Series: Promoting civil society participation in policy and budget process
- European Partnership for Democracy (2015) INSPIRED handbook for inclusive and participatory policy dialogue
- WHO (2015) Briefing note: Policy dialogue: What it is and how it can contribute to evidence-informed decision-making, WHO, Briefing Note: 2015
- Carna L. (2013) OECD: The Nature of Policy Change and Implementation: A Review of Different Theoretical Approaches

Working with Political Parties

Why political parties matter

Representative democracy cannot function without political parties. Political parties are central to achieving pluralistic, consolidated multiparty democracies, which deliver on citizens' aspirations and lead to sustainable development. Political parties have tasks that no other actor can fulfil. They:

- Identify and represent citizens' interests
- Mediate the interests of different groups
- Formulate viable policy agendas and frame political choices
- Educate citizens about political issues
- Recruit, train, socialise and screen potential leaders
- Form governments and take responsibility or, when not in power, hold governments accountable

In other words, political parties fulfil a unique role in democratic systems by linking the state and society. Civil society organisations also have a central role in building democratic societies and holding governments accountable, but they cannot replace political parties, as it is political parties that hold legislative and executive power through their participation in parliaments and governments. By taking up their role in forming the government or the opposition, political parties can anchor and deepen democracy and foster domestic accountability.

Finally, countries with well-functioning political parties are more likely to experience GDP growth than countries where political party institutionalisation is low. Party development and economic development often go hand in hand.

The need for political party support

In developing democracies — and increasingly also in established democracies — political parties struggle to fulfil their democratic roles. They are often poorly organised, lack a solid rootedness in society, and are disconnected from key national and local development planning and decision-making processes. As a result, a growing number of citizens and scholars perceive political organisations as part of the problem rather than the solution to developmental challenges.

Despite their critical role and responsibility in improving responsive and accountable governance, political leaders and parties receive only 0.1% of Official Development Aid, with more funds available for supporting elections.[1] Although free, fair, genuine and credible elections are fundamental for a democracy, elections alone are not sufficient to guarantee the consolidation of a democracy.

Therefore, a growing number of development and democracy support practitioners agree that aid needs to take politics in beneficiary countries into account, if it is to achieve a real impact. Only by integrating technical assistance with more "politically informed" kinds of assistance, such as political party support, will the international donor community increase the effectiveness of development aid. In turn, this will significantly increase opportunities for equitable economic and human development as well as enhanced stability because conflicts can be managed internally and peacefully by dialogue in a multi-party framework.

Facts and figures:

- Political parties are the only institutions that aggregate people's demands, formulate policy choices and represent people.
- There is a positive correlation between party institutionalisation and GDP growth.
- Support to the political party system receives less than 0.1% of Official Development Aid.

A quick guide to political support

External actors can help political parties build the trust that is needed to develop an effective party system and reduce competition in areas of mutual interest. There are two main types of party support and a wide range of instruments to put such support into practice.

Main types of party support

- **Peer-to-peer party support:** Support is given to parties with a common ideological platform, e.g. liberals to liberals, social democrats to social democrats or conservatives to conservatives. The German Political Foundations and the Swedish Foundations work in this way. The Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD) and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy have mixed models where funding is available both for peer-to-peer party support and for multi-party support (see below).

- **Multiparty support:** Support is given to all parties active in a particular country or represented in parliament. The main aim is to build trust among politicians from different parties by providing a neutral space in which they can work together towards solving sensitive issues such as codes of conduct for election campaigning or allocation of party funding. By playing the role of an impartial facilitator – or helping local organisations in doing so – external actors can stimulate greater political cooperation in the competitive arena of national politics, which is especially important in highly polarised contexts. The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), Democratic Parties of Finland for Democracy (DEMO Finland), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI) and International IDEA are champions of this approach.

Party support in practice

- **Capacity strengthening:** Building the capacity of political parties and their members to formulate policy agendas and promote them vis-à-vis voters. This often involves helping political parties to become more inclusive, in order to ensure the political participation of under-represented groups, such as women, youth and ethnic minorities.

- **Peer-to-peer learning:** Helping political parties to share knowledge and experience with their peers in other countries, while also openly discussing issues of national and regional interest. This may involve study visits or workshops, but can also take place through more long-term forms of exchange.

- **Interparty dialogue:** Facilitating dialogue between parties in a safe environment in order to reduce political tensions and foster mutual trust. In situations where parliamentary dialogue does not allow for genuine exploration of consensus or compromise, more dynamic spaces of dialogue are needed.

- **Political skills education:** Fostering a democratic culture by providing education programmes for party members and potential politicians. These programmes usually focus on the importance of equality, human rights and transparent politics, thereby contributing to open, stable and inclusive democratic systems. For more information on this, see the factsheet on Democracy Education in this series.

Further reading:

- Demo Finland (2015) A Decade of Supporting Democracy
- de Vrieze, F. (2014) Mapping and Study on Performance Indicators for EU Support to Political Parties
- ENoP (2019) Coopearting with political parties: Why does it matter?
- IDEA, NIMD and Oslo Center (2013) Political Party Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide
- IDEA (2014) Politics meets Policies – The Emergence of Programmatic Political Parties
- NIMD (2020) Democracy starts with Dialogue
- NIMD (2015) Working with political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings

Women in Policymaking

Women in decision-making

Despite the strong arguments in favour of increasing female participation in politics, women are still underrepresented in political decision-making around the world. These arguments can be summarised as follows:

- **Equality:** Equal representation lies at the very core of democracy. It is thus fundamental to ensure women and men have the same opportunities to participate in decision-making.

- **Prosperity & stability:** Having more female decision-makers is good for everyone, not just for women. Research shows that society as a whole becomes more secure and economically prosperous as gender equality improves.[2] Likewise, public trust and political stability improve with increased female representation.

- **Better policy:** Some argue women bring different qualities, values and priorities to the political arena, and thereby make policy-making processes more holistic and effective. A study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) from 2008 shows female and male parliamentarians from around the world believe women prioritise different policy issues than men, like social issues, women's physical concerns and development issues. It only makes sense women should have a say on issues that concern them directly, like reproductive rights. Women bring different perspectives to decision-making (on childcare, parental leave, poverty alleviation, etc.), which improves the inclusivity of policies.

- **Party support:** An increase in female leadership also benefits men, and male politicians in particular. Increasing gender parity in political parties attracts more female votes and party membership. It also roots the party more deeply into their constituencies through female candidates' NGO and CSO ties.

In addition, women's wings can attract increased earmarked public party funding as well as international support in the form of training and mentoring.

Development commitments to female representation

The international community has long recognised the importance of female representation, as shown by the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and UN Resolution 1325, amongst others. Most recently, this support has materialised in Sustainable Development Goal 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Target 5 of SDG 5 reads:

"Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life"

This target will be measured with indicators on the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments, and the proportion of women in managerial positions. SDG 5.5 is directly linked to SDG 16.7, which embodies the commitment of all signatories to ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Progress has thus far been slow on both targets.

There are a number of entry points for supporting women's participation in politics. Political parties are crucial gatekeepers to women's participation in decision-making, but civil society and female parliamentarians can be targeted too. The most effective strategy combines technical support for institutional reforms, like party bylaws, quotas and women's wings, with direct support to women through trainings and mentoring.

Facts and figures:

- Only 6.2% of heads of government are women
- Only 24.9% of the global percentage of MPs are women
- Only 20.5% of Speakers of Parliament are women

Supporting women's political empowerment in practice

Here you can find an overview of the type of actions to support women's participation in politics:

- **Party rules & strategies:** Political parties are key gatekeepers to women's participation. They should therefore have gender equality strategies which guide them in policy-related decisions and position taking in relation to all sectors they are involved in. These strategies should also lead them to improve party by-laws and increase the participation of women in the party structures through women's wings, earmarked funding, or quotas.

- **Quota systems:** There are 2 types of quotas: candidate quotas and reserved seats for women. In some countries, quotas are stipulated in the constitution or electoral codes, but parties can also establish quotas within party bylaws.

- **Women's wings:** Parties can establish a women's wing where issues salient to women voters are discussed. When women's wings have a strong grassroots support base, they can effectively pressure the party to be gender-sensitive in both internal party policies and national policies. Ideally a part of public funding goes directly to the women's wing or is earmarked for them.

- **Women's caucuses:** Women's caucuses bring together female parliamentarians from across party lines in order to gender mainstream legislation and advance solutions to gender inequality. International actors can facilitate the creation of a women's caucus.

- **Gender mainstreaming & responsive budgeting**: The informal model of mainstreaming gender in all parliamentary commissions necessitates a high level of gender awareness amongst parliamentarians but has the potential to make policy more inclusive. Another method is Gender Responsive Budgeting. Civil society actors and politicians can be trained to spot gender-blind budget initiatives and amend them.

- **Trainings, capacity building and mentoring:** Trainings and capacity building are the main method of supporting women in politics. Trainings can focus on:
    - » self-esteem, public speaking, self-assertion
    - » political campaigns, advocacy and fundraising
    - » leadership skills
    - » media engagement
    - » ways to challenge stereotypes and cultural barriers

Women-only trainings can be very useful for empowering women with the necessary skills and overcoming psycho-social barriers. The safety of a women-only environment helps build confidence and resilience.

However, mixed gender approaches can be more effective at changing the system. By connecting men and women on gender equality and sharing perspectives, men's attitudes and relations with their female colleagues might change. This is especially useful for trainings on campaign skills and fundraising.

Political Parties of Finland for Democracy (Demo Finland) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) base their approach on a long-term engagement by setting up democracy schools and political academies to support female politicians in all stages of their career. At the same time, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recommend adapting the type of trainings to the different stages of the electoral cycle.

Female politicians can learn the most from each other. Therefore, mentoring and twinning are particularly effective for young female politicians, as it provides them with a female role model in a male-dominated arena. Peer learning between politicians from different parties, countries or even continents can be incredibly valuable for exchanging innovative tactics to deal with shared barriers.

Further reading:

- Demo Finland (2015), Gender Equality within political parties and Women's Cross-party Cooperation
- Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (2017), Dancing Backwards in High Heels
- Women Political Leadership, The World Bank (2015), The Female Political Career
- OSCE (2014), Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties
- World Economic Forum (2019), The Global Gender Gap Report 2019

Parliamentary Strengthening

A cornerstone of democracy

Parliaments are a core institution in any democratic society. Citizens elect their members of parliament to represent and translate their needs and aspirations in national policy and decision-making. While free and fair elections are seen as the beacon of democracy, what happens between elections, i.e. elected representatives contributing to the formulation of equitable and sustainable policy, is vital for delivering on the intrinsic values of a democracy. The importance of Parliaments is traditionally based on the three core functions they perform:

- **Representation:** the elected body reflects the society in its diversity, allowing different groups and communities to have a voice in all the issues that are translated into policy;

- **Law-making:** parliaments can introduce laws and have the power to amend or reject government drafted laws;

- **Oversight:** Members of Parliament (MPs) monitor and hold the Executive accountable for its actions and push for the implementation of policies.

While international actors have put a lot of effort into enhancing the powers of Parliaments to perform these three main functions, in many instances a formal increase of these powers has not translated into better performance in practice. MPs and parliamentary staff often lack the specialised expertise needed for the formulation and scrutiny of legislation and public budgets. In addition, entrenched incentives structures may lead MPs to focus on their representative role, limiting their contribution to legislation and oversight of the executive.

The inability of Parliaments to meet the high expectations that come with their election makes them increasingly mistrusted by the public. This, in turn, has made international partners shift their attention to supporting other stakeholders, such as civil society actors.

A partner for international actors

Constitutionally, Parliaments are the only actor able to engage the government on every aspect of its mandate. For precisely this reason, Parliaments are an important partner in contributing to the goals of international development assistance programmes:

- **Parliaments can serve as a platform for dialogue**, playing a crucial role in the resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, especially in fragile and post-conflict contexts, where an arena of exchange is needed for an effective reconciliation process;

- **Parliaments can ensure a more sustainable governance** of natural resources, equitable distribution of revenues and (gender) inclusive sector policies, because they are made up of a diverse number of actors;

- **Parliaments are able to influence the priorities of the government's expenditure** through budget amendments and accountability oversight, thus playing a central role in public financial management;

- As influential opinion leaders, **MPs can make an important contribution to socially difficult questions** such as female genital mutilation (FGM), climate change and corruption.

Facts and figures:

- Approximately €330 million is being spent on parliamentary strengthening
- Average levels of public trust in Parliaments in Sub-Sahara Africa are lower than 50%
- A legislature with the ability to investigate the government is able to impose more constraints on the executive, helping to reduce corruption

Strengthening parliament

In general, the strengthening of a parliamentary institution has two dimensions which are interlinked:

Institutional support (direct support) aimed at supporting Parliaments for the purpose of democratisation, checks and balances, and good governance. This can be obtained through investing in infrastructure (ICT, premises), institutional structures (such as the Administration, Committee system and internal regulations) and through developing knowledge and skills of MPs and parliamentary staff in legislation, oversight, the budgetary process and representation.

Thematic support (issue-based support) for the purpose of promoting specific policy goals, such as poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS prevention, environmental protection, anti-corruption, etc. The support targets the thematic knowledge of MPs, engages societal stakeholders in consultations and works on legislative and parliamentary debate processes.

International actors have identified some of the best practices that make parliamentary strengthening more effective. Inspired by their experience, Parliaments and actors active in the sector drafted the 'Common Principles for Support to Parliaments', adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union Governing Council in October 2014. These principles, widely endorsed by different organisations, insist specifically on the following practices:

- **Politically aware programming:** Parliaments are deeply political institutions and informal power relations can often be more important than formal rules. Moreover, every country has its own specificities and dynamics. In order to better tailor parliamentary strengthening programmes, a clear understanding of historical contingencies, the political context and socio-economic issues is crucial.

- **Peer-to-peer learning:** Trust and good relationships are likewise important in addressing Parliaments. South-South approaches are particularly effective, as Parliamentarians from the same regions, sharing similar challenges and weaknesses, can engage more easily together on sensitive issues. In the same way, parliamentary strengthening works well when implemented through peer-to-peer approaches: parliamentarians are able to understand mutual challenges, concerns, and are more willing to accept external pressure.

- **A long-term approach:** In order to deal with the institutional complexity and differentiation of Parliaments, international actors have ditched one-size-fits-all solutions to adopt more tailored approaches to be implemented with longer-term perspectives. To counter the problem of the high turnover of MPs in many development countries, practitioners are including the permanent staff of Parliaments more frequently.

Parliaments and political parties

Parliaments and political parties are inextricably linked. The effectiveness and efficiency of a Parliament is highly dependent on the political parties that make it up. Parties need to perform equally crucial functions within a democracy (fostering a pluralistic environment, aggregating citizen's interests and engaging them in the democratic process).

Parties are important in the decision-making process: they steer the content of discussions in the Parliament and serve as a point of reference on voting for Parliamentarians. A very disciplined ruling party may mean that the government dominates the Parliament, while a multitude of weakly cohesive parties might make parliament unpredictable and difficult to organise.

Parliaments also help MPs in their outreach function, often providing human and financial resources to parties. As such, when Parliaments are weak (for example due to unequal rules and procedures, or a lack of funds), the effectiveness of parties in fulfilling their democratic role can be hindered. Considering their interdependence and their essential role in democracy, democracy support programmes would be wise to engage Parliaments and political parties at the same time.

Further reading:

- Democracy Reporting International (2015) Global Mapping and Analysis of Parliamentary Strengthening
- Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNDP (2020) GPEDC Guidelines
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (2014) Common Principles for Support to Parliaments
- House of Commons International Development Committee (2015) Parliamentary Strengthening
- Luhrmann A. and Chisanga, A. (2016) V-Dem Institute: Role of Legislative Powers for Executive Corruption

Media Support

Traditionally speaking, the media serves to provide information, entertainment and education. However, media also plays a fundamental role in democracy, human rights and development.

- **Media for human rights:** Freedom of opinion and expression are fundamental rights of every human being. To this end, independent media are necessary for promoting and protecting freedom of expression as well as other fundamental human rights. Democracy cannot exist when these fundamental freedoms are not respected.

- **Media for development:** Free media is also a catalyst for social and economic development. Amartya Sen's (1999) argument that famines can be prevented by freedom of press is exemplary of this function. Media can also curb corruption, facilitate trade, spread innovations, and bring expertise on health and education to remote areas as they are flexible tools to raise awareness.

- **Media for democracy:** Free and independent media, otherwise known as the 'fourth estate', facilitates the exchange of information and opinion. This is necessary for a pluralism of views, informing citizens and building consensus based on a fair representation of public opinion. This ensures transparency and empowers citizens to hold their elected representatives accountable. Likewise, media also plays a watchdog function by scrutinising government action and inaction as well as channeling citizens' voices of discontent.

While recent technological innovations have certainly improved media pluralism, amongst others through citizen journalism and social media, they also provide authoritarian regimes and private interests with new ways to shape and manipulate political processes. Algorithms that reinforce confirmation bias and deepen polarisation come hand in hand with an erosion of trust in traditional media.

Why support media development?

Press freedom has declined to its lowest level in over a decade and the five biggest drops have occurred in Europe. Only 13% of people live in countries where the media is free. Media is instrumental in shaping the developing political discourse and is often critically important during election periods. Community media also provides avenues for participation in socio-political life for the otherwise marginalised.

Where infrastructures of the state lack the political will or knowledge required to regulate and safeguard the media, or provide incentives for its citizens to enter professions which may improve the quality of its output, the international community can play a key role in promoting reform and ensuring open debate among citizens. Development actors can prevent monopolistic ownership conventions, a censorship culture, and promote independent journalism in transitioning states.

The EU guidelines for freedom of expression emphasise the right to seek and receive information, and the right to impart information and ideas of all kinds through any media, regardless of frontiers. Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen which falls within the 2015 United Nations framework strategy for the years up until 2030, calls for the consolidation of peace, justice and strong institutions globally. Point 16.10 of the SDG makes specific mention of the need to support public access to information and to protect fundamental freedoms.

Facts and figures:

- OECD statistics show that ODA for media support made up only 0.4% of total ODA for the year 2016
- Since 2015, 274 journalists have been killed while pursuing stories, 24% of which were corruption-related
- ODA to Media support: Germany: $225 million, United States: $56 million, Japan: $39 million, European Union: $25 million

Media support in practice

There are a variety of ways donors can support media:

Improving access to information: To improve access to information, donors can support legislative changes that allow for transparency and accountability. This can also reduce corruption. It is vital for governments to not only provide the legal framework, but also implement it by:

- Providing legal expertise to update the legal framework of information and communication;
- Democratising access to communication mediums through investment in media infrastructure (support building TV and radio stations and broadcasting infrastructure);
- Providing education programs which improve media literacy and explain where and how to access information, also tackling disinformation.

Internet freedom: When it comes to obtaining information and global news, the internet is the platform. Internet freedom can be protected through:

- Working directly with investors and shareholders of communications companies to help protect internet freedom;
- Creating robust legislation at state-level to effectively regulate the media as an industry so as to combat the spread of hate-speech and enhance accountability;
- Forming an international coalition against censorship and a proper legal framework to govern content moderation.

Promoting investigative journalism: Donors and development implementers can ensure investigative journalists are supported in the correct way by:

- Creating training programs for journalists using local and veteran journalists;

- A universal acknowledgment and consensus of sound reporting;
- Reinforcing the rule of law and combating political corruption so that journalists are not the targets of violence.

Ensuring pluralism: SME's and traditional media face major competition from larger enterprises that can overcome economic hurdles and invest in better technology. They can be strengthened by:

- Ensuring that digital and print media can benefit from the same tax advantages;
- Installation of media pluralism observatories;
- Direct assistance to SMEs and traditional media platforms;
- Training in the use of modern technology and social media engagement, including sensitization on ethics and professional codes of conduct;
- Support to production content ensuring diversity and creative processes.

Supporting freedom of information: Freedom of Information Acts (FOIAs) can offer countries a position to ensure transparency, deepen democracy and fight corruption. Freedom of information can be protected by:

- Appointing a trained, independent and active information commissioner (like the Media Pluralism Monitor);
- Increasing commitment to ensure the accountability and transparency of political and corporate processes;
- Supporting Freedom of Information defenders (Journalists organizations and unions and international networks of those defenders and their activities of lobbying and advocacy).

Further reading:

- Article 19 (2020) The Global Expression Report
- CIMA (2017) Understanding Donor Priorities in Media Development
- CIMA (2020) Supporting Media at a Time of Crisis: Donors Explore New Strategies
- IMS (2017) Defending Journalism
- Brookings Institute (2016) The Media Democracy Needs
- Reporters Without Borders (2020) 2020 World Press Freedom Index
- USAID (1999) The Role of the Media in a Democratic Society

Rule of Law

The 'Rule of Law' is often considered to be the backbone of democratic governance. Broadly, the rule of law can be defined as the principle that all public authorities act within the constraints of law without the arbitrary use of power, in accordance with the laws of the state, and under the control of independent and impartial courts.

The Rule of Law is closely linked to good governance and democracy. The Rule of Law is also the basis on which international organisations function. For example, within the EU, upholding the rule of law is both a founding value of the EU and a guiding principle for external action thereby crossing the internal-foreign policy divide. At EU level, the Commission, defines the rule of law as compliance with the following six principles: legality, legal certainty, prohibition of arbitrariness of the executive, independent and impartial courts, effective judicial review including respect for fundamental rights, and equality before the law.

Democracies and the rule of law

The principle of 'Rule of law' is intrinsic to democracy, and therefore strengthening the rule of law is a direct investment into the quality of a democracy. While the importance of the rule of law for democracy is widely recognised, its application is an inherently political process.

Creating a strong system of checks and balances through the principle of the rule of law is crucial to the prevention of autocratisation. An independent judiciary that upholds constitutionalism is also a critical success factor in countering closing democratic space, as a powerful ally to civil society, political parties and donors. Meanwhile, independent courts contribute to a constitutional culture in which the arbitrary exercise of power is discouraged through a process of public justification to which both public actors and citizens must conform. [3]

"The principle of 'Rule of law' is intrinsic to democracy, and therefore strengthening the rule of law is a direct investment into the quality of a democracy"

In contrast, when the rule of law breaks down, it allows for abuses of power to go unpunished and exacerbates tensions between political actors and citizens. [4] Considering this, investments into the rule of law are necessary to prevent the growing trend of autocratisation.

Facts and figures:

- €2.3 billion is the total aid to developing countries on anti-corruption measures and legal & judicial reforms in 2018
- €3.3 trillion is estimated to be the cost of corruption to the global economy
- Rule of law is a component of Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions and was declared as a universal principle through Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, UNGA 30 November 2012
- Globally 31% of prisoners are held in detention without sentencing

How to support the rule of law

There are a multitude of ways to design programmes in support of the rule of law, depending on the availability of partners, institutional capacity and the characteristics of the concerned stakeholders. Organisations working on the rule of law typically focus their efforts on working with government stakeholders and civil society. The following represent a selection of programmes that have been used in order to promote the rule of law following different aspects that are important to the rule of law.

These pillars have been identified as some potential areas of focus for EU institutions and EU Member States to assist non-EU countries seeking to develop their application of the rule of law effectively. These are by no means exhaustive, as respecting and promoting the rule of law is a complex process.

Supporting the integrity of civil servants: One important aspect of maintaining the rule of law is the integrity of civil services and their ability to effectively apply legislation. This can be done through the following methods:

- **Developing and implementing meaningful and enforceable ethics codes**, linked to systemic practices and procedures, based on legislation, and backed by management leadership and high-level political commitment, and ongoing 'professional ethics' training. [5]

- **Capacity building for civil servants in the field of Rule of Law** through workshops, training and knowledge exchange programmes.

Anti-corruption measures : Corruption undermines the rule of law, by hindering the making of fair and effective laws, as well as their administration, enforcement and adjudication. [6]

Policy reforms in the justice sector: Create reforms such as police reform (improving the police's effectiveness and performance), community security, access to justice (formal courts, alternative dispute resolution, and legal empowerment) and institutional effectiveness and accountability, in line with international agreements.

Independence of the judiciary: The existence of courts advances the rule of law through the judicial process. Supporting independent courts can be done through the following:

- **Constitutional design and reform:** working directly with governments and civil society on constitutional reforms that guarantee the rule of law;

- **Training for magistrates:** setting-up workshops, training and knowledge exchange programmes that increase magistrates knowledge of applying the rule of law;

- **Supporting political actors:** working on strengthening organisations that advocate for the rule of law such as human rights groups, political parties.

Further reading:

- Domingo, P, (2016) The Politics of Rule of Law and Development
- Ioannides, I. (2014) International IDEA Rule of law in European Union external action: guiding principles, practices and lessons learned
- EPRS (2019) Protecting the rule of law in the EU: existing mechanisms and potential improvements
- Netherlands Helsinki Committee (2020) Rule of Law Training
- Waldron, J. (2016) The Rule of Law - The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- World Justice Project (2020) Rule of Law Index 2020

Anti-corruption

Corruption is broadly defined as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain". [7] It covers a wide range of behaviours such as bribery, trading in influence, abuse of power and influence, nepotism, conflicts of interest, and happens both in the public and the private sector. Corruption is found everywhere, but it is particularly prevalent in countries with weak institutions and those affected by fragility. Corruption is known to have a corrosive effect on democracies, eroding trust in institutions, the rule of law and hampering economic development. [8]

Anti-corruption efforts

Corruption has a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of government, the health of the economy and societal cohesion. Some of these effects are:

- The erosion of trust in state institutions (including government, parliament, courts)
- Poverty and inequality through the misuse of public finances
- A dysfunctional relationship between the public and the private sector (including state capture and tax evasion)

Efforts to combat corruption have been taking place at all levels of governance, often bringing together the public and the private sector in order to find new ways to counter corrupt behaviour.

National: National legislation is essential for combating corruption. The independence of the judiciary and the ability of prosecutors to investigate corruption cases without fear of repercussions are vital in this regard. Maintaining the rule of law is a key component of creating an environment that both deters and punishes corruption.

Regional: Intergovernmental organisations, both regional and thematic have created mechanisms to combat and prevent corruption. In the EU, anti-corruption efforts are focused on adopting a high standard of legislation, either specifically on corruption, or by incorporating anti-corruption elements into other laws. Corruption is recognised as a 'euro-crime', which enables the EU to use legislative powers to regulate this area.[9] At the OECD level, there is the Anti-bribery Convention. The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption entered into force in 2006. [10] The Organisation of American States has adopted the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (IACC) and created a mechanism that reviews member countries' legal frameworks, making recommendations on how to improve anti-corruption legislation. [11]

International efforts on anti-corruption: In October 2003, the United Nations General Assembly adopted The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which entered into force in 2005. This is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument. UNCAC covers five areas of action: preventive measures, criminalisation and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange. The Convention has 187 parties, 140 signatories, and has been ratified by the majority of UN states.

Facts and figures:

- €120 billion is lost to corruption each year throughout the 27 EU member states while the African Union estimates that 25% of Africa's GDP is lost to corruption
- €1.11 trillion is lost from illicit financial flows (corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion) in developing countries each year
- 76% of Europeans think that corruption is widespread, according to Eurobarometer

Role of the private sector: The private sector has a complex relationship with corruption, as it is a perpetrator, a victim and a key ally in supporting change. [12] As corruption often affects competition, some private sector actors benefit from corruption, while others suffer. A number of initiatives to counter corruption have taken place in the private sector, with companies creating codes of conduct, ethical standards and taking on voluntary commitments that have anti-corruption elements, such as the United Nations Global Compact.

Supporting anti-corruption measures

It is necessary that donors support initiatives to combat and prevent corruption. The following have been identified as anti-corruption strategies that can help towards preventing and combating corruption:

Capacity building: In implementing legislation that combats and counters corruption, some countries might find themselves in need of technical expertise. Programmes focusing on increasing the capability of national legislators and that of personnel in the justice sector can help them to create and apply anti-corruption reforms, while increasing state effectiveness in curbing misuse of public funds. The independence of the legislative and judicial branches from the executive branch of government can increase oversight and trust in state institutions. As an example, the Netherlands Helsinki Committee leads a project known as Integrity and Accountability which aims to foster improved professionalism in civil servants to combat corruption and nepotism, working directly with civil servants to enable them to better respond to a climate in which corruption stifles the workings of government.

Strengthening civil society: Civil society can put pressure on governments to tackle corruption by investigating and reprimanding high profile cases of corruption. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are also effective in relation to countering corruption in the private sector. CSOs can find allies in the private sector, identifying stakeholders that are sympathetic to the anti-corruption cause and engage with them for increased leverage over the government. Such strategic alliances between various anti-corruption actors can leverage governmental change. For example, the Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy runs set of Democracy Schools in Ukraine that tackle the topic of corruption, bringing together civil society actors and political parties to explore different avenues on how to combat corruption together.

"€1.11 trillion is lost from illicit financial flows in developing countries each year"

Independent media: Another key actor in supporting anti-corruption measures is the existence of free and independent media, who can shed light on corruption cases through investigative journalism and sensitising the public. Pluralism within the media landscape and financial independence are crucial factors to ensure the media is able to scrutinise both the public and private sector. As an example, the organisation CFI organised a series of trainings in Tunis under the theme "Investigative journalism, corruption, transparency and the right to information" to help boost the capacity of local journalists in investigative reporting.

Further reading

- Global Anti-Corruption Blog: The Global Anticorruption Blog
- Transparency International (2019) How Corruption Weakens Democracy
- Transparency International (2020) Corruption Perception Index 2019
- United Nations Global Compact (2020) Principle Ten: Anti-Corruption
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2020) Corruption

Electoral Support

Elections beyond ballots

Elections are widely recognised as the peaceful transfer of power through public participation and act as a forum to discuss issues of importance to citizens. Meaningful elections, which are characterised as being transparent, credible and inclusive, are an important component of democracy, as the process through which governments obtain the democratic mandate to govern. Therefore, supporting democracy includes investing in the peaceful transition of power through different strategies of electoral support.

Elections are not just about what happens on Election Day, but part of a much longer process. The electoral cycle covers 3 broad phases:

- Pre-election period: training and education, voter education, election campaigning, voter registration, electoral reform, updating the voter register
- Election period: voting, vote counting, verification of results
- Post-election period: training, legal framework, audits and evaluation

The dynamics of the pre-election period usually determine whether an election will be impartial and competitive. The electoral process before voting day may be compromised by violence, intimidation, manipulation or mismanagement, which has a major impact on the quality of elections and meaningfulness of the vote. Feelings of unfairness during the electoral period or concerns regarding the outcome of the election may lead to violence. Therefore, the more long-term and comprehensive electoral cycle approach used in electoral support is essential in emerging democracies to contribute to meaningful, impartial, transparent and competitive elections. More long-term, such an approach contributes to entrenching democratic values within society, strengthening the respect for human rights and contributing to stability.

International support to elections

The international community supports elections around the world in order to strengthen confidence in elections, deter fraud, and provide an informed assessment of the election process. In the long run, such electoral support aims to improve the overall election framework and the context in which elections are held, strengthening the independence and accountability of state institutions and supporting good governance. This electoral support follows internationally agreed-upon standards. There are three main ways to support elections:

Election observation aims to provide accurate and impartial reporting on the quality of elections to the public, media and international community, in order to increase the capability to address critical issues and carry out a more effective support. Observers gather and analyse data, and draw objective and impartial recommendations to improve the electoral process.

Electoral assistance is the technical or material help given to the electoral process. This can take multiple forms – professional support for electoral administration and planning, reform of electoral laws and regulations, dispute resolution, boundary limitation, voter registration, budgeting, use of technology, election security and civic education.

Election organisation is the process in which international organisations assume the role normally fulfilled by national electoral authorities, provided that they hold a mandate to organise an electoral process. The UN can organise elections if mandated by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Election standards are set by a series of international and regional agreements. Internationally, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are some legally binding documents which include provisions for election.

Facts and figures:

- 92 EU Electoral Observations Missions and Electoral Expert Missions since 2010
- Violence affects between 19-25% of African elections
- Official election observation missions are often complimented by citizen observers

Supporting elections in practice

Election good practices are set by multiple organisations, such as the OSCE, the UN, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). There are many actors that can impact on the success of elections. Electoral support aims to empower some of these actors, while mitigating the harmful behaviours of others. The following represent some of the most prominent actors that need to be considered in an integrated manner in electoral support programmes.

Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) are the authorities charged with the administration of the electoral process. Their essential tasks include determining who is eligible to vote, conducting polling, counting and tabulating the votes. In order to function effectively, EMBs must be independent and politically neutral, well-funded, adequately staffed and trained with some permanent staff, and follow transparent procedures on the basis of a precise yet comprehensive legal framework. Electoral support may offer technical assistance to help create these necessary conditions for well-functioning EMBs.

Courts are essential during elections as they represent the mechanisms through which the rule of law and human rights are being upheld in elections. They also serve the role of providing reparations and remedies in case of violations of electoral law. Courts can recall elections if they decide that there have been irregularities that have compromised the results. Technical assistance programmes focusing on courts can be an effective form of increasing the capacity of courts to deal with electoral disputes.

Political parties have the potential to be the main channel of public opinion in elections, even though this is not always the case. In the context of elections, political party support may focus on internal capacity development, fostering interparty dialogue, and community outreach.

Political dialogue and election observation are important tools for mitigating the risk of violence.

Parliaments have a role in electoral law, political party finance laws, and upholding human rights. International Organisations and NGOs can aid parliaments through providing technical expertise for drafting new legislation, working on cross-party awareness-raising campaigns, and improving the parliament's oversight of government activities.

Media plays an essential role in holding governments to account and influencing the policy-agenda and political discourse, including during elections. Social media can serve as a platform to monitor fraud, engage debate and spread information, however, online platforms can also be used to disseminate misleading content and hate speech.

Domestic election observers: Investing in domestic observers has long-term benefits, as citizens can reach more areas than international observers and can provide them with essential information. Moreover, investing in domestic election observers ensures continuity to election monitoring, as citizens can hold elected officials to account when they observe misconduct, without the need of international observation missions.

Citizens and civil society play an essential watchdog role in elections, as they may have the ability to pressure governments to follow international electoral standards and highlight misconduct. Supporting civil society during and after elections is also crucial for implementing the recommendations of electoral observation missions, as CSOs are in a good position to advocate for reforms.

Further reading:

- Birch S. & Muchlinski D. (2018) Electoral violence prevention: what works? Democratization
- Democracy Reporting International (2018) A New Frontier: Social Media/Networks Disinformation in the context of electoral observation
- European External Action Service (2016) Handbook of European Union Election Observation
- International IDEA (2016) Risk Management in Elections
- ODIHR (2020) Election Observation Handbook: Sixth Edition

Election Observation Mission Follow-up

Electoral observation missions conclude with a set of recommendations on how elections and the context in which they are held can be improved, with the overarching aim of strengthening the quality of democracy in a country. With evidence showing the need to provide support throughout the electoral cycle for better electoral processes, there has been an increased focus on following-up on the recommendations in-between elections. A series of tools have been developed to facilitate the implementation of these recommendations, which often target multiple actors.

Toolbox for following-up on electoral observation mission recommendations:

1. **Follow-up missions**: Different missions can be deployed during the election cycle, following the request of the host country. At EU level, Election Follow-up Missions (EFMs) are a means of keeping the EOM recommendations on the agenda. These are deployed to countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs), deployed by OSCE/ODHIR, are not strictly considered as follow-up activities, but in practice they investigate the extent to which prior recommendations have been addressed in the later stages of the electoral cycle. These missions are deployed four to six months before election day. NAMs show which recommendations have been followed-up and which still need to be addressed. NAMs can also conclude that there is no need for a new EOM or draw attention to any outstanding recommendations.

2. **Political dialogue:** Another way of following up on EOM recommendations is engaging in political dialogue with the relevant parties and keeping the EOM recommendations on the agenda. The regional offices of organisations such as UNDP, OSCE and EU Delegations can actively pursue dialogue with the relevant ministries and other key stakeholders in electoral processes, including parliaments, political parties, Electoral Management Bodies and CSOs. This work can also be supported by embassies and the relevant ministries.

3. **Democracy Support Programmes:** Democracy support and electoral assistance programmes can help build the capacity of local actors to implement recommendations from electoral observation missions and create the conditions for inclusive, transparent and credible elections in the future. The EU and other international actors support democracy programmes around the world, and there are thus a number of synergies to be explored. In order to best tap into local entry points and timely opportunities, with an eye on the wider democratic process, programmes should be designed along the following principles:

   - an inclusive multi-actor approach,
   - coherence,
   - long-term focus,
   - inclusive of non-state actors with a focus on civil society and media,
   - encoraging international cooperation.

Facts and figures:

- The EU has deployed 20 Election Follow-up Mission since 2012
- ODA for election assistance amounted to €1.9 billion in 2018
- Council Conclusions on Special Report No 22/2017 by the European Court of Auditors recognises the need for election follow-up and that the implementation of EU Election Observation Missions' recommendations should be tracked on a regular basis

Principles for programming election follow-up

- **Inclusive multi actor approach:** Recommendations usually address a wide range of different electoral actors, including electoral management bodies, political parties, courts, media and civil society. One way of supporting EOM follow-up is to adopt an inclusive-multi-actor approach in programmes, as creating political dialogue between the different stakeholders helps gather support for political change, which some EOM recommendations strongly encourage.

- **Coherence:** Working with ongoing democracy support initiatives, while also building new projects that specifically target EOM recommendations, is a way to increase effectiveness. When follow-up activities can be linked with ongoing initiatives without disrupting the ongoing project, there is a wealth of expertise and relationship building that can be tapped into, which helps with the implementation of recommendations.

- **Timing / Long-term focus:** Interventions on the follow-up to recommendations have been shown to give better results when they are approached from the perspective of providing long-term changes and improvements in the areas targeted. Another key aspect is the timeliness of the intervention. In the case of the follow-up to recommendations, programming to address these right after elections can help outcomes for the next electoral cycle.

- **International Cooperation:** Many different groups observe elections and put forward recommendations to improve electoral processes, including the European Union, the African Union, the Organisation of American States, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and numerous citizen observers and domestic observation groups. Cooperation between such groups can be beneficial as it pulls together resources and knowledge.

- **Supporting non-state actors:** Calls for free independent media and dialogue with civil society are often amongst the recommendations of EOMs. Donors can support the follow-up to EOMs, through funding programmes that address these sectors and build their capacity.

  » **Civil Society Organisations:** Many election recommendations are rooted in the need for improved political accountability – an area where civil society actors can play an important role. However, civil society groups often have limited capacity and operate in a restrictive climate. Supporting programmes that enable coalition building at civil society level can help reinvigorate CSOs and create lasting change.

  » **Media:** Programmes for free media and increased media capacity can result in better coverage and representation of the election, and counter-balance unequal access to media resources. Overall, this can lead to voters being better informed on the election, increase the transparency of the electoral process, and help hold government, political parties and electoral authorities to account.

"Since 2012, the Europen Union has deployed 20 Election Follow-up Missions"

Further reading:

- Council of Europe (2016) Using International Elections Standards: Handbook for Civil Society Organisations
- European External Action Service (2017) Beyond Election Day
- OSCE (2016) Handbook on the Follow-up of Election Recommendations
- OSCE (2016) ODIHR Elections Follow-up Activities
- WFD (2020) Learning from Success: The Implementation of Election Observation Recommendations in Sub-Saharan Africa

Democracy Education

Tackling the challenges to a democratic culture

Support to democratic norms and culture is often a missing element of the assistance provided by donors, state bodies and academic institutions in support of democratic governance. Yet, a democratic culture is the foundation of stable institutions and an inclusive decision-making process, where citizens actively participate because of their ability and desire to do so in matters of public affairs affecting them.

"A democratic culture is the foundation of stable institutions"

It is vital that greater attention is paid to education in order to counter, inter alia, deepening polarisation, anti-pluralism and exclusionary rhetoric. These challenges to a democratic culture originate at two different levels: citizens and political leaders.

Citizens: Representative democracy is damaged when citizens fail to participate in the system. One way this lack of interest manifests itself is through abstention from voting in elections. This can be caused by disillusionment or frustration with the system – for example, by voters believing that either their vote doesn't count or a lack of interest in politics as a whole, as well as lack of information and education on their role as voters. This ultimately paves the way for leaders with a much weaker mandate from citizens.

Political leaders: On the other hand, the increase of populist discourse has exposed the dangers that arise when political leaders who disregard democratic principles and values take office. Leaders who do not respect democratic principles can not only break down the critical institutions of democracy, such as the separation of powers and an independent press, but they can also greatly harm the place of democratic values in society, including the respect for the rights of minority groups.

Strengthening a democratic culture through education

As these challenges emanate from the behaviour of individuals themselves, the key long-term means to tackle them comes through education. In the long-run any state needs a populace that understands the principles, rights and obligations of a democracy. In practice, education on the principles of democracy varies according to the target audience and their knowledge of civil duties and rights as well as interest in the subject. There are thus two broad levels to this education:

At the most basic level, **civic education** aims to educate citizens (rather than aspiring political representatives) on the basic meaning of democracy. In this case, the goal is to provide them with the skills to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities, and strengthen their ability to hold their leaders accountable.

At a more 'advanced' level, **democracy education** offers those who are already engaged in politics - like active civil society leaders, media leaders, and political devotees - a more in depth curriculum to acquire the skills and knowledge to become a democratic leader. More concretely, democracy education can be split into two subcategories:

- **Democracy Schools,** which aim to further prepare political party members and members of civil society organisations with the tools to become agents of change in their societies.

- **Schools of Politics,** which target politicians already immersed in the public sphere, place an emphasis on enhancing their practical leadership skills, such as speechwriting, public speaking, debating and campaigning skills, as well as further developing theoretical knowledge.

Democracy education in practice

To guarantee the successful outcome of a democracy education programme, it is important to consider the approach, target group, recruitment process, curriculum and duration of the programme. This section looks at each element in turn and provides evidence based on lessons from the field.

Approach

Democracy education should be seen as neutral and independent. It should strive to create a safe space that is impartial and where all opinions are respected in a non-partisan manner This is vital in building the necessary foundations for democratic discourse and civil debate.

Each democracy education programme should be tailored to meet the needs of a particular country context and the needs of the participants, including through a careful assessment of the political landscape. Participants need to commit to certain requirements, such as attending a minimum amount of classes.

Curriculum

The range of topics varies from culture, public speaking, and human rights, to dialogue with civil society and the role of the judicial system. The curriculum should depend on the needs of the participants and the context.

Course Structure

Number of participants: should ideally be between 30-36. It has been shown that a discussion between a larger group than that hinders the productivity of discussion between participants.

Extracurricular activities: that include the participation of political experts and leaders, should be organised to provide participants with an opportunity to engage with local politicians.

Duration: A long-term course should be privileged over one-off sessions or short-term training courses, with 6 months of engagement being the preferred option.

In general, it is recommended that the participants meet on a regular basis over a period ranging from 2 to 12 months with repeated sessions being held.

Participants

Target group: The primary target group for democracy education is aspiring societal leaders. Participants who attend the democracy education programmes may be representatives of political, public, civil society and media sectors, as well as students and active citizens interested in contemporary issues of democratic politics. The inclusion of underrepresented groups, such as women and youth, is vital in order to underline the importance of diversity and inclusivity in politics.

Recruitment process: Participants should be recruited in different ways depending on the exact target group of the school. In some cases, this can be through an open application process where candidates can apply by sending in their résumés, and in others, participation can be more exclusive, requiring candidates to be recommended by political party leaders.

Alumni networks

Alumni networks can be supported through different types of activities, and serve as civic clubs that would allow graduates to take part in small grants competitions, joint conferences and events.

Further reading:

- Center for Civic Education (1998) A Forthcoming Education Policy Task Force Position Paper from the Communitarian Network
- Council of Europe (2020) Schools of Political Studies
- National Democratic Institute (1997) Democracy Education Civic Forum Style
- Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (2020) Democracy Schools

Civic Tech

Civic tech, also known as civic technologies, are online and digital technologies that enable citizens to communicate remotely with government, monitor government action and ultimately hold government to account. The focus of civic tech is on informing citizens, connecting them and getting them to engage with their government in order to work together for the public good.

Historically, civic tech grew alongside developments in information & communications technology and infrastructure and was developed by coders or groups of coders independently. [13] Since then, it has grown into more organised volunteer groups that actively exchange information, such as the Code for All network, which connects and facilitates information-sharing between different groups of coders and civic activists from around the world. Because of its ability to empower citizens to connect with each other and monitor government action, civic tech has great potential to empower civil society in holding government to account, thereby supporting democracies to thrive. Civic tech is often thought of as an important bridge towards digital democracy.

Aims of different civic tech tools

Different types of civic tech have been designed to help improve democratic practices. The following represent some of the types of tools and their purpose:

- **monitoring activities:** designing and implementing apps and tools that serve the purpose of monitoring a certain activity, for example, apps to monitor voter fraud during elections.
- **crowdsourcing activities:** designing and implementing apps that focus on how to better understand citizens' needs and channelling that information to government for the purpose of influencing policy.

- **networking activities:** some tools are specifically designed to help citizens organise themselves and act as a platform for empowering citizens to express their freedom of assembley and association.

Civic tech vs govtech

Civic tech and govtech or 'government technology' are two terms that have gained popularity in recent times. Both relate to the use of technology but ultimately describe two fundamentally different processes. The focus of civic tech is on citizens' participation, engagement and empowering citizens to better communicate with government, while govtech is mainly focused on improving government efficiency. [14] In the case of civic tech, participation is understood as a bottom-up process that is most often informal and is initiated by citizens or civic tech organisations. [15] The difference between the two also lies in who is the beneficiary of the service. On one side, civic tech directly addresses a need within society, with its citizens as the beneficiary. Meanwhile, govtech's main beneficiary is government, with cost-effective and efficient processes as the overarching principle behind govtech. [16]

"62% of civic tech activists were politically engaged before becoming involved in civic-tech"

Facts and figures:

- 32 years old is the average age of a civic tech developer
- 62% of civic-tech activists were politically engaged before becoming involved in civic-tech
- 25 000 volunteers in over 230 local communities are involved in the largest civic-tech meta-organisation - Code For All

Supporting civic tech in practice

CSOs and international actors need citizens' engagement in order to effectively monitor the implementation of government policies, electoral processes and aid distribution. Citizens can pool their knowledge to the benefit of others using civic tech. Civic tech has been shown to increase participation and inclusion, as well as access to public services, both in established and emerging democracies. [17] In countries with limited entry points for meaningful political participation, civic tech can open up new avenues for citizens to influence decision-making processes. As democratic space is closing, civic tech is needed even more in order to give citizens a platform where they can exchange views and provide input on issues of concern, in a fast and secure manner.

How to support civic tech and guiding principles:

Supporting the development of civic technologies requires creating the space for civic collaboration and investing in information & communications technology. The following kinds of programmes can support the development of civic tech in practice:

- **Supporting civic tech development:** The biggest challenge developers of civic tech encounter is access to funding. Civic tech is a "home-grown" industry, and coders and developers benefit from having access to small and flexible grants that can support their work. As most grants focus on projects, they come with fixed time limits and there is little funding available for maintenance. However, this is a critical part of civic tech development, as software needs to be updated for civic apps to function properly.[18]

- **Supporting advocacy for conducive policies:** Some policies better support the emergence and creation of civic tech, particularly laws on the freedom of information, as civic tech often relies on open source data. Supporting CSOs

and activists to enable such an environment is an important step in making civic tech effective on the ground. The Open Government Partnership brings CSOs, governments and businesses together and helps to bring forward conducive policies for civic tech.

- **Facilitate government-sector partnerships:** Civic tech creators can have a greater impact through cooperation or contact with government. Creating the opportunity for exchange between developers of civic tech and government officials can help not only improve the quality of the design of civic technologies, but it can also help getting government buy-in, which can then lead to an expansion in the use of the civic tech tools.

- **Training** – particularly to women & under-represented groups: in many countries there is a digital divide between genders when it comes to IT and more investment needs to be targeted towards programmes making civic tech accessible and inclusive to women. At the same time, minorities also struggle to be included in the world of civic tech due to lack of training and opportunities. For civic tech to be inclusive, there is a need for investment in training to such target groups.

- **Investing in ICT development to increase connectivity:** Investing in the local ICT sector and broader connectivity is essential for providing the infrastructure that can enable developments in the civic tech sector. The two should be seen as complementary to each other and pursued side by side, in order to provide an environment for the civic tech sector to flourish.

Further reading:

- Camargo, L. (2020) Code For All: A beginner's guide to civic tech
- CitizenLab (2019) Measuring the impact of civic tech
- ePanstwo Foundation and Nesta (2018) Mapping digital social innovation: e-democracy
- Nesta (2017) Digital Democracy: The tools transforming political engagement
- World Bank (2017) Civic Tech in the Global South

Local Democracy

What is local democracy?

Local self-government outlines the right and the ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs. In a local democracy this right is conferred to councils or assemblies composed of members freely elected by secret ballot and directly accountable to their own local constituency. This adheres to the principle of subsidiarity, which ensures that problems are addressed by those institutions and civil society groups that are most competent and closest to citizens.

Local democracy cannot be understood as a mere subdivision of the powers of the state or state institutions at the local and regional level. Appointed representatives of the central government (without accountability to local communities) - such as prefects and regional/local commissions of the state - do not strengthen local democracy, as accountability runs upwards to central government.

The European Charter on Local Self Government of the Council of Europe sets a useful list of the core principles of local government, which include:

- **Full and exclusive exercise of power:** in accordance with the law, local authorities' prerogatives should not be undermined by the central or regional level.

- **Appropriate financial compensation:** local authorities should receive adequate financial resources, proportional to the exercise of the office – alongside budgetary autonomy – local authorities should control their own financial resources, which should partly derive from local taxes and charges.

- **Self-determined administrative supervision:** any administrative supervision of the local authorities' activities by other bodies may be exercised only if in compliance with the law.

- **Legal protection:** local authorities may have recourse to a judicial remedy in order to secure free exercise of their powers and respect for principles of local self-government. [19]

The legal and structural profile of local democracy should be embedded in a broader community approach to be successful. This implies a participative approach to local decision-making, involving different people in the community through practices such as participatory budgeting at the local level or citizens' panels.

Local development

Local democracy and sustainable local development are two sides of the same coin. Socio-economic development at the local level is a crucial and essential part of the overall economic development of a country, much as local democratic governance feeds into the democratic culture of a society. In order for local democracy to be truly effective it is important for citizens to have power over the distribution of locally owned resources within a given community.

Recent evaluation research has shown that the promotion of decentralisation can be associated with development success, particularly in fragile contexts.[20] Indeed, decentralised governments positively affect the performance of the state and the quality of public services. In the scenario of a fragile state that provides only insufficient services, it is assumed that local structures are in a better position to counterbalance these shortcomings and to respond to the needs of the population.

Facts and figures:

- The number of elected local governments in the world's least developed countries has increased by 7% in the last 10 years, as observed in the V-Dem Participatory Democracy Index
- The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) represents more than 300 LAs, associations of LAs, and CSOs from 40 countries
- In 2019 regions and cities accounted for approximately 40.04% of public spending and 56.9% of public investment in the OECD area

How can local democracy be promoted?

The section below describes some key means with which local democratic governance can be promoted:

- **Assigning clear-cut responsibilities to local government:** Central and local governments should be assigned precise responsibilities and financial resources on the basis of subsidiarity and autonomy, proportional to their duties. The responsibilities of central and local governments should be clearly delineated in order to give local government a clear sphere of operational freedom.

- **Ensuring the accountability of local government:** Several features of politics and governance can contribute to ensuring democratic and accountable government. Organised community-based political party representation, anti-corruption bodies, transparent systems of public procurement, participatory budgeting and auditing are examples of effective accountability mechanisms, which can battle various forms of corruption and make local governments more democratic.

- **Engaging civil society in local decision-making:** The creation of a permanent dialogue with citizens – through consultation, partnership processes, and participatory programming – generates better solutions within the community as far as the fight against opacity of power and corruption is concerned. It also facilitates the inclusion of minorities and marginalised groups. Civil society organisations can be actively involved in a wide range of activities from community development to skills training for sustainable livelihoods and to access to social services. To that effect, the Congress of the Council of Europe has recently worked to support leadership among mayors, alongside elected officials and citizens' involvement in Eastern Partnership countries.

- **Fostering local participation:** Mechanisms for participation and accountability at the local level can help ensure a local democracy that is efficient and more accountable to citizens. There are several instruments that raise responsibility, activism, and direct participation: local elections, consultations and referendums give voters a direct say on important policy issues, overcome the sense of distrust, and can bring government closer to citizens. For example, after the 1999 conflict with Yugoslavia, local elections were held in Kosovo as a first-step in recreating internal governance. Similarly, the South African local elections in 2000 defined for the first time the composition of municipal structures, unifying previously segregated areas.

Decentralisation

Decentralisation is often viewed as a technical exercise but has wide-ranging political impact and comes in different forms:

- **Administrative decentralisation,** including deconcentration of central government structures, delegation of central government authority, decentralised cooperation of government agencies;
- **Political decentralisation,** including devolution of powers to local units of government, power-sharing institutions through federalism, constitutional federations or autonomous regions;
- **Fiscal decentralisation,** including fiscal cooperation in sharing public revenues among all levels of government, fiscal delegation in public revenue, and fiscal autonomy for state, regional or local governments;
- **Economic decentralisation,** including market liberalisation, deregulation, and the privatisation of state enterprises.

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Leadership

Executive leadership

The chief executive of a State is responsible for a number of different tasks associated with governing. These are highly dependent on the different legal and political systems of different states – however, some key tasks that are present in many states include:

- appointing people to key government positions;
- deciding on the main domains of ministries;
- presiding over the cabinet;
- having the right to dissolve parliament;
- giving vision and direction to government policy;
- gathering sufficient support for policies within the leading coalition, and;
- representing the government and the country towards citizens and the international community.

As the presidential system typically accords greater powers to the chief executive, parliamentary systems tend to have greater checks on the leader of the executive but this is again dependent on the particular legal framework in a country. Several countries have adopted models based on other systems (e.g. Westminster model in Africa, US system in Latin America) but all have distinct rules of the game (legally and informally).

Leadership styles may be classified along three basic groups: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leaders.[21] Whereas autocratic leaders make decisions by themselves, laissez-faire leaders leave decision-making to their followers/subordinates. Democratic leaders, on the other hand, proactively cooperate in decision-making with those affected, by distributing responsibility and empowering citizens in constructive participation and critical thinking. Leaders can vary distinctly within the groups as well – some democratic leaders are more inclusive than others and some autocrats distribute power within a small circle.

Why does executive leadership matter?

Leaders have far-reaching agency in changing structural dynamics of development in the way they use institutions for development and project a vision that is inclusive and participatory. In contrast, a recurring phenomenon in many countries around the world is predatory leadership, where personal enrichment comes at the expense of development. In such a context, the political will, ability to forge coalitions and vision of the chief executive can make the difference in changing the political dynamics from extractive to inclusive.

Jeffrey Sachs has looked at 5 characteristics of successful leadership a) Envisioning alternative paths, b) Turning that vision into a technical approach to actually accomplish goals, c) Building coalitions d) Selling that vision to the public, and e) Tending to the daily management tasks: budgets, teams, and processes.

Leaders in conflict mediation

Executive leaders are often requested to find a negotiated solution between warring parties, drawing on their own experience, diplomatic skills and status. Many leaders have done so as envoys of international organisations but some have stepped up personally as private mediators, like Jimmy Carter, Martti Ahtisaari and Julius Nyerere. A few of these have created organisations themselves, like the Elders, the Carter Centre, Ahtisaari's Crisis Management Initiative and the Clinton Foundation.

Facts and figures:

- 28 executive leaders have been in power for longer than 15 years – of whom 8 for over 30 years
- According to UN Women, as of June 2019, only 11 women are serving as Head of State and 12 are serving as Head of Government
- There is a statistical correlation between the executive's level of education and the country's level of economic growth.

How to improve leadership in practice?

Whilst there is an abundance of courses and training programmes for leadership in the private sector, this type of capacity building is less widespread in the public and non-profit sector. Efforts towards strengthening leadership can be broadly categorised in two groups, namely capacity building through leadership development programmes, and leader-to-leader coaching and mediation, which capitalise on the expertise of former leaders to coach executive leaders in government.

Leadership advice:

Nobody understands the challenges of executive leadership like former presidents and prime ministers do. They therefore play an important role in advising and supporting ruling executive leaders in democratic transitions, peace-building and societal change. Former leaders are often requested to mediate disputes (see box), provide leader-to-leader advice and to share good practices in terms of policy reform or democratic development. Former leaders may engage in this personally or through organisations such as the World Leadership Alliance/Club de Madrid, which brings together over 100 former presidents and prime-ministers to support democracy, inclusive societies and counter violent extremism.

"Leaders have far-reaching agency in changing structural dynamics"

Capacity building:

Sustainable development requires effective leadership at all levels, not only at the executive level. There are an increasing number of capacity building programmes to strengthen leadership throughout society, targeted at civil society and community leaders, political parties and young entrepreneurs. Whilst necessary skills vary widely across sectors and topics, some cross-cutting leadership capabilities are: multi-stakeholder dialogue; situation analysis and vision; policy and strategy formulation; budgeting, management and implementation, and; monitoring and evaluation. Some key lessons from leadership capacity development:

- **Adapt locally:** Leadership capacity building must be adapted to the local context, existing needs, the political environment and the culture.
- **Culture of leadership:** Rather than improving one leader's capacities, programmes need to foster a culture of leadership in the group for lasting change.
- **Group ownership and mutual accountability:** Teach participatory styles of leadership that prioritise multi-stakeholder dialogue, listening and empathy.
- **Sustainable change:** One workshop won't be effective. Programmes need to include continuous coaching, on-the-job training and incentives for future behaviour.

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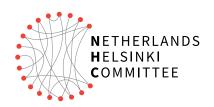21. Gastil (1994) A Definition and Illustration of Democratic Leadership. Human Relations (47:8)

ARTICLE 19

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