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Team Europe Democracy Initiative (TED) Newsletter

#TEAMEUROPE



Updates on the Team Europe Democracy Initiative:

Provided by TED Secretariat

Dear Team Europe Democracy Network Members and Partners,



Valentijn Wortelboer | © private

As 2024 is drawing to a close, we can look contently back on a good productive year for the Team Europe Democracy Initiative. Our joint work has further taken shape. The Working Groups have plans in place and are delivering activities for the benefit of colleagues in EU capitals and in the field. I have particularly appreciated and enjoyed the close working relations we have built with my fellow Co-Chair Germany, INTPA, the other Co-Chairs and the Secretariat. To me personally, it has been encouraging to see the TED “spirit” alive in our discussions and activities.

In our work under Working Group 1.1 (Rule of Law and Access to Justice) we started with substantive, centrally-led, discussions on people-centered justice. We ended this year on a high-note, with a series of practical “clinics” on how to apply this concept in our policy and programming, on different thematic and technical areas. We also continued our explorations on practical TED engagement in partner

countries. I hope 2025 will again bring us inspiration, creativity and energy to bring our work together under the TED umbrella, and so deliver on the promise of improved coherence and impact of our combined efforts.

Enjoy the read,

WG 1.1 Co-Chair

**Senior Policy Officer "Rule of Law and Peacebuilding"
Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid Department
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

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AOB

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Updates

Introducing TED Coordinators

The TED Initiative welcomes its new colleagues and TED Focal Points at DG INTPA. We are pleased to introduce Jonathan Van Meerbeeck and Markus Handke, who will guide TED through the next phase of its work.



Jonathan Van Meerbeeck is Team Leader for Democratic Governance at the European Commission – Directorate General for International Partnerships. He previously worked as Team Leader for Human Rights and in the EU Delegation to Paraguay, and led the management of regional programmes in Africa. Prior to joining the EU institutions, Jonathan was as project officer at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.



Markus Handke studied law in Germany and in France. Having worked for a German business association, he joined the European Commission in 2004, focusing on the programming and implementation of international cooperation programmes in several regions. He was posted in three Delegations over his career, in Sierra Leone, Haiti and recently Uruguay. Since September 2024 he has coordinated the Team Europe Democracy Initiative.

Markus Handke | © private



Update on Grants for Action-Oriented Research

The TED Initiative launched a call for proposals for action-oriented research, open to partner organisations from 18 focus countries, which closed on 12 December. We are pleased to share that we received 131 applications, indicating the significant interest and demand for resources in the field of democracy support. In the coming month, we will work with Member State representatives and our core stakeholders to review the applications and shortlist up to four candidates who will receive funding to implement their projects. We look forward to updating you on the selected projects in the first newsletter edition of 2025.



Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU



Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU 2025 | © Poczta Polska

Starting on 1 January 2025, Poland will take on the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second time, overseeing its work for a six-month term and joining the presidency trio with

Denmark and the Cyprus. With a strong focus on resilience and international cooperation, Poland's presidency will address key global challenges and priorities, leveraging its leadership to promote stability, good governance, and inclusive development.

Poland's agenda is rooted in building resilience by enhancing crisis preparedness in partner countries through healthcare, education, strong institutions, and civil society engagement. The presidency will place a significant emphasis on fostering democracy and the rule of law, addressing democratic backsliding, and safeguarding civic space across the EU and beyond. Deepening international partnerships will also be a cornerstone of Poland's efforts, with priorities including supporting Ukraine, implementing the Samoa Agreement, and addressing global humanitarian crises.

Further Information on Poland's Priorities and Activities:

» [Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union](#)



TED Network

People-Centered Justice: TED launches Rule of Law Clinics



The TED working group on “Rule of Law and Access to Justice” has the key objective for the period 2024-2025 to “enhance the understanding on people-centred justice (PCJ) and its application in programming”. It organises a series of Rule of Law clinics on PCJ with a focus on tailoring justice interventions to meet specific needs of local populations, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity. These clinics are co-convened by the working group’s thematic leads and network members, providing a space to share insights, build capacity, and promote innovative approaches to justice programming.



TED Rule of Law Clinic on People-Centered Justice Programming

On 24 October 2024, TED's Rule of Law Clinic explored people-centered justice, focusing on data-driven approaches and real-world applications. With insights from global experts and case studies from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria, the clinic highlighted the importance of evidence-based solutions, legal literacy, and adaptive funding to create justice systems that meet the needs of individuals.

Read the full article:

» [TED Rule of Law Clinic on People-Centered Justice Programming on October 24, 2024](#)



TED Rule of Law Clinic on Customary, Informal and Community Justice Services

Building on the first clinic's focus on data-driven solutions, the second TED Rule of Law Clinic examined customary, informal, and community justice systems. Experts shared insights on balancing local traditions with formal safeguards. They discussed linking informal and formal justice systems and fostering culturally relevant, accessible solutions. Discussions covered challenges like legitimacy and gender concerns, while exploring context-specific strategies to strengthen collaboration and justice services globally.

Read the full article:

» [Practical Ways to engage with Customary, Informal and Community Justice Services](#)



Mainstreaming Anti-Corruption in Climate Finance to Promote Integrity and Action

On 10 December 2024, the TED Network hosted a webinar tackling the critical issue of corruption risks in climate finance. With insights from global experts, the event explored innovative tools and strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and the integrity of climate investments. Find the highlights and key takeaways below.

Read the full article:

» [Mainstreaming Anti-Corruption in Climate Finance to Promote Integrity and Action | Capacity4dev](#)



Unlocking Resilience: Empowering Local Actors and Partnerships in Fragile Contexts



Explore how local actors are at the heart of democratic resilience in fragile contexts, as TED Working Group 2's recent webinar highlights key strategies for strengthening local governance. From community-led initiatives to civil society and EU collaborations, discover how tailored, inclusive approaches are essential for building trust and sustainable democracies.

Read the full article:

» [Unlocking Resilience: Empowering Local Actors and Partnerships in Fragile Contexts](#)



Defending Democracy: Navigating and Addressing Shrinking Civic Space

The global rise of shrinking civic space threatens the fundamental rights essential to democracy.

TED Working Group 2 together with ECDPM examines how the EU and Member States can respond effectively, from immediate actions to long-term strategies, to safeguard freedoms, empower civil society and reinforce democratic resilience.

Read the full article:

» [Defending Democracy: Navigating and Addressing Shrinking Civic Space](#)



Championing Democracy by Uniting for Political and Civic Participation: Interview with Mr. Hans Joppen



The Co-Chair of TED Working Group 2 explains how the group leverages the TED Initiative to strengthen local governance, foster inclusion, and address shrinking civic space. By championing a harmonised approach, WG2 is working to defend freedoms, expand civic space, and ensure marginalised groups have a voice—laying the groundwork for resilient democratic systems.

Hans Joppen | © GIZ

Read full article:

» [Championing Democracy by Uniting for Political and Civic Participation](#)



Webinar Series on Information Integrity Kicks Off with Focus on "Human Rights Online"



Human rights and the access to reliable information need to be safeguarded in the digital age. For the first of its webinar series, Working Group 3, together with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Co-Chair), Global Partners Digital, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, showed strategies to address systemic gaps in information integrity. From the UN Global Principles for Information Integrity to human rights-based approaches, the discussion tackled key challenges like disinformation, and regulatory fragmentation.

Read the full article:

» [Webinar Series on Information Integrity Launched](#)



Advancing Media Support Through Coordinated Action. Insights

from OECD GOVNET Meeting

From November 20 - 22, 2024, members and partners of OECD GovNet (Development Assistance Committee's Network on Governance) convened in Paris. A dedicated half-day session focused on the implementation of the “OECD Development Co-operation Principles for Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment”. During this session, TED Secretariat presented its WG3 Media and Digital activity designed to support the principles’ implementation.

Read the full article:

» [Advancing Media Support Through Coordinated Action](#)



Bringing the OECD Media Principles to Local Actors. Experiences from WG3 Co-Chair Austria



Participants of Workshop in Moldova | © Ursula Werther Pietsch

In an era framed by the erosion of democratic norms, independent media and information integrity play a crucial role in upholding transparency and accountability. WG3 Co-Chair Austria has recently brought the above mentioned OECD Media Principles to local media practitioners in Moldova.

Read the full article:

» [Bringing the OECD Media Principles to Local Actors](#)



Partner Country Updates

Supporting the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic



TED is supporting the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic by carrying out an organisational analysis of the courts' governance and financial autonomy. Highlights include an on-site visit to Bangui and a high-profile side event in The Hague, aimed at raising awareness and mobilising partners to strengthen justice efforts.

Further Information:

» [Supporting the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic](#)



TED Will Support Guatemala with Electoral Reform and Safeguarding of Civic Spaces

Starting in January 2025, TED will support our partners in Guatemala with two key activities. The first focuses on developing a roadmap for electoral reform steps, building on the recommendations of the EU Electoral Observation Mission. This collaboration aims to identify joint support activities that can be implemented by the EU and Member States to strengthen democratic governance in Guatemala. The second engagement involves an in-depth analysis to increase civic space involvement in national reform processes, with a particular focus on the justice sector and open government reforms.



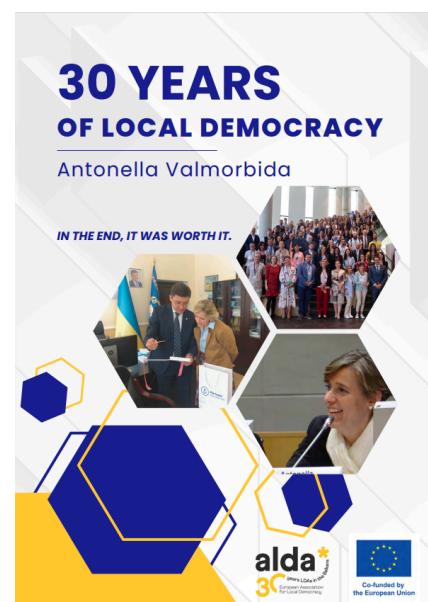
Publications

30 Years of Local Democracy

Discover the inspiring journey of ALDA in Antonella Valmorbida's latest book, "30 Years of Local Democracy." From its beginnings in the post-conflict Balkans to its global impact today, this book reflects on the challenges, milestones, and individuals who contributed to ALDA's development over three decades.

Further Information and Download:

» [30 Years of Local Democracy](#)



Polarisation and shrinking civic space undermine democratic reforms in Eastern Partnership countries like Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. A joint policy memo by TED and KPSRL explores how inclusive citizen engagement, tailored local reforms, and stronger media pluralism can rebuild trust, bridge divides, and drive sustainable progress towards European integration. By amplifying diverse voices and fostering ownership of reforms, the EU and its partners can help deliver resilient, people-centred democracy in the region.

Further Information and Download:

» [Sustainable Democracy and Rule of Law Reforms in Eastern Partnership Countries](#)

Team Europe Democracy (TED) Initiative

United for Democracy

Sustainable Democracy and Rule of Law Reforms in Eastern Partnership Countries: A Case for Engaging Citizens in Every Step

Policy memo

December 2024



Staying Engaged as Team Europe in Fragile Settings

Thanks to the support of GIZ and Enabel, a report developed by the European Think Tank Group (ETTG), examines the challenges of fragile contexts, from weak state capacities to economic distress and climate risks. It highlights the need for clearer political guidance, stronger local partnerships, and improved coordination of European efforts. With the upcoming EU strategy on fragility and budget negotiations, the report offers timely recommendations to address the root causes of fragility.

Read the full report [here](#).

Further Information and Download:

» [Staying Engaged as Team Europe in Fragile Settings](#)

ETTG | European Think Tanks Group

The European Think Tank Group (ETTG) is a network of European independent think tanks working on EU international cooperation for global sustainable development. www.ettg.eu

Staying engaged as Team Europe in fragile settings

ETTG Collective Report 3/2024

KEY MESSAGES

1. This report aims to support discussions around how European actors (including EU institutions, EU member states' governments, and European agencies) can respond to the challenges of fragile settings. It highlights how European agencies can respond with a Team Europe spirit in fragile settings in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment. For many European agencies, operating in fragile settings has been a key part of their mandate. The report also highlights how European agencies have purposefully reinforced locally led approaches to development, relying on existing networks of partners, information and access, and resources. The lessons from these approaches are critical for how European agencies have aimed to reinforce Team Europe approaches and coordinate their actions in fragile settings.

2. Looking specifically at conflict-affected settings, including the Central Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger), European agencies have adopted a range of tools and approaches to 'stay engaged', but are reaching the limits of what is possible. The report highlights the challenges of the Central Sahel and European political strategy, the experience of European agencies in fragile settings, including the Central Sahel, should be looked at closely, as they continue to support local partners and communities in fragile settings globally, while supporting a more coordinated Team Europe approach, and applying the Triple Nexus.



The Future of European Electoral Support

As billions headed to the polls in 2024, elections are increasingly contested under unequal conditions, raising concerns about legitimacy and polarisation. With EU election guidelines established nearly 25 years ago, a new report explores how the EU and Member States can modernise their electoral support to tackle today's geopolitical, technological, and political challenges.

Further Information and Download:

» [The Future of European Electoral Support](#)

European Democracy Hub

The Future of European Electoral Support



Why Media Freedom Matters: New Report

The Media Freedom Coalition's latest report outlines how free and independent media strengthen democracy, improve health outcomes, reduce violence, and promote economic and environmental accountability. Backed by over 100 pieces of evidence, the report underscores the urgent need to protect media freedom worldwide. Discover why it matters.

Further Information and Download:

» [Why Freedom Matters](#)

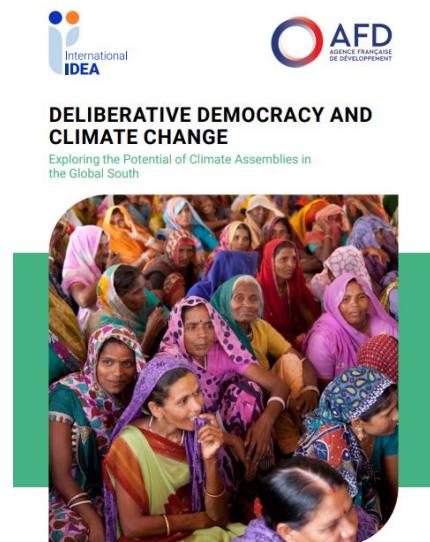


Deliberative Democracy and Climate Change

How can citizen deliberation drive climate action in the Global South? This report explores the potential of climate assemblies to break political deadlocks, reduce polarisation, and enhance policy legitimacy. Discover key lessons, challenges, and recommendations for designing inclusive, impactful climate assemblies. Watch the expert panel discussion for further insights!

Further Information and Download:

» [Deliberative Democracy and Climate Change](#)



How to Strengthen Democratic Resilience

The ongoing trend of democratic erosion around the world has led academics and policymakers to increasingly ask how to insulate political systems from authoritarian subversion and strengthen their democratic resilience. A new report done by the European Democracy Hub is exploring the strategies for democratic renewal and explores strategies to overcome the huge challenges democracies currently face.



How to Strengthen Democratic Resilience: Five Lessons for Democratic Renewal

Nic Cheeseman, Marie-Eve Desrosiers, Licia Cionetti, and Manoel Gehrike

December 2024

europeandemocracyhub.eu



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The TED Team Wishes All Readers Happy Holidays



TED Team in December during a Workshop in Bonn

The TED Secretariat would like to thank all our members and partners for the many inspiring moments in 2024, your contributions, discussions and ideas!

Please find below some of our 2024 highlights in figures.

We wish you and your families happy holidays and a great start to 2025, in which we will continue to work together.

270 Individual Members

73 Member Organisations

150 Participants in Brussels

during Annual Meeting

7 Country Missions

13 TED Events

3 Newsletters

29 Articles on Capacity4Dev



Links

Team Europe Democracy on Capacity4dev

» Capacity4dev.europa.eu/projects/team

Team Europe Democracy Factsheets

» Capacity4dev.europa.eu/projects/factsheets

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