



## Terms of Reference

### **Expert contributions to the scoping of the JRC's project on Challenges and opportunities for the Future of Democracy**

The present document defines the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the call for Expression of Interest in being part of a pool of experts contributing to the Joint Research Centre's (JRC) research work<sup>1</sup>. The Call is for the provision of expert advice and contribution in designing and subsequently executing a scoping review for a JRC project on 'Challenges and opportunities for the Future of Democracy' in the European Union (EU).

#### **1. Context**

The European Commission's science and knowledge service, the JRC, a provider of world-class science for policy, aims to provide independent knowledge and science, supporting EU policies to positively impact society. The use of science, besides supporting the design of more effective policies, supports democracy by enabling informed democratic debate about the facts underpinning the proposed policies. The JRC has been working on different approaches to enable a more optimised use of science in policymaking. More specifically, the work carried out by the JRC includes conducting work on understanding the drivers that influence political decision-making<sup>1</sup>, building capacity of researchers and policymaker<sup>2</sup>, and building institutional capacity for evidence-informed policymaking in the EU Members States<sup>3</sup>. The JRC is also working to implement participatory and deliberative practices in science and policy<sup>4</sup>, recognizing that, besides expert knowledge, other types of knowledge (e.g. experiential, embodied, indigenous and local) are needed to address citizens' concerns and needs, and ultimately liaise with complex governance issues.

The political decision-making in the EU is founded on the democratic values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, inclusivity,

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/evidence-informed-policy-making/topic/enlightenment-20\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/evidence-informed-policy-making/topic/enlightenment-20_en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/evidence-informed-policy-making/topic/smart4policy-check-your-competences\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/evidence-informed-policy-making/topic/smart4policy-check-your-competences_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/projects-activities/introducing-multi-country-technical-support-project-building-capacity-evidence\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/projects-activities/introducing-multi-country-technical-support-project-building-capacity-evidence_en)

<sup>4</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/participatory-democracy/about\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/participatory-democracy/about_en)

representativeness, political deliberations, voting via elections, political freedom, and access to information. Having resilient and strengthened democratic systems in place to support and provide the space for a robust, inclusive and holistic political decision-making will be fundamental to face many of the complex challenges and threats lying ahead of our society now and in the future.

In the last years, concerns about a democratic backsliding, have emerged in the EU and in its Member States. But other threats to democracy have also become more apparent and insidious, illustrated by measurements of several issues, including long-term trends of declining electoral participation, increased alienation from politics, increased polarization<sup>5</sup>, declining trust in political institutions and politicians as well as in democracy<sup>6</sup>.

Many issues seem to be stemming from, and contributing to, a disenchantment with democracy. Socio-economic issues, inequalities, as well as issues associated with the quality of information shared across societies through digitalization, are some of the issues considered having an impact as pointed by the Strategic Foresight report 2023<sup>7</sup>. In this respect, reinvigorating EU democracy and identifying potential ways to further improve it, grow its resilience, and deepen its roots will be of fundamental importance to the EU.

Looking towards the future, the EU's transition to sustainability as charted by the European Green Deal will be closely interlinked with the development of democratic processes including increasing the participation of citizens to complement representative democracy<sup>7,8</sup>. The 'Challenges and opportunities for the Future of Democracy' project will benefit from, and should build on existing JRC studies<sup>9</sup> and Horizon Europe projects<sup>10</sup> to explore and shed light on key issues that could strengthen and innovate our current democratic systems to face best future trends and critical challenges, to anticipate and respond to them, and, in doing so, to increase trust in democracy.

## 2. Objectives and Scope

The project will seek to explore the development of future democratic processes that will contribute to strengthening democracy and build resilience to future threats. Considering the complexity and the

---

<sup>5</sup> McCoy J, Somer M (2019). Toward a theory of pernicious polarization and how it harms democracies: comparative evidence and possible remedies. *Ann Am Acad Political Soc Sci* 681(1):234–271

<sup>6</sup> [Past, present and future of democracy - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\) 2019](#)

<sup>7</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/SFR-23\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/SFR-23_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [Report on Support to the engagement of European Citizen in the transition to the European Green Deal: "Citizen Voices for the EU climate transition" Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> Such as the [Future of Government 2030+](#), where foresight and speculative design were used to explore innovative approaches to democracy through engagement with citizens and other stakeholders across Europe.

<sup>10</sup> Such as Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 projects and Calls including the cluster of projects on trust in governance (PERITIA, TIGRE, ENTRUST), the cluster on the **future of civic participation** (DUST, ORBIS, INCITE-DEM), the future of liberal democracy in Europe (RED-SPINEL, AUTHLIB, RECLAIM). The JRC project should forge links with the [Nets4Dem "Network of networks for democracy"](#) bringing together practitioners and researchers in the field of democracy, civic deliberation, participation and citizenship education, and whose role is to bring together the threads of research in democratic innovation, make it accessible, and issue recommendations to policymakers.

broadness of the topic, the project will start with a scoping phase intended to direct JRC's future work by shaping its objectives, scope and methodological approach.

The scoping phase aims to identify and explore critical challenges, emerging trends and drivers that could impact and influence the future of democracy. This will include investigating and discussing key factors underpinning democratic systems.

The considerations provided in this document are designed to illustrate the context, drivers and aims of the scoping phase. The exact research questions will be discussed in detail and co-created together with the selected experts through the scoping phase itself.

The ToR, described in this document, constitute the basis of the application for experts to participate in the scoping phase. This ToR define the context, roles, guidelines and assessment criteria for selecting experts, who can provide their expertise to support the JRC staff in the definition of the work of the 'Challenges and opportunities for the Future of Democracy' project by:

- providing key inputs to the definition and execution of future work on this topic, including key sources of information, discussion and analysis of key points, and state-of-the-art perspectives based on ongoing work in a range of relevant fields;
- creating collaborative and effective interactions with the other selected experts and JRC staff, advising upon the objectives, scope and methodological approach to be used in future work on this topic.

Key components of the scoping phase will include three mandatory workshops (one in presence, and the other two to take place online which are expected to be delivered through MS Teams) and desk-based research preceding and following those (see timeline in section below):

- An initial, two days' workshop designed to discuss collectively the aims of the scoping phase and provide key prospective inputs into its execution (to take place in presence in Brussels)
- A second half-day workshop designed to discuss the draft scoping review storyboard that will have been prepared by the 'Lead author' (defined below) and assign responsibilities with respect to the work given to the different 'Contributors' (defined below) to draft the final deliverable
- A third full day workshop designed to discuss and refine the outcomes of the scoping phase within the project team and with the JRC, based on the draft scoping review that will have been assembled together by the Lead Author considering the contributions of all the different Contributors.

### **3. Fields of expertise**

Given the scope and multidisciplinary nature of the questions at play, it is important to have a comprehensive approach to the study. Therefore, a wide variety of expertise is required. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre has substantial experience in working collaboratively with such multidisciplinary groups.

We provide the following list of indicative expertise, which does not intend to constrain or limit the nature of the expertise that might be needed or desirable to deliver the work for the scoping phase. We would be delighted to receive applications from:

- Political scientists (public administration, institutionalism, political theory, comparative politics, democratic innovation),
- Historians,
- Political Economists,
- Legal scholars,
- Sociologists,
- Anthropologists,
- Philosophers,
- Political Communication scholars,
- International Relations scholars,
- Futures studies/foresight scholars,
- Deliberative democracy scholars and/o practitioners,
- Science and Technology Studies (STS) scholars.
- Scholars working on quantitative analysis (e.g. indicators) of Democracy

### **4. Final deliverable**

The key deliverable of the scoping phase will be a detailed technical note (target length 20-30 pages without references and annexes). The technical note will summarise the results of the scoping review, including background information, key analysis and discussion points, sources of information, and based on those, recommendations to be used in the definition of the objectives, scope and methodology in the 'Challenges and opportunities for the Future of Democracy' project.

### **5. Roles and responsibilities**

Preparatory work and content delivery of the scoping review, including preparation of the final deliverable, will be a responsibility of the selected experts, a Lead and Contributing Authors. Among

the experts, a Lead Author of the scoping review will be selected, based on expertise, suggested approach, motivation, availability to perform key duties within the timeframe indicated and track-record of working collaboratively on relevant projects. The Lead Author is expected to ensure that the scoping review is the result of a shared and consolidated view of all the selected experts through an effective communication style (e.g. balanced document with appropriate levels of detail), rather than presenting a collation of potentially unstructured views in different styles.

Experts will be selected for their expertise and ability to ensure the following:

**Lead author (1 expert, 11 person days)**

- Substantial individual contribution to the technical content of the main deliverable and develop an effective communication with the Contributing Authors and the JRC
- Technical coordination of the work of all the Contributing authors, delivered through leading the storyboarding of the final deliverable at the onset of the work (structure, content, ownership of specific sections)
- Technical integration of the work of the Contributing Authors, to ensure that the various contributions to the technical note are brought together in an effective, systematic and consistent way
- High quality of the final deliverable. To this effect, the final deliverable is expected to be presented with a ‘single voice’, i.e. with an effective and uniform communication style
- Attendance to the three workshops, including required preparation. Attendance to the first workshop **in presence** in Brussels for two days is required.

**Contributing Authors (7 experts, 8 person days)**

- Effective communication with the Lead Author, and the JRC on relevant matters and topics whenever necessary through an agreed calendar
- The provision of their assigned/agreed technical duties (e.g. text for specific sections of the storyboard and final report deliverable) to the Lead Author on time (through agreed dates which align with the timeline of the scoping phase) and with high quality
- The timely interaction with the JRC with respect to the planning and execution of the study, including participation on key meetings, requests of information to monitor project progress and/or possible resolution of technical issues such as differences in expert opinion
- Support the work of the Lead Author in reviewing and preparing the final deliverable
- Attendance to the three workshops, including required preparation. Attendance to the first workshop **in presence** in Brussels for two days is required.

## 6. Application Procedure

In order to have their expression of interest considered, applicants need to submit the following:

- Identification, affiliation, field of expertise (please consider section 3) and CV.
- Indicate if you would be interested to be a Lead or Contributing Author (based on the duties define above), and provide a rationale for your interest in either role based on your academic interests, experience and availability (max. 800 characters).
- **Core skills and expertise**, including experience and track record of carrying out similar or relevant duties, documented through the description of experience in working together with other experts in an open, collaborative and effective manner in similar studies (max. 2,000 characters).
- **Motivation and Availability**, including alignment with research interest and availability to carry out suggested duties (as Lead or Contributing Author) within the timescales included in this document (max. 2,000 characters).
- **Abstract** - briefly outlining the scientific contribution they could make to this project in view of its aims, objectives and their expertise. This should include highlighting key technical considerations on the proposed objectives, scope, as well as indicating the key overall trends and critical challenges that should be considered in the scoping review, and key factors that should be taken into account, and, which of these the author would propose to develop further, giving, where possible, examples of relevant references (max. 2,000 characters).

**To submit your application**<sup>11</sup>, please use this [link](#) to the dedicated EU survey form. Only applications submitted to the dedicated EU survey will be considered.

The call is launched on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and will be open to applicants **until 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023, 12:00 (CET)**.

## 7. Selection procedure

Evaluation Committee composition: an evaluation committee will be composed by JRC staff specifically appointed for this call.

For the Assessment Criteria please consider the information on the Application Procedure in section 6.

---

<sup>11</sup> By responding to this call, you accept that we process the data you insert for the sole purposes of the selection procedure of suitable experts to carry out the work described in Section 7 of these Terms of Reference. For more info on the purpose and conditions of the processing operations of personal data by the Commission, please see the [Data Protection Register \(for targeted consultations\)](#). Please click here for the [privacy statement](#).

<b>Assessment criteria</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Abstract	40%
Skills and Expertise	30%
Motivation and Availability	30%

## **8. Registration to the Participant Portal**

Upon confirmed selection, **experts will be required to enter their details into the European Commission's database of independent experts within 5 days (max).**

It is imperative that the experts selected by the Evaluation Committee to provide the JRC with the necessary expertise, as described in these ToR, register themselves in the Commission's database of independent experts. Only once the registration is complete, the JRC will be able to select them and prepare an ad-hoc expert contract.

Please note that independently of this call for expression, experts can register themselves in the Commission's database of independent experts at any time. **We strongly recommend that all applicants do this already when submitting their application. This will make the process faster and more efficient.** More information on how to register can be found in the Expert Registration Portal [here](#).

For the "step by step" to register:

**Here's the 'How to':** <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/funding-tenders-opportunities/display/IT/Creating+a+Profile+as+an+Expert+or+an+Applicant> [[webgate.ec.europa.eu](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu)]

Important note: you may find many answers to your questions in the [FAQ for experts](#) [[ec.europa.eu](https://ec.europa.eu)].

## **9. Provisional timing in 2023/2024**

**September-October 2023** – The call closes at 12:00 (CET) on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The Evaluation Committee will meet and inform all applicants of their decisions by 13<sup>th</sup> October.

**October 2023** – Selected experts will have to create an expert profile by Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October (the latest). The contracting will start as soon as the experts are registered. This next weeks will be for organising expert contracts.

**December 2023** – Work will start with an online kick-off meeting.

**January 2024** – Selected experts will participate in the first workshop, one and half days' workshop designed to discuss collectively the aims of the study and provide key prospective and inputs into its execution.

**January-February 2024** – Selected experts to work on the scoping review.

**February 2024** - A second half-day workshop designed to discuss the final scoping review storyboard that will have been prepared by the Lead author and assign responsibilities with respect to the work assigned to the different Contributing Authors to draft the final deliverable.

**March-April 2024** – A third full day workshop designed to discuss and refine the outcomes of the study within the project team and with the JRC, based on the draft scoping review that will have been assembled together by the Lead Author.

**April-May 2024** – To deliver the final deliverable.

## **10. Enquiries**

For any questions on the call, please use the following email address: [JRC-ENLIGHTENMENT2@ec.europa.eu](mailto:JRC-ENLIGHTENMENT2@ec.europa.eu)

Please do not submit your application to this email address as it will not be considered. **Please use the link to the dedicated EU Survey Form, [here](#).**