



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels





EU internal action

Overview and challenges

The European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail¹. The EU's key objective is to promote peace, its values and the wellbeing of its people, offering an area of freedom, security and justice².

The founding values and objectives of the EU are therefore fully in tune with SDG 16, and the actions taken by the EU to protect and promote fundamental rights, the rule of law and democracy contribute to the implementation of SDG 16. In 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for advancing peace, reconciliation, democracy, and human rights in Europe.

In the last several decades, the EU has become a safer place to live – but Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine brought back war to its borders. Deaths due to homicide or assault and the perceived occurrence of crime, violence and vandalism in European neighbourhoods have fallen considerably. At the same time, government expenditure on law courts has increased in nominal terms but remained stable in relation to GDP and total government expenditure. The perceived level of independence of the justice system has improved marginally and trust in EU institutions has increased, following a drop after the

onset of the COVID-19 crisis. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index the EU scored 64 on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) in 2021, 21 points more than the world average score. Some 10 EU Member States are in the top 20 countries perceived least corrupt in the world.

Nevertheless, threats to the rule of law challenge the legal, political and economic basis of the EU. Crime remains a threat, and corruption is a particularly big challenge. Some findings point to a degradation of civic space throughout the EU, a trend further accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key initiatives

The EU has several instruments, and mechanisms at its disposal to help overcome challenges to different aspects of SDG 16.

In 2020, the Commission reinforced its toolbox to promote and protect the rule of law with the [European Rule of Law Mechanism](#). This provides a process for an annual dialogue between the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament together with Member States and national parliaments, civil society and other stakeholders on the rule of law, based on an annual rule of law report. The 2022 Rule of Law report includes specific recommendations for all EU Member States, aimed at assisting them in implementing reforms, advancing positive developments and identifying where further improvements or follow-up action to recent changes or reforms may be needed.

2030 targets and trends at EU level

Target and policy reference

Make sure that all public powers act within the constraints set out by law, under the control of independent and impartial courts and in accordance with the values of democracy and fundamental rights

The Rule of Law Mechanism

Fight corruption in the private sector, involving European officials or national officials of Member States

[Convention against corruption involving public officials and combating corruption in the private sector framework](#)

Foster access to democratic participation and trust in democracy

European Democracy Action Plan

Trends

53 % of EU inhabitants rated as ‘very good’ or ‘fairly good’ the independence level of courts and judges in their country in 2022 (+3 % higher than 2016). The ‘very bad’ or ‘fairly bad’ ratings fell by 3 % in the same period (35 % in 2022).

According to Transparency International’s [Corruption Perceptions Index \(CPI\)](#), the EU scored 64 on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) in 2021. EU countries continued to rank among the least-corrupt globally in 2021 and made up one half of the global top 20 least-corrupt countries, although many differences persist among Member States.

The confidence of citizens in EU institutions such as the European Parliament, European Commission and European Central Bank is increasing since 2015, despite a fall in 2020 (coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic).

More details on indicators and trends for SDG 16 can be found in the statistical and analytical annex and Eurostat’s monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs. reference

A key tool in the EU’s rule of law toolbox is the new [Regulation on a general regime of conditionality](#) for the protection of the EU budget. This Regulation makes it possible for the Commission to propose measures to the Council to protect the EU budget in case of rule of law breaches in Member States when they affect (or seriously risk affecting) the sound financial management of the EU budget in a sufficiently direct way. It covers both the long-term budget and NextGenerationEU.

Fighting corruption is one of the pillars of the rule of law. With the adoption of the [Stockholm Programme](#), the European Commission was given a political mandate to monitor the fight against corruption and to develop a comprehensive EU anti-corruption policy. In EU legislation, the fight against corruption is covered by the [1997 Convention on fighting corruption involving officials of the EU or officials of Member State](#) and the [2003 Framework Decision on combating corruption in the private sector](#).

EU Member States implement national anti-corruption strategies and coordinated anti-corruption policies required by international law³. In line with international standards⁴ and EU law⁵, the EU and its Member States aim at eliminating obstacles to criminal investigation, prosecution, and the application of dissuasive sanctions for corruption.

The [European democracy action plan](#), adopted in December 2020, aims at empowering citizens and building more resilient

democracies across the EU by promoting free and fair elections, strengthening media freedom and countering disinformation.

As part of its implementation, the Commission adopted an initiative to fight against abusive litigation (SLAPP) targeting journalists and rights defenders. The initiative aims to provide civil procedural safeguards for cross-border situations and to recommend best practices also to national level, as well as European supporting measures.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the “Charter”) is not just any instrument of EU law. It enshrines the fundamental rights that everyone in the EU should enjoy and reiterates the principles on which the EU is founded, namely democracy and the rule of law.

The Charter has helped to better promote and protect people’s fundamental rights and has triggered new EU legislation directly protecting and promoting certain key rights. The new rules on data protection, gender equality, protecting whistle-blowers, fair trial and defence rights, and victims of crime are key examples⁶. The Commission also put forward a proposal to revise the Digital Services Act with new rules to curb illegal content, including hate speech online. Additionally, the Commission tabled a proposal on artificial intelligence, which aims to ensure a fundamental rights approach in the design and rolling out of artificial intelligence. The case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU (‘the Court’) invoking the Charter has developed significantly⁷ in a wide range of policy areas⁸.

In December 2020, the Commission adopted a new strategy on strengthening the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU to make sure people can effectively enjoy their fundamental rights in their daily lives. The Commission presents a thematic annual report on the application of the Charter in the EU, focusing on areas of strategic relevance governed by EU law and which looks more closely at the Charter's application in the Member States. Together with the annual Rule of Law report, the annual Charter report will contribute to further upholding fundamental values in the EU.

Concerning the need to develop the area of freedom, security and justice, improving the effectiveness of justice systems in Member States has been identified as a key component for structural reforms in the [European Semester](#). With the help of the [EU justice scoreboard](#), the EU monitors the efficiency, quality and independence of Member States' justice systems.

The EU has a wide range of policies in place that address or touch on personal security. They are covered by the EU security union strategy 2020-2025, which identified as priorities: a future-proof security environment, tackling evolving threats (e.g., cybercrime, modern law enforcement, hybrid threats), protecting Europeans from terrorism and organised crime and a strong European security ecosystem. There are many sectoral strategies regarding the issue made in the same time period, e.g. the EU agenda and action plan on drugs, the EU action plan on firearms trafficking, a counter-terrorism agenda for the EU, the EU cybersecurity strategy, the EU strategy on combating trafficking in human beings, the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse, and the EU strategy to tackle organised crime.

The European Commission proposal for a revision of the EU Anti-trafficking Directive to strengthen the EU rules to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims also feeds into SDG 16 given that over 50% of the victims of trafficking in the EU are EU citizens.

Selected enablers

The [Justice programme](#) (running from 2021 to 2027) provides funding to support judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters such as training for judges and other legal practitioners and effective access to justice for citizens and businesses. It contributes to the further development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law, including independence and impartiality of the judiciary, and on mutual recognition, mutual trust and judicial cooperation. It is strengthening democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights.

The [Citizens, equality, rights and values programme](#) (CERV) protects and promote rights and values as enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights by supporting civil society organisations active at local, regional, national and transnational level. It aims to sustain

and develop open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law. That includes a vibrant and empowered civil society, encouraging people's democratic, civic and social participation and cultivating the rich diversity of European society based on our common values, history and memory. CERV also aims to promote the rights of the child and prevent violence against children, young people, women and other groups at risk.

Promising research is carried out under Horizon Europe. For example, the project PushBackLash has as objective to systematically explore the present-day contestation of gender equality issues and policies. Approaching democracy from a global feminist perspective, the project employs a rigorous, comparative, multi-method design. To develop sustainable solutions, it brings together gender activists, EU experts and researchers from several fields of political science, anthropology, communication and media, philosophy, sociology and social psychology.

Another example is the project 'Strengthening Access to Justice in Latvia (Phase II)' supported by the Technical Support Instrument under the call for 2021. The project is connected to the Mediation Directive that calls for the establishment of mediation and legal aid services and development of an effective online dispute resolution system. This domain is relatively weak in Latvia and the 'traditional' way of rendering justice suffers from workload and delays. Therefore, the project's objective is to enhance access to justice through an improvement of legal aid, mediation and online dispute resolution systems as well as the professionalisation of involved personnel.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) was set up to provide independent evidence-based assistance and expertise relating to fundamental rights in the domain of European Union law. It collects data and information on the situation of fundamental rights in the EU, which supports EU institutions and bodies as well as Member States in their policy-making. This includes data relevant under SDG 16, such as the extent and nature of violence and harassment experiences within the EU, including the general population as well as selected groups such as immigrants, Roma, LGBTIQ people and Jewish people to analyse intersectional experiences. FRA dedicated the focus chapter of its 2019 Fundamental Rights Report to the interrelationship between the human and fundamental rights framework and the SDGs of the global Agenda 2030 in the context of Member States' and the EU's internal policies. It takes a closer look at the SDGs related to reducing inequality (SDG 10) and promoting peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16).





Stakeholder engagement

The EU delivers on SDG 16 in a collaborative approach. For example:

- ▶ To prepare its annual rule of law report, the Commission carries out targeted stakeholder consultations, which are published with the consent of the stakeholder. The [list of contributions](#) to the third edition of the rule of law report published in July 2022 includes the Council of Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency, and the United Nations Human Rights Office.
- ▶ The [EU Network for Children's Rights](#) was launched in March 2022 with the aim of reinforcing dialogue and mutual learning between the EU and the Member States on children's rights. The network supports the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the EU strategy on the rights of the child.
- ▶ To prepare the annual thematic report on the application of the Charter, the Commission carries out targeted consultations with relevant stakeholders. The 2022 report, which focused on "A thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU", was prepared based on the results of consultations of international organisations, the European networks of NHRIs (ENNHRI) and Equality bodies (EQUINET), civil society organisations at EU and national level.
- ▶ The 'Have Your Say' portal is a one-stop shop for citizens' engagement at EU level.
- ▶ The European Parliament's [Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought](#) is the highest tribute paid by the European Union to human rights work. It gives recognition to individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting freedom of thought.
- ▶ The [European Citizen's Prize](#) recognises initiatives that contribute to European cooperation and the promotion of common European values. Awarded each year

by the European Parliament, the prize goes to projects organised by citizens or organisations that encourage mutual understanding and closer integration between people in the EU, cross-border cooperation that builds a stronger European spirit, and EU values and fundamental rights.

- ▶ [Mayor Paweł Adamowicz Award](#) — Mayor of Gdansk Paweł Adamowicz focused his activities on fostering solidarity, the integration of migrants and minorities, dialogue with civil society, and the promotion of fundamental rights on the ground. He was assassinated on 13 January 2019. The establishment of this award is a homage to and recognition of everyone who works with courage and integrity against intolerance, radicalisation, hate speech, oppression and xenophobia, those who promote equal opportunities, social integration and fundamental rights.

Multi-level approach

SDG delivery implies ambitious action at all levels. Good practices in implementing SDG 16 include:

Austria has introduced a series of initiatives and measures to protect victims of violence. Among these is the Violence Protection Summit held in 2021 to spread awareness among the population, the 2021 law prescribing compulsory violence prevention consultation for perpetrators, and the 2020 legal reform to protect victims of cyber violence.

The city of Jihlava in Czechia implements SDG 16 by making its policymaking inclusive. The first step was to join a supporting network. Jihlava followed the methodology of the EU funded URBACT Global Goals for Cities network for developing a strategic plan aligned with SDGs and defining a systematic participatory approach. Jihlava benefited from exchanges of good practices and expert advice and training. It worked and exchanged with 150 experts, 20 companies, 1 300 citizens and 1 110 children from the city to co-create a sustainable plan for the city.

EU external action

Global trends

Peace and security are vital for sustainable development and, conversely, sustainable development is key to maintaining peace and development. With the highest number of conflicts worldwide since 1947, and a sharp deterioration of 2002 indicators of the Global Peace Index (political instability, political terror scale, neighbouring country relations and refugees) and indicators of democracy, the rule of law and bribery, together with the rise in internally displaced people, achieving SDG 16 seems further away than ever before.

Internal / external coherence including policy coherence for development

In relation to SDG 16, the EU internal security has been increasingly linked to addressing the external dimension of security. From the Strategic Compass to the Security Union Strategy and other related strategic policy documents, EU action is underpinned by a broad toolbox covering the internal-external nexus, based on a whole-of-society approach and on close cooperation with strategic partners, including non-EU countries, civil society actors or international organisations. The EU external policy instruments play an important role in supporting this approach and for working with partners on priorities under SDG 16.

Curbing illicit financial flows to increase domestic resource mobilisation is a key component of the Commission's support for partner countries. When it comes to addressing money laundering and financing of terrorism, the Commission is mandated to identify high-risk non-EU countries having strategic deficiencies on their regime on anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism. The Commission is also a member of the Financial Action task Force (FATF), the main international body concerned with combating money laundering, the financing of terrorism and other threats to the integrity of the international financial system. In the tax area, the Commission cooperates with all international organisations, which work on reducing aggressive tax planning opportunities and tax evasion, such as the [Inclusive Framework on domestic tax base erosion and profit shifting \(BEPS\)](#) and the [Global Forum on transparency and exchange of information](#) (see also SDG 17).

The Commission has also supported specific initiatives in this regard under its Addis Tax Initiative commitment, including through a Team Europe approach. The Commission supports developing countries' increased participation in international tax fora and promotes double tax agreements between Member States and developing countries. In particular, the

Commission has developed a toolbox which recommends strategies to Member States on how to assess the spillover effects of their tax treaty policy. This issue is regularly discussed in the [EU Platform for Tax Good Governance](#), which is an advisory expert group composed of representatives of civil society and EU Member States.

The [EU list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions](#) is a strong instrument to address tax good governance concerns with non-EU countries and an additional example of policy coherence for development. Good governance in the tax area is of mutual benefit for developing countries and for the EU and its Member States. It supports the sovereign rights of governments on public revenues and contributes to the efforts made at international level to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance. The EU list is regularly updated based on a set of criteria for good governance. These criteria relate to tax transparency, fair taxation and the implementation of anti-BEPS minimum standards. To support the efforts of jurisdictions engaged in the process, the Commission is closely engaged in dialogue with them on relevant technical matters and has used its various available tools to provide dedicated technical assistance and training needed for developing countries to meet international standards.

Moreover, the special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance under the EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) grants preferential access to EU markets to certain countries on the condition that they fulfil, ratify and effectively implement a number of international conventions on sustainable development, including on human rights and good governance.

EU and Member States external financial support for SDG implementation and results

In 2021, EU institutions reported to the OECD commitments for EUR 3.9 billion in projects contributing to SDG 16. The largest share of the EU contribution is accounted for by projects that target SDG 16 as the main SDG. These projects also contribute to other interlinked SDGs, with the largest contributions going to SDG 5, SDG 10 and SDG 17. Other SDGs also contribute to SDG 16 as a significant objective. The main contributors are SDG 4, SDG 8 and SDG 17. When taking into account also other official flows, private funds mobilized through public intervention and support to international public goods, the Total Official Support to Sustainable Development (TOSSD) of the EU to SDG 16 amounted to EUR 5.2 billion in 2021.



In terms of selected results of assistance ⁽⁴⁰⁾, in 2018-2021 the EU supported 56 countries in the improvement of their electoral process and supported the development and revision of 1 600 government policies, with the participation of civil society organisations. The EU also funded the assistance directly provided to 129 000 victims of human rights violation and supported legal aid interventions directly benefiting more than 5.8 million people. Through its interventions, the EU also supported 988 000 individuals in situations of post-conflict peace building and/or conflict prevention.

Collectively, the EU and those Member States that reported on SDGs to the OECD in 2021 contributed EUR 14.9 billion to SDG 16. The EU and Member States flows to SDG 16 target all regions, with a stronger focus on Africa (38 %) and Asia (24 %), America (11 %) and other countries in Europe (11 %). It also has a strong global component (15 %) which is explained by the importance of multilateral actors and processes in SDG 16.

Main policy orientations and initiatives for external engagement

In relation to SDG 16, in line with partner countries' own policies and plans for building effective accountable and inclusive

institutions, the EU's **priorities**, underpinned by its **global strategy on foreign and security policy**, encompass:

- ▶ peace and security, with a focus on conflict risks-early warning and analysis, humanitarian response, conflict mediation and resolution, and post-conflict recovery;
- ▶ human rights and democracy, and
- ▶ the rule of law.

In line with UN efforts, the EU follows an integrated approach to conflicts and crisis, from conflict prevention to crisis management and peacebuilding. It has adopted a comprehensive approach using the entire breadth of its policies and tools (diplomatic, financial, security, trade-related, sustainable development actions and humanitarian aid) to this end. These include prompt acting on prevention, responding responsibly and decisively to crises, investing in stabilisation and avoiding premature disengagement, while promoting the importance of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the **Responsibility to Protect**, the promotion of local ownership, inclusiveness, and the resilience and sustainability of supported actors, by engaging with national and local authorities, communities and civil society. The approach also integrates the 'women, peace and security' action plan as one of its key priorities, articulates disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) around

⁽⁴⁰⁾ For the methodology on results, see the same section under SDG 2.

a people-centred approach, and implements the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, under which humanitarian, development and peace actors work hand in hand to find and deliver collective outcomes to reduce overall vulnerability and unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict, and ultimately ensure the protection and well-being of populations and build their resilience to shocks. The EU uses different funding instruments (geographical, thematic and rapid response under NDICI) as well as actions under its common foreign and security policy (CSFP), complemented by actions under the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020) aiming for stabilisation, reconciliation and peace processes in partner countries and regions.

Conflict sensitivity is incorporated into the EU's external action, in particular in fragile contexts. The 2017 European Consensus on Development recognises that poverty, conflict, fragility and forced displacement are deeply interlinked and must be addressed in a coherent and comprehensive way. The EU, despite many challenges, continues to be seen and perceived in most parts of the world as a key international actor in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, with significant added value regarding its different tools and approaches.

The promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is a cornerstone of EU external action, implemented in a concerted and coordinated approach with Member States. Resources and expertise support inclusive and transparent governance in partner countries, such as illustrated by the important initiative on parliamentary capacity strengthening (2019) using a peer-to-peer approach, by facilitating exchanges with EU Member State parliaments.

As upheld in the European Consensus on Development and enshrined in the Global Europe Regulation, the EU implements a **human rights based approach** (HRBA) to international partnerships. The aim is to ensure that all EU development actions are anchored on the following key principles: apply all human rights for all (universality), meaningful and inclusive participation, non-discrimination and equality, accountability and rule of law for all and transparency and access to information.

The EU counterterrorism agenda (2020) aims to reinforce international cooperation across four main pillars (anticipate, prevent, protect, and respond). The EU Global Facility on anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism remained a key tool to assist partners in complying with international standards. In April 2021, the Commission presented a new strategy to tackle organised crime for 2021-2025.

The fundamentals of the rule of law and the functioning of democratic institutions, together with public administration reform and socio-economic stability, are at the core of the EU's enlargement policy and determine the overall pace of accession negotiations. In the EU's Eastern and Southern



Neighbourhood, stabilisation in political, economic and security terms is the main driver for the EU engagement with partner countries.

Examples of EU actions (with a focus on Global Gateway and Team Europe initiatives)

In relation to SDG 16, responding to EU-Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) shared challenges in the area of security and justice, the regional LAC Team Europe Initiative on security & justice partnership aims to leverage the transformative impact of EU-LAC cooperation on the rule of law and the fight against transnational organised crime by joining forces with EU Member States, Commission DGs, the EEAS, EU specialised agencies, and OLAF. Actions will support LAC's overall rule of law environment, the consolidation of structural regional and intercontinental cooperation networks to fight against serious and organised crime, and a priority focus on bi-regional cooperation on the main 'lines of business' of LAC organised crime.

On law enforcement and judicial cooperation, EU regional projects include, for instance, the Euromed Police project implemented by CEPOL, in cooperation with EUROPOL. It aims at enhancing institutional capacity to protect EU neighbours' citizens against transnational serious and organised crime. The Euromed Justice project, on the other hand, is a capacity-building initiative designed to develop a sustainable cross-regional mechanism of judicial cooperation in criminal matters between



EU member states and the south partner countries (SPCs), as well as EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies.

In the Western Balkans, in 2018 a Regional Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their ammunition was signed as well as an EU-Western Balkans Regional Action Plan (JAP) on Counter-Terrorism and countering and preventing violent extremism (C/PVE). Regional projects provide dedicated support to their implementation as well as to the reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters, countering radicalisation in prison, exchanging knowledge for practitioners, policy makers and researchers (mirroring the Radicalisation Awareness Network activities in EU Member States). Other initiatives include regional campaigns such as Block the hatred, Share the love, launched by the Council of Europe with EU support in response to the rise in hate speech and the glorification of war crimes in the region, and which reached over 1 500 000 people. The Commission has continued to support civil society organizations advocating for Good Governance and Anti-Corruption in Southeast Europe, while working with OSCE and the Council of Europe on several projects aimed at strengthening the capacity of the judiciary to investigate and adjudicate corruption, financial crime and organised crime cases.

Within the Eastern Partnership framework, a regional programme on the fight against organised crime is being implemented in partnership with CEPOL, Europol and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNCRI) aiming at strengthening strategic and operational

police cooperation between the region, the EU and its Member States and at increasing capacities to trace, freeze, seize, confiscate and recover assets linked to criminal activities.

Across regions, the EU assisted partners in the design and implementation of reforms in the fields of good governance, the rule of law, judiciary reform, and the public safety and security sector, including border management and counterterrorism. The Commission's budget support has been an important tool used in support of SDG 16 with EUR 4.4 billion in support of SDG 16 as a main objective in 74 countries and more than EUR 15 billion as a significant objective in 271 countries in 2014-2021. The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily slowed down engagement in the security area, although the demand for greater accountability and advancement in reforms remained high. In 2022, more than 20 Team Europe initiatives focusing on security aspects are proposed for co-funding, 60 on resilience and 15 on peace. Examples of EU action in support of SDG 16 include support for public administration reform in the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Ukraine, Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Tunisia. Support for public finance management was provided for 14 countries over 2014-2021 in the form of budget support and associated technical assistance across all regions.

Similarly, the EU supports justice reforms focusing on institution and capacity building, promoting alternative dispute resolution, measuring and enhancing the independence, effectiveness and transparency of the judiciary, and improving the penitentiary system. Programmes have spanned the Southern

and Eastern Neighbourhood, the Western Balkans, West Africa and the Caribbean regions. In Albania, for example, EU budget support and technical assistance facilitated the increased pace of the vetting process for judges and prosecutors, under the supervision of the EU-funded International Monitoring Operation (IMO). In Armenia, support for justice and anti-corruption contributes to strengthening the integrity and accountability of the judiciary. In Jordan, the EU supported the independence, accountability, specialisation and efficiency of the judicial power, including ensuring better access to the justice system for Syrian refugees and vulnerable populations. In Georgia, the EU supports the project Civil Society Action for Promoting Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, for the development of legal services and effective advocacy with a special focus on women with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

The EU also funds regular peer reviews of national justice systems, notably in enlargement countries, as part of accession negotiations. Within the Eastern Partnership framework, a third phase of the Partnership for Good Governance programme is being implemented in cooperation with the Council of Europe and targeting the strengthening of the Rule of Law within thematic priority areas such as anticorruption and combating money laundering/terrorist finance, key judicial reforms, and combating discrimination. A Governance Progress Board programme for the Eastern Partnership Countries has been launched in cooperation with GIZ and aiming at enhancing evidence-based policy through improved monitoring of good governance and rule of law reforms.

The EU has been supporting multiple actions focusing on crisis response, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis preparedness, and for addressing global and trans-regional threats. Key ongoing crisis response actions include Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, Ethiopia, Central African Republic and Venezuela. In Ukraine, crisis response actions have spanned humanitarian law, assisting Ukrainian authorities and key stakeholders in protecting civilians, and preparing early recovery of liberated areas and preventing further escalation of violence. A regional conflict transformation programme (EU4Dialogue) has been implemented in a number of Eastern Partnership countries. The EU has also been supporting UN-led peace processes in Yemen, Syria, Libya, and the Central African Republic.

Support for national reconciliation processes is another facet of support, such as support for the Colombian Truth Commission or, in Central African Republic, support for national peace and reconciliation processes. An action in Iraq supports the digitisation of evidence of crimes committed by Da'esh in order to increase prosecutions of Da'esh members for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

Through its Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, the EU assists partner countries in conflict prevention, combating organised crime & smuggling, reforming

national security sectors, border management and monitoring the judicial system and the rule of law. For instance, the EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) supports the national authorities in developing state security structures, border management, law enforcement and criminal justice.

EU non-proliferation and disarmament (NPD) actions also contribute to SDG 16 by promoting the universalisation and implementation of international treaties and conventions on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The same objective is pursued by the European Special Representatives (EUSRs), independent CFSP entities that support EU diplomatic work in key regions and countries. In Kosovo, the EU Special Representative supports the country's commitment to the rule of law, the protection of minorities and the protection of cultural and religious heritage.

Another area of support is decentralisation. In Togo, for example, a Team Europe initiative is proposed to support Togo's decentralisation and local governance, combining EU and Member State efforts through capacity building, budget support and decentralised cooperation, to consolidate the decentralisation process at national and local levels, and strengthen the role of town halls in grassroots development and their involvement in the stability and security of Togo.

On humanitarian assistance, the EU together with its Member States remains a key donor and intervenes not only in large-scale humanitarian crises – like Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan or Ethiopia – but also in forgotten crises, i.e. those of severe and protracted character that do not attract media attention, and where the level of international aid to affected populations is insufficient.

Under the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, tailor-made migration partnerships were initiated or strengthened with several countries in Africa and Asia. The EU and its Member States are also pooling efforts to reinforce their impact in supporting democracy worldwide with a global Team Europe initiative on democracy, with better targeted, more strategic and more visible actions and a shared and increased knowledge base.

Between 2014 and 2020, the EU provided support for its partners in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries to support prevention and repression of corruption and the fight against organised crime and money-laundering, and it continues to do so under the new financial framework for 2021-2027.

Between 2014 and 2020 the EU allocated funds to support the active involvement of civil society and media organisations in decision-making and in key sector reforms in enlargement countries through the Civil Society Facility and Media Action Programmes. For the period 2021 and 2023, these allocations total EUR 218 million. More specifically in the area of freedom of expression, the EU supported the promotion of media

pluralism, media freedom, development and implementation of media policy and regulation, financial sustainability, safety of journalists, fact-checking, fight against disinformation, support to public broadcasters, new media development, professional and ethical standards of the media and self-regulation, just to name a few key areas of work

Actions by the EU and its Member States are mutually reinforcing and coordinated to ensure complementarity and impact in support of the SDGs. In addition to acting together with the EU through joint programming and Team Europe Initiatives, EU Member States carry out their own projects in support of the 2030 Agenda including SDG 16, such as the following initiatives for illustrative purposes. Several Member States provide support for partner countries to implement SDG 16 across the world, including by sharing best practices

in organising public administration, state institutions or local government reforms. Scholarships are an important instrument for supporting the development of partner countries. For instance, in relation to the European Partnership countries and the Western Balkans, Latvia and Poland support the training of young professionals in public administration. Poland also supports capacity building in local investment plans, decentralisation, democratic change and good governance, entrepreneurship and private sector development. In addition, Latvia supports capacity building in such areas as anti-corruption, justice and regional development. Croatia supports countries in the EU integration process by providing experts with relevant experience of the accession process to transfer knowledge. Slovenia actively supports countries in the areas of administrative law, public finance management, central banking and reform management.

Looking ahead

In 2023, the Commission will put forward a defence of democracy package to strengthen action under the European democracy action plan to promote free and fair elections, including by developing civic space and citizen participation to bolster democratic resilience from within. It will include proposals to protect our democracies and strengthen trust by defending our democratic system from outside interests. The Commission plans to propose measures to update our legislative framework for fighting corruption.

In July 2023, the Commission will adopt the fourth edition of the annual rule of law reports with specific recommendations addressed to all Member States. As part of the European rule of law mechanism the report informs the continued dialogue with Member States, the Council, the European and the European Parliament. By the end of 2023, the Commission will also publish its annual report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU. The report monitors progress in the areas where the EU has powers to act, showing how the charter has been taken into account in actual cases, notably when new EU legislation is proposed.

The Commission also plans to adopt a new anti-corruption package, update the anti-corruption legislative framework and include corruption in the sanctions toolbox to promote good governance practices.

The Commission is strengthening its online engagement to facilitate citizens' participation in European policymaking. The upgraded Have Your Say portal will be a single-entry point bringing together all information on citizens' engagement tools and processes that run in the Commission, including the new generation of citizens' panels. This new online hub will not only integrate key features of the Conference's multilingual

digital platform, such as direct exchanges between citizens in all EU official languages thanks to eTranslation, but will also host online polls and online participatory events.

On the external side, the EU will continue to take determined action to accelerate the implementation of SDG 16 globally, including through the roll-out of a range of multiannual indicative programmes with partner countries, which include shared priorities such as peace, security, good governance, the rule of law, democracy and human rights, and through mainstreaming this priority across its actions. The support is also in the form of thematic programmes under NDICI, notably the Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy and the Thematic Programme on Civil Society Organisations. A tangible contribution to SDG 16 (and other interlinked SDGs) will be made through the deployment of Global Gateway, to be undertaken in a Team Europe approach, which will actively integrate these enabling conditions.

