

Next Ten Years: A vision for EED

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“Considering that democracy is a universal value that includes respect for human rights as enshrined in public international law, in particular the International Bill of Human Rights together with other relevant UN, international and regional texts; considering that democracy is a constituent part of European history [...].”

(from the Declaration on the Establishment of EED, 2011)¹

This June, “A Strategic Orientation Document of the Board of Governors for the Further Development of the European Endowment for Democracy” was adopted by the Board of Governors. The document sets out EED’s strategic choices and priorities for this next period.

EED’s values-based approach implies supporting democratic aspirations wherever they exist. EED has already proven its ability to scale up, and the strategy foresees that any further expansion of EED’s geographical mandate should be well-prepared, based on a step-by-step, region-by-region approach. It also must be well-resourced in terms of grant-making and the structural development of the Secretariat.

Over the next period, EED will continue to prioritise support based on a profound understanding of and respect for local contexts, with EED providing both “wide support”, working with many actors and initiatives, and “deep support”, including intensive coaching, capacity-building and technical assistance.

For many years to come security will remain the main concern of societies. EED will continue to raise awareness of the interlinkages between democracy and regional security, including when identifying grant support, coaching beneficiaries and advocating for donor funding, given the long-term security benefits of democracy support.

EED support is an act of democratic solidarity that takes account of societal perspectives and the needs of people, their empowerment and resilience, as the main drivers of change. In my view, this “democratic solidarity” concept can be also understood as a call to the international democratic community to reject all types of “foreign agent laws” and to promote the “right to assist” so no one in need is left without support.

EED will further consolidate its flexible support and robust, fast decision-making processes for responding quickly to emergencies and providing long-term values-based support, and it will continue to build trustful relationships with local partners, allowing for locally driven agendas based on genuine democratic principles and values.

¹ Declaration on the Establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 20 December 2011, 18683/11.

As has been the case since EED's launch, the safety of grantees and the Secretariat's staff will continue to be prioritised. EED will constantly improve and adjust safety procedures to enable flexible support to democracy activists within the most hostile environments.

EED was established to "add value" and complement existing democracy-support programmes. This allows EED to support groups and activists that cannot be supported by existing EU instruments and that struggle to attract other donor support. EED's "added value" has evolved over the past decade, with an expansion of EED's geographic mandate and the increase in earmarked funds, and in some hostile environments in particular, EED's role has shifted from that of "gap-filler" to main supporter.

It is crucial that in the future, EED can continue to "support the unsupported" in countries, regions and thematic areas that other donors do not or cannot support. We will continue to engage with member states and the donor community to ensure stable, long-term, non-earmarked funding to respond to democracy activists in under-supported countries, regions and thematic areas.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning is core to EED's work, and in the future, it will continue to capture and assess results, identify lessons learned and actively contribute to the international democracy-support community's efforts to improve the evidence base underlying democracy assistance.

EED will also continue to engage with and collaborate with like-minded organisations, ensuring knowledge-sharing, increasing the impact of support, avoiding duplication and helping to build a stronger community of practice.

Over the next ten years, EED will also work to further develop its knowledge-management, knowledge-sharing and advisory capacity, which is a key part of its role of collecting, analysing and aggregating knowledge from partners on the ground and sharing this with EU institutions and member states.

While European Union funding is the largest contribution to EED, EED will continue to seek to broaden and diversify its funding sources while retaining its political and operational independence in line with its statutes.

Approval of this Strategic Orientation document merely marks the start of the ambitious endeavour of EED's next phase of development; the Board of Governors and Executive Committee will play a leading role in discussing detailed roadmaps and action-plans to implement this broad vision over the coming years. I look forward to contributing to this work together with the EED team during the next period to ensure that the next ten years of EED's work supporting democracy can build on the achievements and lessons learned over our first ten years.