



2024 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.



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OUR JOURNEY IN 2024

2 MARCH

Fulufhelo Siphugu joined the team

5 MARCH

Co-organised *ECI Day* at the European Economic and Social Committee

12-13 APRIL

Organised two workshops
Level Up Youth Conference

9 MAY

Europe Day and kick-off of Democratic Wave pledge campaign

13 MAY

Sibahle Zuma joined the team

15-19 MAY

Our *Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy* gathered over 400 participants

6-9 JUNE

European Parliament elections and coordinated 43 activities in 10 EU countries with *eurVote* *eurFuture* campaign

10-15 JUNE

We co-hosted the *Participedia on Transnational Democratic Innovations* in South Africa

19-21 JULY

Democracy International informed citizens at *Christopher Street Day Festival in Cologne* the second year in a row

31 JULY -

4 AUGUST

60 young people explored their democratic opportunities at the *Democracy Camp* in Romania

1 AUGUST

Lorenza De Luna and Josephine Schnee joined the team

4 SEPTEMBER

First *Life as an Activist* workshop took place in Cologne

6 SEPTEMBER

Sharing activism stories around the world at the Turn up in *CGN Youth Festival*



▶ **10-12 SEPTEMBER**

Spoke in panel discussion at Swiss Democracy Foundation and Polit-Forum Bern's International *Democracy Day Conference*

▶ **20-23 SEPTEMBER**

Our *We The Peoples campaign* (for a more democratic UN) at the United Nations Summit of the Future Action Days and Summit of the Future

▶ **25 SEPTEMBER**

Informal briefing with country missions to the UN on inclusive global governance

25 OCTOBER - 6 NOVEMBER

US elections monitoring tour in three swing states

▶ **7 NOVEMBER**

Our chARTer democracy art was exhibited in the European Parliament

16-18 NOVEMBER

First Transnational Panel of the EU for Global on the EU's Role in the World took place in Bucharest, Romania

▶ **20 NOVEMBER**

Organised reception in the European Parliament for cross-party Intergroup on Democracy

▶ **1 DECEMBER -**

New European Commission takes office

5-6 DECEMBER

Kick-off event of Building Bridges project in Lecce

DEAR FRIENDS



Dear friends, partners and supporters of Democracy International,

2024 was a year like no other in modern history of democracy. More people than ever in more countries than ever were called to make their voices heard and votes counted at the ballot box this last year. This grand exercise of people power was huge challenge to citizens around the world, but also to institutions involved in this so-called super election year: election management bodies, media organisations, educational institutions and last but not least – Democracy International. Our global community has grown over the years and 2024 was no exemption. In contrary: with the ever first Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy in an Eastern European country we extended our reach to a region which is under high pressure

both from within and from the outside. The 12th Global Forum in Bucharest in May gathered hundreds of people of all walks of life from across the world around an essential ingredient of democracy: trust.

But at Democracy International we do not just trust the power of democracy, but we work hard every day for the protection, strengthening and development of people power at all political levels, all the way from supporting a local community in developing their participatory infrastructure to coordinating the global campaign for a ‘World Citizens Initiative’. We do this work out of conviction and experience, but also based on research evidence displayed in the world oldest and biggest data base on modern direct democracy, our ‘Direct Democracy Navigator’.

With such a comprehensive expertise strongly rooted in our networks of active citizens and professional experts, we have been able to deliver a series of great results in projects related to the empowerment of young people, activists in highly challenged societies and elected officials in parliaments and governments around the world. This includes Youth Camps, programs for interns at our Headquarters in Cologne and a comprehensive support and guidance at the European level, where we strongly continue our development work with the European Citizens' Initiative. This wouldn't have been possible without the support of our democracy community, sponsors and talented members of staff.

As members of the Executive Board of Democracy International we are extremely proud to present this annual report, which offers an overview, insights and outlooks to the work done both by our excellent team in Cologne and with partners around the world. Both the best and worst of all is: this is just the beginning!

Around the world non-democratic and illiberal ideas and forces are challenging and undermining basic freedoms and participatory opportunities on a daily basis. That's the reason we must invest and work even harder – every day, with your support!

Thank you and democratically yours,

*Clara Egger, Daniel Schily, Bruno Kaufmann,
Members of the Executive Board*

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.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS



ANDREAS MÜLLER

Executive Director
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"Celebrating my 10th anniversary at Democracy International, including seven years as Executive Director, has been a true highlight of 2024. It has been an incredible journey to help build and shape this organization alongside the board and my colleagues. Looking back at what we have achieved and how we continue to grow with strength and purpose fills me with pride—and I am excited for the opportunities and challenges the coming years will bring."

"At the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy in Bucharest, we hosted the first and only debate between Romanian candidates for the European Parliament in the 2024 election cycle. It was broadcasted live on national television, which allowed us - as outsiders - valuable insights into Romania's key political discussions but also sought to serve as a meaningful resource for Romanian citizens."

CAROLINE VERNAILLEN

Lead Global Policy and Advocacy
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EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

Level up your issue with the European Citizens' Initiative

This year, two European Citizens' Initiatives emerged as the fastest-growing ECIs in the instrument's history, highlighting the power of citizen engagement on a variety of issues. My Voice, My Choice calls for accessible and affordable abortion care across Europe and finished 2024 by becoming the 13th ECI to reach one million signatures. Stop Destroying Videogames is tackling consumer rights in the gaming industry. Both demonstrate how the ECI can serve as a launchpad to level up your issue on the European stage! We are proud to have consulted both of these initiatives via the ECI Forum. With the ECI Forum, we will continue to advise organisers at every stage of the process and provide campaigning, fundraising, and legal advice to support the growth of the ECI community.



Under Subcontract by



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WE THE PEOPLES



"We can't build a future for our grandchildren with a system built for our grandparents" – António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN

This year saw the highly anticipated United Nations Summit of the Future, the culmination of a years-long process to "upgrade" the UN. Revamping our efforts around the We The Peoples campaign for a more democratic UN, Democracy International co-hosted an official side event to the Summit and a briefing with Member States. We co-chaired a official ImPACT Coalition - an alliance of like-minded organisations to contribute to the Summit. The resulting UN Pact for the Future is a milestone in the inclusion of future generations and artificial intelligence. However, but falls short when it comes to the hoped-for global governance reform. Member States scrapped every mention

of the word "democracy" from the pact. With our partners, we'll keep working for a more inclusive global governance.



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

For a European Parliament that puts democracy first

The 2024 super-election year saw even the largest democratic exercise take place: the European Parliament elections on 6-9 June 2024. The election results saw a shift to far-right parties, raising a red flag about the future of European democratic values.

To counteract this potential shift, ahead of the elections, we ran the eurVote, eurFuture campaign focusing on encouraging voter turnout, particularly among underrepresented groups and young people. We coordinated a multilingual online campaign as well as 43 get-out-the-vote activities on the ground in 10 EU countries.

Our Democratic Wave pre-election pledge campaign efforts allowed us to identify 23 Members of the European Parliament who would prioritise democracy in their term, which grew to 108 Members of European Parliament who voted to support a parliamentary intergroup on democracy.



INTERGROUP ON DEMOCRACY

A cross-party forum of Members of the European Parliament dedicated to strengthening European democracy

Following our Democratic Wave pledge campaign that identified democracy-driven Members of European Parliament, we got to work on establishing the first-ever European Parliament intergroup on democracy. The first-of-its-kind coalition would serve as a cross-party watchdog and as a launchpad for parliamentary initiatives that enhance citizens' participation in the EU, that safeguard democracy and rule of law in trying times, and that deal with the challenges and opportunities of AI and emergency tech on our democracy. Even though the intergroup was ultimately not established as one of the 28 formal European Parliament intergroups, the process served as a launchpad to setting up a friendship group of like-minded democrats.

A successful reception at the European Parliament in November was one representation of the strong and diverse backing of over 108 Members of the European Parliament from four political groups that support a democracy friendship group.

In 2025, we will continue to help the champions of democracy in the European Parliament create the space needed to commit to democracy defence and democracy action.



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PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS



DANIELA VANCIC

Lead Europe Policy and Advocacy
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"This super-election year taught me that there will always be winners and losers in a democracy. What matters is how we react, organise, and mobilise afterwards to protect and strengthen democratic principles. Following the US elections on the ground and working with decision-makers and partners to establish the first-ever parliamentary intergroup on democracy showed me that people are champions when we fight for our values. Sharing the space with those who work to keep democracy well and alive, even in the most trying times, is the highlight of my year."

"In 2024, I had three personal highlights: During the preparatory meeting for our Democracy Camp in Bucharest, 30 young Europeans came together, developed their programme for the Camp in August and joined the international democracy community at the Global Forum. At the same time, Josi and Lorenza have joined us as full-time team members. They make sure that we can maintain and extend our work and impact for direct democracy and citizen participation. And lastly, the latest local initiative on making Cologne more bike-friendly has reached the necessary signature quorum for a referendum. Since I only moved to Cologne recently, it would be my first time voting on a citizens' initiative!"

ANNE HARDT

Campaigning and Fundraising Manager
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US BRIEFING TOUR



Democracy: a work in progress

For the most closely watched election of 2024, Andreas and Daniela hit the road in a US election monitoring tour across three swing states.

We exchanged with voters, election experts, and campaign organisers, including groundbreaking initiatives. An example that directly comes to mind is the groundbreaking initiative on abortion rights. The organisers used direct democracy in a record number of states. We witnessed the extraordinary effort to protect election integrity, from visiting polling stations on Election Day to observing the work of ballot intake centers.

And we observed firsthand the approaches of two presidential campaigns. While attending Harris and Trump rallies, we gained insight into their messages and stark contrasts. (And yes, we did see Jennifer Lopez on the campaign trail!)

While the presidential election results sound the alarm for democrats worldwide, we took key lessons back home with us. Democracy is about more than who holds the highest office. Ballot initiatives and local elections offer citizens a way to check and balance power. Beyond elections, democracy requires each of us to activate our inner watchdogs, scrutinise leaders, and hold governments accountable whenever they stray from constitutional and fundamental values.





GLOBAL FORUM ON MODERN DIRECT DEMOCRACY

In the face of a global decline in the quality of elections, direct and participatory democracy tools stand as vital mechanisms to reinforce citizen engagement, foster accountability, and strengthen democracy.

In 2024, a historic number of people worldwide cast their votes, while Romanians faced an especially significant voting year with elections at the local and European levels and at the end of the year fraught and eventually cancelled presidential elections. So in this super-election year, from May 15 to 18, 2024 our Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy travelled to Bucharest, Romania. The Forum brought together over 400 participants from around 50 countries across all continents. This diverse gathering included members of civil society, academics, activists, and political representatives to discuss the all-encompassing issue of trust. One

of the major highlights of the Forum was the launch of our first-ever Global State of Direct Democracy Report.





DEMOCRACY CAMP

Democracy for young people, by young people

Five days, 10 countries, 60 young Europeans, and two guiding democracy questions – that’s our annual Democracy Camp. As a youth-led project, this year, 30 motivated youth shaped their Camp during a preparatory meeting at the Global Forum in May. The Camp itself took place in Bucharest from 31 July until 4 August with a visit to Romania’s current youth capital Ploiești. Together, we explored the questions “What participation tools are available to me?” and “How can I use these tools to promote sustainability and inclusive European societies?”. Participants published a collection of best democracy practices they identified for Europe in the the Youth Participation Handbook.



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PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS



JOSEPHINE SCHNEE

Project Officer

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"My highlight of the year at Democracy International was witnessing the powerful impact of grassroots activism. Through projects like Life as an Activist, I saw how individuals, when equipped with the right tools and a collective vision, can challenge the status quo and create real change. It reaffirmed my belief: Democracy is not just a system—it is a practice, and every voice, every action, brings us closer to a more inclusive and participatory world."

"For me, the highlight of the year was surely joining the Democracy International Team and starting this new experience. Also, travelling all together to Bucharest for the Global Forum and participating in an event that welcomed so many internationals sharing an interest in direct democracy and participation was very exciting"

LORENZA DE LUNA

Project and Fundraising Coordinator

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EU FOR GLOBAL

Together to shape a better EU for the World

In a world facing global challenges, strengthening transnational democracy is crucial. Only participatory strategies and amplifying underrepresented voices can democratise transnational governance and make it equipped to handle the biggest challenges of our time.

The EU for global project builds trust in transnational democracy by encouraging the democratic participation of traditionally underrepresented groups. Starting from the European Union's pioneering role with its unique set of participatory tools, we want to know how people see the role of the EU in the rest of the world. With citizen panels in eight countries, we want to co-design recommendations on EU policies towards global issues in 2025.



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LIFE AS AN ACTIVIST



Anyone can be an activist—the tools already exist.

"I realised that to actually enable change, we need to act collectively, deliberate, and influence public discussions." –

Allison Benson-Hernández, Re Imaginemos.

Life as an Activist brings together South American activists and youth in Germany to explore the power of democratic participation. Through mini-documentaries featuring the activists and their work, workshop participants learn how tools like citizens' assemblies, referendums, and participatory methods have empowered communities to protect the environment and defend indigenous rights.

"The possibility, with the right question, to move society through a referendum - small steps can have a big impact." – workshop participant.

**Ciudadanía_
Inteligente**

Re - imaginemos!

Explorando caminos de equidad

delibera

**Activa
Buena
-ventura**
Asociación para el fortalecimiento de la ciudadanía



**LIFE AS
AN ACTIVIST**

Funded by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL
with funds from



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung

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SCHOOL TOURNAMENT

*Our school competition for the European elections:
Fresh, new and especially young ideas to increase voter turnout.*

In our school competition for the 2024 European Elections, we empowered young people to shape democracy. Across six schools in North Rhine-Westphalia, pupils aged 16-18 learned about the EU elections through workshops and trainings and then unleashed their creativity in a playful competition. Their mission was to inspire classmates, schools, and communities to vote. Activities were evaluated by a jury based on outreach, creativity, and impact on first-time voters. Supported by Democracy International, Mehr Demokratie, and NRW Science Campus, the project combined education, innovation, and action to strengthen voter engagement. It was funded by the European Parliament and Post Code Lottery.



PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS



ANNA PROSKURINA

Communication Officer

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"To me, this year pointed out even more how fragile our democracies are. Especially the advances of pro-Russian political forces in Eastern (and not only) Europe and the continuous Russian war of aggression in my home country, Ukraine, showed me how important it is to step out of the bubble. If we want to protect and develop democracy, we need to talk to everyone, try to understand the appeal of populism and work with its weaknesses. At the same time, joining the Global Forum for the first time and experiencing this community of democracy professionals was truly showing how much we can achieve if we are together."

DIRECT DEMOCRACY NAVIGATOR

Democratic empowerment through science

The Direct Democracy Navigator, our database of direct democracy tools around the world, adds an academic direction of Democracy International's work. We published the first-ever "Global State of Direct Democracy Report", which monitors and evaluates direct democracy developments around the world, global trends and predictions for the future. The team conducted three "Direct Democracy 101" workshops and four webinars focusing on the basics and intricacies of direct democracy, from why legislations matter to what are the specifics of rejective referendums, from Taiwan to Uruguay to EU countries.



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THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Democracy International is funded via several pillars: Larger or smaller donations from our members and individual donors like you, funding from foundations and institutions that enable our general work and grants that enhance specific activities. Many of our actions wouldn't be possible without financial support from the European Commission, European Parliament or Engagement Global/German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development under their citizen engagement programmes.

A special thank you goes out to our dedicated members, individual supporters, and project partners who showed their trust in our work through their donations and collaboration throughout the year. Your support has been invaluable, and we are excited to continue working together in 2025!

THANK YOU

NETWORKS



This year, we have continued to work with more networks and partners. We want to thank you for fruitful work!



/// Participedia



NETWORKS



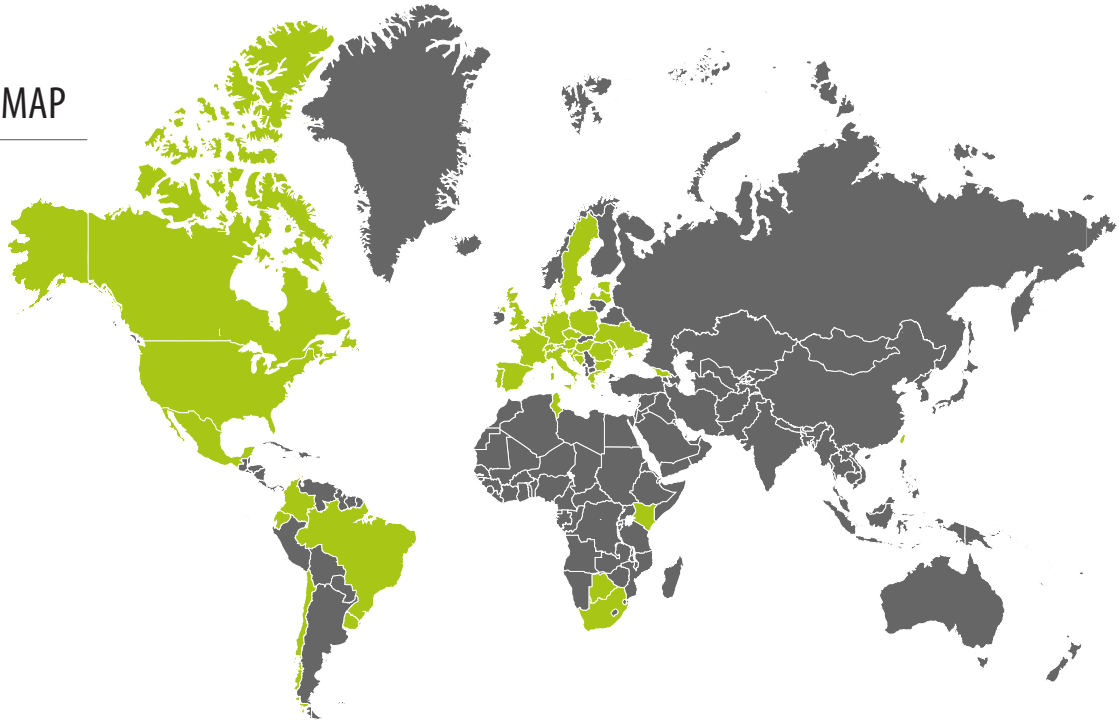
VALUE OF COOPERATION

We would like to express our strong gratitude to the growing network of institutions whose generous contributions enabled our work in 2024. Our sincere thanks go out to the Swiss and European Democracy Foundations, the European Commission and European Parliament, Engagement Global/German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, GLS Treuhand, German Postcode Lottery, European Citizen Action Service, and Cultura gGmbH.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to our volunteers and interns who played an essential role in our work. In particular, Fulufhelo and Sibahle, who joined us from South Africa through the weltwärts volunteering programme, as well as all the interns who contributed their time and effort.

COOPERATION

OUR WORK ON THE MAP



GOING FORWARD



Dear friends, partners, and supporters of Democracy International,

As we close the chapter of 2024 and look to the horizon of 2025, one truth stands clear: democracy remains both a challenge and a promise. Around the globe, we see forces attempting to redefine democracy, restrict freedoms, and divide societies. Yet, 2024 also showed us the resilience of democratic values—tolerance, inclusivity, participation, and justice—and the determination of citizens to protect them.

At Democracy International, we dedicated the past year to fostering these principles. Whether through youth empowerment initiatives, our advocacy for the European Citizens' Initiative, or the 12th Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy in Bucharest, we strengthened our global networks and laid the groundwork for more inclusive, participatory democratic processes.

And yes, the challenges are undeniable, but so too is the potential for progress when people come together to uphold the values that make democracy thrive.

2025 offers us a chance to build on this momentum. Together, we can continue to challenge populist narratives with clear and confident messages about the strength of democratic values. We can unite to inspire action, advocate for solutions that embrace complexity, and reinforce the belief that democracy belongs to everyone.

We are counting on your support.

Democratically yours,
Andreas Müller - Executive Director Democracy International e.V.

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

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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.

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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.





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