



Strengthening human rights and democracy in the world: EU launches a €1.5 billion plan to promote universal values

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On the eve of Human Rights Day and coinciding with the Summit for Democracy, the European Union launches the **Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy** programme. This programme, worth €1.5 billion, steps up EU support in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law and the work of civil society organisations and human rights defenders around the world during the period 2021–2027. The programme will promote and protect the universality of human rights, strengthen the rule of law and accountability for human rights violations and abuses, and defend the full and effective exercise of fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression, supporting independent journalism and media, while seizing opportunities and countering risks associated with digital and new technologies.

High Representative/Vice-President, Josep **Borrell**, said: *"Courageous people from all backgrounds are fighting on a daily basis for their civil liberties, for independent media and to safeguard democratic institutions, often at great personal risk. The European Union stands with them. The Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme will allow us to strengthen our support to and protection of universal human rights and democratic principles worldwide: for everyone, at any time and everywhere. Together with civil society organisations, human rights defenders, the UN Human Rights Office and the International Criminal Court, we will leave no one behind."*

Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta **Urpilainen**, said: *"Human rights and democracy are a cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive development, and essential to addressing global challenges and ensure citizens reach their full potential and realise their aspirations. In whichever way you measure it – in stability, equality, economic growth, health or longevity – democracies always outperform other forms of government in the long run. I am proud to think of the countless human rights defenders, young people, women, girls and civil society organisations that the €1.5 billion Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme will empower to build a better tomorrow for all of us."*

Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy

The Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme for the period 2021–2027, that will complement further support at bilateral and regional level, is the EU's flagship tool for action to advance human rights and democracy, including addressing the impact of global challenges, such as climate change and environmental degradation, digital and new technologies, or the COVID-19 pandemic.

The programme can support activities in any country outside the EU and at global level. It therefore complements other EU programmes at local, country, and regional levels.

It has five overarching priorities:

- **Protecting and empowering individuals – €704 million**

Uphold all human rights, including by working towards the universal abolition of the death penalty, the eradication of torture and cruel and inhumane treatment, the fulfilment of basic needs, decent working conditions, the eradication of child labour, and a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The programme will promote equality, inclusion and respect for diversity, support human rights defenders and counter shrinking space for civil society, and strengthen the rule of law, ensure a fair and effective administration of justice, and close the accountability gap.

- **Building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies – €463 million**

The programme will support functioning pluralist, participatory and representative democracies, and protect the integrity of electoral processes. It will, for instance, engage civil society observers in election observation and support pro-democracy organisations, networks and alliances.

- **Promoting a global system for human rights and democracy – €144 million**

Enhance strategic partnerships with key actors, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Criminal Court (ICC), regional human rights systems, national human rights institutions, the private sector, and the Global Campus of Human Rights.

- **Safeguarding fundamental freedoms, including harnessing the opportunities and addressing the challenges of digital and new technologies – €195 million**

Create and maintain an environment conducive to the full exercise of all fundamental freedoms both offline and online. For example, it will help strengthen the capacity of independent, pluralistic and quality media, including investigative journalists, bloggers and fact-checkers, to provide the public with reliable information through responsible and professional reporting. It will support civil society in fostering online media literacy and digital skills and in promoting an open, global, free and secure internet equally accessible to all.

- **Delivering by working together – €6.6 million**

The earmarked funds can support the civil society in engaging with national authorities within the framework of the human rights dialogues that the EU conducts with partner countries, or finance training, studies, or exchanges of best practice. It underpins all of the activities.

In the first year of implementation, the EU will focus on promoting a global system for human rights and democracy. For example, in 2022–2024, the EU will support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with €16 million, the Global Campus of Human Rights with €10 million, and the International Criminal Court with €3 million. The EU will also support in 2022 the launch of a Team Europe Democracy initiative to reinforce the impact of EU and Member States' global support to democracy. The 2021 action plan complements a number of urgent individual measures under the programme adopted earlier.

Background

The Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme is flexible as regards procedures, and supports civil society actions independently of the consent of partner countries' governments and other public authorities. A substantial part of the programme will be implemented at country level. Subsequent calls for proposals covering the different activities, open to civil society organisations across the world, will be published in the coming months.

Funded under the thematic pillar of the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe, the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme is the successor of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which was established in 2006 to support civil society-led actions in the area of human rights and democracy in countries outside the EU. Under the previous financial period 2014–2020, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights was allocated €1.33 billion.

For More Information

[Multi-Annual Indicative Programming for the NDICI-Global Europe Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy 2021-2027](#)

[Annual Action Plan 2021 for the Human Rights and Democracy thematic programme](#)

[European Commission and Democracy](#)

[European Commission and Human Rights](#)

[Human Rights & Democracy Action plan](#)

[EU Gender Action Plan III](#)

[Democracy and human rights special measures 2021](#)

[Team Europe Democracy initiative](#)

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