European Commission

European Democracy Action Plan
Making EU democracies stronger
#EUDemocracy

3 December 2020

"The European Union is not only about parties and politics, rules or regulations, markets or currencies. It is ultimately — and above all else — about people and their aspirations. It is about people standing together. For their liberty, for their values, simply for a better future."

Commission President von der Leyen, 27 November 2019

Democracy is the foundation on which the European Union is built.

In a healthy and thriving democratic system citizens can freely express their views, choose their political leaders, and have a say about their future.

The past years, have shown that democracy in the EU is facing great challenges ranging from rising extremism, election interference to spread of manipulative information and threats against journalists – offline and online. We learnt our lesson: democracy cannot be taken for granted.

The **European Democracy Action Plan** seeks to empower Europeans and to strengthen the resilience of our democracies.

Going Digital

The digital revolution is transforming European democracies. People can more easily participate in the decision-making process, while politicians directly reach out to their voters.

The rapid growth of online communication and campaigning has brought new possibilities but also difficulties. To keep up with the digital revolution, the EU needs to upgrade its rules to fit the new digital world.

How to strengthen European democracies?

Individual rights and freedoms, transparency and accountability are at the heart of the EU's response set out in the European Democracy Action Plan.

Protect the integrity of elections and promote democratic participation by:

- Introducing **new rules on transparency in political advertising** in 2021
- Revising existing rules on the **financing of European political parties** in 2021
- Setting up a new EU **operational mechanism for electoral resilience,** rooted in structured cooperation of Member States to counter threats to electoral process
- Promoting **respect in the public debate** and fight again online hate speech

50.66%

of EU citizens eligible to vote **took part in the 2019 elections.**

Strengthen media freedom and media pluralism by:

- Proposing a **recommendation on safety of journalists** in 2021
- Presenting an **initiative to protect journalists and civil society against abusive litigation** (SLAPP) in 2021
- Providing **sustainable funding** for projects on legal and practical assistance to journalists inside and outside the EU
- Supporting cooperation, **journalistic partnerships and standards**
- Strengthening media **diversity and transparency** (including transparency of media ownership with a new Media Ownership Monitor, transparency of state advertising)

73%

of **women journalists** globally have experienced online violence in the course of their work (survey UNESCO/ICJF).

Counter disinformation, foreign interference and information influence operations by:

- **Developing the EU's toolbox for countering foreign interference** in our information space.
- Issuing guidance for a reinforced **Code of Practice on Disinformation** in Spring 2021 and setting a permanent monitoring framework
- **Boosting media literacy,** raising awareness and support for civil society

2.5 million

accounts were challenged in August 2020 by **Twitter's** COVID-19 guidance.