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Find out more about our activities:



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# DEAR FRIENDS,

As we are preparing to move into a new decade, 2019 has truly been a year of scale-up for Democracy International. Our work is more diverse and international and we are planning further ahead than ever.

This year, we have launched a number of new and exciting projects, such as our online platform for democracy activists and our campaign for a World Citizens' Initiative. At the same time, we have seen a lot of our work of the past years pay off: we had a spectacular edition of the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, our European Public Sphere went on its most extensive tour to date and the European elections signified a watershed moment for our campaigns, with long-awaited successes on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and lobby transparency.

All of this happened in between moving boxes and address changes, while we have taken up residence at our new offices in the city centre of Cologne!

Nonetheless, we are very worried about the state of democracy in the world. Throughout the year, we have seen the signs of continuous chipping away at the foundations of our democratic institutions. In 2019, we have seen ugly and repeated political attacks on freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of the judiciary around the world.

Not only are the foundations of our democracy under attack, so are the people defending it. Civic space is in an alarming and accelerated decline. A recent CIVICUS report estimates that 40% of the world's population now live in repressed countries, twice as many as last year. It is more necessary than ever to support activists on the ground. This is why, at Democracy International we have started working even more to create spaces for civil society and citizens: for the first time this year, we offered grants for young activists to join our Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, and we are well on the way to open an Initiative House for Human Rights and Democracy in Cologne.

Around the globe, people are being pushed to reappraise the true worth of our democratic institutions. Citizens everywhere have sent a clear signal that participation in decision-making is of vital importance to them. The European elections saw the highest turnout in 20 years, not least due to civil society mobilization, and a record number of ECIs were registered this year.

We are also happy to see new models of participation being developed and implemented worldwide. This year, citizens' assemblies were called into being in Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Eastern Belgium.

2019 really was the year of the citizen! All over the world, citizens concerned about their future took to the streets, from the Fridays for Future movement that swept the planet to pro-democracy demonstrations in Lebanon, Sudan, Hong Kong and Chile. The citizens of the world have one clear message, "the future belongs to us!"

And so, maybe things are not very different from 30 years ago, when peaceful protests in Eastern Germany provided the catalyst for the implosion of one of the great poles of power in our world. We would do well to pay close attention to what happened here three decades ago. It is a timely reminder that power can only exist by virtue of the people.

With that principle as our guideline we will continue our work in the new decade. But we cannot do it alone. As you read through our annual report, know that nothing we do would be possible without your support. You continue to inspire and encourage us, and for that we are incredibly grateful.

So thank you for your encouragement and passion! Together, we are ready to start the roaring twenties!

The Democracy International team

**In 2019...**

**4**

**new co-workers**  
joined our team

**8/11**

of our demands for  
a better **European**  
**Citizens' Initiative**  
flowed into the **new**  
**regulation**

Our **European Public**  
**Sphere** travelled to

**36**

**different cities**

**300+**

people registered for  
the **Global Forum**  
**on Modern Direct**  
**Democracy**

Democracy International  
hosted

**7**

**interns**

we reached a new  
record:

**23**

**European Citizens'**  
**Initiatives were open**  
for signatures

**700+**

**people participated**  
in a **European Public**  
**Sphere discussion**

**10**

cities founded an  
**International League**  
**of Democracy Cities**

335

candidate MEPs  
**pledged for our Now  
the Citizens campaign**

61 663

**emails calling for a  
lobby register** in the  
European Parliament  
were sent using our tool

We packed up

43

**boxes** to move to  
**our new office**

**but...**

8

**national plebiscites**  
were held

21 016

citizens **signed our  
petition for a more  
democratic Europe**  
ahead of the elections

Over

125

organisations worldwide  
have **endorsed our 'We  
the Peoples'** campaign

14

**national  
referendums** were  
organised globally

5

national votes were  
held **outside of any  
legal mechanism**

# OUR JOURNEY IN 2019

**23-26 January 2019:**  
Democracy International  
invites activists to Dublin  
on a study tour on  
citizens' assemblies.

**6 March 2019:**  
We move to our new  
offices that we share with  
Mehr Demokratie in the  
centre of Cologne.

**22 March 2019:**  
We sign the agreement for  
the 2020 Global Forum on  
Modern Direct Democracy  
with the City of Bern.

**12 March 2019:**  
European Parliament approves  
reformed European Citizens'  
Initiative. The new regulation will  
go into effect in January 2020.

**30 March 2019:**  
Opening of the  
European Public  
Sphere season. First  
event in Liège, Belgium.

**30 April 2019:**  
Start Austrian 'Querbeet  
durch den Pongau' Tour  
of our European Public  
Sphere.

**Browse our interactive  
timeline  
online:**  
  
[bit.ly/  
2s5Ei5h](https://bit.ly/2s5Ei5h)

### TIME FOR CHANGE IN EUROPE

Since its inception, Democracy International has made a priority of ensuring citizens a seat at the table in the European Union (EU). With the continent anxiously awaiting the European election results, a lot of our work was geared towards the incoming European Parliament. Our aim this year was to make sure that the citizens of Europe are on the top of the list for the new Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Our message: “this is your chance for change!”

#### Now the citizens! – The Parliament of change

In the second-biggest democratic exercise in the world, nearly 500 million citizens in 28 countries were called to vote in the European Union Parliamentary Elections. 751 seats were to be filled from a pool of over 10 000 candidates. At 51%, this year’s European elections saw the greatest voter turnout in two decades. Our own homebase of Cologne even proudly boasted the greatest turnout of all major cities in Germany! The good news is that this increased voter participation means that the next five years will be about really putting the EU’s promises to work.

In the run-up to the elections, we called on candidates to pledge to a bottom-up relaunch of the EU. We ran the ‘Now The Citizens’ campaign together with Meer Democratie Netherlands, contacting over 4000 candidates! 335 candidates we contacted pledged they would support



On 11 September, we met with MEPs to officially start our campaign for a European Parliamentary Intergroup on democracy.



our demands. 33 of them from four political groups were elected to the European Parliament. Over 60 civil society organizations joined our campaign by signing our open letter.

A first positive surprise came immediately after the elections. As she was nominated President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen announced that a Conference on the Future of Europe will take place in 2020. The conference will bring together citizens (likely chosen at random), civil society and the EU institutions as equal partners to discuss how we can strengthen European democracy, and even treaty change will be on the table. However, this will not be the official convention according to Article 48 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty that we have demanded for years and so far, no concrete plans have been announced. We do welcome the initiative and will of course do whatever we can to make it a success, while we will also continue to work towards an official process of EU reform.

Our 'Now The Citizens' campaign continues even after the elections. We are currently lobbying for the first-ever parliamentary intergroup

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on the EU's democratic future, which will draft a roadmap for citizen participation that we can use to keep Members of European Parliament accountable. By establishing an official intergroup, MEPs can send an important signal that democratic reform is a priority to them and open the possibility of putting actual resources towards this goal. If achieved, the intergroup will be a forum where innovative and creative ways to bring citizens closer to EU decision-making can be explored. We publicly called on MEPs to become the Parliament of Change at the official launch of our intergroup campaign in the EU Parliament in September. With our support, MEPs Patrick Breyer (Greens/EFA) and Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL) helped prepare the road to establish the intergroup.

As this report went to print, we have advanced through all the rounds of intergroup negotiations and have nearly made it to the end of the process. Only a limited number of intergroups will be accepted. They will be officially announced by mid-December. In case our intergroup isn't officially accepted, we will continue with an informal group of supportive MEPs, organising expert hearings and citizens' talks on the future of European democracy. Stay tuned!

**23-26 May 2019:**  
EU parliamentary elections, with our 'Now the Citizens' campaign calling on candidate MEPs to pledge to democratic reform.

### **Finally! - A better European Citizens' Initiative**

After two years of intensive advocacy and negotiation on the reform of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), the European Parliament finally approved the new regulation in March to go into effect on 1 January 2020. Our concentrated campaigning efforts paid off with eight out of 11 of our demands fully or partially accepted in the new regulation. The ECI will see concrete improvements to make it more user-friendly. Our main

focus now will be the improvement of the digital dimension of the ECI. A new online collaborative platform, the ECI Forum, was launched last year, where Democracy International continues to offer expert fundraising and campaigning advice to ECI organisers. As of recently, we manage the stakeholder community of the Forum as well. The European Commission has also invited us to contribute to an overhaul of the Online Signature Collection System for ECIs, which will be implemented at the beginning of the new year.

### **Finally 2! – A lobby register for the EU parliament**

2019 started with a big civil society win for transparency in the European Parliament. In January, the European Parliament adopted historic lobby transparency rules that for the first time ever oblige MEPs in special positions to publicly disclose their meetings with lobbyists. The vote came as a result of continued civil society pressure, including our email drive which allowed citizens to write their MEPs and call on them to vote in favour of the amendment. A wave of citizens took part in a matter of days: 1316 citizens in 24 Member States sent 61 663 emails to targeted MEPs using Democracy International's tool.

At the same time, Lobby Control launched an email drive aimed specifically at German MEPs, and WeMove.EU launched an open letter which was signed by over 90 000 citizens. In a last-ditch effort to stop the rule from passing, the European People's Party, the European conservatives, triggered a rarely used parliamentary rule that allows MEPs to vote in secret. Despite this, the necessary absolute majority of 376 votes was narrowly surpassed by four votes. The new rule went into effect autumn of this year.

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### **Doubling up on a European Public Sphere**

In 2019, our travelling European Public Sphere project really kicked into high gear. Throughout six tours, we organised more than 70 mini walk-in conventions in 36 cities. Setting up in easily accessible places such as market squares, shopping malls and beaches, we collected ideas from citizens all over Europe who were able to spontaneously join the debate.

In March, we started out in two directions, an Austrian 'Pongau Tour' and a BeNeLux Tour. The latter was the most extensive tour with our Europe Dome to date: 11 stops in three countries in the space of only two months. After this intensive start, our Austrian team visited Vienna's Grätzels (neighbourhoods), while the Cologne team set out for Poland. During our 'Czesc Polska, 1785 km of Poland' tour we invited young people to share their thoughts on sustainability, youth involvement and democratic resistance in Europe. In the meantime, we remained active in Germany as well, realising a further nine stops. In the wake of the Ibiza scandal, the Austrian team organised discussions on the future of democracy in their country.

As we were naturally crossing borders on our six different tours this year, we were able to experience Europe as more than just a collection of countries. Surprisingly (or maybe not), across borders people worry about similar issues, such as climate change. No matter where we were and no matter who spoke up - young or old, progressive or conservative, Polish or Luxembourgish - the conversation also always came back to the lack of means of civic participation in our European democracy.



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Our European Public Sphere set out for its most intensive season to date, making stops in 36 cities in Austria, the BeNeLux, Germany and Poland.

2019 was a big year for the European Public Sphere, especially thanks to many local partners and participants. We received a lot of support and confirmation that the project is highly appreciated and, more than that, needed. Participants told us they enjoyed the opportunity to get informed through dialogue. We are continuously learning and working to lower the barriers to participating. Our events this year taught us that people do not shy away from using microphones, which allows us to include more passers-by in the debates.

But the discussion does not stop when we dismantle our dome. The goal is to carry these ideas from the streets to the EU Parliament: currently, we are working on a catalogue of ideas based on the input from the first two years of the project! A whole pool of staffers, interns and volunteers has analysed the recordings of 62 Dome Talks for ideas, problems and solutions for our European future. We are incredibly grateful to them and will hand over the catalogue to political decision-makers across Europe starting January 2020. The catalogue as well as the full Dome Talks will soon be available on our website. Keep an eye out for them: [www.publicsphere.eu!](http://www.publicsphere.eu!)





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### **Looking forward: Focus on fundamental rights**

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is turning 20 in 2020. To raise awareness on citizens' fundamental rights in the EU, Democracy International is organising an event and a Dome Talk in Cologne next May with the Connect Europe project. The European Public Sphere already has ambitious plans for 2020. In the run-up to the Global Forum in Bern, we are organising a Democracy Spiral Tour with eight stops in four countries. And Scandinavia's white nights have also caught our attention. Let's see what still comes our way – or whose way we come – until then.

### **RESEARCH FOR ACTIVISM**

Information is the key to action. This is why Democracy International aims to produce high quality, scientific research and put it at the disposition of the democracy community. Through analysis and trainings we can strengthen our global advocacy efforts and reinforce our networks. Our academic projects this year went through an exciting growing phase.

### **Navigating the world of direct democracy**

We are coming up on an important birthday with the Direct Democracy Navigator database celebrating its 10th anniversary next year. The main mission of the Navigator has always been to provide accurate information on legal instruments for direct

democracy. We are continuously checking if the legal designs listed on the Navigator are still up to date. So as we do every year, in 2019 we updated the legal designs in our database, from Switzerland to Mexico to Germany!

The Navigator website now also offers an exciting, new tool: the 'Compare' function allows users to explore instruments and examine them side-by-side. It offers three different possibilities for a more detailed, targeted search in the database. You can test the tool here: [www.direct-democracy-navigator.org/compare](http://www.direct-democracy-navigator.org/compare).

Two further big steps to fully exploit the possibilities the database offers were taken this year. In the Navigator workshop at the 2019 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy in Taiwan, we examined how an ideal direct democracy law can look, and what the possible pitfalls are, drawing on the different experiences of 1792 legal designs worldwide. The Navigator team was also reinforced by two interns this year, Carolina and Shanne, who took up research comparing the effect of legal infrastructure on direct democratic practice, especially in Latin America.

**5 June 2019:**  
European Public  
Sphere sets out  
on Cześć Polska -  
1785km of Poland.

### **A learning democracy for an ever-evolving world**

Under the header "We can do it better - we can do it together" our Academy for a Learning Democracy has really taken flight this year, spreading the message that modern democracies need to reflect on how they practice democracy. To make our democracies more resilient, we need to take care of the people and the process that keep our democracy running. A learning democracy both supports public personnel and continuously improves the system.

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Following that guiding principle, we had a number of activities this year, we organised a Summer Academy for Democracy Development, in partnership with the University of Tübingen, the Weltethos-Institut and the CVJM University in August. The three-day course addressed the question of why we need learning democracies and how the concept can be disseminated and professionalised.

The principle of professional democracy development was also presented at the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy in Taiwan and met with lively interest from participants. Building on this success, the Academy will offer its own training program starting in 2020, based on formats and topics that have been developed and tested in the recent years. Keep an eye on our website for more information: [www.lernende-demokratie.de](http://www.lernende-demokratie.de).

Together with Pulse of Europe, we organised a second Germany-wide round of HomeParliaments. In the heat of the European parliamentary election campaign, 1500 citizens discussed “a Europe that protects” in 260 discussion rounds in their own homes. The results of their discussions were commented on by Katharina Barley (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats), Nicola Beer (Renew Europe Group), Sven Giegold (Greens/EFA) and Manfred Weber (European People’s Party).

**23-25 August 2019:**  
The Summer Academy for a Learning Democracy takes place at the University of Tübingen.

We are currently looking for fundraising opportunities and gathering alliance partner to take the HomeParliaments model to the next level and to develop it into a European participation platform. With Open Petition we have already won an important implementation partner. More information on the HomeParliaments can be found on [www.homeparliaments.eu](http://www.homeparliaments.eu).

## **Ancient, yet cutting-edge - The reinvention of citizens' assemblies**

Last January, Democracy International organised a study tour on the phenomenon of the Irish citizens' assemblies for 23 activists and professionals. The group met with leading experts to look at what made the process so successful and learn about the legal, administrative and political perspectives of organising and running a citizens' assembly. Speakers included former Prime Minister Enda Kenny, David Farrell and Jane Suiter, the architects of the procedure, and real-life members of the assembly.

The study tour prepared the ground for our member organisation Mehr Demokratie to organise its own citizens' assembly in Germany in the fall of this year. It was the first-ever citizens' assembly on the national level in Germany, gathering 160 citizens, selected at random, to discuss how democracy in Germany can be improved. The conclusions of the discussions were handed over to President of the Bundestag Schäuble on 15 November, the Day for Democracy, together with a joint open letter by Mehr Demokratie and Democracy International. The handover was marked with a big event co-organised by Democracy International, which featured an enormous collaborative aerial art performance.

A second German citizens' assembly focussing on climate change is in the works and a Citizens' Convention on Climate is already underway in France. Democracy International is assisting on both processes and will gather these recent experiences in a specialised thematic track at the next Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy.

### A HOMEBASE FOR DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS

To achieve a democratic world, where citizens get to decide on their own future and that of the societies they live in, cooperation and exchange are paramount. Democracy International aims to create spaces where people working on issues of direct democracy around the world can share practices and experiences, so that we can learn from each other and grow stronger together.

### All aboard the democracy train!

One of our key events is the annual Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, the biggest gathering of its kind worldwide. Our 2019 edition was an especially animated one as we headed to Taiwan against the backdrop of a newly introduced referendum law and a first voting day in 2018. Over 300 experts, activists and officials from over 60 countries gathered to learn about Taiwan's democratisation history and new legislation.

**1 September 2019:**  
Our jury selects 7 young activists who receive a grant to attend the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy.

The Global Forum week set out with a spectacular three-day briefing tour aboard the Taiwan Democracy Train, which was hosted by the Minister of Transportation. Taking off from Taipei main station, participants travelled to eight cities with particular significance in Taiwan's democratic history along the country's west coast. Between stops, participants could discuss with each other, visit an onboard exhibition on the



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campaign for direct democracy in Taiwan and observe a participative performance based on the political repression referred to as White Terror, which the country went through from '49 to '87.

The final stop of the Taiwan Democracy Train was Taichung, the second-biggest city of Taiwan and the actual home of the 2019 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy conference. From 2 until 5 October, the National Chung Hsing University hosted participants from six continents. In three plenary sessions, the programme mainly focused its attention on Taiwan's 2018 referendum experience, where for the first time citizens were asked to vote on 10 different questions that had been submitted by citizens' initiative. The new legislation is one of the most advanced in the world, making Taiwan an example for the rest of the region.

From 2 until 5 October the 2019 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy took place in Taiwan - it was preceded by a briefing tour on a train, attended by over 250 participants.

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Using the questions “What can the world learn from Taiwan?” and “What can Taiwan learn from the world?” as guiding themes, the programme was exceedingly diverse this year. With 38 workshops, six different city tours and the city of Taichung signing onto the Magna Charta for Democratic Cities, it was the most ambitious edition of the Forum yet.

But attention was also paid to the circumstances in the wider region. With conditions in Hong Kong changing from day to day, participants were also especially interested in how to protect existing democratic rights. On the last day of the Forum, several participants met with pro-democracy protesters from Hong Kong and Taiwan, learning about the necessity for international solidarity and visiting Taichung’s ‘Lennon Wall’, where messages of protest against police brutality in Hong Kong are posted. The meeting prompted the participants to sign off the Forum’s closing declaration - 10 principles for direct democracy in the world - with the message “in love and solidarity with people in Hong Kong and all those fighting for their rights everywhere...”

The Global Forum week was concluded on Saturday 5 October with the official founding ceremony of the International League of Democracy Cities, hosted by the city of Taipei. Representatives from 10 cities around the world signed the Magna Charta on Democratic Cities and committed to more citizen participation in their towns. The League has raised particular interest in Korea, where several cities have linked up to and are looking into the possibility of hosting the secretariat for the International League.

## **Investing in young talent**

This year, for the first time we had the amazing opportunity to specifically invite young democracy activists and researchers to the Global Forum, offering them a grant to participate. Our goal was to give people who don't usually have the chance to travel to conferences such as the Global Forum an opportunity to join, share their experiences and meet fellow activists. Through a global competition, we selected seven grantees who received up to 1000 Euros to cover travel and accommodation costs to join us in Taiwan. Our jury selected Aung Than Oo from Myanmar, Dion from Australia, Greta from Mexico, Matthijs and Mees from the Netherlands, Tamuna from Georgia and Tosin from Nigeria. It was incredibly enriching and inspiring to hear about their respective projects at the Forum, and we fully intend to give out travel grants for the Forum again in 2020.

## **Looking forward: the practice and future of direct democracy**

Next year, the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy will be hosted by the city of Bern, Switzerland. From 21 to 27 September, we will meet in the Swiss capital to discuss the practice and future of direct democracy. This Global Forum will offer several specialised tracks taking an in-depth look at topics such as "Direct democratic practice in Switzerland" and "E-voting and digital democracy", but also "Transnational instruments of direct democracy" and "From participatory instruments to direct democracy".

The 2020 Global Forum will take place during a national voting week. Throughout a pre-forum briefing tour participants will have the opportunity to see Swiss direct democracy in action. From Monday to Wednesday we will hear from campaigners



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and officials about the specific initiatives on the ballot. On Sunday after the Forum, the voting day, we will be able to visit polling stations and follow the voting results coming in, with live analysis. Talks are already underway for the 2021 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, which will likely take place in Mexico City. Keep an eye out for announcements here: [www.democracy.community/global-forum](http://www.democracy.community/global-forum).

### **Building bridges - Taking the democracy network online**

On 2 October, we officially launched our International Democracy Community! We have worked on this project intensively over the past years, developing a concept, gathering input and feedback from our network, and finally setting up the technological structure. The Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy was the perfect occasion to finally present our online direct democracy atlas!

We built the International Democracy Community to bridge a gap, to represent the vibrant and dynamic democracy community that exists offline on the internet as well. It is a participatory platform which allows people create a profile for themselves or their organisation, find others working on the same issues and publicise events they are organising. We want this platform to become the digital emanation of the inspiring network we have in real life, sharing our work with each other and the world - our digital Global Forum.

Beyond representing the existing democracy network, we also want to support people working on direct democracy all over the world in their activities. On the platform, we will collect expertise and experiences, offering stories from and for the community and creating learning opportunities such as webinars and a summer academy. In 2020, our goal is to scale up the International Democracy Community, promoting it to a wider audience. But we also want to roll out a large feedback round with existing users and add new tools in function of what users themselves say they need. You can discover the Community and create your own profile here: [www.democracy.community](http://www.democracy.community).

### **(Y)our house**

Democracy needs space! Space for discussion, but also physical space to work, meet and think. These places are becoming less and less affordable for civil society organisations, especially in cities. This is why in 2019, we have taken steps to realise our dream of an Initiative House for Human Rights and Democracy in Cologne.

Together with other organisations, we have officially founded an association and gained the explicit support of the Mayor of Cologne, Henriette Reker. Two new team members are now searching for the perfect location to be turned into a meeting, working and exhibition space for civil society in Cologne. A first exploratory meeting already took place this year, presenting the idea to local NGOs and in the next two years the project will be financially supported by the city of Cologne. Find out more on: [www.initiativenhaus.de](http://www.initiativenhaus.de)

**11 September 2019:**  
Kick-off meeting of  
MEPs who signed  
our Now The  
Citizens pledge.

### GLOBAL TOOLS FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES

In recent years, communities everywhere have experienced the boundaries of their democracies under the strain of globalisation. The challenges we collectively face today are complex and cross-cutting. There is no way for single countries to address them. But we do not currently have the global decision-making infrastructure needed to address them in an equitable manner. This is why we are advocating for transnational tools of citizen participation.

#### We The Peoples - citizens and the United Nations

This year, we launched our campaign for a United Nations (UN) World Citizens' Initiative. Together with Democracy Without Borders and CIVICUS, we developed the concept for an instrument that would allow citizens to table items for discussion at the UN General Assembly if they have gathered enough global support. The tool is loosely based on the model of the European Citizens' Initiative. In an academic paper that we commissioned, two legal experts from the University of Liverpool, Ben Murphy and James Organ, examined the legal feasibility and sketched the potential workings of a World Citizens' Initiative.

**30 September 2019:**  
Global Forum week,  
with a pre-tour  
on a train, our  
General Assembly,  
the Forum and a  
Democracy City  
Summit.

Since then, we have worked to build a broad global alliance around the campaign, that was baptised 'We The Peoples' mirroring the preamble of the UN Charter. We presented the idea at the CIVICUS International Civil Society Week for the first time in May. At the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy this fall,

we held a panel on the campaign and on both occasions we received positive reactions and important feedback from participants.

On 13 November, we had a first advocacy meeting presenting the idea to representatives of 10 missions to the UN. We followed up the briefing with the official kick-off of the campaign in New York, across from the UN Headquarters, which was attended by over 50 NGO representatives. In less than one month's time, our 'We The Peoples' campaign was endorsed by 125 organisations worldwide. In the next year, we plan to scale up the campaign and secure more civil society partners, as well as political support: [www.worldcitizensinitiative.org](http://www.worldcitizensinitiative.org).

**2 October 2019:**  
Launch of our  
International  
Democracy  
Community.

### OUR PEOPLE & PARTNERS

Democracy International is an association with offices in Cologne, Germany, but we have wonderful supporters and colleagues all over the world. We also have an incredible network of partner organisations around the world who do amazing work. We see it as a vital part of our task to support them and foster this network. We are stronger together!

This year, we collaborated intensively with our Dutch partner organisation, Meer Democratie Netherlands, who supported us in running the Now The Citizens campaign ahead of the EU elections. We assisted Mehr Demokratie Germany and Omnibus for Direct Democracy on the organisation of the first-ever Germany-wide citizens' assembly and helped to gather EU-wide support for an open letter demanding more direct democracy on the national level in Germany. Our partners at Mehr Demokratie

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Austria and IG Eurovision launched a campaign demanding complementary democracy in Austria in the wake of the Ibiza scandal and ahead of the federal elections. Both our Belgian and Luxembourgish council organisations, Meer Democratie Belgium and Initiativ fir Demokratie-Erweiterung, helped us organise our European Public Sphere BeNeLux tour.

We have had a very eventful year at Democracy International and so in 2019, we had two planning sessions: one in January and one in July. On 13 and 14 March, our council organisations joined us in Cologne to discuss how we could coordinate campaigns and work together this year. At this meeting, the idea for a summer academy ahead of the 2020 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy was born. Stay tuned for more!

Democracy International's General Assembly this year took place in Taichung on 2 October, just before the opening event of the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy. It was attended by 22 members. At the General Assembly, members of the Democracy International staff presented the budget for 2020 and reported on the team's activities in the past two years. We were able to bring good news, as



Our office community in Cologne: the team of Democracy International and Mehr Demokratie NRW.



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we have had two very successful years with a financial situation that is better than we had anticipated and several projects that have done really well, such as the European Public Sphere, the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy and our advocacy for an ECI reform. The next General Assembly will take place during the 2020 Global Forum week in Bern, which will be from 21 to 27 September.

### **The Democracy International family**

This year we were extremely happy to welcome four new team members. Inge Pistor has joined our office as Team Assistant, while Julia Dietrich has come on board part-time to assist with editorial tasks. Maarten de Groot joined our team for the duration of the 'Now the Citizens' campaign, ensuring a Brussels foothold for us. Finally for the Cologne Initiative House for Human Rights and Democracy, a joint project with Mehr Demokratie North Rhine-Westphalia, Jörg Eichenauer has joined our ranks.

Furthermore, we were very fortunate to host several interns and volunteers again this year, who assisted us with campaigns, events and research. Without the wonderful support and enthusiasm of Mirte, Helene, David, Michelle, Katharina, Carolina, Shanne, Elisabeth and Martin it would not have been possible to mount

**13-14 November 2019:**  
Briefing with  
country missions  
to the UN and  
campaign kick-off for  
our World Citizens'  
Initiative project.



## 26| Annual Report

so many activities this year. As ever, we also received a lot of support this year from Edda Dietrich, Markus Wendel and Lucas Rosenthal whose amazing videos and photos bring our work to life.

After eight years, in March of this year it was also time to leave our Rhine-side offices in Porz. Together with our partners from Mehr Demokratie North Rhine-Westphalia, we moved into larger offices in the city centre of Cologne. With a view of the Cologne Cathedral and a versatile co-working space, this office offers us a myriad of new possibilities. A number of events have already taken place at the Gürzenichstraße 21 a-c, from lectures on the practice of citizens' assemblies to planning meetings from burgeoning initiatives.

We also want to thank our incredible board, who support our activities worldwide and have helped us grow further this year. Thank you to Mehdi Ben Mimoun, Daniela Bozhinova, Bruno Kaufmann, Jung-Ok Lee, Joe Mathews, Erwin Mayer, Suresh Nautiyal, Arjen Nijeboer, Daniel Schily and Dane M. Waters. We especially want to congratulate our Board Members Jung-Ok Lee, who this year was appointed Minister for Gender Equality and Family in Korea, and Daniela Bozhinova, who this year completed her PhD.

But most importantly, our work would not be possible without you! Your support and input continue to inspire us and enable us to keep going. Our deepest thanks go to you, supporters of democracy and citizens' rights around the world! We are happy to have you on our side and look forward to continuing to work together with all of you in the next year!



# OUR PLANS FOR 2020

**25 February 2020:**  
Democracy International is co-organising ECI Day in Brussels.

**7-8 May 2020:**  
Democracy International organises a Conference in the Framework of the Connect Europe project.

**18-20 September 2020:**  
Democracy International Council Summer Academy in Austria.

**8-9 May 2020:**  
Zofingen Democracy Summit in the run-up to the Bern Global Forum.

**21-17 September 2020:**  
Global Forum week in Bern, Switzerland with a briefing tour, the Democracy International General Assembly & the Forum.

**Keep an eye on more news and events:**  
[www.democracy.community](http://www.democracy.community)

## We moved! Time to update your contact information:



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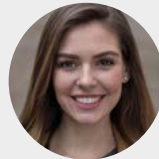


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