

Team Europe Democracy (TED) Working Group (WG) 2

Webinar

27th of May 2025, 10:00 - 12:00 CET

Netherlands Institute for
Multiparty Democracy



Democracy Between the Ballots: Sustaining Engagement and Integrity Beyond Election Day

Strengthening institutions, engaging citizens and safeguarding democratic integrity between elections

ANALYTICAL REPORT

Webinar Concept.

This timely Team Europe Democracy (TED) Working Group 2 webinar focused on the often overlooked, yet politically decisive, period *in-between elections*; a phase increasingly recognised as fundamental for rebuilding trust, strengthening institutions and protecting civic space. The session called for moving beyond event-driven democracy support to more sustained, inclusive and adaptive engagement. “*Democracy does not begin or end on Election Day*,” underlining that the democratic contract is shaped and tested most deeply in the months and years between ballots, often far from the public eye, but with profound impacts on legitimacy and stability.

To ground this discussion in real-world dynamics, **Mozambique and Guinea** were presented by [IMD \(Institute for Multiparty Democracy\) Mozambique](#) and the [EU Delegation](#) respectively, as anchor case studies, each highlighting different trajectories of electoral crisis, political transition and reform. These contexts provided a springboard for an engaged panel discussion with leading institutional actors - [ECES \(European Centre for Electoral Support\)](#), [NIMD \(Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy\)](#), [UNESCO](#) and [The Carter Center](#) - who shared practical experiences, strategies and enduring dilemmas from their work across civic engagement, institutional reform, digital integrity and international norm-setting.

Moderated with sharp thematic prompts, from the fragility of post-electoral legitimacy to the strategic importance of civil society voice and the rising threats of digital disinformation, the session offered a cross-section of innovative responses and candid reflection. It underscored not only the need for sustained and context-sensitive democracy support, but also the value of coordinated, principled action across Team Europe and beyond.

As the conversation unfolded, the case for investing politically and programmatically in the “in-between” moments became increasingly clear: it is precisely here that democratic resilience is either quietly rebuilt or eroded.



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Setting the Scene: Country Case Studies - Mozambique and Guinea.

Mozambique's 2024 Elections: The Overflow of a Saturated System.

- Please refer to Annex 1 for the Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD) Mozambique intervention.

The 2024 elections in Mozambique revealed the structural fragility of a democracy that has long been maintained through procedural form rather than substantive transformation. On the surface, the general (2024) and provincial (2023) elections appeared relatively peaceful. Yet beneath this formal calm lay a combustible mix of mistrust, exclusion and unaddressed social grievances that erupted into the most severe unrest since the end of the country's civil war.

What followed the October 2024 vote - mass protests, a paralysed capital, hundreds of deaths and a political system under siege - was not simply a reaction to alleged electoral fraud. It was the breaking point of a political order unable to absorb the weight of years of disillusionment. As highlighted by the Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD) Mozambique, ***"no glass overflows with a single drop unless it is already full."***

The 2024 elections represented that final drop but the overflow had been long in the making. One of the key structural shifts that accelerated the crisis was a recent constitutional amendment centralising electoral dispute resolution in the Constitutional Council. This change not only weakened decentralised judicial oversight but also concentrated authority in a body widely perceived as aligned with the ruling party, further eroding trust in electoral justice. Compounding this were the 2023 local elections, where the ruling party won 64 out of 65 municipalities, outcomes that many Mozambicans viewed not as an affirmation of political strength but as confirmation of stagnation and manipulation within the democratic system.

The electoral process also exposed the inadequacy of the political establishment to respond to growing warning signs. Both the ruling party, Frelimo, and the traditional opposition, particularly Renamo, appeared disconnected from shifting public sentiment especially among the youth. The dominant political narratives, still rooted in the liberation struggle and elite accommodation, failed to resonate with a generation whose priorities are defined by employment, public service delivery and political accountability. These failures took place against a broader backdrop of persistent poverty, corruption and unmet expectations regarding the country's vast natural resource wealth. With over 60% of the population living in poverty and little visible return from democratic processes, faith in institutional politics has steadily eroded.

In this context, the protests were not only a rejection of flawed election results but a broader repudiation of procedural democracy. Participation in the demonstrations - youth-driven, spontaneous and, in many cases, more widespread than the electoral turnout - reflected a shift in political engagement. Enabled by digital technology, social media and mobilised by emerging (new) political actors like Venâncio Mondlane and the Podemos party, these protests signalled a generational rupture in Mozambican politics. What emerged was not merely unrest but a call for a more **"developmental democracy,"** a model of governance that delivers concrete improvements in people's lives and provides meaningful political inclusion, particularly for young people, women, people with disabilities and historically marginalised communities.

Despite the violence and disruption, Mozambique's post-election crisis has opened a window for potential democratic renewal. In March 2025, a **Political Agreement for Inclusive**



National Dialogue (PCIND) was signed between President Chapo and nine opposition parties.

Importantly, the agreement committed to **structural reforms in governance and constitutional frameworks and institutionalised a multi-stakeholder reform commission including both political actors and civil society representatives**. The current technical committees and working groups include designated seats for civil society representatives (three civil society members and two per political party). Remains **important that civil society actors proactively build capacity and actively claim their space, rather than passively await inclusion as formal institutional openings alone do not guarantee meaningful participation**. Additionally, the consultation methodology envisions **multi-level engagement from local to central authorities**, opening further avenues.

All this has marked a departure from previous crisis responses, which tended to be elite-led and excluded broader societal input. The roadmap outlines reforms in ten key areas, reflecting a growing consensus that democracy must be redefined to respond not only to electoral legitimacy but to governance legitimacy.

Whether this reform process succeeds will depend on its ability to **transcend symbolic gestures** and produce tangible institutional change. It also depends on the **preparedness and assertiveness of civil society actors to engage effectively**. Hence support mechanisms aimed at strengthening civil society capacities, encouraging inclusive consultation processes and ensuring transparency are vital.

There is a real risk that popular momentum could be co-opted by political elites or dissipate through inaction. At the same time, there is also a genuine opportunity: to transition from a democratic system based on centralised power and transactional legitimacy toward one that is inclusive, accountable and responsive to citizen needs.

The Mozambican case also carries important implications for the region of Southern Africa. It underscores the limits of procedural democracy in contexts where economic hardship and institutional weakness persist. It also illustrates how youth-led mobilisation, enabled by digital platforms and a new political imagination, can transform national politics from below but also transcend borders. Most importantly, it **shows that where democratic systems fail to deliver, legitimacy itself begins to shift from institutions toward outcomes**.

For international partners and regional actors, the Mozambique crisis is a cautionary tale. Democratic resilience cannot be taken for granted in countries where formal political systems have not translated into substantive change. **Efforts to support democracy in the region must go beyond electoral observation and technical assistance to address deeper governance and socio-economic drivers of instability**. In Mozambique, the challenge now is to convert a moment of crisis into an inflection point for democratic transformation, where institutions are not just reformed, but made to serve the people they claim to represent.

Key Messages and Recommendations:

- **Electoral Reforms:** Ensure transparent and fair electoral processes to rebuild public trust, eliminating practices that distort popular will.
- **Depoliticisation of Institutions:** Implement reforms to guarantee the neutrality of institutions in justice, security and democratic representation, promoting their independence.



- **Inclusion and Youth Participation:** Strengthen mechanisms to enable greater youth participation in politics and policymaking, addressing their demands for employment, security and development.
- **Transition to Substantive Democracy:** Ensure that formal democratic structures align with tangible outcomes, fostering a democracy that delivers real benefits to the population.
- **Civic Education and Political Maturity:** Promote awareness initiatives to ensure that democratic changes are driven by rationality and maturity, avoiding opportunistic capture of reforms.

Guinea's Transition: Democracy in the "In-Between."

- *Please refer to Annex 1 for the EU Delegation in Guinea intervention.*

If Mozambique's post-electoral unrest exposed the fragility of democratic institutions under pressure, Guinea presented a different but equally revealing case: a transition still suspended. Where Mozambique is dealing with the consequences of a contested outcome, Guinea is still negotiating the very terms of the next vote (preparation phase). Yet both cases share a common truth: **democracy is rarely defined by elections alone, but by what happens in between.**

Since the military coup of September 2021, Guineans have found themselves suspended between constitutional estrangement and political reconstitution. The transitional government, led by the Comité National du Rassemblement pour le Développement (CNRD), committed to restoring democratic order by the end of 2024. But by mid-2025, none of the ten transition milestones (agreed in the October 2022 roadmap under ECOWAS diplomatic pressure) had been fully achieved. The draft Constitution, adopted by the Conseil National de la Transition (CNT) in April 2025, remains under executive review. A referendum has been announced for September, but it is **shadowed by legal uncertainty, operational confusion and unresolved disputes over voter registration systems.** Meanwhile, the **absence of an independent electoral commission** leaves the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MATD) in charge of election preparation raising concerns about both neutrality and competence.

Beyond technical delays lies a deeper issue: trust. The transitional authorities face growing public scepticism about their willingness and not just their ability, to return Guinea to constitutional rule. The **continued detention or exile of key opposition figures, the dissolution of over 50 political parties and the narrowing of space for dissent** signal not only a democratic deficit, but a shrinking arena for legitimate contestation.

What we are witnessing is not simply a slow transition. It is a contested **redefinition of political legitimacy.** In a country where nearly half the population lives below the poverty line and where public institutions are perceived as distant and ineffective, citizens increasingly view formal political processes with suspicion. The transitional government's hesitations are **not just administrative, they are political**, and they reflect a broader struggle over who defines the future of Guinea, and on what terms.

Against this backdrop, the **EU has positioned itself not merely as a donor, but as a democratic partner - one that stays engaged precisely in the ambiguous, unfinished space of transition.** Through the **Projet d'Appui au Renforcement de la Démocratie (PARDE)**, the EU supports constitutional and electoral reform, media freedom and judicial



integrity. Equally important is the support for civil society: civic education in underserved regions, grassroots platforms for youth and women and structured dialogue frameworks such as the **Cadre de Dialogue Structuré (CDS)** offer channels for participation beyond elite (capital-only) negotiations. Efforts to counter disinformation and strengthen digital citizenship, particularly among younger Guineans, recognise that the transition is not just institutional but generational, like in Mozambique.

There is an observed increase in pressure on citizen and cyber activists, particularly those involved in digital monitoring and civic tech. These actors, often working from within civil society with strong local credibility, play a critical role in exposing disinformation, tracking electoral data and holding authorities accountable. However, these actors face mounting risks, including intimidation, legal harassment, surveillance and even forced disappearances.

The EU delegation actively supports youth-led digital initiatives and bloggers - such as **Association des Blogueurs de Guinée (Abloqui)** - through Team Europe partnerships notably with France. Current efforts include advancing a joint reflection on safeguarding the civic tech ecosystem, particularly through open-source election monitoring tools and integrating digital resilience into civic education. This involves basic digital security training for citizen observers, journalists and grassroots actors. Crucially, **the approach goes beyond technical capacity: it includes political messaging, diplomatic support and, where needed, protection mechanisms for those at risk.** The defence of digital civic space has become a core element of democracy support, as well remains a priority for coordinated EU action, in Guinea - particularly in this pre-electoral, transitional phase.

Indeed, the challenges remain profound. **The delay in constitutional reform and the absence of a credible electoral calendar have eroded public confidence.** Yet these same delays also underscore the **importance of getting the process right, not just fast.**

As in Mozambique, where a post-electoral crisis forced a new political agreement, Guinea's pre-constitutional limbo holds both risk and potential. **What links both cases is a shared lesson: that democracy support must be continuous, not episodic.** That building legitimacy requires more than timelines; it demands trust, transparency and civic ownership.

Ultimately, Guinea's trajectory remains undecided. The months ahead will reveal whether this transition becomes a foundation for renewed democratic legitimacy or an extended interim (missed opportunity) that risks becoming permanent. **In this uncertain space, the EU's role is to stand by local actors committed to a pluralist and accountable future, not by scripting their choices, but by ensuring that they have the space, support and safeguards to make them freely.** Transitions are not just political episodes; they are lived experiences, where hope must compete with fatigue and where the real work of democracy often begins long before, and long after, the vote.

Key Messages and Recommendations:

- **Prioritise inclusive dialogue** at all stages of the transition, including with actors who have been excluded or silenced.
- **Support gradual, transparent reform**, rather than rushed processes that risk further destabilisation.
- **Build civic resilience**, especially among youth and women, through long-term civic education and local participation.



- **Strengthen decentralised mechanisms** - local dialogue, subnational civic platforms - to ensure that democracy is not seen as a capital-city process.

Sustaining Democracy: Empowering Civic Mobilisation, Institutional Strengthening and Safeguarding Information Integrity.

Cultivating Civic Maturity, Dialogue and Agency.

- [A European Response to Electoral Cycle Support \(EURECS\)](#)
- [Electoral Political Economy Analysis \(EPEA\)](#)
- [Leadership and Conflict Management Skills for Electoral Stakeholders \(LEAD\)](#)
- [Prevent and manage Election-related conflict and Violence \(PEV\)](#)

Echoing the calls from Guinea and Mozambique for stronger civic maturity, youth engagement and decentralised democratic practice, ECES brings forward a set of grounded and transferable practices shaped across Sub-Saharan Africa with a special focus on the Island States of the Indian Ocean Commission (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles). In contexts where electoral transitions carry the burden of both fragile trust and rising expectations, the challenge is not simply to support democracy but to embed it “meaningfully” in everyday civic life as to be able to bridge gaps between political offer and public demand.

These efforts are systematised under ECES' flagship approach: [A European Response to Electoral Cycle Support \(EURECS\)](#) which aims to offer innovative delivery mechanisms for electoral and democracy assistance, consistent with European values and EU policies. It focuses on preventing, mitigating and managing electoral-related conflicts by involving a wide range of actors, including election management bodies, civil society, political parties, local authorities, security forces and media.¹

According to this approach, ECES advises to begin with the basics: **building platforms for local participation that are rooted in lived realities**, not institutional templates. Central to this is the use of [Electoral Political Economy Analysis \(EPEA\)](#), a tested methodology that doesn't just map the visible landscape of elections, but understands the informal power relations, latent tensions and structural exclusions that shape citizen-institution relations. This lens enables the design of civic education efforts (e.g. integration of African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, democracy and election principles in school curriculum) and dialogue platforms that resonate.

These efforts are not confined to capitals or formal stakeholders. ECES promotes working from the ground up to **support the formation of civic coalitions**² bringing together youth groups, community leaders, women's associations and others to organise, gain legitimacy and engage with institutions (e.g. structured dialogue mechanisms in Guinea, to address critical

¹ EURECS structures ECES' interventions around five key pillars: (1) it facilitates the implementation of EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) recommendations through sustained dialogue with beneficiary countries; (2) it helps prevent, mitigate, and manage electoral-related conflicts; (3) it provides cascade training on leadership and conflict management (LEAD) tailored to electoral stakeholders, especially in fragile political environments; (4) it applies Electoral Political Economy Analysis (EPEA) to uncover informal power dynamics, underlying causes, and structural bottlenecks in electoral processes; and (5) it is supported by Standard Operating Procedures that ensure transparent, efficient, and EU-compliant administrative, financial, and operational management. Further complementing these pillars, EURECS encompasses a range of complementary activities, including civic and voter education, as seen in countries like Nigeria and Zanzibar in which the youth was actively engaged and media monitoring.

² Civil society groups, including youth and women organisations, often face leadership challenges, politicisation and lack of structure. ECES has supported the formation of civil society platforms to express citizens' needs and act as watchdogs. Being part of a platform also provides a safer environment through peer protection.

issues such as women's participation, the fight against gender-based violence (GBV) and youth inclusion). These coalitions have taken shape not only in Guinea but also in Ethiopia and across the Indian Ocean Commission Island States (Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles), empowered to voice citizens' needs and play a watchdog role (follow up on political responsiveness and accountability, public policies, electoral reforms, etc.). Just as importantly, ECES recommends linking these actors across borders, creating **regional peer-learning and solidarity networks**, crucial in settings like Mozambique, where national reform processes are closely tied to broader regional trajectories, as those experienced in its neighbourhood (e.g. South Africa).

Where moments of calm exist between elections, ECES advocates to use them not as a pause, but as an opportunity: **investing in leadership and conflict management training (LEAD)**, and enabling civil society, women and youth associations, local authorities, security forces and electoral management bodies (EMB) to find constructive ways to engage. In contexts marked by low trust and limited avenues for non-violent expression, these interventions become a foundation for durable democratic dialogue. ECES' capacity building in monitoring and advocacy techniques offer further structured opportunities to contribute to the formulation, implementation and monitoring of public policies and engage in more coordinated and strategic public advocacy.

Youth engagement runs throughout this work as youth represent a transformative force, not only because of their numbers but due to their capacity for innovation, mobilisation and sustained civic engagement. In transitional or conflict-sensitive democracies, their role becomes even more critical. But ECES goes further than inclusion "for its own sake," it recognises the pressures young people face in post-crisis democracies. From **digital disinformation to economic precarity**, they often sit at the crossroads of frustration and manipulation. In response, ECES blends **digital literacy, fact-checking and early warning and rapid response³ initiatives** with **creative formats** like **mobile cinema campaigns** and **youth parliaments**, giving young people the tools, platforms and confidence to take part in public life with agency and accountability. *"Nothing for youth without youth."*

This work doesn't happen in isolation. Even in an increasingly constrained funding environment, ECES sustains **partnerships with electoral bodies, regional organisations and international institutions**. Recent collaboration with UNESCO on **information integrity in elections** signals a broader commitment: to defend democratic space not just during elections, but throughout the political cycle; and not just for institutions, but for the citizens who bring them to life.

Overall, ECES emphasises the need for tailored, context-sensitive engagement to build trust, encourage inclusive dialogue and prevent violent expressions of frustration and mistrust.

Strengthened Institutional Architecture a Foundation for Democratic Stability.

Drawing on its long-standing presence in Somalia and Somaliland, NIMD responded to Mozambique's and Guinea's calls for investment in democratic architecture, depoliticisation and structured dialogue to mitigate electoral risks and rebuild trust in democratic institutions. In settings where institutions are often contested and legitimacy is fragile, their experience shows that the period between elections must not be seen as dormant but as decisive.

In Somaliland, this meant engaging institutions beyond the moment of the vote. NIMD's work with the Electoral Commission, including the facilitation of a **voter register audit**, helped to

³ **Prevent and manage Election-related conflict and Violence (PEV)** - <https://www.eces.eu/en/posts/pev-copyright>

restore credibility to the electoral roll, long a flashpoint for dispute. Simultaneously, **political parties were not treated merely as electoral actors, but as pillars of institutional culture**. Through targeted training, they were supported to take on roles as credible election observers, reducing the risk of post-election contestation and reinforcing the institutionalisation of electoral norms from within.

Complementing the discussion as to democratic trust-building, NIMD advocates to work closely with media and civil society actors to strengthen the **citizen–institution relationship**. **Voter education campaigns** were co-designed to promote understanding of rights and procedures, laying the groundwork for more informed participation and transparency. While training as to ethical journalism and fact-checking contributed to a more responsible information environment.

Where polarisation deepened, particularly during the 2022 electoral impasse over the electoral roadmap, political dialogue platforms were reactivated. NIMD supported both **bilateral and multi-party dialogue forums**, creating the space for adversaries to re-engage in structured negotiation rather than escalation. These efforts helped defuse tensions and paved the way for a peaceful and uncontested transfer of power in the 2024 elections, an outcome that reflects the value of investing early and continuously in dialogue. Institutional strengthening must be understood not as a discrete technical exercise, but as a continuous, politically informed process.

Yet electoral credibility also hinges on institutions often left outside the spotlight. NIMD **invested deeply in parliamentary committees**, providing support on (public office) oversight, accountability and electoral reform in the wake of political tension. Included technical assistance as to multi-stakeholder dialogues and understanding of legal and institutional changes. For instance, in a system where new political parties can emerge every ten years, Somaliland's unique political model, NIMD worked with the **committee responsible for registration, bolstering both legal clarity and inclusive access** ensuring space for women, youth and minorities in formal politics.

A standout innovation is the **Political Parties Task Force**: a joint platform/forum **bringing together registered parties and the electoral management body**. It enables **continuous dialogue and coordination**, helping reduce misperceptions and pre-empting institutional conflict. It supported to build confidence in electoral processes. NIMD reinforced that legal reforms must be **citizen-responsive** supporting mechanisms for civic input into parliamentary debates and helping ensure that (legislative) reforms **reflect public priorities**, not only elite consensus.

Through all these efforts, a single message emerged: **democratic institutions are not forged in moments of crisis, but in the quiet, continuous work of trust-building, inclusivity and reform**. NIMD's experience in Somaliland and Somalia demonstrates how **embedding support within local structures, sustained across the governance cycle**, not just around elections, can encourage accountability and resilience even in the most contested environments.

Governing the Vote Online: Safeguarding Information Integrity.

- **UNESCO Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms:**
<https://www.unesco.org/en/internet-trust/guidelines>
- **Principles and Guidelines for Digital and Social Media Use in African Elections:**



Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Digital and Social Media in Elections in Africa - Electoral Commission of South Africa

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidelines-digital-and-social-media-use-african-elections-launched-johannesburg>

In an era where the line between campaign season and everyday political communication is increasingly blurring, UNESCO drew attention to a critical frontier of electoral risk: **information integrity in digital spaces**. With platforms now functioning as de facto electoral arenas, the traditional electoral cycle is being reshaped: its boundaries blurred by the speed, scale and opacity of online influence. Drawing from global insights and African regional cases, UNESCO unpacked what this shift means for electoral actors on the ground.

At the centre of this transformation is a **permanent campaign environment**, driven by digital and social media, and now radically accelerated by generative AI. Content no longer flows in predictable cycles. Instead, political messaging, disinformation and algorithmic amplification operate in a continuous loop, often outpacing the ability of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), civil society or regulators to respond. The stakes are high: credibility in elections can be undone by a single viral falsehood especially where oversight and content regulation remain underdeveloped.

UNESCO's analysis highlighted a key tension: EMBs are increasingly expected to manage digital risks in real time, yet many lack the **mandates, technical tools or resources** to monitor campaign finance/spending online, enforce content rules, trace disinformation networks, counter or challenge the platforms whose policies often remain opaque, especially in under-prioritised markets. This asymmetry is dangerous and its effects were seen starkly in Mozambique, where an internet shutdown during vote counting directly undermined transparency.

In response, UNESCO promotes advancing a **multi-actor strategy rooted in human rights and freedom of expression**. This means engaging not only journalists and civil society, but **also law enforcement, judicial bodies and security forces**, ensuring a shared understanding of democratic boundaries, the legitimate limits of speech regulation and freedoms. Internet blackouts, for example, are unequivocally rejected by UNESCO as inconsistent with international norms, electoral transparency and corrosive to trust.

One of the most dynamic areas of engagement is the push to treat and govern **digital platforms as electoral actors**. In the 2024 South African elections, **civil society-led shadow risk assessments** forced global platforms to the table, securing voluntary agreements on content moderation, political ad transparency, curbing incitement and hate speech. This model is now being closely watched and adapted across the region.

UNESCO is also supporting normative frameworks that can guide national action. The [Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Digital and Social Media in Elections in Africa](#), developed with the Association of African Electoral Authorities and **UNESCO's own Guidelines on Digital Platform Governance**, call for **early risk assessments and inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogue**. Yet meaningful cooperation remains often uneven in practice hence the growing need for **coordinated pressure, advocacy and local agency**.

Beyond regulation, UNESCO has innovated in **pre-bunking** as well as Media and Information Literacy (MIL). Rather than solely chasing, reacting to, falsehoods after they go viral, these strategies aim to **inoculate the public before disinformation hits**. Designed through proactive public awareness campaigns. This involves working with **young people and first-**



time voters to build critical thinking and digital resilience and reaching out to **content creators and influencers**, many of whom shape online discourse without formal exposure to journalistic norms and responsibilities.

These shared strategies reflect a broader paradigm shift: the governance of elections can no longer be separated from the governance of the digital space. **Building electoral resilience now requires layered, anticipatory strategies, where institutions, platforms and society co-own the challenge.** It demands new forms of accountability, cross-sectoral coordination and anticipatory action. And in that effort, **human rights standards and locally anchored practice** remain the compass.

Democratic Norms in Action Beyond the Ballots.

“Looking in from outside the TED bubble,” The Carter Center offered a measured yet resolute message: **democracy support must remain principled, persistent and people-centred even as funding landscapes shift.** Against the backdrop of recent US budget retrenchments, including cuts affecting core actors like the National Democratic Institute (NDI), commitment to international democratic norms **needs Europe’s reaffirmation.**

The normative foundations of democracy - **transparency, impartiality, peaceful participation, inclusiveness and accountability** - are not abstract ideals. They function as both a technical framework for credible elections and a political compass for broader democratic reform. These principles do not only guide international observers and donors; they empower (domestic) civil society actors with **a language**, and a legitimacy, to push for change and reform agendas from within.

This dual function of international norms was illustrated through the examples of Mozambique and Guinea.

In Guinea, repeated electoral delays and contested transitions have left citizens weary, but not silent. Civil society groups, drawing directly from international standards, have mobilised to demand inclusive electoral reform, greater transparency and institutional accountability. Offering benchmarks for international engagement. Here, **norms serve not only as an external benchmark for international observers but as an empowering toolkit for domestic advocacy.**

In Mozambique, the dynamics were different, but no less telling. While the technical aspects of the electoral process passed formal muster, post-election tensions exposed deep fissures in public trust and dispute resolution. In this context, civic actors **strategically invoked international norms not just to critique outcomes, but to call for more systemic reform** and accountability, illustrating how such **principles can be internalised** and applied in inter-electoral periods, beyond the immediate glare of election day.

A defining insight is that electoral integrity is built between elections. Rather than seeing observation missions as endpoints, there is importance in **a continuous investment in long-term civic education, capacity building and principled diplomacy.** Democratic resilience, in this view, is not an event, it is a process.

Three strategic takeaways emerged:

1. **Civic trust and engagement between elections is foundational.** Sustained democratic participation cannot be reduced to the act of voting or electoral events. It depends on citizens’ belief that (political) institutions are responsive, legitimate, fair



and accountable. Support must therefore speak to these public demands for transparency, responsibility and inclusion.

2. **Norms must be lived, functional, not just legislated.** Legal frameworks matter, but they are not enough. In contexts where formal institutions are weak or politically captured, equal attention must be paid to informal systems: community leadership, customary norms, local dialogues. They often hold the real democratic potential. Effective democracy support must meet actors where they are. Hence, a need for nuanced, context-sensitive democracy support strategies that value societal, community and people-centred norms alongside institutional reform.
3. **Information ecosystems are relational.** As disinformation is not just a technical problem; it's a trust problem. The elevation of trusted messengers, from local journalists to community influencers, who can sustain credible public dialogue is advocated for. This aligns closely with TED's vision of democratic and digital resilience through local agency.

Ultimately, what sustainable democracy support looks like is: **norm-driven, locally grounded and continuously engaged**. And in a world where democratic values are under growing pressure, there is a call for **co-creative, cross-actor collaboration** - within and beyond formal structures.

Echoes from the Room.

Beyond Episodic Engagement: Towards a Full Democracy Cycle Approach.

- EU-UNDP ["Select – Sustaining Peace Through Elections"](#) resource hub supports practitioners in elections, conflict prevention and inclusive governance with evidence-based strategies, offering thematic guidance and practical examples on topics like women's political participation, youth engagement and information integrity.

The landscape of electoral support is undergoing a transformation. No longer confined to technical support for election day logistics, the field is evolving toward a **"democracy cycle approach:" one that recognises that credible elections are not endpoints, but entry points for democratic consolidation**. This shift calls for long-term, context-sensitive strategies that strengthen institutions, information integrity and empower civic actors to address the political and governance environment before, during and after elections.

UNDP noted that while the electoral cycle methodology (developed some twenty years ago) remains relevant as a conceptual tool, its real-world application often falls short. **Operational constraints and short-term funding cycles have led to a disproportionate focus (an overemphasis) on the pre-election phase, leaving the post-election space under-resourced and under-attended**. There is hope that Mozambique's PCIND could serve as an example of how multi-year, multi-stakeholder programmes aligned with the full democratic cycle can generate real reform and progress. Yet such cases remain rare - and Mozambique has yet to fully demonstrate its potential.

Citizens are no longer satisfied with formal electoral processes alone, they are demanding accountability, participation and democratic dividends. Reflecting these expectations, UNDP advocated for a **pillar-based, cross-sectoral strategy encompassing transparency, dialogue, peacebuilding and civic empowerment**. This model depends on democratic consolidation extending beyond electoral commissions to also engage media, civil society, youth and local governance actors broadening the reach and relevance of electoral support.



However, financing remains a key bottleneck with time-bound and sector-specific funding often taking precedence over comprehensive, long-term support for all relevant actors.

The discussion also noted that democracy support is challenged with political contexts where **the period between the ballots intersects with wider societal conflicts and geopolitical tensions**, as seen in Ukraine and Gaza. Such contexts demand that supports for these in-between election periods be locally attuned and sensitive to perceptions of neutrality to **avoid being seen as externally imposed or neo-colonial**. Consequently, political mediation, peer-to-peer learning and inclusive, locally led processes have become central to effective support.

International IDEA echoed this with countries undergoing protracted transitions like Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso. Here, support should be framed not as a standalone intervention but as part of **a broader “democracy cycle” encompassing inclusive national dialogue, constitutional reform and institutional rebuilding**. These entry points enable systemic change to break cycles of flawed elections and political instability.

Regional and continental institutions, like ECOWAS, the African Union and Association of African Electoral Authorities, can play a role in filling governance gaps and supporting transitions through election calendar mediation, pre-electoral conflict prevention and post-electoral negotiation. Their involvement can complement domestic efforts and provide legitimacy where national institutions are weakened or contested. But they too need strengthening.

Collectively, these reflections signal a growing: **shift away from episodic election observation and assistance towards longer-term, multi-actor strategies rooted in capacity-building, civic education and local ownership**.

Resilient Democracies Need Women: Political Participation and Protection.

Despite its centrality to inclusive democracy, support for women's political empowerment is facing sharp declines, with anticipated budget cuts reportedly reaching up to 90%. This trend risks undoing hard-won gains in women's participation across all levels of political life - from voters to elected office (candidates, political party members) to civil service (parliamentarians, government officials) and journalism. **UNESCO data shows that women already face disproportionate barriers, including rising threats from technology-facilitated gender-based violence**. Without sustained **financial, security and institutional backing**, their ability to participate safely and meaningfully in political processes is increasingly compromised.

This issue demands urgent corrective action. **Preserving and expanding spaces for women's political engagement must remain a priority across all phases of the democratic cycle**, not only as a matter of equity, but as a condition for resilient democratic governance. Stakeholders must collaborate to safeguard progress, identify sustainable models and ensure gender-sensitive design across electoral and governance support initiatives.

The Added Value of the Team Europe Approach in Democracy Support Between Elections: Insights from Guinea and Mozambique

Drawing from practical experience in Guinea and Mozambique, several key features emerge that define the added value of a Team Europe approach to democracy support.



Strategic Alignment and Political Coherence. A primary advantage of the Team Europe approach lies in its ability to encourage strategic alignment across EU institutions and Member States. This goes beyond joint programming or project implementation. In country contexts such as Guinea, where political transitions are contested and international actors risk being instrumentalised, a unified and principled Team Europe stance provides critical leverage. Coordinated political messaging reinforces the EU's credibility, lever for influence as one voice but also safeguards its neutrality. This coherence is especially vital in contexts where fragmentation among external actors could undermine the legitimacy of democratic transitions.

Resource Pooling and Division of Labour. Team Europe enables not just co-financing, but true complementarity. By pooling resources, also in light of budget cuts, Member States and EU institutions can link thematically distinct but strategically aligned efforts - ranging from migration and civil society support to constitutional and electoral reform - into a more coherent and impactful whole. In Guinea, for example, the alignment of Member State-led civil society initiatives with broader EU engagement frameworks has maximised resource efficiency and increased the reach of democracy support. The model facilitates a practical division of labour, allowing each actor to leverage its comparative advantage while avoiding duplication. This results in more coherent programming and more sustainable outcomes.

Mutual Learning and Knowledge Sharing. An often underappreciated but important element of the Team Europe approach is the structured knowledge sharing it facilitates and enables. The deployment of strong national teams, such as those from Belgium, France, Italy, Spain and Germany, in countries like Guinea has created a dynamic environment of mutual reinforcement. Regular coordination meetings, shared analytical tools and joint technical expertise enhance collective intelligence and accelerate adaptive programming. In volatile political environments where learning cycles must be short and responsive, this collaborative infrastructure helps the EU and its Member States stay agile and effective.

Civil Society Engagement and Inclusion Challenges. The importance of the “in-between” periods is also reflected in the evolving strategies for civil society engagement. In Mozambique, recent political dialogue processes have included civil society representatives in technical committees, but the extent to which these actors can influence reform remains to be seen. Past cycles have shown how elite-driven processes can marginalise non-governmental actors. The Team Europe or coordinated democracy support can play a role in sustaining diplomatic pressure for meaningful participation, helping to monitor both the direction of reforms and the space civil society is afforded to engage in shaping them. This applies equally to Guinea, where the transitional context has narrowed the space for dissent. Here, EU support through initiatives like PARD and frameworks such as the CDS has helped to sustain civic agency beyond elite negotiations. A Team Europe dimension could only strengthen this.

Protection of Civic Space and Digital Resilience. The evolving nature of democratic activism increasingly involves digital and cyber dimensions, posing novel risks to civic actors. As mentioned, in Guinea, digital civic space has become a frontline for democratic engagement and, concurrently, repression. The Team Europe framework (in this case with France) recognises the urgency of protecting this space through a multifaceted approach: capacity building in digital security, diplomatic support, political messaging and potentially direct protection measures. Efforts are underway to develop safe online spaces for mobilisation, integrate digital resilience into civic education and establish early warning mechanisms for threats against digital activists. These initiatives underscore the importance of addressing the digital dimension as integral to democracy support in fragile contexts.



The EU Delegation in Guinea provided **three main principles** of experiencing the added value of the Team Europe approach:

- **Strategic alignment and unified voice.** Team Europe ensures coordinated political messaging and programming among the EU and Member States. This unified stance enhances credibility and leverage, particularly in fragile or transitional contexts where fragmentation risks weakening influence.
- **Resource pooling and division of labour.** Beyond pooled funding, Team Europe enables coordinated co-financing and collaboration between EU Member States on complementary projects. This facilitates connecting initiatives (e.g., civil society support linked with migration programmes), reducing duplication and improving overall impact.
- **Knowledge sharing and technical cooperation.** Regular sharing of insights, tools and expertise among EU teams on the ground strengthens implementation. This mutual reinforcement accelerates learning and helps avoid redundant interventions, which is crucial in fragile environments like Guinea.

Recommendations and Operational Entry Points.

How do you intend to use the knowledge gained from this webinar in your own work and/or programming?



There is a growing consensus on the need to move beyond the narrow, event-based focus on election-day support. Instead, democracy support must embrace a longer-term, more integrated approach that reinforces institutional resilience and rebuilds public trust throughout the full “Between the Ballots” period.

Central to this shift is the need to strengthen the capacity, independence and transparency of institutions, electoral management bodies, alongside proactive, credible communication strategies to counter misinformation and disinformation. Just as crucial is the promotion of inclusive, continuous political dialogue bringing together a broad spectrum of actors across formal institutions and informal spaces.

Also underscored is the importance of sustained civic education, digital and media literacy and community-level engagement. These efforts are most effective when grounded in partnerships between civil society, citizens, media actors and led by trusted local voices. Inclusive voter education tailored to marginalised groups must also be prioritised, as should the creation of mechanisms for regular, structured dialogue between civil society and electoral institutions.



Taken together, these elements form the backbone of a democracy support model that is not only more adaptive and locally anchored, but also better equipped to build lasting democratic resilience, well beyond the ballot box.

1. Institutional Architecture and Public Trust.

- Sustain institutional capacity beyond election day: move from a peak-resources model to continuous institutional engagement to address the permanent nature of digital campaigning and evolving challenges to electoral integrity
- Enhance transparency of electoral bodies (Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs)): support real-time communication strategies, public briefings and online transparency dashboards to build credibility and pre-empt misinformation.
- Strengthen multi-level political dialogue mechanisms: facilitate formal and informal platforms for political actors to engage across the electoral cycle (e.g., national dialogue forums, local-level roundtables).
- Support political party reform and accountability by promoting transparent candidate selection, inclusive structures, and enforcing codes of conduct against hate speech and online abuse.
- Develop digital protection mechanisms for women in politics: support hotlines, reporting systems, and legal aid for women targeted by online violence or harassment.

2. Voter Education, Media Literacy and Civic Engagement.

- Co-create civic education campaigns with CSOs and media: focus on rights, voting procedures and media literacy, particularly targeting first-time voters and digitally active populations.
- Deploy long-term voter education through schools and communities: include civic and media literacy modules in school curricula and community outreach via radio and local influencers.
- Empower community media and trusted intermediaries: support hyperlocal media and community leaders to spread verified electoral information in native languages or dialects.
- Support the formation of civic coalitions bringing together youth groups, community leaders, women's associations and others to organise, gain legitimacy and engage with institutions (e.g. structured dialogue mechanisms) to address critical issues such as women's participation, the fight against GBV, youth inclusion and engage in governance oversight.
- Encourage cross borders platforms for regional peer-learning and solidarity networks, crucial and build their capacity in monitoring and advocacy techniques to contribute to the formulation, implementation, monitoring of public policies and engage in more coordinated and strategic public advocacy.
- Build capacity in leadership and conflict management skills among different stakeholders to find constructive ways to engage in durable democratic dialogue.
- Promote youth engagement through digital literacy, fact-checking and early warning and rapid response initiatives with creative formats like mobile cinema campaigns and youth parliaments, giving young people the tools, platforms and confidence to take part in public life with agency and accountability (*"nothing for youth without youth"*).

3. Media Integrity and the Role of Digital Platforms.

- Recognise social media platforms as new electoral actors: encourage EMBs and regulatory bodies to engage directly with platforms for transparency on political advertising, algorithmic impact and content moderation.
- Refer to cases like South Africa's platform engagements for adaptive regulation.
- Build capacity of emerging content creators: offer targeted training for influencers and digital content creators on:
 - Election laws and disinformation
 - Basic fact-checking tools
 - Human rights awareness
 - Social responsibility in communication
- Support independent journalism and information integrity units: fund cross-sector coalitions of journalists, fact-checkers and technologists to monitor and respond to dis/mis/mal-information campaigns.

4. Addressing the Challenge of “Permanent Campaigning.”

- Update campaign finance monitoring frameworks: extend monitoring beyond formal campaign periods to cover continuous digital spending and influencer-driven messaging.
- Create regulatory sandboxes for digital campaign oversight: pilot flexible and adaptive frameworks to test transparency tools, political AD libraries and content tracing mechanisms with platforms and regulators.
- Institutional collaboration on digital oversight: encourage tripartite collaboration between EMBs, CSOs and digital platforms to anticipate and mitigate electoral risks stemming from always-on campaigning.
- Civic education and voter engagement: lead inclusive voter education campaigns. Partner with CSOs to develop targeted, grassroots voter education initiatives, especially for marginalised groups (youth, women, rural communities).
- Train community facilitators and media ambassadors: build CSO capacity to train local influencers, teachers and religious leaders to act as trusted intermediaries on electoral information and rights.
- Develop mechanisms like participatory feedback tools and public engagement scorecards to bridge institutions and citizens.
- Facilitate dialogue between citizens and EMBs: enable CSOs to host town halls, citizen report cards and local consultations to improve public trust in electoral institutions and processes.
- Monitor and report on human rights during elections: strengthen CSOs' role in documenting electoral violence, digital abuse and political repression, including threats to journalists and content creators.

ANNEX 1: Country Case Studies

1. MOZAMBIQUE



REFLECTIONS ON THE 2024 ELECTIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: OUTCOMES, TRENDS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE REGION

Electoral Outcomes and Political Transitions: The case of Mozambique

No glass overflows with a single drop unless it is already full

Mozambique is a young democratic Country which, recently, on October 9, 2024, held the seventh general elections and fourth provincial. For the presidential elections, 4 candidates competed: Daniel Chapo from the ruling party Frelimo, Ossufo Momade from the opposition party Renamo, Lutero Simango from the country's third political party, MDM, and Venâncio Mondlane, an independent candidate supported by the Podemos party). More than 30 parties participated in the legislative and provincial elections. The CNE released the official results on October 24th, declaring victory for the ruling party and its candidate. Later, on December 22nd, the Constitutional Council validated the results after making some adjustments that slightly increased the number of opposition party seats in Parliament. In both cases, the ruling party retained at least two-thirds of the seats in Parliament⁴, allowing it to lawfully approve legislation - including constitutional amendments - without needing opposition support. Overall, the electoral process was considered relatively peaceful during most stages. However, during the vote tabulation phase, several observation platforms, media outlets, and opposition parties reported evidence of electoral fraud. These allegations triggered nationwide demonstrations. Hundreds of people were killed, and many others were injured during the protests. Both public and private infrastructure suffered significant damage over nearly three months (from October to January). Since January, the situation has progressively stabilized, following the return of Venâncio Mondlane to Mozambique, peace talks, and the signing of an agreement between the newly elected President, Daniel Chapo, and nine opposition parties. This agreement was later approved by Parliament, giving it the force of law. Currently a Technical Commission, composed by members of Political Parties and CSO has been established with a mandate to conduct Governance and Constitutional reforms for the next 2 years.

The metaphor of the overflowing glass perfectly captures the critical moment Mozambique is facing related to the 2024 post-electoral tensions. While immediate attention is focused on the recent events that triggered the crisis, it is imperative to address the underlying causes that have saturated the system over decades.

The formal democracy established in the country, after more than three decades, has yet to deliver significant improvements in the living conditions of most of the population. With poverty

⁴ As per the CNE released results, FRELIMO had 194 seats (77.6%) from a total of 250. After the Constitutional Council approval, Frelimo's seats were reduced to 171 (68.4%).

levels exceeding 60%, it is evident that the current democratic model is failing to deliver the expected social and economic dividends.

Despite the Constitution declaring Mozambique a Democratic Rule of Law, international reports (often classify the country as a hybrid regime. This characterization as an "anocracy" highlights the challenges of a democratic transition marked by advances and setbacks. Recent demonstrations and events underscore the urgent need to recalibrate formal democracy into a substantive democracy, one that not only respects procedural rituals but also addresses the most basic social demands.

Among these demands, there is a growing call for inclusion, political participation, and concrete improvements in living conditions. Traditionally marginalized groups, such as women, people with disabilities, and opposition parties, continue to fight for greater representation, while young people are now at the forefront of new demands. These demands are no longer tied to gratitude for independence but instead focus on structural changes that ensure social, economic, and political dividends for all.

In this context, elections play a central role in consolidating peace, governance, and development. They must no longer be seen as mere formalities to legitimize political power on the international stage or as mechanisms for negotiating partisan accommodation.

People are clearly pushing for democracies to deliver real results through electoral integrity. However, it is crucial to recognize that while this movement is positive for democratic maturation, the predominance of collective emotions could result in reforms being captured by specific groups or the creation of "heroes of the moment."

What is needed, however, is not simply a replacement of individuals or groups, but rather a transformation of polarized and authoritarian democratic systems into more balanced, inclusive, and developmental models. For this to happen, it is essential that the winds of change are channelled within democratic limits, reflecting the genuine will and interests of the people.

Political Response to the Crisis.

To contain political tensions and widespread violence, a Political Agreement for Inclusive National Dialogue (PCIND) was signed on 5 March 2025. The agreement was reached between party leaders and the President of the Republic, aiming to restore political stability. The aim of the Political Agreement is to establish deep structural reform measures, especially in the areas of Governance and Constitutional Reforms as well as to promote political inclusion and strengthen trust in democratic institutions.

Recommendations.

The current protests and dissatisfaction demonstrate that political parties urgently need to reinvent themselves. The people are rejecting poor electoral practices and disregard for popular will, which not only erode trust in electoral institutions but also contaminate sectors such as justice, defence and security, and other democratic institutions.

Therefore, some of the key recommendations would be:

- **Electoral Reforms:** Ensure transparent and fair electoral processes to rebuild public trust, eliminating practices that distort popular will.



- **Depoliticization of Institutions:** Implement reforms to guarantee the neutrality of institutions in justice, security, and democratic representation, promoting their independence.
- **Inclusion and Youth Participation:** Strengthen mechanisms to enable greater youth participation in politics and policymaking, addressing their demands for employment, security, and development.
- **Transition to Substantive Democracy:** Ensure that formal democratic structures align with tangible outcomes, fostering a democracy that delivers real benefits to the population.
- **Civic Education and Political Maturity:** Promote awareness initiatives to ensure that democratic changes are driven by rationality and maturity, avoiding opportunistic capture of reforms.

Conclusion.

Mozambique faces significant political and social costs due to years of irresponsibility and manipulation by its political leaders. This is a moment to deeply rethink the foundations of Mozambique's democracy, safeguarding the necessary changes and ensuring that they are carried out in the genuine interest of the people. The transition to a developmental democracy is inevitable and must be embraced by all as a pathway to a more balanced, inclusive, and prosperous future.

H. Mulhovo



2. GUINEA



**Florina Costica – Team Leader Governance,
EU Delegation to Guinea**

**TED Webinar (WG2+WG3)
Democracy Between the Ballots:
Sustaining Democracy and Integrity between Election Periods**

**27 May 2025
Case Study: Guinea**



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1. Introduction – The “In-Between” as a Test of Democracy.

We often measure democracy by what happens on election day. Nevertheless, the reality is that the strength of a democratic system lies in what happens *between* the ballots. These are the often the hardest moments - when expectations are high, and patience is running low, when civil society must remain engaged, and when citizens must be able to trust that the next election will be fair, meaningful, and transformative.

Over the past months, we’ve seen first-hand how fragile and yet how vital these “in-between” moments truly are. Many Guineans feel stuck between hope and disillusion, a sentiment that is not captured in official timelines. It is in this uncertain, unfinished space that the foundations of constitutional legitimacy must be rebuilt. And it is in this space that the **European Union’s** engagement is most vital - not just as a donor, but as a **partner in democratic resilience**.

2. Political Context - Guinea’s Transition at a Crossroads.

The Republic of Guinea is a country of extraordinary natural wealth - from bauxite and hydropower to a dynamic, youthful population. And yet, it remains one of the world’s poorest and most institutionally fragile states. In 2023, Guinea ranked **179th out of 191** on the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index . Nearly half the population lives below the poverty line, and literacy rates are far below the regional average. Governance remains heavily centralised, and public institutions struggle to deliver services or to enforce accountability.

The current political configuration emerged from the **coup d’État of 5 September 2021**, led by **Colonel Mamadi Doumbouya** and the **Comité National du Rassemblement pour le Développement (CNRD)**, which ousted former President Alpha Condé. In response to pressure from the ECOWAS, the transitional authorities committed to a 24-month transition period starting on 1 January 2023. The promise was to return Guinea to constitutional rule by the end of 2024.

However, as of May 2025, not a single one of the ten milestones laid out in the October 2022 roadmap - including the adoption of a new Constitution, the reform of the electoral register, or the scheduling of legislative and presidential elections - has been completed . There are encouraging signs, though progress remain uneven.

Although the **draft Constitution** was approved by the **Conseil National de la Transition (CNT)** in April 2025, the text is still under review by the Presidency, and further changes are expected. A **special law on the referendum** was passed, but it has not yet been promulgated. **A referendum is planned for 21 September 2025**, but major operational questions remain: the voter registration process is contested, and the choice between the **RAVEC** system (state civil registry) and an independent electoral roll has not been resolved.

In the absence of an **independent electoral commission**, the **Ministère de l’Administration du Territoire et de la Décentralisation (MATD)** is managing the process. This raises serious concerns about neutrality and capacity. Meanwhile, more than 50 political parties have been dissolved, several opposition leaders remain in detention or exile, and the space for inclusive political dialogue has narrowed considerably.

It's more than just delay. It's a political signal reflecting a broader tension between formal commitments and actual political will - a tension that has direct implications for Guinea's return to democratic order.



3. The Role of the European Union.

The European Union's approach in Guinea is aligned with the principles of the **Team Europe Democracy Initiative (TED)** - which seeks to promote democracy, human rights, and rule of law through a coordinated and context-sensitive strategy .

a. Supporting Institutions:

Through the **Projet d'Appui au Renforcement de la Démocratie (PARD)**, implemented by the **European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES)**, we assist:

- The **National Transitional Council (Conseil National de la Transition, CNT)** in legal and constitutional reform;
- The **Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (Ministère de l'Administration du Territoire et de la Décentralisation, MATD)** in electoral planning;
- The **High Authority for Communication (Haute Autorité de la Communication, HAC)** in promoting media freedom and information integrity;
- **Judicial actors**, like the Supreme Court and in particular those involved in electoral dispute resolution.

b. Supporting Civil Society Across the Territory:

The European Union supports civil society through the **Cadre de Dialogue Structuré (CDS)**, a platform that brings together 20 national umbrella organisations. In addition, we also encourage initiatives, such as:

- Local civic education initiatives, particularly in underserved areas;
- Platforms for youth and women's political participation;
- Early warning mechanisms and grassroots monitoring of the transition.

c. Promoting Information Integrity:

In line with TED WG2 and W3 principles, we work to:

- Counter disinformation through fact-checking and media literacy;
- Support the professionalisation of journalists;
- Foster digital citizenship, especially among young people vulnerable to online manipulation.

Of course, none of this is perfect and we are constantly adapting to realities on the ground. But the commitment remains strong.

4. Governance Between Elections - Managing Expectations and Rebuilding Trust.

Guinea's experience shows that the time between elections is never neutral. It is a time of contestation, fatigue, and often fear - but also a time of opportunity. The biggest challenge today is **trust**. Citizens are uncertain about the future, frustrated by delays, and sceptical about the intentions of the transitional authorities.

That's why our support focuses not only on institutions, but on **inclusive dialogue**, **transparent processes**, and the **protection of civic space** - so that democracy is not



reduced to a legal timeline, but becomes a collective project grounded in participation and accountability.

5. Comparison with the Mozambique case.

Mozambique and Guinea face different transitions, but similar risks. Mozambique is in a **post-electoral phase**, recovering from disputed elections in 2024 and navigating new reforms under a political agreement signed in March 2025. Guinea, by contrast, is **pre-constitutional**, still negotiating the very framework of its next elections.

Both cases show that **democracy support cannot be episodic**. It must be continuous, adaptive, and committed, particularly in moments when the rules are still being written or rewritten.

Neither country has an easy path ahead, but what they share is a reminder that **democracy is always work in progress**.

6. Key Messages and Recommendations.

Based on our experience in Guinea, here are our key messages:

- **Prioritise inclusive dialogue** at all stages of the transition, including with actors who have been excluded or silenced.
- **Support gradual, transparent reform**, rather than rushed processes that risk further destabilisation.
- **Build civic resilience**, especially among youth and women, through long-term civic education and local participation.
- **Strengthen decentralised mechanisms** - local dialogue, subnational civic platforms - to ensure that democracy is not seen as a capital-city process.

7. Conclusion.

The Guinean transition remains at a crossroads. In the coming months, we will see whether it becomes a pathway to renewed legitimacy or a missed opportunity prolonged under a transitional label.

In that context, the role of the European Union is to **stay engaged**: to support local actors, defend civic space, and ensure that transitions are not only managed, but truly democratic. Transitions are not just political sequences – they're lived experiences. And in Guinea, they are being lived intensely, every day.

