

Summary Booklet

Team Europe Democracy (TED) Network
Annual Meeting, 13/14 June, Brussels

Executive Summary

The Second Team Europe Democracy (TED) Network Annual Meeting was held on 13th and 14th June 2024 in Brussels, gathering over 150 participants from EU Delegations (EUD), Member States (MS), and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The event focused on strategies to support global democracy, taking a close look at the achievements of TED and its network members. Key sessions included discussions on fostering civic space, advancing rule of law, combating corruption, and addressing misinformation. High-level speakers emphasised the need for pragmatic actions and stronger collaboration between EU institutions, MS, and civil society. The Working Group (WG) sessions highlighted the importance of operationalising outputs, enhancing awareness of TED's initiatives, and integrating political and technical assistance to support democratic values worldwide.

Throughout the event, participants engaged in dialogues on how to counter the shrinking of civic spaces both online and offline, drawing insights from case studies in various countries. The discussions also delved into the critical role of independent media in safeguarding democracy, particularly in the context of combating fake news and misinformation. Additionally, the importance of inclusive participation was a recurring theme, with a focus on engaging women, youth, marginalised communities, and people with disabilities in democratic processes. The event underscored the significance of aligning development aid with human rights principles, showcasing examples of innovative financing instruments and integrated trade and development policies. This summary booklet provides key insights from the exchanges and commitments of this annual event, reflecting the collective effort to enhance global democratic resilience.

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High Level Opening Ceremony



Jutta Urpilainen
EU Commissioner for
International
Partnerships



Caroline Gennez
Minister of
Development
Cooperation and
Urban Policy
Belgium



Alexandra Kurth
Team Leader TED
Secretariat



Katie Gallus
Event Moderation

Summary

The annual TED event opened with a video message from the EU Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen. In the context of the recent European elections, Mrs Urpilainen emphasised the importance of democracy, declaring it a cause worth fighting for with civil society organisations as crucial allies of democratic societies. Minister Caroline Gennez, with Belgium currently holding the presidency of the Council of the EU (until end of June 2024), reaffirmed Europe's commitment to democratisation. The Minister underscored Belgium's longstanding dedication to safeguarding human rights, civic space, and democracy, aiming to further strengthen these through their Civic Space Initiative. Alexandra Kurth, Team Leader of the TED Secretariat, illustrated how this commitment translates into concrete actions by providing an overview of the TED Initiative's accomplishments and challenges over the past year.

Key Takeaways

- **State of global democracy:** There is an alarming worldwide decline in democracy.
- **Position of EU:** European commitment to support democratisation is needed.
- **TED Initiative:** The TED Initiative is an EU approach to countering autocratisation and to support democratic actors worldwide.



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Fostering Civic Space in Partner Countries



Hans Joppen
Co-Chair WG 2
Attaché at the Belgian
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Trade and
Development Cooperation



**Ursula Werther-
Pietsch**
Co-Chair WG 3
Senior Adviser, Federal
Ministry for European and
International Affairs of
Austria.



Ramses Malaty
Director for the Unit for
Administrative and
Legal Development
Cooperation Matters,
Finland



Heidi Rombouts
Directorate-General for
Development Cooperation
and Humanitarian Aid,
Belgium



**Birgitte Nygaard
Markussen**
Director for the Department for
Humanitarian Action, Civil
Society and Engagement,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of
Denmark



**Clémence
Weulersse**
Head of the Democratic
Governance Department,
Ministry of Europe and
Foreign Affairs of France



Jean Van Wetter
CEO Enabel

Moderation

Summary

This session combined the approaches of two TED Working Groups – WG2 on Political and Civic Participation and WG3 on Media and Digital – to address the growing challenges of shrinking civic space, both online and offline. Mr. Jean Van Wetter, CEO of Enabel, opened the session, followed by presentations from WG2 Co-Chair, Mr. Hans Joppen, and WG3 Co-Chair, Ms. Ursula Werther-Pietsch. They highlighted key achievements and strategies in fostering civic spaces over the past year of TED and emphasised the importance of countering misinformation and supporting media pluralism through the newly launched WG3.

During a high-level panel discussion, EU MS shared democratic support initiatives on strengthening civic spaces and upholding fundamental freedoms. The session underscored the importance of joint EU and MS strategies in addressing democratic regressions, enhancing policy programming, and coordination. By sharing best practices and fostering dialogue, the session aimed to bolster the resilience of civil society organisations and promote democratic governance in partner countries. The session highlighted the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to address civic shrinking spaces to enable inclusive participation – online and offline – and foster trust in democratic institutions and processes, calling for a long-term strategy and perspective for civil society actors in democracy support.

Key Takeaways

- **Thematic priorities to cover the threats to democracy, information integrity and actors:** Special focus lies on (1) ensuring inclusive participation of marginalised communities and groups – women, youth, people with disabilities, (2) addressing shrinking civic space both offline and online, (3) supporting digital literacy and developing a European "information support continuum," (4) countering media distrust and misinformation. Synergies between both WG2 and WG3 were explored.
- **Member State Engagement:** Initiatives from Belgium, Finland, Denmark and France were shared on safeguarding civic rights, fundamental freedoms and media-digital integrity through development cooperation and civil society partnerships.
- **Localised Approach:** Actions need to be concrete and targeted to specific local contexts.



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Advancing Rule of Law and Combating Corruption



Achim Johannsen
Co-Chair WG 1
Deputy Head of Division
Governance
Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development
Germany



Erica Gerretsen
Director for Human
Development, Migration,
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Helen Eduards
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Lex Gerts
Deputy Director for
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of Foreign Affairs
Netherlands



Helge-Elisabeth Zeitler
Director for Multilateral
Cooperation and EU, Federal
Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development,
Germany



Reinhold Elges
Director of the GIZ
Representation in Brussels

Moderation

Summary

This session focused on the critical issues of advancing rule of law and combating corruption within the EU. Moderated by Reinhold Elges from GIZ Brussels, the session included contributions from high-level representatives. The session began with Achim Johannsen from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development outlining the objectives of WG1, which emphasises the interdependence of rule of law and anti-corruption efforts. The panellists from the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany discussed their countries' commitments and strategies for promoting these values, highlighting the importance of a people-centered approach and the need for effective collaboration among EUD and MS. The European Commission underlined the need for a holistic approach, integrating democratic governance principles into all actions under the Global Gateway strategy. The session concluded with a call for stronger joint actions at the partner-country level, affirming the need for coordinated efforts to ensure the effectiveness of rule of law and anti-corruption measures.

Key Takeaways

- **People-centered approach:** Recognising the needs and priorities of local populations is crucial for effective rule of law support.
- **Evidence-based learning:** Continuous learning and adaptation are necessary due to the complex and changing contexts in which rule of law initiatives operate.
- **Integration of anti-corruption measures:** Incorporating anti-corruption efforts across all sectors is essential for achieving broader development goals.
- **Collaboration and coordination:** Enhanced coordination among MS and other stakeholders can improve the impact of rule of law and anti-corruption initiatives.
- **Global Gateway strategy:** Ensuring investments are supported by strong governance frameworks to mitigate risks and promote democratic values.
- **Sustainable economic development:** Legal certainty and a corruption-free business environment are key for attracting investments and fostering economic growth.



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3rd Plenary Fireside Chat



Flora Cresswell
Western Europe
Regional Coordinator,
Transparency
International – WG 1



**Antonella
Valmorbida**
Secretary General, The
European Association
for Local Democracy
(ALDA) – WG 2



Thomas Law
Deputy Director, Global
Forum for Media
Development (GFMD) –
WG 3

Summary

The Fireside Chat brought together Thematic Leads from the different WGs for an open discussion on the state of democracy. The inputs focused on corruption as a driver of democratic decline, the importance of civil society in defending democracy, and the crucial role of independent journalism. The discussion further delved into the global state of democracy, its challenges, and the role of the TED Network in supporting democracy. Thematic leads shared their motivations for joining TED, emphasising the need for coordinated action and cross-regional exchange, the importance of civil society, representation of partner countries and EUD. The panellists also highlighted the importance in fostering synergies between the different TED Network WGs.

The audience gave input on what they believe are the biggest challenges to democracies – such as disinformation, polarisation, populism and authoritarianism, corruption and inequality. They further were able to ask the panellists questions on the goals for the TED Network, their strategies for building partnerships and advocacy engagement.

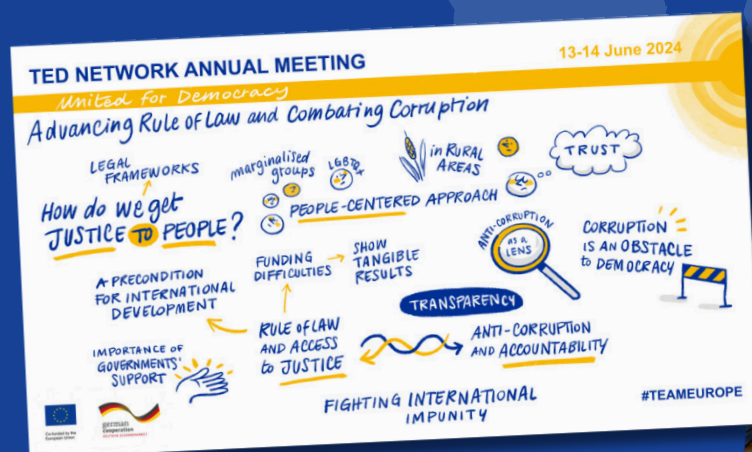
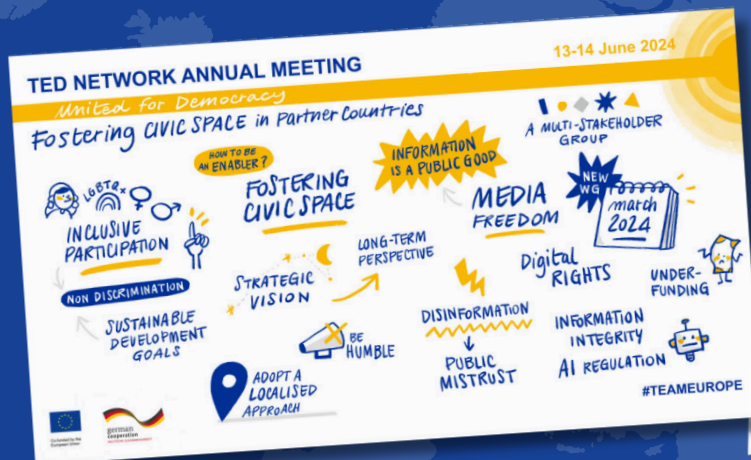
Key Takeaways

- **Importance of networks:** Regional and international networks like the TED Network are essential for exchanging, aligning, and coordinating global approaches.
- **Cross-cutting issues:** Identifying cross-cutting issues between WGs, expanding cross-regional exchanges, and including civil society will maximise the effectiveness of democracy support.
- **Central role of civil society:** Civil society must be at the centre in the response to defending democracy and anti-corruption efforts.
- **Innovation:** Innovation and out-of-the-box thinking are vital, as democracy encompasses more than just voting.
- **Support for media:** Securing funding and coordinated support for free and independent media is critical for democracies.
- **Focus on local level:** Democracy support thrives at the local level, so measures must be concrete and targeted.



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Impressions Day 1:



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Opening Day 2



Chiara Adamo
Deputy Director for Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace, DG INTPA



Alexandra Kurth
Team Leader TED Secretariat



Mia Sichelkow
Project Manager TED Secretariat

Summary

The opening session recapped the discussions and activities from the first day, focusing on the challenges and strategies in promoting adherence to international law, human rights, and democracy in difficult political contexts marked by the rise of illiberal democracies, increased impunity, disinformation, and shrinking civic space. There is a pressing need for practical, smart, flexible, and de-siloed actions. The WGs were encouraged to address these issues in their respective meetings and in the definition of their activities and priorities for 2024/2025. During the Partner Country Engagement (PCE) segment, which is demand-driven via EUD, specific updates and lessons learned from various country engagements (Colombia, DRC, Jordan, Mongolia, Tanzania, Uganda) were shared. Additionally, the session explored the mutual enrichment between TED workflows, specifically PCE and WGs. The session underscored the importance of collaboration/partnerships and innovation in achieving meaningful progress.

Key Takeaways

- **WG1 activities:** Explore partnerships, use indices and customary law approaches, implement practical applications through its upcoming clinics.
- **WG2 activities:** Utilise the ECDPM report findings and case studies on shrinking civic space to guide programming and fieldwork. It will build on EU and MS civic space initiatives shared during the high-level panels.
- **WG3 activities:** Support measures to uphold information integrity, media independence, and human rights in the digital space.
- **TED PCE approach:** Central to applying strategies in partner countries by understanding the political context and exploring cooperation opportunities between EUD, MS, TED Network members active on the ground, and partner countries.
- **Strengthening understanding:** There is a need to enhance understanding of EUD and MS requests, refresh the mutual understanding of TED's role, conduct initial mapping by EUD-MS before TED activities commence, and balance EU and local expertise.



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Thematic Deep Dive on Elections



Domenico Tuccinardi
Senior Advisor, EPD



Mette Bakken
Policy Officer, EEAS



Teresa Polara
Election and Democracy Support Specialist



Ken Godfrey,
Executive Director, EPD
Moderation

Summary

The deep dive session on election support focused on election observation and monitoring (EOM) and election assistance (EA), highlighting significant challenges including threats to observers' safety, monitoring complexities in digital campaigns, disinformation, and inconsistent implementation (including recycling) of EOM recommendations. The session emphasised the unique approach of EU missions integrating EOM with EA, stressing the need for pre- and post-mission follow-ups and the combined roles of political and technical assistance/development cooperation in implementing EOM findings. It underscored the integration of civil society, media, and digital aspects into election support efforts. Recommendations included enhancing EU expertise, adapting strategies to evolving contexts, combating disinformation, fostering partner countries' political will and public interest, improving procurement competitiveness, and boosting collaboration among stakeholders, particularly regional and international organisations.

Key Takeaways

- **Election observation and monitoring:** Out of over 800 recommendations, 49% saw no action, particularly those requiring legal reforms. Quick wins include operational/logistical recommendations and focusing on media independence.
- **Integration of cooperation:** Political and development cooperation should be incorporated into EOM recommendations for broader impact beyond elections.
- **Election assistance:** EA should support the entire election cycle, linking with broader governance support and improving collaboration among EA providers.
- **Importance of public perspectives:** Ensuring access to quality information via media/digital is crucial. Recommendations include integrating media/digital aspects into EA and countering disinformation (training, going beyond mere 'fact checking').
- **Local understanding and awareness:** Invest in on-the-ground awareness, including MS and EU representations, to enhance local understanding and engagement.



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Speakers

Thomas Millar, Head of Section, Democratic Governance, G1 DG INTPA

Achim Johansen, Deputy Head of Governance Division, BMZ, Germany (Co-Chair WG1)

Valentijn Wortelboer, Senior Policy Officer in the Rule of Law and Peacebuilding, MFA, Netherlands (Co-Chair WG1)

Masha Matthews, Customary And Informal Justice Adviser, Director Business Development, HiIL, (Thematic Lead WG 1.1)

Michael Warren, Customary And Informal Justice Adviser, IDLO, (Thematic Lead WG 1.1)

Jean Traband, Desk Officer, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France (online)

Jamie Smith, Senior Policy Specialist, SIDA, Sweden

Karolina Jozic, Senior Policy Analyst, SIDA, Sweden

Paula Perez, Senior Program Officer, OGP, Thematic Lead, WG 1.2

Flora Cresswell, Regional Coordinator, TI, Thematic Lead, WG 1.2

Summary

WG1 started jointly with both workstreams affirming the interconnectedness of Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption in supporting democracy, having the EU's Global Gateway 360° approach as an initial input. Participants discussed integrating democratic principles into Global Gateway investments, further strengthening the enabling and regulatory frameworks. Suggestions were made where TED could support in disseminating risk mitigation tools and continue in raising awareness and sharing best practices.

WG 1.1 on Rule of Law, went on to discuss "People-Centred Justice in Practice". HiIL's work in Nigeria and IDLO's alternative dispute resolution programme in Somalia were presented. Both initiatives focus on improving justice outcomes by integrating local and formal justice systems, prioritising tangible results and local ownership.

WG 1.2, Anti-Corruption, then continued to update its strategy to mobilise organisations for anti-corruption efforts in line with Global Gateway priorities. The main objectives for the next 12 months include mainstreaming anti-corruption across key sectors, involving civil society, and testing tools in selected countries.

The session also reflected on the 2024-2025 work plan, focusing on operationalizing research on RoL and cross-cutting topics from WG members and from upcoming TED grants, organising practical training opportunities and rolling out support packages for country engagement.

Key Takeaways

Global Gateway: WG 1.2 will focus on Anti-Corruption guidelines and practical sector-specific implementations.

People-Centred Justice (PCJ): Transition from conceptual understanding to practical application in partner countries

- Addressing limitations of traditional institution-focused Rule of Law support, securing local stakeholder ownership and funding through tangible results.
- PCJ as contribution to stability by providing access to justice in fragile contexts.
- PCJ interventions should aim at shifting the way institutions work, they should be embedded in the overall justice system, involving both formal and informal sectors.

Work plans 2024 - 2025:

- WG 1.1: Operationalise research, organise practical trainings on PCJ, roll out support to partner countries
- WG 1.2: Developed a concept and work plan focused on: mainstreaming anti-corruption through Global Gateway 360 projects in sectors like education, health, energy, transport, and infrastructure.





Speakers

Eva Nilsson, Attaché, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, (Co-Chair WG2)

Samantha Chaitkin, Human Rights Officer, G1, DG-INTPA

Panel Discussion:

Emanuele Sapienza, Global Lead, Open and Inclusive Public Sphere, UNDP

Annika Gostowski, Adviser for Grantmaking Programme in East Africa, KIOS

Gina Wharton, Civic Space Policy Advisor, Oxfam International

ECDPM Report Presentation:

Amandine Sabourin, Policy Officer - EU Foreign and Development Policy, ECDPM

Sara Gianasello, Policy Officer and Gender and Youth Focal Point, ECDPM

Summary

The WG2 work session focused on fostering civic space (2nd work plan priority), reviewing the ECDPM report's key findings with panel insights from UNDP, Oxfam International and KIOS. The ECDPM report highlighted political and operational responses to shrinking civic space in various partner countries, stressing the need for a common strategic vision (definition) and coordinated efforts between the EU and MS on civic space. The session also reflected on the 2024-2025 work plan, pointing out the need to operationalise previous reports on inclusive participation and civic space recommendations; deepen the understanding of local political life with a focus on local democratic governance and economic development; and ensure ongoing democratic engagement of citizens, civil society and parliaments/political parties in-between election periods.

Key Takeaways

Strategic vision and coordination:

- Be credible, no double standards – also address closing civic space at home.
- There is a need for a shared strategic vision, definition (build on that of OECD and other MS) and coordinated efforts (less ad-hoc) between the EU and MS. TED can add value and tap into potential of Team Europe.
- EU and MS should capitalise on existing tools available such as the roadmaps as well as identify new entry points (political economy analysis, Global Gateway); use political interventions and link them to operational ones; set clear red lines and go beyond the programme/project approach.
- Explore working with emerging/new actors to “go beyond the usual suspects”; create links between stakeholders peer2peer, people2people, private sector.
- Support the consolidation of the enabling environment for civic space at partner country level: support capacity, good governance, strong democratic institutions, adapt to/understand the local context through political economy analysis.

Work plan 2024-2025:

- Follow-up/harvest on priorities 1 (inclusive participation) and 2 (civic space): give relevance to the Human Rights-Based Approach; operationalise outcome products and recommendations with a focus on in-country (translate/outreach/learning for EUDs and MS representations, buy-in for existing initiatives in the field).
- Local democratic governance: linkages between local governance and economic development, deepen understanding of local political life especially the inclusion of women and youth. Civic space considerations should be integrated into public and private infrastructure projects, ensuring meaningful consultations and participation. Localised approaches.
- Strengthening civic engagement in-between elections period: trust-building between citizens and political actors (parliaments, parties).

Speakers

Ursula Werther-Pietsch, Senior Adviser at the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria (Co-Chair WG3)

Mia Steninge, Programme Manager of the Digital Democracy Initiative, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Co-Chair WG3)

Julien Musseau, Desk Officer - Information and Media Cooperation, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France (Co-Chair WG3)

Thomas Law, Deputy Director, Global Forum for Media Development (Thematic Lead WG3)

Leon Willems, Senior Advisor, Free Press Unlimited (Thematic Lead WG3)

Maksym Popovych (substituting Senior EU Advocacy Officer Mark Dempsey) Article19 (Thematic Lead WG3)

Summary

The WG3 working session focused on the use of digital and media strategies for the advancement of democracy. Co-Chairs and Thematic Leads welcomed new members and facilitated the development of a work plan. Recognising media's role - offline as well as online - in democracy, the WG discussed the recent trends of disinformation and fake news, amidst the declining role of traditional media and its business models. The WG's primary objectives include the critical importance of safeguarding healthy information systems (information integrity, access to information), and the focus on promotion and protection of human rights online (digital rights). These efforts aim to ensure a healthy information ecosystem that advocates for and defends democratic values worldwide. Subgroups were tasked with refining the work plan, starting with a comprehensive mapping of EU initiatives to stimulate deeper discussions. Members noted that the WG is beginning its work in the midst of a rise in authoritarianism and decline in trust in media and rising disinformation. Within this context, the overarching goals of importance include increasing the capacity of national information access organisations and better integrating media and journalism support into good governance. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure that human rights and democratic freedoms are upheld both online and offline. The group explored crisis response for journalism and proposed measures to uphold information integrity. The OECD Development Cooperation Principles on Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment will serve as a guiding reference.

Key Takeaways

Thematic categorisation:

- Interconnectedness of digital developments and media, while interdependent, focus on enhancing journalistic practices to ensure integrity of information systems. This includes addressing disinformation and upholding standards of accuracy and reliability in media content.
- Recognition of the transitioning from foundational discussions to actionable steps.
- Support for traditional media, as they still play a key role in democratic societies. Sustainability is crucial, necessitating ongoing support amidst economic and business model pressures.

Work plan 2024-2025:

- Mapping and understanding the media and digital landscape, especially in Europe. Identify gaps and potential synergies to optimise collective efforts.
- Provide support to EU MS and EUDs in implementing the OECD Development Cooperation Principles.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange on information integrity seeking cooperation with other WGs.



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Impressions Day 2:



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Closing Remarks & Outlook

Summary

The Second TED Network Annual Meeting concluded with a final plenary session, during which Co-Chairs reported back from their WG sessions, sharing highlights of their discussions, presentations, and outcomes. Key themes included adopting a practical, country-focused approach to people-centred justice with clinics for skill development; emphasising anti-corruption as essential for development and integrating it into critical sectors and procurement activities; creating a joint vision on civic space and enhancing inclusion strategies; and prioritising information integrity, media support, and digital rights.

The subsequent Q&A with the audience facilitated discussions on the need to be pragmatic in TED's work, operationalise the WGs, and publish meaningful products. The discussions during the annual meeting highlighted the importance of engaging more with EUD and MS to further leverage synergies between WGs and ensure linkages between global (gateway) and local actions.

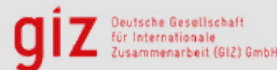
TED Network members also emphasised the urgency of concrete actions, increased coordination, and meaningful engagement with partner countries and civil society. Democracy is a combination of many pieces – effective democracy support requires the involvement of all stakeholders, from governments to individual citizens.

Key Messages

- 1. Practical and country-focused approach:** WG1 emphasised developing guidelines, applied research and practical skill clinics to support practitioners on the ground. Also, anti-corruption work should focus on public procurement, beneficial ownership, transparency, and whistleblowing, with a country-specific testing approach.
- 2. Anti-corruption as a development prerequisite:** Mainstream anti-corruption perspectives in sectors like health, education and infrastructure. Increase engagement, particularly from MS, using platforms like the Vilnius Anti-Corruption Conference in June 2024.
- 3. Collaborative civic space strategies:** WG 2 highlighted the need for a joint approach and vision on civic space, operationalising findings from the ECDPM report. Emphasised the importance of involving diverse and emerging actors.
- 4. Information integrity and digital rights:** WG 3 focused on safeguarding information integrity and ensuring secure digital civic spaces. Advocated for media support actions from EU institutions and leveraging existing international initiatives (OECD principles). Addressing challenges related to disinformation and AI, with a focus on media literacy, Media Vulnerability Manifesto and strategic clarifications from the EU.
- 5. Central themes:** Operationalisation of work, break the silos and enhance collaboration: Emphasised the need to be deliverable and concrete in approaches, linking global actions to local implementation/ownership. Encouraged stronger coordination between EU and MS, also involving civil society and academia in the process. Identified potential synergies between the WGs, such as linking to local economic development, civic space, justice integrity with information integrity.



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