



DEG ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2024

Democracy Support & Election Coordination Group (DEG)

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024

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Executive summary

Pursuant to the “Implementing Provisions on Democracy Support and Election Observation Activities”, the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) is responsible for four main areas of activity, namely - **election observation, parliamentary capacity development, human rights actions, as well as mediation, facilitation and dialogue**. The Annual Work Programmes, including the present one for 2024, **cover the latter three areas, with EP election observation delegations being subject to a separate bi-annual procedure** in DEG.

Since its establishment in 2012, DEG has been actively seeking to increase the European Parliament's role in the area of democracy support. It has developed a variety of concepts, methodology and specifically designed operational instruments. The EP democracy support activities, addressing fragile democracies around the world, have been increasingly recognised for bringing an added-value and complementarity to overall EU foreign and security policies and geopolitical priorities.

In line with the **Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach** (CDSA), a guiding principle of the Group's work, DEG selected the following **six priority countries/regions** for enhanced democracy support activities, carried out in coherence with electoral cycles: **Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Tunisia, Western Balkans** (as a priority region), the **Pan-African Parliament** (as a priority regional parliament), as well as support to the **Belarussian democratic forces**. Taking into account the increased focus on the criteria of “functioning of democratic institutions” in the accession process, and the significant impact the EP support can have on the strengthening of parliaments, **DEG will support the candidate and potential candidate countries as its permanent priority**. Additionally, the DEG will continue to provide its assistance to other parliaments and regional parliaments, such as the Pan-African Parliament, according to political priorities of the EP.

In addition to the countries chosen for long-term strategic interventions around the electoral cycle, the DEG, in line with the criteria for engagement, will continue to implement activities in support of other countries and/or beneficiaries through a variety of thematic activities linked to the Sakharov Prize, human rights actions, mediation and dialogue, capacity development as well as election-related activities.

This work programme covers activities envisaged to be carried out with Members of the European Parliament during the first part of 2024, programmes at administrative level that could continue during the election break, as well as proposals for activities to be

implemented under the supervision of the newly constituted DEG in September/October 2024.

In 2024, DEG will continue its core work, under the political guidance of its Co-Chairs and its Lead Members, in the selected priority countries and regions, whilst applying the well-established wide range of instruments, included under the thematic areas.

As always, DEG activities will be conducted in **close cooperation and coordination with AFET and DEVE, DROI and the relevant EP inter-parliamentary delegations**, with a view to fostering consistency and visibility of parliamentary diplomacy, as well as with other EU institutions and the international donor community, where relevant.

For 2024, a specific budget of EUR 1,250,000 will be available to implement the DEG activities that are presented in this Annual Work Programme .

I THEMATIC AREAS AND INSTRUMENTS OF EP'S DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

DEG has a variety of instruments at its disposal to carry out its different missions. Together, these instruments constitute DEG's **democracy support toolbox**. The toolbox has components in the following activity areas: **election observation**, **parliamentary support and capacity building**, **human rights action** as well as **mediation and dialogue support**. The activity areas reflect the aforementioned Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA) and are associated to the electoral cycle. Under DEG's political guidance and supervision the democracy support toolbox and its individual components are managed by DG EXPO's **Directorate for Democracy Support**.

1. Election-related activities

The European Parliament decides to deploy election observation delegations in third countries on request of the DEG, following the specific rules set out in the DEG Implementing Provisions. The EP Election Observation Delegations (EP-EODs) are always part of, either the EU Election Observation Missions (EU-EOM), based on the indicative priorities provided for by the HR/VP; or the International Election Observation Missions (I-EOM) led by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE ODIHR).

There are some conditions for DEG to decide the list of priority countries where the EP can send an Election Observation Delegation: this list is agreed following the principles of regional equilibrium and political priority. In this respect, the DEG deems crucial to carefully assess the engagement of the EU in third countries, based on clear political conditions like the will to engage on inclusive reforms and concrete follow-up on any previous missions' recommendations. Another condition is that an invitation comes from the competent authorities of the Country observed.

1.1. VIRTUAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORAL DIALOGUES (V-PEDS)

The gradual easing of the pandemic crisis led to a return to classic channels of communication for in-depth analysis and exchange of opinions in the field of political dialogue between parliamentarians about democracy support. In the years 2020-2022, the parliamentary electoral dialogues did not stop. They were first replaced then supplemented by virtual exchanges, the so-called V-PED Virtual Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues. The DEG will keep organising such online activities in 2024, when in person dialogues will be not viable, due to the presence of crisis situations (war conflicts, epidemics, natural disasters) or when the political dialogue is hindered or even prevented by the authorities of third countries in power.

1.2. ELECTION-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

The DEG will envisage for 2024 a number of events in addition to the Election Observation missions and the Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues. These events will include:

- Organisation of a specific training on election observation. Newly elected Members as well as Members not involved yet in EP election observation activities will have the possibility to learn about the origin and the international standards of election observation and the Code of Conduct of the Election Observation contained in the UN declaration on the Declaration of Principles on Election Observation (DoP). They will also become acquainted with the way an EP Election Observation Mission is organised and the concrete observation practices of the EP EOD both in EU EOMs and OSCE-ODHIR led EOMs. This training is paramount for Members who wish to join an EP EOD.
- In November 2024 DEG will organise an Open Day in the main EP premises in Brussels. Workshops, awareness raising activities, concrete case studies, and exchange of best practices will be organised during the Open Day.
- In line with the preliminary conclusions of the Working Group on Election Observation Methodology, and pending their final approval, DEG will organise, ahead of the deployment of an EP EOD in a DEG priority country, in camera election observation meetings gathering EP EOD and the relevant standing delegation, to assess the political and electoral situation in the country. In addition, post-electoral debriefing by the Chief Observers to the EP EODs members will be organised, once the final report of an EU EOM has been presented. Members of the standing delegations will be systematically invited to these meetings. Finally, greater synergies between the DEG/EP EODs and standing delegations will be sought in the context of election observation follow-up activities to integrate an election follow-up dimension in standing delegations' visits to a partner country.

2. Mediation and Dialogue, including the Young Political Leaders programme

Mediation, inter-party dialogue and consensus building are highly cost-effective tools to be applied in a wide range of cases, complementing democracy support and conflict prevention efforts. As such, DEG supports Members in mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes.

The **core tools** underpinning Parliament's efforts in this field are the **Jean Monnet Dialogue and the Inter-Party Dialogue processes** as well as the **Young-Political Leaders Programme**. The Jean-Monnet Dialogue and Inter-Party Dialogue processes are parliamentary mediation instruments,

adapted to the specific political environment in which they are deployed. The Young Political Leaders Programme targets parliamentarians and civil society actors outside the EU to encourage dialogue, confidence and cooperation among those who might hold important positions of responsibility in the future.

Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit also supports those Members representing the European Parliament in the **advisory board of the European Institute for Peace**.

The added-value of the European Parliament's activities in parliamentary mediation, dialogue and conflict prevention, as well as the key role of Members of the European Parliament engaged in mediation processes, has been recognised as complementary to the overall EU capacities and strategies in this field, most notably in the European Parliament's Resolution on building EU capacity on conflict prevention and mediation of March 2019, as well as in the Commission's Communications on EU enlargement policy.

Since the introduction of mediation in the European Parliament's array of external policies instruments in 2014, DEG and its Lead Members have successfully built on the well-established Jean Monnet Dialogue/Inter-Party Dialogue concept and methodology, giving the European Parliament a unique role within the broader EU mediation efforts. The Jean Monnet Dialogue and other parliamentary mediation and dialogue facilitation activities have provided added-value to the overall EU approach to effectively address conflicts, in a very cost-effective fashion, while giving high visibility to the European Parliament.

Alongside with its other flagship initiative, the Young Political Leaders programme, mediation and dialogue are key instruments in DEG's Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA). They will thus continue to be offered to priority countries and, in line with the DEG's Implementing Provisions, to additional countries deemed a priority for the European Parliament.

2.1. JEAN MONNET DIALOGUES (JMD) and OTHER DIALOGUE PROCESSES

The Jean Monnet Dialogue process will be continued with the *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine, the *Sobranie* of the Republic of North Macedonia and with the Serbian *Skupština* (under the form of a Parliamentary Dialogue Process using the Jean Monnet Dialogue process methodology).

In each of the above-mentioned countries, the Dialogue will need to be adapted to fit to the prevailing political circumstances and priorities. Notably, the Dialogue with the *Verkhovna Rada* will need to be adjusted in consultation with the *Rada's* leadership to suit the needs of a parliament in times of war.

The Parliamentary Dialogue Process, using the Jean Monnet Dialogue methodology for consensus building has been proposed to the leadership of the Serbian Parliament as a follow-up of the Inter-Party Dialogue Process (implemented from 2019 until 2021) on improving the electoral conditions with parliamentary and non-parliamentary stakeholders. Given the fact that all major political forces

are represented in the parliament, the objective of the Parliamentary Dialogue Process would be to work towards reaching consensus on improving the functioning of the Serbian Parliament.

Implementation of the Jean Monnet Dialogue with the Parliament of Moldova, which has been agreed with the parliamentary leadership in 2022 and reconfirmed in 2023 is also envisaged in late 2023 or early 2024.

The Jean Monnet Dialogue or Inter-Party Dialogue methodology may be further expanded, adapted and provided to other CDSA priority countries and regions, notably to Georgia (should political circumstances be adequate), as well as to other third countries.

2.2. MEPs as MEDIATORS AND FACILITATORS

Following the successful model of the joint EP/European Commission mediation in North Macedonia (2015-2017), MEPs could be appointed, in line with EP priorities and DEG Implementing Provisions (including in situation of urgency), to act as Mediators or Facilitators on behalf of the EP and with in an overall or joint EU response to political conflicts and crises.

2.3. PARLIAMENTARY MEDIATION TRAINING PROGRAMME

Based on successful peer-to-peer coaching of MEPs tailored to specific mediation processes and country contexts, the programme, initially designed for the needs of Members of the European Parliament acting as mediators, would be further adapted and customised, including to fit the purposes of the new pool of mediation experts.

2.4. POOL OF EP MEDIATION EXPERTS

The creation of a pool of EP's mediation experts will contribute to Parliament's operational readiness to respond to challenges in addressing diverse and constantly changing contexts. The objective of this innovative initiative is to further strengthen Parliament's mediation capacities, including the support to MEPs assuming the role of mediators, further develop the specific parliamentary mediation methodology and instruments and increase of the recognition and visibility of the EP as a mediation actor.

2.5. WOMEN AND PEACE BUILDING

It is essential to ensure that women are fully involved in mediation activities and provided with specific capacity building. Focusing on women and mediation is a new aspect of mediation activities that the EP could offer and further develop in 2023 (in line with EP Resolution March 2019 and in recognition of UNSCR 1325).

2.6. YOUNG POLITICAL LEADERS PROGRAMME (YPL)



LEAD MEMBER: FABIO MASSIMO CASTALDO

The Young Political Leaders programme will continue its activities as described below. They could also take the form of nation-specific events following the model of November 2023 YPL event with the Parliament of Albania.

The programme will seek to promote the YPL *alumni* network as well as their involvement in Committees and Delegations activities. It will advance as well their presence in UN and Regional Organisations activities and initiatives of key international civil society organisations (CSOs).

A. Western Balkans

Following the engagements with the Western Balkans through the “Bridging the Gap” format, this type of conference would be organised together with the European Commission, Parliaments from the region and relevant organisations active in youth policy making.

Organisation of workshops on policies related to the EU-driven reform agenda. These events could be organised with international partners active on the region or with specific expertise in the workshop’s theme.

Organisation of online activities with YPL alumni to follow-up in-person activities or discuss topical matters.

B. Eastern Partnership countries

Provided political, security and practical conditions allow, organisation of a Young Political Leaders programme events with participants from one or several Eastern Partnership countries such as: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The event could be organised together with the European Commission, the European External Action Service and relevant organisations active in youth policy making.

C. Africa

Pan-African-Parliament (PAP): in-line with the priority partnership with the PAP, support youth parliamentary caucuses as a platform for reaching a wider African audience.

D. MENA region

Following the successful past cooperation with the EEAS and the Anna Lindh foundation, (re)initialisation of a YPL programme on Israel and Palestine and Tunisia, taking into consideration its political conditions, might be envisaged.

E. Turkey

Engaging with the next generation of leaders will be key to ensure parliamentary and democratic standards in Turkey. The Young Political Leaders programme frozen in 2016 following the failed *coup* could be resumed. The programme would include issues of common concern, to both young MEPs and young Turkish parliamentarians (as well as other young leaders), such as: the challenges and importance of young people participating in political life; the role of social media and communicating effectively with citizens; defending the rule of law and human rights; developing a culture of peaceful political dialogue and consensus building; cross party cooperation to promote issues of concern to the youth.

F. Thematic priorities

In addition to geographical scope, the Young Political Leaders Programme may focus on horizontal areas, such as initiatives on “Youth and Climate Change”, “Women and Peacebuilding”, “Youth, Peace and Security agenda”, “Young leaders in mediation processes” and “Young people’s civic and political participation” in line with the European Union’s Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action 2022 – 2027.

3. Human Rights, Civil Society, and Sakharov Activities

The **human rights component of democracy support** includes empowering agents of democratic change like human rights defenders, civil society, strengthening free and pluralistic media, and parliamentarians, especially women, as promoters of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

It further supports the **EP human rights agenda** and gives visibility to EP human rights work. The **Sakharov Prize** for Freedom of Thought and the activities of the Sakharov Prize Community of laureates, finalists and fellows are an integral part of this agenda.

Major instruments include the empowerment of civil society actors through their inclusion in democracy support activities and facilitation of their dialogue with parliaments and authorities, the **Sakharov fellowship Programme** for human rights defenders, **the Simone Veil Programme** for women parliamentarians, and the **Triangle for Democracy** linking civil society, media and parliaments on fighting disinformation while protecting freedom of expression.

In this context, DEG supports the Members representing the European Parliament in the **governing bodies of the European Endowment for Democracy**.

3.1. Empowering Agents of Democratic Change



LEAD MEMBERS: UDO BULLMANN, CHAIR OF THE EP SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND LEAD MEMBER OF RELEVANT PRIORITY COUNTRY

- The **Simone Veil Programme** helps **empower women in politics, in particular women parliamentarians** to promote inclusive societies and democratic change. Training modules can be tailored to the needs of the beneficiaries. Human rights-oriented training, seminars, workshops or study visits can also be organised for all parliamentarians and staff from partner parliaments in Brussels, Strasbourg or remotely.
- **Empowering civil society** actors in their interaction with partner parliaments and government authorities through inclusion in democracy support actions and activities to build trust, identify avenues of cooperation, and strengthen local human rights agendas.

- The **Triangle for Democracy Programme** gathers parliamentarians, civil society representatives and media actors to reflect on and embrace strategies to **fight information manipulation** as a threat to democracy, while at the same time preserving **and protecting** the fundamental right of **freedom of expression**. Content and the number of sessions are tailored to the needs of the beneficiary country.

3.2. Sakharov Community Activities



LEAD MEMBER: HEIDI HAUTALA, EP VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE SAKHAROV COMMUNITY

A. Sakharov Prize week 2024

Around the award of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in Strasbourg in December, a comprehensive programme of meetings, interviews and public events is organised for the laureates or their representatives and, if decided, the finalists, including follow-up events to promote the Sakharov Prize in EU Member States.

B. Sakharov fellowship for human rights defenders

This annual capacity-building programme for up to 14 human rights defenders grows an alumni network intertwined with EP human rights activities. It includes **a two-week training** at the EP and at the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice (4-16 March 2024). Alumni are part of a **stay-in-touch programme**.

C. Support Sakharov Community members (laureates, finalists or fellows)

- **at risk.** Actions are coordinated with the President, the Vice-President responsible for the Sakharov Prize Community, relevant committees and delegations. Public support and/or silent diplomacy entails close cooperation with EU institutions.
- **in their projects and advocacy initiatives.** Events or meetings to support their causes and enhance the visibility of the Sakharov Prize can be organised with their presence in Brussels and Strasbourg (e.g. the European Youth Event), within or outside the EU.

3.3. Support to the EP Human Rights Agenda



LEAD MEMBER: UDO BULLMANN, CHAIR OF THE EP SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

- **Support and promotion of DROI and its Members activities.** This can include the production of audio-visual material including sub-titling, exhibitions, or events combining art and human rights.
- **Invitation of human rights defenders** to contribute to the EP human rights agenda, including through fact-finding, reporting and participation in inter-parliamentary meetings, delegation meetings, conferences or other relevant meetings in Brussels, Strasbourg or elsewhere.
- **Human rights film screenings and debates, organised by the EP or third parties** (e.g. the Brussels part of the annual One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival).

4. Parliamentary Support and Capacity Development, including Democratic Innovation

Assistance to national parliaments and parliamentary assemblies beyond the EU in order to **reinforce their institutional capacities** and functioning as democratic institutions is a further component of the democracy support toolbox. This parliamentary support includes a number of **customised support programmes** for members of parliaments as well as for civil servants. The programmes aim to **strengthen the principal functions of parliaments**: citizens' representation, law-making, scrutiny of the executive. Additional programmes can be dedicated to more specific topics, such as fighting misinformation and "fake news", communication with the citizens, or digitalisation. A variety of tools are used to implement the programmes, which focus on the exchange of best practices. The EP works also closely with EU national parliaments in these exchanges. In line with DEG's orientations, the main focus of these activities is given to the enlargement countries, including the Western Balkans region, Ukraine and Moldova. This approach is also in line with the new methodology on enlargement published by the Commission in February 2020, which includes the "functioning of democratic institutions", including parliament, in the fundamentals. Considering the role of the EP in the accession process, prioritising candidate and potential candidate countries' parliaments in its capacity building programme, and accompanying them in the accession process, seems in line with the EU approach to enlargement.

While working with enlargement countries remains the main priority, DEG should not shy away from sharing best practices with and supporting parliaments in other regions, where there is political interest and which might ask for extended or ad hoc support in areas where the EP has developed particular expertise, such as fight of disinformation, digitalisation, e-vote.

DEG disposes of a range of tools to carry out its capacity building programmes. These include, but are not limited to: seminars (online and in person), study visits, fellowships for staff, Citizens' Assemblies. It is key to continue developing the tools and to ensure that programmes have clear objectives and that activities build towards those and have concrete follow-up.

Moreover, DEG should continue reaching out to other parliaments, including EU national parliaments, through its Democracy Support Network and INTERPARES, and other like-minded parliaments and organisations, to discuss democratic innovations and issues of common interest in democracy support. In light of the challenges faced by parliaments in the recent years, with Covid-19, the continuous affronts to parliamentary democracy, the Russia's illegal aggression against Ukraine, it is key for the EU and the EP to continue building democratic resilience, within the EU and worldwide. The DEG could continue hosting reflections on democratic innovation with EU national parliaments and parliaments of like-minded countries, as well as with democracy support organisations.

II CRITERIA FOR EP DEMOCRACY SUPPORT ENGAGEMENTS

In line with Article 21 of the EU Treaty, the European Parliament, through its democracy support, contributes to the overall Union's efforts in advancing its principles and values, including democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, in the wider world. Actively supporting Union's international actions in consolidating and supporting democracy and human rights is one of the core responsibilities of the European Parliament.

For this reason, through the democracy support, DEG focuses on providing its assistance in format that is the most relevant to select countries undergoing various stages of democratic transition.

Pursuant to the “Implementing Provisions on Democracy Support and Election Observation Activities”, the DEG Annual Work Programme has been focusing on a maximum of **six priority countries and regions, selected as primary beneficiaries of long-term strategic and comprehensive democracy support interventions around electoral cycle , undertaken in compliance with the Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA)**, a guiding principle of the Group’s work.

In addition to the six priority countries or regions, DEG may, in line with the criteria for engagement (see Annex II), provide **ad hoc support to other countries and/or beneficiaries through a variety of thematic activities linked to the Sakharov Prize, human rights actions, mediation and dialogue, capacity development as well as election-related activities.** For example, DEG decided to explore the possibility of conducting some democracy support activities in Armenia in 2024.

Considering the increased focus on the criteria of “functioning of democratic institutions” in the accession process, and the significant impact the EP support can have on the strengthening of parliaments, **DEG will support candidate and potential candidate countries as its permanent priority.** Additionally, DEG will **continue supporting other parliaments and regional parliaments, such as the Pan-African Parliament,** according to political priorities of the EP.

In this context, alignment with the electoral cycle in the partner countries is of paramount importance. If DEG detects an improvement in a specific country in terms of election observation, the country could be considered for further democracy support. In the event of a decline in the electoral process, DEG could reconsider its engagement and activities in that country. Therefore contributions from the EU Election Observation Missions and EP Delegations within the International Election Observation Missions should feed into DEG’s country specific assessments.

In countries where democratic regimes are improving or deepening, DEG will primarily engage with parliamentary institutions. In countries undergoing democratic backsliding and/or rise of autocratisation, support will be given to other potential partners, including civil society organisations, human rights defenders, actors of political change and democratic forces.

DEG Lead Members for the priority countries/regions and horizontal activities will provide guidance for implementing democracy support in liaison with response to demands received by the partner countries. Efforts of a DEG Lead Member in a specific country shall be aligned with the work of AFET Standing Rapporteurs and the EP Delegation Chairs, through regular exchanges and/or meetings.

Taking into account the political priorities, developments in local contexts, specific arising needs, and feasibility of a roll-out and/or implementation of the EP's democracy support in each priority country/region, the most relevant democracy support activities, listed in the aforementioned thematic areas and instruments, will be carried out.

Certain democracy support activities, included in the Annual Work Programme, such as those envisaged to be carried out at the administrative level in support of the secretariat of parliaments in priority countries, could be implemented under the guidance of Lead Members but without their presence .

All proposed activities, conceived as complementary to overall EU foreign and security policies and geopolitical priorities, will take place in close cooperation and coordination with the relevant EP bodies, including Committees and Delegations, other EU institutions and international actors.

III PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

1. Ukraine



LEAD MEMBER: MICHAEL GAHLER



Political context/overview of democracy support activities

The EP has a long-standing and trustful cooperation with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU), in particular, in the areas of institutional reform support and mediation/dialogue facilitation. A “Memorandum of Understanding”, last revised and renewed in November 2023, underpins this cooperation. Given the current conditions of Russia’s continuous military aggression and the granting of EU candidate status by the European Council on 23 June 2022, the cooperation with Ukraine and its parliament is now of even greater political significance and practical urgency.

The democracy support activities envisaged for 2024 factor in the specific situation imposed by the continued military aggression against the country. They will focus, in particular, on strengthening the VRU and its Members, supporting its reform efforts in general and more specifically providing assistance for those transformation processes inside the VRU, which are related directly to Ukraine’s recently acquired EU candidate status.

Since its launch in 2016, the Jean Monnet Dialogue process with the VRU has conducted, among others, several successful rounds of dialogue, focussing on matters related to the necessary reforms of the Rada (in an online-format during the COVID-19 pandemic). Following the granting of EU candidate status to Ukraine the VRU is now in the process of accelerating its reform efforts. The Jean Monnet Dialogue in 2023 aims to facilitate the consensus building among key parliamentary actors on the envisaged reforms and to deepen their awareness regarding the transformative nature of the EU enlargement process.

The main reference for the reform and capacity building initiatives of the Ukrainian parliament is the “Report and Roadmap on Internal Reform and Capacity Building for the VRU” prepared by a team of EP-experts following the Needs Assessment Mission, led by former President of the European Parliament, Pat Cox in 2015/2016. To date, the proposed recommendations remain valid and many have not been implemented, in particular those related to the legislative process, political oversight, transparency and accountability matters as well as a number of administrative issues (including

modern technical solutions). The suggested democracy support and capacity development actions for 2024 particularly aim at enhancing awareness and capacities related to the process of EU integration, and particularly on the strengthening of the functioning of the Rada as an independent democratic institution.

Considering the circumstances, it is of the utmost importance to strictly uphold the political openness and inclusiveness of Parliament's democracy support measures for Ukraine. This applies specifically to the participation of representatives of the parliamentary opposition in democracy support and dialogue activities. This inclusiveness should be constantly highlighted in the dialogue with the VRU and also with other representatives of Ukrainian institutions, including the executive ones.

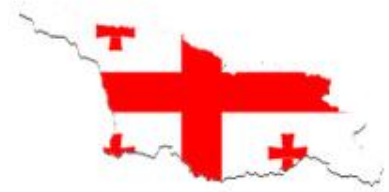
Russia's ongoing war of aggression and the resulting martial law currently in force in Ukraine did not allow general elections to be held by the statutory deadline (October 2023). The agreement reached between the political forces represented at the 9th JMD stipulates that elections will be held after the end of the war and six months after the lifting of martial law on the basis of the current Electoral Code. DEG, as in 2023, will continue in its support actions for the preparation of appropriate electoral regulatory instruments including to ensure at the appropriate time the right to vote for all eligible Ukrainian citizens.

DEG will keep high the attention on the issue of the elections in Ukraine and stands ready to observe elections (presidential and legislative) as soon as they will be called.

2. Georgia



LEAD MEMBER: VIOLA VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL



Political context/overview of democracy support activities

After submitting its application for EU membership in 2022, Georgia was granted the status of a European perspective country and not candidate status. The backsliding on democratic standards and rule of law that Georgia has registered in recent years has hampered this ambition. While the Georgian government was reluctant to make progress on the recommendations put forward by the European Commission, the broad commitment of the Georgian society to European values prevailed and the Commission recommended that Georgia be granted EU candidate status in November 2023. Georgia has been a priority country for DEG since 2017 and multiple democracy support activities have been organised with its Parliament.

In 2020 and 2021, during and past the COVID-19 pandemic, DEG organised online activities around elections and corruption risks, including an online conference on rights and responsibilities of the oppositions. In-person activities resumed with the deployment of two EP Election Observation Delegations to monitor the municipal elections in October 2021. During 2021 and 2022 the European Parliament explored a possibility to launch a Jean Monnet Dialogue with the Georgian parliament and to agree on a Roadmap of democracy support activities. In early 2023, due to a lack of agreement, all activities related to capacity building, human rights and discussions aiming at launching a Jean Monnet Dialogue have been suspended.

Georgia should hold Parliamentary elections in 2024. If all the conditions are met, the EP might send an Election Observation Delegation to Georgia under the umbrella of the I-EOM led by OSCE ODIHR. In 2023, the Central Election Commission of Georgia adopted new rules introducing an electronic voter registration and voting system on most of the polling stations. Certain recommendations formulated by previous I-EOMs however remain unaddressed.

3. Moldova



LEAD MEMBER: DRAGOȘ TUDORACHE



Political context/overview of democracy support activities

Following the European Council's decision on 23 June 2022 to grant Moldova **candidate status**, and the European Commission's recommendation on 8 November 2023 that the Council **opens accession negotiations** with Moldova, the European Council will convene on 14-15 December 2023 to make a decision regarding the initiation of accession negotiations with the country.

In the framework of democracy support activities, the European Parliament has continued to work with Moldova as one of its priority countries since 2014. Its democracy support engagement with Moldova has intensified following the outcomes of elections in 2020 and 2021, which brought to power a pro-European President, Government, and Parliament. These important political developments paved the way for strengthening of the relations between the two parliaments in general, and for intensifying of the democracy support activities.

The mission of the Lead Member for Moldova Dragoș Tudorache in 2021 led to the agreement on the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between the European Parliament and the Parliament of Moldova on a Joint Framework for democracy support activities, signed by late President David Sassoli and Speaker Igor Grosu in November 2021. Further details of democracy support activities were subsequently provided in **the Roadmap** of democracy support activities, a document jointly agreed between the two Parliaments and annexed to the aforementioned MoU.

In line with the MoU and the annexed Roadmap, providing a **comprehensive framework of democracy support activities**, a wide spectrum of activities, at both political and administrative level, have been implemented. A number of activities focused on measures to counter foreign interference and manipulation of information (under the Triangle for Democracy Programme), to empower women leaders to promote inclusive societies and democratic change (Simone Veil Programme), to promote a culture of dialogue in the Moldovan Parliament (preparation for the Jean Monnet Dialogue), and to build capacities of the Parliament so that it can in turn accomplish its role on the country's EU path and in the upcoming accession negotiations.

Against the background of current political situation in Moldova, affected by the Russian military aggression in neighbouring Ukraine, the 2024 democracy support activities will continue to further support the Moldovan Parliament.

Notably, following June 2023 mission to Chisinau of the three Jean Monnet Dialogue co-facilitators Dragoș Tudorache, Andrzej Halicki and Thijs Reuten, the first Jean Monnet Dialogue with the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova is foreseen for early 2024.

Concerning election-related democracy support activities, in addition to the EP election observation delegation deployed to observe local elections in Moldova on 5 November 2023, in the framework of the international observation mission led by OSCE/ODIHR, the EP plans to observe also the presidential elections in autumn 2024. DEG will furthermore continue to monitor the proper implementation of the recommendations made by the OSCE ODIHR International Mission to the November 2023 local elections.

4. Tunisia



LEAD MEMBER: EMMANUEL MAUREL



Political context/overview of democracy support activities

Tunisia has been encompassed by political instability since the enactment of Article 80 of the 2014 Constitution by President Kais Saied, on 25 July 2021, and the subsequent Presidential Decrees dismissing the Prime Minister, suspending the Parliament, lifting the parliamentary immunity and ultimately repealing the constitutional order and affirming self-supremacy on 22 September 2021.

In July 2022 the Tunisian people voted in a referendum for a new constitution, while in September 2022 the President adopted a new electoral law, which paved the way for legislative elections in December 2022, with a second round in January 2023.

In the current context, the democratic achievements since 2011 have been under constant threat not only by the very poor socio-economic performance, but also by the political measures taken by President Saied, including the amendment of the constitution and the reform of the electoral system, which lacked prior national debate. In this context, civil society organisations have repeatedly highlighted the need to preserve and strengthen the accomplishments of the democratic transition and avoid backsliding.

Tunisia has been a DEG priority country since 2015.

During the current EP legislature, a fact-finding mission has been conducted in February 2020.

On the basis of that mission and of subsequent extended negotiations between the European Parliament and the Tunisian Parliament, a roadmap on Democracy Support Activities was finalised in May 2021 and was ready to be signed.

However, the signature of the roadmap and all democracy support activities have been frozen since 25 July 2021.

5. Western Balkans



LEAD MEMBERS: VLADIMÍR BILČÍK AND MATJAŽ NEMEC



Political context/overview of democracy support activities

In line with the assessment of the state of play and the progress made by the Western Balkans on their respective path towards the European Union, included in the Commission reports on the candidates and aspiring candidates to the EU enlargement and reconfirmed by the EP's annual resolutions, the DEG will continue to intensify its democracy support activities, complementary to other EU and EP initiatives addressing the transformative process in the region.

Russia's unprovoked military aggression of Ukraine and its effects on the political developments and polarisation in the Western Balkans has highlighted the importance of the EU enlargement policy. It has also stressed a need for a reinforced presence of the EP's democracy support engagements in all Western Balkan countries.

Following up on a number of initiatives carried out in the region during the ninth Parliamentary Term, including the election observation missions to Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, meetings and missions in the context of the mediation and dialogue support activities, Dialogue processes with the Serbian *Skupština*, the Jean Monnet Dialogue with the parliament of North Macedonia, the Citizens' Assembly, successfully implemented in Montenegro, as well as a number of capacity development activities, the DEG 2024 programme will focus on the fundamentals of EU integration. Namely, the attention will be on the role of the parliaments in EU accession process, and through that strengthening the oversight function of parliaments in Western Balkan countries and supporting the transformation of the political culture of the region aiming to reduce polarisation.

To enhance the reform process and increase the accountability of parliamentary institutions, notably through the Jean Monnet/Parliamentary Dialogue processes, capacity development, human rights activities and election observation and follow-up, DEG activities will also focus on empowering agents of democratic change - women parliamentarians under the Simone Veil programme, as well as civil society actors, to help create effective channels between citizens and institutions.

The running of the main electoral competitions in Western Balkans remains at the core of the DEG activities and will be monitored through the tools of Election Observation Delegations and in person or virtual PEDs.

5.1. Regional and Bilateral Activities

A. Programme on Support to parliaments on EU accession process

The Parliaments of the Western Balkans are at different stages of the EU accession process, and the challenges and reflections around this process is an element that unites them. The EP proposes to develop a programme on **Support for parliaments on EU accession process**. The programme would cover three key areas:

- Political: focusing on the role of the parliaments in the EU accession process and ensuring that they can perform this role efficiently and effectively.
- Administrative: ensuring that the administrative structures have the capacity to support the political work during the EU accession process.
- Parliamentary monitoring organisations: strengthening the role that the civil society organisations play vis-à-vis the parliaments in contributing to the EU accession process.

The implementation of this programme at a regional level would allow for sharing of experiences and expertise among the Western Balkan countries themselves, with the support of the European Parliament, the EU National Parliaments and other EU Institutions.

B. Other democracy support tools

- The pattern of study visits from the Western Balkans, notably presented by the staff of the European Integration Committee could be further adapted to and applied to other parliamentary committees, as part of the Support for EU integration programme. This would allow for a proper representation and point of view of each individual country, whilst covering the entire region.
- The **Young Political Leaders** (YPL) programme will continue engaging in the Western Balkans through the “**Bridging the Gap**” format with young parliamentarians and civil society representatives from the region. A fourth edition of the “Bridging the Gap” on youth political participation and youth policy in the relevant areas related to the EU integration process could be envisaged. This type of conference would be organised together with the European Commission, Parliaments from the region and relevant organisations active in youth policymaking in Brussels or in one of the Western Balkans capitals willing to host the activity.
- Organisation of online and in person activities with YPL alumni to follow-up and discuss topical matters.
- Organisation of workshops on policies related to the EU-driven reform agenda. These events could be organised with international partners active on the region or with specific expertise in the workshop’s theme.
- Initiatives aiming to empower agents of democratic change, including civil society actors through their inclusion in democracy support activities, or supporting women parliamentarians in the framework of the **Simone Veil Programme**.

5.2. Country-specific activities

A number of specific democracy support and election-related activities could be developed and carried out at the national level targeting parliamentary political leadership, MPs, parliamentary staff and civil society. They would consist of:

- Country support programmes
- Pre-Accession Fellowship Programme
- Jean Monnet Dialogue, Inter-Party Dialogue and/or Parliamentary Dialogue processes
- Citizens' Assemblies and their follow-ups
- Study visits for MPs and staff
- Trainings for MPs and staff
- Election Observations Missions where elections take place and conditions are met
- Pre- and post-electoral activities (including parliamentary dialogues on implementation of previous Election Observation Mission's recommendations)
- Dedicated programmes for women parliamentarians under the Simone Veil Programme
- Expert missions

Pan-African Parliament



LEAD MEMBER: ASSITA KANKO



Political context/overview of democracy support activities

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) has been on DEG's list of priority countries/regions since the last European Parliament's legislature. In line with the end-of-legislature recommendations from the previous DEG, in the 9th legislature DEG activities with PAP were primarily focused on a "Train the Trainers" approach. This involved sharing EP's best practices and working methods on a selected topic in a very targeted, in-depth and structured way, aiming to build in-house capacity more effectively.

As one of the Pandemic consequences, PAP activities were suspended in June 2021 and resumed following the election of new officeholders in June 2022 who expressed an interest in relaunching the capacity building programme with the EP, in particular in view of its objective of strengthening the role of the PAP.

A new capacity-building programme has been launched with PAP in October 2023. Two seminars on impact assessment of legislation and foresight addressed to staff from PAP were held already with the support of the European Parliament Research Service and were highly appreciated by the beneficiary parliament. The programme (organised online) will continue with a seminar on psychological harassment, which is scheduled for January 2024.

At the end of 2023, the PAP benefited of a fellowship offered to a committee secretariat advisor, interested in EU budget-related decision-making processes. In January 2024, EP and PAP will take stock of this experience and develop further capacity building activities (possibly adding new topics for the training programme).

Given the interest of PAP administration in human resources procedures (that led to the organisation of the psychological harassment seminar which is in the pipeline), a fellowship could be offered to a senior human resources staff in PAP administration in 2024.

In the framework of the "train the trainers" approach and considering PAP's interest in a "programme on enhancing capacities in the areas of election observation, conflict prevention and mediation", a half-day seminar on election observation could be organised in the margins of the next EP-PAP Inter Parliamentary Meeting.

6. Belarus - ad hoc activities in line with EP political priorities



Political context/overview of democracy support activities

The brutal repression unleashed by the Lukashenka regime after the stolen elections and mass protests of 2020 continues. The number of political prisoners has risen to over 1400. Courts impose extremely harsh sentences for any expression of opposition to the authorities. Having four Sakharov laureates in jail and fifth disbanded is a vivid illustration of this situation.

The regime in Minsk has lost much of its autonomy and is supporting Russia in its illegal aggression against Ukraine. Moreover, the larger crisis of a full-scale war in Europe overshadows the reality of a continuing dismal human rights situation in Belarus. Even if almost any dissent is only possible in exile, democratic forces continue to function. Creative democracy support to them is important.

In its resolutions on Belarus, the EP has insisted on the need for the EU to assist the country's democratic forces in an inclusive way. In 2021 the DEG endorsed a Platform against Impunity for Human Rights Violations which provides stakeholders with a space to discuss and support Belarussian civil society in collecting evidence of human rights violations. The EP has maintained a dialogue with the Coordination Council (CC) led by Sviatlana Tsikanouskaya. On 1 March 2023, the Mission of Democratic Belarus was opened in Brussels, which should facilitate contacts. Ms Tsikanouskaya has also formed the United Transitional Cabinet. This Cabinet, which presents itself as a sort of executive-in-exile could receive support of the EP, while also keeping an inclusive approach to other components of the Belarussian democratic forces.

ANNEX I

List of DEG Members and Lead Members**DEG Composition - EP Term 2019-2024**

Co-Chairs:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Mr David McALLISTER | Chair AFET, EPP |
| Mr Tomas TOBÉ | Chair DEVE, EPP |

Members:

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Mr Michael GAHLER | EPP |
| Mr György HÖLVÉNYI | EPP |
| Mr Nacho SANCHEZ AMOR | S&D |
| Ms Isabel SANTOS | S&D |
| Ms Inma RODRÍGUEZ-PIÑERO | Chair CDC, S&D |
| Ms Izaskun BILBAO BARANDICA | RENEW |
| Mr Urmas PAET | RENEW |
| Ms Viola VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL | Greens/EFA |
| Mr Thierry MARIANI | ID |
| Ms Anna FOTYGA | ECR |
| Ms Marisa MATIAS | GUE/NGL |

Ex-officio Members (without voting rights):

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Mr Udo BULLMANN | Chair DROI, S&D |
| Ms Heidi HAUTALA | Vice-President responsible for the Sakharov Community and for Human Rights and Democracy, Greens/EFA |
| Mr Martin HOJSÍK | Vice-President responsible for Human Rights and Democracy, RENEW |

DEG Lead Members - EP Term 2019-2024

| Country / Region | Lead Member | Political Group |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Ukraine | Mr Michael GAHLER | EPP |
| Georgia | Ms Viola VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL | Greens/EFA |
| Moldova | Mr Dragoş TUDORACHE | RENEW |
| Tunisia | Mr Emmanuel MAUREL | GUE/NGL |
| Pan-African Parliament | Ms Assita KANKO | ECR |
| Western Balkans | Mr Vladimír BILČÍK | EPP |
| | Mr Matjaž NEMEC | S&D |
| Young Political Leaders | Mr Fabio Massimo CASTALDO | NI |
| Sakharov network | Ms Heidi HAUTALA | EP Vice-President |
| Human rights and civil society activities (including Simone Veil Programme) | Mr Udo BULLMANN | DROI Chair |

ANNEX II**Criteria for Engagement****OPTING IN.**

1. Is the existing engagement and/or opportunity to engage coherent with/important to the imminent EU foreign and security policy priorities?
2. Is the potential engagement of the European Parliament bringing an added value/is it complementary to other EU (and/or like-minded partners') instruments or initiatives, being developed for/already deployed in the country?
3. Is there a demand and/or a clear expression of interest of the beneficiary country in receiving a form of EP's democracy support? Is there a momentum and/or a window of opportunity — a decisive shift in the political landscape (taking into account electoral process) that creates an opening to the EP's democracy support? Is there already an established cooperation/continuity of EP's democracy support to the country? Is the engagement aligned with the electoral cycle?
4. Would the engagement, deployed by the EP, present a politically and operationally relevant and coherent response to the country's needs?

FORMAT OF SUPPORT.

1. Based on the country/local context analysis and/or needs assessment, relevant to the deployment of EP's democracy support, can clear objectives be determined?
2. Which EP's democracy support instrument(s) would be most appropriate to achieve the objectives and at which point in time?
3. Can the activity be carried out in a manner that is coherent and complementary to, third countries' electoral cycles, under the Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA). CDSA builds upon the premise that democracy support should be provided in the form of comprehensive assistance, to parliament-related players, through a variety of activities undertaken ahead of and after the elections.
4. Would the initiative present a one-off activity or would that entail a long-term strategy and continuity?
5. Can the principle of local ownership of the beneficiary country be ensured?

OPTING OUT.

1. Have the objectives of the engagement been attained or is it an open-ended process/support?
2. Are the political and operational conditions set in OPTING IN still met?
3. Is the format of the support still relevant or should that be reconsidered?
4. Could the continuity of EP's democracy support be ensured by another format?

ANNEX III

Budgetary Breakdown for EP Democracy Support Activities for 2024

| BUDGETARY LINE | ACTIVITIES | EUR |
|--|---|--------------|
| Budget Line 3230-01-01: Actions to support democracy | Horizontal democracy support activities, pre and post-election activities, capacity building, mediation, human rights, etc. | 90.000,00 |
| Budget Line 3230-01-02: Mediation support | Mediation activities, including Jean Monnet Dialogues, Inter-Party Dialogues, activities related to conflict prevention | 230.000,00 |
| Budget Line 3230-01-03: Young Political Leaders Programme | Young Political Leaders Programme | 130.000,00 |
| Budget Line 3230-02-01: Sakharov Prize | Sakharov Prize | 100.000,00 |
| Budget Line 3230-02-02: Sakharov Community activities | Activities related to the Sakharov Prize /network, etc. | 100.000,00 |
| Budget Line 3230-02-03: Human Rights actions | Targeted human rights activities in the CDSA priority and other ad hoc priority countries | 100.000,00 |
| Budget Line 3230-03-01: Capacity-building activities | Capacity development and building activities in CDSA priority countries and regions, EU candidate countries and other ad hoc priority countries | 500.000,00 |
| TOTAL | | 1.250.000,00 |

ANNEX IV

Secretariat Implementing Democracy Support and Election-Related Activities

| DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES (DG EXPO) | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---------------------|
| DIRECTORATE D: DEMOCRACY SUPPORT | | | | |
| SERVICE/ UNIT | CDSA ACTIVITIES | CONTACT | E-MAIL | PHONE +32 2 28 + |
| Directorate D: Democracy Support | DEG Secretariat Coordination of democracy support activities | Director Armelle DOUAUD | DEG-DGEXPO@europarl.europa.eu | 43806 |
| Election Observation and Follow-up Unit (ELEC) | Election observation missions Pre- and post-election activities and events | Head of Unit Cristina CASTAGNOLI | elec-secretariat@ep.europa.eu | 32782 |
| Parliamentary Support and Capacity Building Unit (PAC) | Capacity building activities in priority countries, including pre-accession countries | Head of Unit Marta UDINA | parliamentary-support-and-capacity-building-unit@ep.europa.eu | 32916 |

| DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES (DG EXPO) | | | | |
|--|---|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| DIRECTORATE D: DEMOCRACY SUPPORT | | | | |
| SERVICE/ UNIT | CDSA ACTIVITIES | CONTACT | E-MAIL | PHONE +32 2 28 + |
| Human Rights Actions Unit (HRAC) | Targeted human rights activities in priority countries and Sakharov-related activities | Head of Unit Stefan KRAUSS | HumanRights-Actions@ep.europa.eu | 32256 |
| Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit (MED) | Mediation activities Jean Monnet Dialogues Young Political Leaders Conflict prevention | Head of Unit Maximilan SCHROEDER | med@ep.europa.eu | 32250 |

