

2025

ANNUAL REPORT



**DEMOCRACY
INTERNATIONAL**

Democracy International is largely funded by donations of committed citizens. We are always looking for new possibilities to guarantee our independence. In the past year, we have directed a lot of our efforts towards widening our financial base. If you have ideas or want to support us, please let us know - we are stronger together.



If you want to help us with your donation, you can use the form on the back or donate using our website:

[www.democracy-international.org/
become-sponsor](http://www.democracy-international.org/become-sponsor)

Democracy International is a registered association in Germany (eingetragener Verein - e.V.) - Amtsgericht Köln: VR-Nr. 17139

Printed on paper from responsible sources.



www.democracy-international.org



contact@democracy-international.org



[@democracy_intl](https://twitter.com/democracy_intl)



[@di.DemocracyInternational](https://www.facebook.com/di.DemocracyInternational)



[DemocracyNetwork](https://www.youtube.com/DemocracyNetwork)



[@democracyintl](https://www.instagram.com/democracyintl)

OUR VISION

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS - ONE IS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE OTHER

SHAPING YOUR LIFE IS A HUMAN RIGHT, AND DIRECT DEMOCRACY MAKES IT POSSIBLE.

DEMOCRACY EXTENDS BEYOND ELECTIONS

DEMOCRACY ACTIVISM THRIVES ON GLOBAL DIALOGUE

GLOBAL PROBLEMS NEED GLOBAL DEMOCRATIC SOLUTIONS

DEMOCRACY IS NEVER FINISHED, WE CONSTANTLY NEED TO DEVELOP IT FURTHER

OUR METHODS

LEARN & EXCHANGE

Learning & exchange

We at Democracy International are dedicated to creating learning experiences and opportunities for exchange.

HELP & DEVELOP

Helping & developing

Democracy International offers support by sharing expertise, for instance, by advising on organisational development and campaigning.

TRANSNATIONAL DEMOCRACY

Enhancing transnational democracy

We strengthen international advocacy for democracy. Our work contributes to the growth of solid and democratic transnational institutions.

DEAR FRIENDS

Dear friends and supporters of Democracy International,

With 2025 behind us, it is a good moment to pause together at Democracy International and to give some thought to everything we have initiated, explored, inquired about, and developed together in the past year.

This annual report describes a part of all these activities, from our comprehensive work at the European level, backing up the European Citizens' Initiative, the Future of Europe and twinning groups and cities across the continent, all the way to our global work at the United Nations and preparations for the next Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, taking place in Gaborone, Botswana 7-10 October 2026.

Despite all the daily noise about the imminent end of democracy – and the threats are indeed real – we do our best in keeping our heads cool and resolve strong. In 2025, we continued our long-term work to protect and develop democracy at all political levels worldwide. By now, we understand ourselves to be part of an essential global infrastructure to shield and strengthen democracies.

Getting credit for this work warms our hearts. During the International Electoral Awards Ceremony in Botswana, the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy won the Citizens Engagement Award. Many other of our long-term activities, like the Democracy Camp for young people under 30, are continuing to make a difference.



We are proud and honoured to lead an organisation with such a great team in Cologne and a network that spans the entire world. In our 14th full year of operation, the globe is literally crying out for good and constructive forces – like you, dear friends and supporters of Democracy International.

We wish you all a lot of new energy for 2026, which, we can be quite sure, will demand even more from us – including your generous support for our continuous work.

Yours democratically,

*Clara Egger, Bruno Kaufmann, Daniel Schily,
Democracy International, Executive Board*

OUR JOURNEY IN 2025

24 JANUARY - Our *Building Bridges EU x Life as an Activist* Event took place in Berlin

29 JANUARY - The Horizon Europe *TWIN4DEM* project, our digital twins for democracy experiment, kicked off in Rotterdam

06 MARCH - The first event for the *Inclusive Digitalisation in the EU* (IDEU) project took place in Siegburg

6 MARCH - Our first cohort of *European Solidarity Corps* Young Professionals, Lia and Beka, joined our team from the

Netherlands and Georgia

6 MARCH - The third cohort of *weltwärts* Young Professionals, Carlyne and Simamkele, arrived from South Africa to join Democracy International

18 MARCH - Democracy International co-organised the annual *European Citizens' Initiative Day*

25 MARCH - A *Democracy Iftar* evening, co-hosted with ikult Jugend, brought together 100 participants

8 APRIL - Democracy International joined the "*Spotlight on the European Citizens' Initiative*" high-level event at the European Commission

27 APRIL - Itzel and Max, our two *ASA Young Professionals*, joined Democracy International from Mexico and Germany.

29 APRIL - A final event in our *Life as an Activist* series, "People. Power. Planet. Lessons from Latin America" took place in Cologne

1 MAY - Our *Global citizens'*

assemblies - Pathways for the UN: Principles, design, and implementation paper was published

15 MAY - *The Future of Democracy Parliamentary Group* held an event at the European Parliament on democracy and the EU budget

18 MAY - The European Citizens' Panel on Budget handed over their final recommendations

11 JUNE - Democracy International became a member of the European Economic and Social Committee Liaison Group



25 JUNE - A workshop *From ARTivism to Politics* on creative resistance for LGBTQI+ gathered over 30 people

02 AUGUST - We called on Annalena Baerbock, the elected President of the UN General Assembly, to endorse the proposal for a *UN World Citizens' Initiative* (UNWCI)

1 SEPTEMBER - The My Voice My Choice *European Citizens' Initiative* (ECI) became the 12th verified ECI

3 SEPTEMBER - Cohesion Policy for the Equality of

Regions *ECI* became the 11th ECI to receive a response by the Commission

3-7 SEPTEMBER - The *Democracy Camp* took place in Austria

11 SEPTEMBER - Our Unboxing Democracy event, connected to the *International Day of Democracy* took place

4 OCTOBER - The *Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy* won the Citizen Engagement Award at the International Electoral Awards in Botswana

1-6 OCTOBER - 60 young people joined our *Youth Bridges Europe* in Bosnia

5 NOVEMBER - 100 students joined our workshop to learn about *activism for climate* in Wuppertal.

12 NOVEMBER - The EU Democracy Shield and Civil Society Strategy were published

1 NOVEMBER - We launched the new website!

16 NOVEMBER - The *European Citizens' Panel* on Intergenerational Fairness

handed over their final recommendations

17 NOVEMBER - Ban Conversion Practices became the 13th verified European Citizens' Initiative

25 NOVEMBER - The dates for the 2026 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy are announced! *Meet us in Gaborone on 7-10 October!*

19 DECEMBER - We celebrated the holiday season with an in-office networking party

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS



ANDREAS MÜLLER

Executive Director
mueller@democracy-international.org

"One of the most inspiring aspects of this year has been the deep exchange with democracy experts from around the world. Through our Twin4DEM project, I gained profound insights into the work of other democracy organisations and practitioners. While the rise of internal democratic erosion and executive aggrandisement is alarming, these conversations have also shown how vital a strong and vigilant civil society truly is."

"I was deeply touched, travelling in Germany this year to share stories of successful activism such as the YASunidos decade-long struggle to protect the Yasuní national park in Ecuador. Seeing young people and community groups in Europe connect with a story of courage and persistence from across the globe reminded me how powerful democracy tools can be. Meanwhile in Ecuador, as civic space narrowed, the Inter-American Court's March ruling affirming the mandate of the 2023 referendum offered rare hope that democratic backsliding can be resisted."

CAROLINE VERNAILLEN

Lead Global Policy and Advocacy
vernaillen@democracy-international.org



GLOBAL DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

*When global systems falter,
citizens must have a seat at the table.*

In May, we published *Global Citizens' Assemblies – Pathways for the UN*, a call to rethink how democracy works at the global level. Amid a worsening crisis of multilateralism and escalating ecological breakdown, the paper argues that the United Nations must open its doors to citizens. By bringing randomly selected people together to deliberate on global challenges, Global Citizens' Assemblies can offer inclusive, legitimate guidance when it is needed most.



HELP &
DEVELOP

TRANSNATIONAL
DEMOCRACY

DEMOCRACY ON THE EUROPEAN AGENDA



*Defend democracy, yes -
but dare to innovate it, too.*

We're pushing democracy higher on the EU agenda through the Future of Democracy Parliamentary Group. Together with our alliance partners, we organised a series of conversations to explore how the next EU budget must fund participation and civic infrastructure. In 2026, we'll keep bringing together democracy champions to ensure democracy is a core EU priority.

With the European Democracy Shield now on the table, we advocated that it doesn't stop at defending democracy from the outside. Real resilience comes from strengthening democracy from the inside out, through citizen participation and democratic innovation. Europe deserves a democracy that both shields and strikes.



ADVANCING THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

Europe's one-million-signature power tool has entered its golden era

What a year for the European Citizens' Initiative! Four ECIs passed the one-million-signature mark. That's a record high for a single year in the instrument's entire 13-year history. These were My Voice, My Choice for reproductive rights, Ban Conversion Practices for LGBT+ rights, Stop Destroying Videogames on consumer rights, and Stop Cruelty, Stop Slaughter for animal welfare.

How the Commission responds to each of these ECIs is the real test. 2026 will show whether the ECI can deliver as a powerhouse for grassroots policymaking.



HELP &
DEVELOP

TRANSNATIONAL
DEMOCRACY

SUPPORTING THE ECI COMMUNITY

Helping every new European Citizens' Initiative learn from the ones that made history.

As ECIs succeed, we study what worked - digital strategy, storytelling, community-building - and pass those lessons straight to the next generation of campaigns. Through our work with ECAS on the ECI Forum, this year we supported organisers in many ways from guidance on fundraising, to hands-on crisis-simulations, to a mapping of local movements across Europe to help turn them into future EU-level initiatives.



Funded by
the European Union



PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS



DANIELA VANCIC

Lead European Policy and Advocacy
vancic@democracy-international.org

"I've never seen democracy under greater pressure, and at the same time, I've never seen so many people stand up for it. That's our way through. If 2025 taught me anything, it's that we have to lead with courage and conviction."

"Every year, Democracy International is growing and deepening its activities. Helping to shape new team structures and processes in combination with our various democracy activities has been an empowering experience particularly in 2025. Seeing how we grow together, adapt, and learn from each challenge reminds me how much strength there is in collaboration and shared purpose across continents, languages and backgrounds."

ANNE HARDT

Lead Fundraising & Projects
hardt@democracy-international.org



YOUTH SHAPING DEMOCRACY



Empowering young voices to shape tomorrow's democracy

Young people must be a cornerstone of democracy and its guardians, because it is their lives that will be most shaped by the decisions made today. Our youth work places young people at the centre, ensuring they have the knowledge, confidence, and platforms to participate meaningfully.

In 2025, Youth Bridges Europe invited participants to Bosnia and Herzegovina to reflect on how remembrance of Europe's darkest history and processes of reconciliation continue to shape democracy today.

This year's Democracy Camp in Austria explored the connections between democracy, media literacy, and participation, resulting in

a comprehensive handbook to support young people in becoming politically active.

Through You(th)&Dem, young people were given the space to develop and implement collaborative local projects across Europe and scale them up to the European level.

Together with our long-term volunteering (and learning!) opportunities under the European Solidarity Corps and weltwärts, these initiatives demonstrate our commitment to support an active, informed, and resilient generation of young citizens capable of driving democratic change from the local to the global level.



Funded by
the European Union

Funded by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL
with funds from



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung

HELP &
DEVELOP

LEARN &
EXCHANGE



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

182 *NEW MEMBERS* JOINED THE
INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY
COMMUNITY IN 2025

165 *ARTICLES* ON LOCAL, NATIONAL
AND TRANSNATIONAL DEMOCRACY
WERE PUBLISHED ON THE
INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY
COMMUNITY

WE HELD
40+
WORKSHOPS
THIS YEAR

6 *YOUNG PROFESSIONAL*
JOINED OUR TEAM

12 *INTERNS* JOINED OUR TEAM

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

OVER

1000

PEOPLE TOOK PART
IN OUR WORKSHOPS

4 EUROPEAN
CITIZENS'
INITIATIVES

CROSSED THE 1-MILLION
SIGNATURE THRESHOLD
THIS YEAR

120 YOUNG PEOPLE JOINED US IN BOTH
THE DEMOCRACY CAMP AND YOUTH
BRIDGES EUROPE RETREATS

WE CONSULTED

15

REGISTERED
AND
EARLY-STAGE ECIS

THROUGH

11

EVENTS IN

7 EU MEMBER
STATES,

WE EXPLORED THE ROLE
OF THE EU IN THE
WORLD WITH
CITIZENS.

OVER

1700 PEOPLE NOW FOLLOW US ON
INSTAGRAM, AND MANY MORE
ACROSS OTHER CHANNELS

PRACTISING DEMOCRACY THROUGH CO-CREATION

Cologne's largest event for the International Day of Democracy

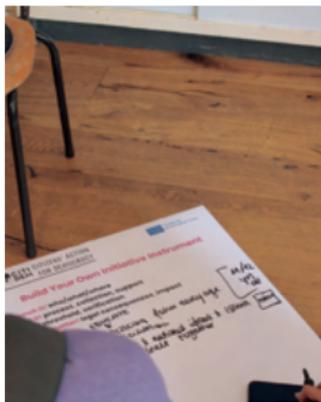
For the International Day of Democracy, we brought together thought leaders from across Europe, right here in our home city, to do what Democracy International stands for: strengthen democracy by practising it together. As part of our Citizens' Action for Democracy project, participants explored democratic tools and then got hands-on by co-designing what stronger participatory instruments in Europe could look like. The day was not just about observing democracy, but about advancing it - by placing citizens at the centre of innovation and renewal.



Funded by
the European Union



PANEL I: SIGNATURES	
QUESTION	EU-LEVEL
How does the tool link to direct and representative democracy?	NO D.D. "to make somewhat" triggers poli. converst. @ high level
Who can launch an initiative?	EU citizens MIP BE DE FI NL AT ES GR Cypriot +
What is the process to law register an initiative?	
How are signature	



PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS



JOSEPHINE SCHNEE

Project Officer
schnee@democracy-international.org

"My highlight of the year at Democracy International was seeing, once again, how urgent and alive democracy becomes when people practise it beyond elections. Through working with activists and young people, I witnessed communities and younger generations using - and learning to use - citizens' assemblies, referendums and collective organising to resist anti-democratic currents and protect what matters."

"A personal highlight this year was travelling across Europe with the EU for Global project and listening to perspectives from diverse communities. Their inputs showed how essential inclusive citizen engagement is in shaping EU's policies. I also voted in Cologne's local elections for the first time and for the Italian referendum as a national living abroad – a reminder of the responsibility and privilege of democratic participation."

LORENZA DE LUNA

Project and Fundraising Officer
deluna@democracy-international.org



EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

Harvesting the power of democracy tools to bolster the environment and protect indigenous ways of life.

In San Miguel de Allende, Mexico we worked with grassroots organisations and collectives to deepen their capacity to use existing participatory and direct democracy tools. Together with Mar de Fuegositos, we hosted a workshop where participants explored how direct and participatory democracy mechanisms can help defend the environment, indigenous ways of life and community rights. The workshop supported activists in strengthening their strategies, learning from each other and identifying practical ways to assert their democratic power in everyday civic action.



HELP & DEVELOP

LEARN & EXCHANGE

CITIZENS AT THE HEART OF EU GLOBAL POLICY

*From local voices to global impact -
citizens shaping transnational policymaking*

EU for Global addresses rising distrust in democratic and transnational institutions by putting people at the centre of shaping Europe's global role. With seven partners across Europe, the project empowers citizens, especially underrepresented groups, to share their perspectives on EU values, democratic instruments and their views on EU's external action. Through an Online Consultation and Citizens' Panels, the project gathers co-designed recommendations on transnational democracy, human rights and individual freedoms, youth participation, climate action, misinformation resilience and community-driven change to help build more inclusive and representative EU global policies.



EU for Global



Co-funded by
the European Union



STORIES OF DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS

Hope turns into change when people pick up the tools of democracy.

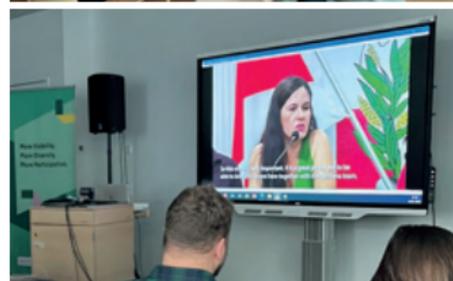
Five activists, five stories: Life as an Activist meets Latin Americans defending the environment and Indigenous rights through participatory and direct democracy. Across five mini-documentaries from Ecuador, Chile, Colombia and Brazil, they mobilise citizens' assemblies, referendums and community organising to push for climate justice. Their journeys remind us that democracy's tools are for everyone. Shared at seven events in Germany with 220+ participants, the series sparked cross-border empowerment.

Funded by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL
with funds from



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung

**LIFE AS
AN ACTIVIST**



LEARN &
EXCHANGE

HELP &
DEVELOP

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS

ANNA PROSKURINA

Communication Officer

proskurina@democracy-international.org



"Seeing how long it takes to build a democratic system and how quickly it can be undermined has been sobering this year. At the same time, the courage of people standing up for democratic values, particularly in Ukraine and Georgia, two countries very close to my heart, has renewed my belief that when people are ready to defend their values, democracy can never fully die."

**EXPLORE OUR
NEW WEBSITE!**



"On another note, shaping Democracy International's renewed visual identity - from our new website to our overall look - a reminder that even in difficult times, renewal and improvement are possible."

WHAT PROTECTS DEMOCRACY UNDER PRESSURE?

Understanding the concentration of executive power to strengthen democratic resilience

Creating spaces for reflection and exchange at a time when executive aggrandisement, the creeping expansion of executive control over other branches of government, is becoming more widespread was a core focus of our work within the TWIN4DEM Horizon Europe framework. Through feedback group meetings in Czechia, Hungary, France, and the Netherlands, we brought together civil society, policymaking, and media actors to examine why, when, and how power balances are shifting - and which democratic safeguards can prevent power grabbing. These conversations made one thing clear: democratic erosion is not a distant threat but a present reality, and civil society remains informed, connected, vigilant, and ready to act.



LEARN & EXCHANGE

INCLUSIVE DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

Europe's digital future should be built with citizens, not just for them

In 2025, Inclusive Digitalisation in the EU ran a citizen participation process via online crowdsourcing across six Member States, gathering ideas to make the digital shift more inclusive. Over 2,000 people joined online and in person. As the German partner, Democracy International prioritised including marginalised communities. A tailored campaign reached 32,000+ more citizens. Their input shapes recommendations for the EU Commission.



Co-funded by
the European Union



INDEU
INCLUSIVE DIGITALISATION IN THE EU

LEARN &
EXCHANGE

HELP &
DEVELOP

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Democracy International e.V. stands on several strong pillars of support. Our work is made possible through a diverse mix of contributions: membership fees and individual donations, institutional funding that sustains our long-term mission, and project-based grants that enable us to innovate and expand our impact.

We are deeply grateful for the continued support from the European Union, Engagement Global / the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Democracy Foundation, whose programmes allow us to advance democratic engagement around the world.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to our dedicated members, individual donors, and project partners. Your trust, generosity, and collaboration have been invaluable – especially in a year marked

by global challenges and increasing pressure on democratic institutions. Your support has not only enabled our work; it has strengthened our resolve and reaffirmed the importance of defending and renewing democracy.

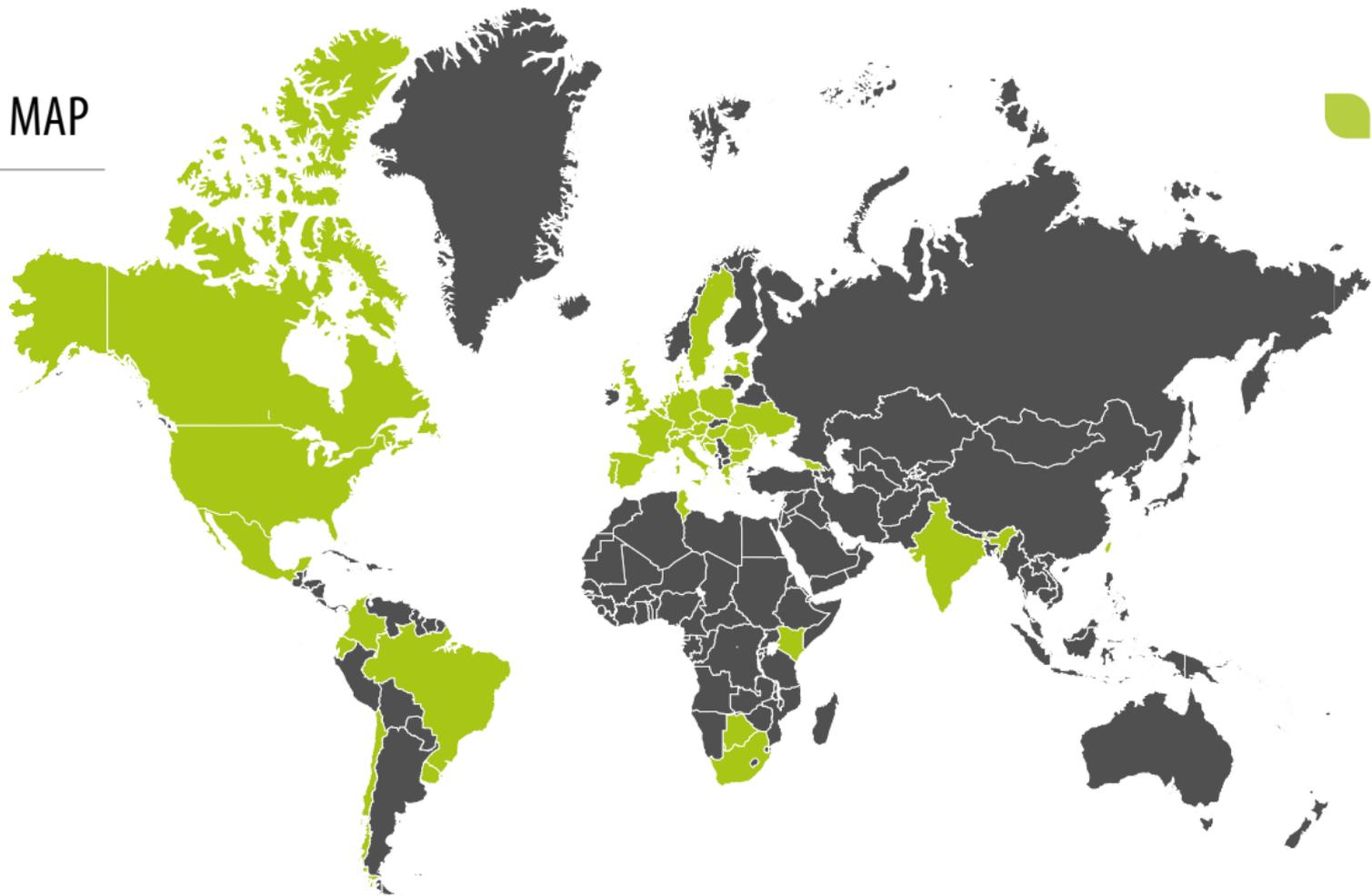
As we look ahead to 2026, we are inspired by the solidarity and commitment you have shown. Together with you, we will continue expanding democratic participation, engaging citizens worldwide, and reinforcing sustainable democratic structures. Only through this shared effort can democracy remain vibrant, inclusive, and resilient.

THANK YOU

TEAM BEHIND OUR WORK



OUR WORK ON THE MAP



GOING FORWARD

Dear friends, partners, and supporters of Democracy International,

This year reminded us of a core principle shaping our work: meaningful democratic progress is often achieved through small, steady, and persistent steps. In turbulent times, these steps may appear modest, yet they are the foundation on which resilient and sustainable democracies are built. Only continuous, serious, and long-term democracy work creates real, lasting change.

The events of 2025 made this clearer than ever. Around the world, we observed rapid and troubling shifts. In the United States, for example, democratic backsliding unfolded in large, abrupt moves - revealing how quickly democratic norms can erode when the balance between executive, legislative, and judicial powers is no

longer fully respected. When autocratic tendencies advance in big, dramatic leaps, it is easy to feel that our own responses, rooted in incremental and careful progress, are not fast enough.

But these small steps are precisely what enable true democratic renewal. They may be slower, but they reach deeper. They strengthen democratic values through education, participation, dialogue, and civic empowerment - elements that cannot be imposed overnight but grow through patient cultivation.

Throughout 2025, Democracy International expanded democracy education, enabled people across generations to experience democratic tools firsthand, and deepened its advocacy through more strategic media work. These efforts supported civil society, policymakers, and citizens worldwide.



As we turn toward 2026, we do so with renewed purpose. The challenges ahead are significant, but so is our determination. In the coming year, we will intensify our efforts to reinforce democratic resilience, broaden participation, and support those who stand for democratic norms under increasing pressure. Step by step - and together - we will continue building the democratic future our societies deserve.

Democratically yours,

Andreas Müller
Executive Director, Democracy International e.V.



**IN 2026 WE KEEP BUILDING DEMOCRACY
PERSISTENTLY STEP BY STEP - TOGETHER!**



THANK YOU

Yes, I want to support Democracy International e.V.

- 10 euros other amount _____ euros
- 20 euros
- 45 euros One-off
- 100 euros Monthly
- 250 euros Yearly



Tick the amount and frequency relevant to you

SEPA Direct Debit Mandate

By signing the mandate form, you authorise Democracy International to send instructions to your bank to debit your account and your bank to debit your account in accordance with the instructions from the creditor.

As a part of your rights, you are entitled to a refund from your bank under the terms and conditions of your agreement with your bank. A refund must be claimed within 8 weeks starting from the date on which your account was credited.

Name, First Name

Street, Number

Postal Code, City, Country

IBAN (International Bank Account Number)

BIC/SWIFT (Bank Identifier Code)

Location and date

Signature

We will send you your SEPA mandate reference number. The donation is tax-deductible.
You can get a tax receipt at the end of the year.





DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL

GÜRZENICHSTRASSE 21 A-C

50667 COLOGNE

GERMANY

CONTACT@DEMOCRACY-INTERNATIONAL.ORG