

European Centre for Democratic Resilience

High-level technical meeting with Member States and candidate countries and potential candidates, Brussels, 9 July 2026

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

The in-person meeting was hosted by the European Commission. Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK) and candidate countries and potential candidates (AL, BA, XK*, MD, ME, MK, RS, UA) were represented at senior administrative level. The Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Council's General Secretariat as well as the European Parliament's Spokesperson's Service were also present.

The meeting was chaired by the Director-General for Communication of the Commission, with participation of DG ENEST, DG JUST, DG CNECT and the European External Action Service (EEAS).

Main points raised:

The Commission and EEAS welcomed Member States and candidate countries and potential candidates to the meeting and presented the European Centre for Democratic Resilience (ECDR), a core component of the European Democracy Shield, and its ongoing projects. The Commission noted that the ECDR is Member State-driven and supported by a dedicated secretariat, and its principle is the whole-of-society approach. It explained that the high-level technical meeting provided an opportunity to exchange views with enlargement partners on how to possibly cooperate within the framework of the ECDR and draw on

***** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

each other's experiences in strengthening democratic resilience in response to shared challenges. Meeting participants then proceeded to discuss the association and the contribution of candidate countries and potential candidates to the ECDR and identified priorities of mutual interest.

Member States broadly expressed support for the cooperation with candidate countries and potential candidates in the framework of the ECDR and viewed their participation as mutually beneficial, stressing that cooperation should yield concrete practical results, support a broad approach to democratic resilience, and maintain alignment with shared democratic values.

Candidate countries and potential candidates expressed strong interest in becoming active associated partners and highlighted their readiness to contribute with their experience, especially in relation to information integrity and resilience, in a whole-of-society approach. They also emphasised the importance of closer cooperation on early warning, factchecking and media literacy.

The discussion focused on democratic resilience as a shared European challenge extending beyond the European Union's borders, with particular emphasis on countering FIMI and hybrid threats, supporting election integrity, institutional preparedness, media freedom, civil society participation and strategic coordination. Participants underlined that hybrid and security threats are cross-border in nature and require common understanding, information-sharing and coordinated responses rather than isolated action.

Conclusions:

Participants expressed strong interest in several practical areas for cooperation. These included capacity building and exchange of best practices, the development of common concepts and methodologies, the stakeholder platform, joint simulation exercises, support for fact-checkers, media literacy initiatives, safety in democratic life, and a possible development of a democratic resilience index. There was support for the association based on a pragmatic, flexible and project-based approach and for sequencing activities

carefully, building on collective intelligence to strengthen democratic resilience while avoiding fragmentation and duplication.

A ministerial level discussion on the cooperation with candidate countries and potential candidates, organised by the Irish Presidency, will be held in the autumn.

The ECDR secretariat will gather feedback from Member States on possible joint projects with candidate countries and potential candidates to prepare the forthcoming discussion at ministerial level.