



## **Expression of Interest for the 2025 Evaluation of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED)**

### **1. Background to EED**

The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) was established in November 2012, as a joint initiative of the Member States (MS) and European Union institutions, to foster democracy and freedom. It has a hybrid organisational model. While being autonomous from the European Union and established as a private foundation, it is governed by a Board of Governors (BoG) that is composed of, among others, representatives of the EU Member States and European Union institutions and an Executive Committee (ExCom) that is supported by a Secretariat. The EED Secretariat currently employs 65 staff and 13 interns.

EED's mandate is to *“foster democratization by providing demand-driven, flexible and context-based support to un(der)supported pro-democracy actors and activities, whereby significant political and operational risks are accepted. The support is to add value and complement EU and other democracy support programmes”*. It is important to note that the Theory of Change underlying EED's work is not guided by a focus on the most effective ways to support democratisation processes with minimal risks. Instead, it is based on the understanding that there are gaps in the democracy assistance provided by other EU democracy support actors, which need to be filled by providing demand-driven support - as it is deemed advantageous for the fostering of democratisation and transition processes, when flexible and fast support can be provided to otherwise un(der)supported pro-democracy actors/activities. Hence, EED accepts significant political and operational risks.

EED's main activity is providing grant support to civic, human rights and political activists, pro-democratic movements, media, and journalists. Its grant scheme commenced in August 2013, and by November 2024, over 2800 grants had been provided to pro-democracy actors, totalling €230m. Other activities include the provision of pre- and post-award assistance and facilitating external technical assistance, knowledge sharing and networking activities. A gender perspective has been mainstreamed into all decisions and EED-funded actions.

EED's initial, although not exclusive, focus was on the European Neighbourhood (Article 2.1. of the EED Statutes). On 3 December 2014, the EED Board of Governors decided to extend EED's support to democracy actors beyond the EU Neighbourhood and, more specifically, to focus on the area adjacent to the neighbourhood (e.g. Bahrain, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkey). The Board of Governors reasserted, however, that the EU Neighbourhood would continue to constitute EED's main priority. In 2018, EED opened its grants process for applications from the Western Balkans. This decision was taken following a recognition of the specific challenges in these countries.

### **2. Scope and focus of the 2025 Evaluation**

EED's Statutes require EED to undertake an external evaluation of the Endowment and its activities at least every five years. The external evaluations of EED are commissioned by the

EED Secretariat, conducted by an external party, and approved by the Board of Governors, based on a recommendation of the Executive Committee. In line with good practice, EED has decided to establish an Advisory Group for the 2025 Evaluation, which advises the EED Secretariat and Executive Committee throughout the evaluation process in order to strengthen the credibility, quality and independence of the evaluation.

Four independent evaluations were carried out during the period 2014 - 2020:

- an Inception Phase Review (2014);
- a Mid-Term Evaluation (2015);
- a Full-Term Evaluation (2016/2017); and
- the 2020 Evaluation of EED.

The Inception Phase Review provided a detailed assessment of the set-up phase and of the progress made during the initial implementation phase. The Mid-Term evaluation provided an initial assessment of progress towards EED's objectives as an organisation, and of the more specific objectives linked to the implementation of the EED grant scheme.

The Full-Term Evaluation focused on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of EED as an organisation and its grants. It assessed the political relevance of EED, its added value as an organisation by filling gaps in the democracy support provided, and the extent to which EED has been able to support democratisation through providing fast and flexible grant support. In addition, it analysed how the organisational efficiency and effectiveness of EED could be further enhanced, including how the MEL system could be further strengthened.

The 2020 Evaluation of EED analysed the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of EED's support. In addition, it analysed a) what lessons can be learned from EED's expansion to new regions/countries, b) the extent to which EED has become a learning organisation, and c) the extent to which EED's risk-taking mandate was implemented and has paid off. A combination of data collection methods was used, including document and literature review, semi-structured interviews, online surveys, detailed grant research, country case studies and thematic studies. Outcome harvesting, contribution analysis, and sense-making techniques were then used to analyse the data. Country case studies were conducted for Lebanon, Turkey, Serbia, Moldova, and Ukraine. In addition, a case-study focusing on EED's support in "sensitive countries" was conducted, as well as thematic analyses focusing on EED's support for media and gender equality.

### **3. Scope and focus of the 2025 Evaluation**

The 2025 Evaluation is to build upon the previous evaluations. Following the advice of the Advisory Group, the evaluation is not to provide a broad assessment of EED's work based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, but instead to explore several key questions in depth. More specifically, the evaluation is to address the following key questions:

- What have been the main and most important results achieved with EED's support? What has been the biggest impact of EED's work? How can "success" be defined in the different contexts in which EED operates (e.g. using V-DEM's typology of regimes: closed autocracy, electoral autocracy, autocratic grey zone, democratic grey zone etc.)? Does EED's risk-taking approach pay off?
- To what extent has EED been able to effectively adapt and respond to the changing circumstances (e.g. democratic backsliding, violent conflict/war), and changing needs

for support, in the countries of its operations? To what extent has EED seized “windows of opportunity” linked to important political events in the last five years?

- To what extent are EED’s grant selection, oversight, and support modalities fit for purpose, taking into account the significant changes in the context in which it operates (e.g. evolving geopolitical context, increased risks in sensitive and highly repressive environments)?
- To what extent has EED been able to complement other donor support, and avoid duplication? What was EED’s added value compared to other donor support? Do other donors build/follow-up on EED’s support (e.g. do other donors regularly take over support for certain groups after an initial EED grant)?
- To what extent has EED been able to safeguard the security of its grantees?
- Is EED’s support (too) scattered? Would it be beneficial for EED to focus its support more on specific areas/topics/types of support?
- To what extent have the recommendations of previous evaluations (especially the 2020 Evaluation) been accepted and institutionalised?

The evaluation will cover the period between January 2020 - December 2024.

The evaluation methodology is likely to include a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods and tools to achieve optimal evaluation results. It could include document and literature review, semi-structured interviews, online surveys, causal hypothesis testing, and case study research. The use of smart technology/IT tools to collect and analyse the data is welcomed.

A minimum of two country and/or thematic case studies should be conducted, covering at least one country in the Eastern and one country in the Southern Neighbourhood of the EU.

#### **4. Timeline & budget**

The evaluation will commence on 1 May 2025. It will consist of an inception phase (1 May - 6 June 2025), a main research phase (9 June – 29 August 2025), and a reporting phase (1 September 2025 - 28 February 2026), during which several iterations of the Evaluation Report will be submitted for review. The first draft Evaluation Report is to be submitted by 19 September 2025. Following the submission of each report, a review meeting will be organised between the Evaluation Team and EED. The purpose of each meeting will be to review and to provide feedback to the Contractor. This could take place by phone, video conference or meetings at the EED Secretariat in Brussels.

The maximum budget allocation for the 2025 EED Evaluation is €100,000, inclusive of professional fees (including 21% VAT)<sup>1</sup> and all travel and subsistence expenses (if meetings in Brussels or any fieldwork trips are proposed) and any other miscellaneous expenses such as translation.

#### **5. Required Expertise**

The evaluator/researcher(s) shall have well established and proven experience in the evaluation of civil society, media, and democracy support activities (including grant-making), including in sensitive contexts. The team should have experience and demonstrated understanding of the

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<sup>1</sup> For companies outside of Belgium, VAT will be paid by EED in Belgium in accordance with Article 44 of the Council directive 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value added tax.

wider political context in which EED operates, including experience with EU structures and governance. The team should have proven ability in both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods. Prior use of experimental and counterfactual approaches would be an advantage.

The language of the assignment and the Evaluation Report shall be English, although EED works in English, French, Arabic, Russian, Turkish and languages of the Western Balkans. Relevant language skills will be considered an advantage.

## **6. Application procedure**

Interested consultant(s) should electronically submit an Expression of Interest to: [secretariat@democracyendowment.eu](mailto:secretariat@democracyendowment.eu). The Subject line of your application should be “2025 Evaluation”.

The Expression of Interest should include:

- A brief motivation letter – please highlight relevant expertise and experience and explain your interest in this evaluation
- CV’s of the proposed members of the Evaluation Team
- Overview of the organisation’s relevant track-record (if applicable)
- Examples (executive summaries) of recent evaluations conducted
- Daily rates of the proposed evaluation team members

The deadline for the submission of the expression of interest is 14 February 2025.

The Expression of Interests are reviewed by the EED Secretariat, which will identify around five candidates who will be invited to submit a full proposal (responding to detailed Terms of Reference), by 7 March 2025. Please note that only successful applicants will be contacted.