

Democracy Support Strategies in the European Union's Neighbourhood

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Summary

As an integration project dedicated to preserving peace among its Member States, the European Union has evolved over the past six decades into a community of like-minded members who share a host of fundamental values such as human rights, equality, freedom and the rule of law. Crucially, democracy is the necessary scaffolding for supporting the principles that guide all EU policies, and which Brussels seeks to promote both within and outside its borders. The EU's external democracy support efforts have revolved around mechanisms such as accession conditionality and socialisation, underpinned by the transfer of values, norms and procedures across an expanding area of EU external action. But while the definitive prospect of membership provided strong incentives for democratisation to Central and Eastern European candidate countries, the challenges to democracy support in the EU's eastern and southern neighbourhood proved more formidable. The purpose of this workshop is to explore the difficulties encountered by the EU in supporting democracy and democratic initiatives in its eastern and southern neighbourhood.

These challenges can come in various ways:

- (a) From the EU itself as the process of integration continues and as its own MS face democratic backsliding and erosion
- (b) From the geopolitical location of the EU's eastern and southern neighbours, considering the Great Power competition and the sensitive relations in the Middle East
- (c) From the demand for democracy and support for democratisation processes within the countries of the eastern and southern neighbourhood

As a result of these challenges, a number of questions emerge around the following themes:

- How effective are the EU's strategies for democracy support towards the ENP countries?
- How successful has their implementation been?
- Has the EU's good governance agenda been instrumental in promoting democracy?
- How does the competition between other international players affect democratisation?
- How can democracy promotion strategies effectively capture political agents?
- What kind of a democracy is externally promoted, and what demand and support exists on the ground?
- Is this a new form of colonisation or is there the opportunity for grassroots emergence of democratic initiatives?

The workshop invites contributions along these questions, but also on specific countries of the EU's neighbourhood, exploring the nexus between current affairs and the challenges to democratisation and democracy at large. The workshop is supported by three Horizon Europe projects: REDEMOS, SHAPEDEM-EU and EMBRACE, all researching aspects of democracy promotion and support in the ENP countries and beyond.