

# IED ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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## FOREWORD

The Institute of European Democrats (IED), a European political foundation formally affiliated to the European Democratic Party (EDP), was founded with the aim to promote a better understanding of the core aspects of the European integration process, to bridge the gap between citizens and EU institutions and to play an active role in strengthening the confidence of European citizens in the European project.

To carry out its mission, the IED focuses on two key pillars: the organization of conferences and seminars and the coordination of research activities. In particular, the IED organizes international conferences, seminars, and webinars where politicians, experts, EU and national officials, academics and civil society representatives share ideas and discuss concrete problems affecting citizens. Such events are mainly organised in the EU Member States, but also virtually, in order to discuss concrete issues closer to EU citizens and member organisations and to contribute to the national discussion with a European perspective ensured by the international dimension of the events. At the same time, the Institute carries out research activities and publishes political documents and studies produced by associated researchers and external projects. The IED also promotes a discussion on the situation of democracy in Europe, through its Podcast “the European Democracy Lab Podcast” launched in 2020.

The IED works in close collaboration with both European and national institutions, universities, research centers and international foundations. Through a broad range of activities, the IED aims to play an active role in restoring and strengthening citizens' confidence in the European Union, and beyond this, in promoting a united and sovereign Europe.

Through this report, the IED wishes to share the topics and findings of these activities conducted in 2022.

We wish you a good reading!

## REMARKS ON EXECUTION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES 2022

During the process of drafting the program of activities for 2022, the IED followed its customary internal consultation process. The program was developed in line with the priorities of the new EU Commission and with consideration given to the concrete thematic proposals suggested by IED member organizations. Four thematic priorities were established, with the intention of translating them primarily into conferences, webinars, and studies.

### Priorities 2022:

#### 1. A STRONGER EUROPE IN THE WORLD

Cooperation is essential to influence the global developments shaping our future and to sustain the balance of our planet.

#### 2. THE EU GREEN DEAL

In 2022, the EU's global leadership in fighting climate change remains a key priority.

#### 3. PROMOTING OUR EUROPEAN YOUTH

The future of our Union will depend on young people being able to shape Europe's future.

#### 4. A EUROPE FIT FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated hyper-connectivity and the integration of new technologies that shape the way we live and also exposed the digital vulnerabilities Europe is facing.

In 2022, the IED successfully implemented its programme of activities with most events held in person. Despite the ongoing impact of Covid-19, the IED adapted to the pandemic context and held conferences in hybrid format as needed. The IED also continued to disseminate its podcasts and conduct research activities. We are pleased to present the results of these efforts in our annual report.

Furthermore, the IED complied with the holding of meetings of the governing bodies, thereby ensuring effective oversight of the implementation of the programme.

## INITIATIVES CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE CARRY-OVER

The Institute of European Democrats was able to utilize the unspent funding allocated for the 2022 financial year by carrying it over to the first quarter of 2023. This allowed the Institute to implement a portion of the planned 2022 activities that were unable to be completed within the expected timeframe.

### **1. EU YOUTH DIALOGUES IN NANTES: A CONVERSATION ON DEMOCRACY, POLITICS, ECOLOGY, SOLIDARITIES – 10/02/2023**

A group of 12 young professionals and students gathered in Nantes to engage in discussions on democracy, politics, ecology, and solidarity. Their primary concerns were the well-being of our planet and the need for renewed solidarity between generations and individuals. With a focus on urgent ecological issues and violence against women, they aimed to collectively take action and make a positive impact on society. These young individuals, recognizing themselves as a 'generation with a task,' actively participated in dialogues with citizens from diverse political backgrounds.

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2023/nantes.php>

### **2. EUROPE ENERGY CRISIS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REINVENTION – 23/03/2023**

The event covered a range of topics related to the energy crisis in Europe, including the current energy issues in Greece, the current energy situation in Europe, and geostrategical aspects of international law in the Aegean and around Cyprus. The participants were also discussing food sufficiency and supply in the framework of the war in Ukraine, as well as the environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine. Other topics included collective EU security, targeted misinformation, and ethics in politics. The event featured distinguished speakers.

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2023/athens.php>









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# 1.

## MEETINGS OF GOVERNING BODIES



1. A meeting of the Board of Directors on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March of 2022 by electronic means (exchange of emails) aimed at the adoption of the 2020 IFRS Financial Statements prepared by Grant Thornton.
2. A meeting of the Board of Directors on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March of 2022 aimed at the adoption of the 2021 financial statements prepared by BPO Accountancy to be submitted to the Grant Thornton auditors. The meeting decided the 2022 membership fees and fixed the date of the following General Assembly.
3. A meeting of the Board of Directors on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May of 2022 aimed at the adoption of the 2021 financial statements provided by BPO accountants and Grant Thornton auditors.
4. A meeting of the General Assembly on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May of 2022, in Munich, aimed at the adoption of the amendments to the Statutes to make them compatible with the entry into force of legislative changes in Belgium concerning non-profit organisations, the approval of the 2021 financial statements provided by BPO accountants and Grant Thornton auditors, the need to continue to expand the number of members of the Institute and the presentation and round table on the priorities of the activities for the second semester 2022 and their implementation.
5. A meeting of the Board of Directors on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October of 2022 by videoconference aimed at the adoption of the 2021 IFRS Financial Statements prepared by Grant Thornton and the acceptance of FWK das Bildungswerk, BKB Bildungswerk für Kommunalpolitik Bayern e. V., Coalición Canaria and the Young Democrats for Europe as full members of the IED.
6. A meeting of the General Assembly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November of 2022, in Bilbao, aimed at presenting the final reports on the updated IED Statutes and the organization's financial situation, introducing the 4 new IED members and discussing the priorities of the activities for the year 2023 and their implementation.

Therefore, the IED complied with the meetings of the ruling bodies scheduled, ensuring the effectiveness of all activities in contributing to the political debate being close to the European citizens:

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> SEMESTER 2022

- Three meetings of the Board of Directors
- A meeting of the General Assembly

#### 2<sup>ND</sup> SEMESTER 2022

- A meeting of the Board of Directors
- A meeting of the General Assembly



2.

**CONFERENCES  
AND EVENTS**





## EU – WESTERN BALKANS: A FUTURE IN COMMON?

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2022/eu-western-balkans.php>

We gathered in Kotor, a remarkable historical and artistic region in Montenegro, protected by UNESCO since 1979. Kotor encompasses an array of styles from Romanesque to Baroque, symbolizing the unbreakable unity of cultures and the need for courageous political leadership and decisive action. Unfortunately, on 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion on Ukraine, destroying baroque cities, taking innocent lives, and dismantling living spaces. Putin's aggression aimed to erode Ukraine's identity and impose a new Russian imperial power that perceives a unified Europe as hostile, dispensable, and worthy of destruction. This invasion was predictable, given Putin's attempt to revive communism and the Soviet Union's demise. Moreover, the failure to integrate former Yugoslavia and Albania over the last two decades has left Europe with no time left.

The seminar aimed to provide an institutionalized European perspective on the rich and varied reality of the Europe of the Western Balkans, which includes Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The main objective was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the region's present views regarding the EU's current geopolitical context and potential future membership in the community.

The region is a melting pot of civilisations that provide the foundations of cultural diversity in a plural Europe. It is a crossroads where the Greek and Roman civilisations, Catholicism, Byzantine Christianity, Islam, Slavic migrations and the rise and fall of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires have blended to form a unique, multi-ethnic, multinational region of nation-states.

These ethnically diverse states are actively working to promote peaceful coexistence both internally and externally with neighboring countries. Unfortunately, EU societies often have incomplete and distorted information about the situation in the Western Balkans. The region is often associated solely with past ethnic conflicts, which contributes to a sense of "enlargement fatigue" when it comes to integrating Balkan countries into the EU.

In their first panel, speakers analyzed the diversity that exists in the Western Balkans from a broad perspective. This approach reinforced mutual understanding by identifying historical, religious, and cultural ties that could help overcome prejudices and stereotypes that hindered encounters between different communities. By emphasizing shared values, the panel aimed to promote the development of a single, plural political community in the region.

The second panel analyzed the potential for cooperation and for reaching association agreements between the six Balkan countries to communication and cooperation among Western Balkans countries, in the context of their EU membership prospective space that could help heal historical wounds and favor peace and stability in the region, thus accelerating the prospects of accession to the EU.

In an increasingly complex, threatening global context, participants emphasized the urgent need to end bureaucratic procedures and failed policies that had become irrelevant. To ensure the safety of the region, NATO must secure all potential conflict points created by Russian malignant influences, including Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Serbia must be uncompromisingly engaged in security cooperation coordinated by NATO while removing all obstacles to European integration. Belgrade's obstructionist and destabilizing exports must be stopped. To establish new political leadership, the Western Balkans and the Western world require a new vision of cooperation. The Western Balkans are an integral part of Europe, and revitalizing that shared space is necessary, leveraging diverse cultural backgrounds as a strength, despite political differences.



## CLIMATE, ENERGY, ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSITIONS IN EUROPE

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2022/venice.php>

Since 2020, IED has been organizing one of its largest international conferences in Venice at the end of August. The conference is attended annually by Italian members of government and international institutions, under the auspices of the Mayor of Venice, Luigi Brugnaro.

At the Gala Dinner held at Teatro La Fenice, the Municipality of Venice provided a warm welcome to IED and its guests. During the event, attendees were given the opportunity to learn about the fascinating history and legends surrounding the Baroque Opera House, which was once a hub of Venetian high society and hosted performances by legendary composers such as Verdi, Rossini, and Bellini. The guests were guided by Fortunato Ortombina, the Superintendent of the La Fenice Opera House, who graced the occasion with his presence.

Since its inaugural edition in 2020, the IED conference has been held at Fondazione Cini, which is widely regarded as one of the most sophisticated and esteemed venues in Venice. The first two editions of the conference had limited attendance due to the severe restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in 2022, the conference successfully accommodated over 200 participants, and it was also broadcasted live on the IED website.

The event featured senior representatives of international institutions discussing topics such as climate, energy, ecological transition, and the international scenario, including the consequences of the war in Ukraine.

The conference was opened with a written message from the President of the Republic of Italy, Sergio Mattarella. In his message, he addressed to the national and international guests of the IED Conference and of the Venice Soft Power Conference to open up a debate on the most urgent future challenges: Climate Change, the new phase of Multilateralism and long-overdue measures to set the world on a more sustainable development path. Moderated by IED President Francesco Rutelli, the conference included a video presentation by the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Paolo Gentiloni, and speeches by the Ministers for the Economy and Ecological Transition, Daniele Franco and Enrico Giovannini. Amitabh Kant, CEO of the National Institution for Transforming India, spoke about India's role in energy transition and climate change.

Following the keynote speeches, a lively debate ensued featuring a diverse range of speakers including Ulrike Müller, a Member of the European Parliament; Ana Luiza Massot Thompson-Flores, Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Science and Culture in Europe; Iván Martén, President of Orkestra, Basque Institute of Competitiveness; Marzio Galeotti, Professor of Environmental and Energy Economics at the University of Milan; Barbara Quacquarelli, Professor of Business Organisation at the Bicocca University of Milan; Antonio Navarra, President of the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change; and Giulio Boccaletti, an honorary researcher at the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment at Oxford University and author of the book 'Water: A Biography'.

The central theme of the conference revolved around climate change and how it affects the economies of the world.

During the event, the speakers addressed various key issues related to energy, climate change, and the environment. The EU's ambitious strategy "FIT FOR 55" was discussed, with a focus on its delivery progress, particularly in the context of the new "RePower EU" program. The discussion also centered on making these strategies work to achieve both immediate energy security goals and medium-to-long-term decarbonization goals.

The speakers also discussed the consistency of these strategies with the IEA report's "Formidable goal of Net-Zero Emissions by 2050" and the recent extreme weather events worldwide, attributed to ongoing climate changes. Given that the EU is responsible for about 8% of global emissions, the need for global cooperation was highlighted.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was seen as a game-changer, leading to fundamental changes in energy, climate, and environmental national and EU strategies. During the conference, the speakers discussed how Europe could move towards "Energy Independence" given its diverse national energy mix.

The EU Taxonomy, including gas and nuclear as sustainable energy sources, was also a topic of discussion. The speakers questioned whether international and EU research investments in climate science and technological innovations were consistent with the dimensions of the climate challenges. They also questioned whether adaptation policies and investments in Europe were adequate to address the dramatic impacts already underway.



The global competition on Raw Materials and Rare Earth, necessary for both the Green and Digital Transitions in Europe, was also a major concern. The discussion then turned to how the Green Transition should be managed by EU institutions, European governments, civil societies, financial institutions, and the private sector to avoid social and economic backlash, especially in the current difficult situation of inflation, economic inequalities, energy shortages, and high costs for households and businesses.

The speakers emphasized the need for awareness, support, and engagement from citizens and discussed ways to get ordinary people on board to promote inclusion and pluralism in this strategic existential challenge for humankind.



## DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2022/democracy-in-europe.php>

Francesco Rutelli, President of the IED, opened the seminar by thanking the participating Institutes for their collaborative efforts to address the challenges facing democracy in Europe. He noted the timeliness of this collaboration given recent events, including the rise of alt-right political parties in Sweden and Italy, and the deteriorating relations with countries like Hungary. Rutelli emphasized the importance of demonstrating the capability of democracy to deliver value for ordinary people in the face of rising populism. He called for the production of conclusions, proposals, and common purposes that could come out of collaboration in the following years in the interest of European citizens.

Marina Nistotskaya, the Director of the QoG Institute, explained that institutions play a vital role in public service delivery, with Quality of Government (QoG) measuring impartiality in the exercise of power. QoG differs from other institutional quality measures, she underlined, by solely focusing on government, rather than governance. Nistotskaya emphasized that QoG measures how institutions effectively deliver public goods and distinguishes between the input and output of political power.

Nistotskaya presented evidence that indicates countries with high levels of Quality of Government (QoG) are more satisfied with democracy, have higher levels of political participation and trust in institutions, and show less support for populist parties. When public service provision is impartial, it signals that society will share equally the cost of investments that are required for higher rates of entrepreneurship, innovation, and government regulations that support economic growth. Therefore, QoG is crucial for democratic countries as it promotes a more equal and effective distribution of public goods, leading to higher levels of satisfaction with democracy and greater trust in institutions.

Afterwards, Monica Bauhr presented her work on the European Quality of Government Index (EQI) and its contribution to the study of corruption and QoG. The index is constructed from surveys collected over the past 10 years and examines regional and local level measurements of QoG. Bauhr presented a graph that highlighted the relationship between corruption control and democracy, showing that many democratic countries perform poorly in controlling corruption. She asserted that this can be explained by examining regional and local variations of QoG. The EQI supported the idea that democracy alone cannot dictate the level of QoG experienced by citizens. The EQI is an innovative opportunity to investigate important questions about the relationship between democracy and corruption.

During the panel discussion, a question was asked by Debora Spini about the rise of populist parties in countries with high QoG like Denmark and Sweden. Marina Nistotskaya connected this question to Monica Bauhr's work with the EQI, which found evidence of regional variation in QoG affecting democratic outcomes. Nistotskaya emphasized the importance of delivering high-quality public goods, stating that without QoG, people become dissatisfied with democracy, which decreases their motivation to participate. However, the question remains about how a democracy can improve its QoG.

Victor Lapuente presented ways to improve Quality of Government (QoG) at the QoG Institute. He outlined how consolidated rich democracies produce very high QoG, while poorer democracies have lower QoG than autocracies. Social trust, Civil Society actions, electoral rules, meritocracy, de-bureaucratization, transparency in government, and reforms are the most well-researched ways to improve QoG. Lapuente emphasized that reforms such as service orientation and talent internalization in New Zealand produced one of the highest QoG states in the world.

Former member of the French National Assembly, Sylvain Waserman, shared his perspective as a practitioner on how to improve QoG. Specifically, he presented his work on legislating protections for whistleblowers and its vital role in protecting democracy in Europe. Waserman began by detailing his report to the Council of Europe on the current state of whistleblowing policy across Europe, which had found that national legislations lacked consistency and produced inefficient outcomes. He then introduced 13 proposals to enhance and make more coherent policy on whistleblower protection, which he had applied to the inefficiencies in French legislation on whistleblowing. As a result of his work, he was able to consolidate and significantly improve the protections placed upon whistleblowers in French law.

The following panel provided a nuanced understanding of the state of democracy and citizenry in Europe, emphasizing the importance of the work done by practitioners and academics. Staffan Lindberg, Director of the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute, highlighted global trends for democracy and autocracy, revealing that the share of the population living in an autocracy is back to 1989 levels. He identified 33 countries that are in the process of becoming autocracies, while the number of countries democratizing is only 15. Additionally, polarization is approaching toxic levels in 40 countries and goes hand in hand with autocratization. Lindberg emphasized the instrumental value of democracy, noting that countries that democratize experience stable, predictable growth, improved human health, contribute more to social spending, and lead the way in actions against climate change.

Debora Spini reviewed the motivational deficit in European citizenry, adding nuance to the discussion of the state of democracy in the World and Europe following Lindberg's work. Spini emphasized that the motivation crisis is a fundamental problem leading to the failure of civil society projects like the Arab Spring. Democracy has failed to fulfill basic promises like solidarity and redistribution, leaving people feeling left out and ignored. This issue feeds authoritarianism, polarization, and antipluralism, deepening the motivation crisis. Spini noted that de-politicizing public spheres is not the solution, and democratic parties must engage society and respond to real demands to address the motivation crisis. Spini clarified that European democracy can learn from populism, acknowledging that political concerns are valid, and de-politicizing society only worsens the motivation deficit.

During the Q&A session, the audience asked Spini and Lindberg about the potential changes in the world due to the decreasing level of democracy in the US. Spini provided a grim outlook, stating that Trump might return to office and his position could extend beyond the traditional Democrat-Republican divide, possibly leading to authoritarianism. She emphasized that the impact would not be limited to geopolitical borders, and other countries could follow suit. Lindberg supported Spini's views, unequivocally stating that January 6 would have been considered an attempted coup in any other country. He explained that the underlying conditions that led to the event still exist, and even without Trump, these conditions could be activated, raising the risk of civil war. The possibility of such a scenario is not far from sight, Lindberg warned.

Lindberg and Spini discussed the War in Ukraine and highlighted flaws in the EU's approach to unanimity, where one member can block action against another. They acknowledged the serious challenges facing European democracy in this regard. However, they also pointed out that Russia's aggression has united Europe in the need to stand up for democracy. This realization could extend to the future, particularly concerning China's aspirations to lead the world in a particular direction. Despite the challenges, there is a silver lining that Europe is coming together to defend democracy.

In the final panel of the seminar, Mikel Burzako introduced the mission statement of the Institute under Francesco Rutelli's presidency. He highlighted the division in the world between democracy and autocracy and passionately emphasized that democracy had always been the pillar of the EU. Burzako looked to the Basque Country as a leader in overcoming challenges faced by democracy in Europe, and introduced the next presenter to detail the innovative process of Collaborative Government. He concluded by acknowledging the importance of the seminar and IED's duty to defend democracy and make it meaningful again, with projects like those in the Basque Country serving as inspiration for future success.

Xabier Barandiaran presented an innovative approach to collaborative governance during the seminar. He argued that to strengthen European democracy, we need to reinforce the democratic and civil character of the people by establishing communication between civil society, public administration, and policy creation. Barandiaran pointed out that contemporary society is profoundly disconnected from the political community, and collaborative governance seeks to generate social capital among society and the political community by developing deliberative spaces where power can be shared. This generates the conditions for social innovation and the capacity to respond and adapt to issues that arise.

Barandiaran concluded by emphasizing the vital importance of collaboration between civil society and policy creation. He advised moving away from the presumed client relationship between society and government and instead looking to the community as equal stakeholders in the equation.

In his presentation, Marco Perduca, a former Italian Senator, shared his perspective on political detachment, institutions, and threats to European democracy. Based on his experiences as a politician in Italy, he argued that the problem we are facing is not with democracy itself, but rather with the disconnect within the institutions, which are filled with redundancies and contradictions.



Perduca emphasized that the issues with institutions are not unique to Italy and that outdated and undemocratic institutions pose a threat to democracy across Europe. He warned that if we fail to address these issues, we risk further disconnection, loss of motivation, and deterioration of democracy. Overall, Perduca's presentation provided a valuable perspective on the need for institutional reform to strengthen democracy.

Ardita Driza Maurer brought valuable expertise to the seminar with her knowledge of the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in electoral processes. She argued that while ICT can offer opportunities to improve democracy and increase engagement, it also presents new risks that can undermine citizen confidence in the electoral process. According to Driza Maurer, traditional paradigms need to be taken into account when implementing ICT solutions because they can impact public confidence and democratic outcomes. She firmly believes that ICT cannot be used to build trust but rather requires existing trust to be effective. To achieve the best outcome, Driza Maurer asserts that verifiability is essential, allowing voters to follow their vote from the moment it is cast to when it is counted. This approach should increase participation and prevent a loss of trust in the electoral process. In conclusion, Driza Maurer emphasized that ICT can complement traditional tools of electioneering to achieve certain goals, but it is not perfect and always carries some risk. Ultimately, political decisions on the use of ICT in elections need to be taken with careful evaluation of how they will impact democratic outcomes in the public space.

During the discussion period that concluded the seminar, there were interesting interactions between the institutes and presenters. Lapuente observed that collaborative governance could potentially violate the rule of impartiality central to QoG, as it focuses on those who are already engaged in the community, potentially further distancing those who are already socially disengaged. In response, Barandiaran countered that collaborative governance requires precise regulations to define the participation of civil society. He explained that the role of deliberative spaces is to support policy creators in the decision-making process, not necessarily change it. Barandiaran further emphasized that collaborative governance is a trust-building exercise and should not be an endless forum for consultations, but rather an instance where politicians can develop their policy alongside engagement with the community. However, he also emphasized that the community is not making the decision-making but acting in a facilitator capacity alongside the process.

The seminar came to an end with Lapuente delivering a brief speech, expressing gratitude to IED, collaborating academics, practitioners, and institutes for their contributions in making the seminar possible. **Together, they looked towards the future and the potential collaborations between Institutes, with the goal of revitalizing European democracy. Lapuente acknowledged the unprecedented challenges facing democracy in Europe, including the war at the Eastern flank, surging populist support, and misinformation. However, he maintained that Europe was well-positioned to make democracy meaningful again. Collaborative efforts could lead to innovative solutions, such as collaborative governance, digital electioneering, and new transparency measures.**



## THE DIFFICULT ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2022/youth-academy.php>

Every year since 2015, the Institute of the European Democrats (IED) in collaboration with the Young Democrats for Europe (YDE), organizes a gathering of young Europeans under 35. The main objective of this initiative is to provide a better understanding of the European political context to young people and encourage them to take an active role in the democratic process. This year, after a two-year hiatus, the IED brought together 40 youngsters from 12 different countries in Reims, France. Through a series of conferences, workshops, and a tour of the Reims Cathedral, the participants reached a consensus that there is a greater need to understand what it means to be European in 2022.

### THE CURRENT STATE OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY AND ITS FUTURE PROSPECTS

*Petr Mucha, Prof. at New York University, Prague*

Petr Mucha, a key figure in the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, believes that the digital and climate revolutions are hallmarks of a new democracy for the 21st century that needs to be more globalized and locally focused.

He outlined five key points that define this democracy, including the need for global assistance for democracy in post-democratic countries, the importance of civic education, the moral duty of Europeans to uphold democratic values, countering disinformation used by authoritarian regimes to disrupt democracies, and the strengthening of European democracies to foster a new post-national common narrative. The European Union is not just a single market but it's about a community of values that need to be worked on. He uses the different levels of identity from Vaclav Havel.

Mr Mucha emphasized that the conflict in Ukraine is not merely a battle between two countries, but rather a clash between two political ideologies: an authoritarian regime versus a dynamic call for democracy.

Participants highlighted the importance of raising awareness about the costs of change, emphasizing that simply condemning Russia is not enough without being able to bear the additional financial costs of cutting off gas and oil supplies. Furthermore, climate change must be addressed at both the local and global levels. They also discussed the need for stronger political education, starting from childhood, to help people understand that they hold the future in their hands. Ultimately, policies should be implemented that lead to tangible improvements in the lives of citizens, as this is what people want to see.

## STATE OF PLAY: WHAT IS THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE IN 2022?

*H.E. Mr. Vladimir Astapenka, Deputy Head of The National Anti-Crisis Management, Former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Ambassador in Brussels*

The years following the dissolution of the USSR were a productive time for Belarus, but in 1994, Alexander Lukashenko came to power, marking a shift in the country's trajectory. Despite this, the desire for European integration remained strong among the Belarusian people. In the 2020 presidential elections, Lukashenko claimed a victory with 80% of the vote, but this result was disputed by the public, with reports of voter fraud and intimidation. Protests erupted, and many were arrested for opposing the regime.

Russian troops remained in Belarus following a military exercise and used the country as a base for attacks on Ukraine. The justification given was that if they didn't attack, their troops in Belarus would be attacked. Sanctions alone are unlikely to change the situation in Belarus, and it is up to the people to effect change from within.

Most opposition figures have been jailed or exiled from the country, and around 300-400 Belarusians have been forced to flee. The opposition is primarily based in Warsaw and Vilnius, working to renew democratic movements. During the discussion, participants addressed the prospects for Ukraine and Europe joining the EU, the human rights situation in Belarus, and the personality cult of Lukashenko. In summary, Mr Astapenka emphasized the importance of defending democracy and fighting for our fundamental values and principles.

*Mariia Isakova, Ukrainian actress, originally from Kyiv*

Mariia has been living in Paris since 2013 and has actively participated in the struggle of the Ukrainian people since the beginning of the Dignity Revolution and the war in Donbass.

Mariia Isakova did not hear the Ukrainian language until she was 5 years old. This was because Ukrainian identity was denied and there was a lot of propaganda claiming that Ukrainian people were actually Russian. However, while exploring Ukrainian history for her play, she discovered that there were over 50 Ukrainian revolutions in the past and that the Ukrainian people had suffered greatly. Even the Ukrainian language was forbidden at one point in history. Despite this, Ukrainians were always inspired to build a democracy throughout their history. Mariia Isakova remained optimistic about the future of Ukraine.

For Mariia, the war in Ukraine, initiated by Russia, demonstrated once again the resilience of her country. The call for help from Ukraine was heard in Europe, but she believed that Ukrainians were still very lonely and Europe needed to act quickly. This included military and emergency aid, as well as considering the integration of Ukraine into the EU.

Living in France, this dramatic situation was especially meaningful to Mariia, and she felt more connected to her Ukrainian roots than ever before. She wanted to share her story and involve the French and other Europeans more closely in her struggle.

## DISCUSSING DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

*Frédéric Petit, French MP and Deputy-secretary-general of the European Democratic Party (EDP)*

Mr Petit resided in Kraków and was aware that all the countries neighboring Russia or Ukraine were deeply concerned because of their Russian minority population. His responsibility was to coordinate and provide tangible solutions for organizing the actions of civil society in response to these concerns. He believed that in France, one had to take immediate action in the event of a disaster, and he felt the same in his situation at the time.



Petit had traveled to Kiev and Vilnius as part of a French representation in those countries. He held the belief that democracy was a matter that citizens had to act on independently. The war in the region was about the history of the area and the different models of state organization. He questioned whether it was feasible to unite against a threat despite speaking different languages or having only one language and leader. He believed there were two models.

The reconstruction of Russian history aimed for all the neighboring Russian countries to have one boss and be part of only one country. However, Mr Petit believed that this model was not necessary for Europe to be effective in addressing most issues.

Moreover, Mr Petit held the belief that the European community did not start after 1945. He cited the Baltic and Black Sea regions as examples of cooperation that had existed for 500 years, with only one leader during the republic of the two nations. They had fought against Russians, and he believed they could still cooperate and fight together, even if they did not speak the same language.

According to Petit, the story of Babel in the Bible was not only a punishment but also an answer: "look what divides you, and you will find me." He argued that countries needed to disagree and argue because that was the essence of democracy.

Mr Petit stated that approximately 1% of the European population, which amounted to 3 million individuals, faced issues that were not necessarily linked to the influx of refugees. He also warned that if Ukraine was unable to fulfill its role as a key agricultural producer, it could have resulted in Europe facing food shortages.

Furthermore, he emphasized that investing in the education of the younger generation of Ukrainians was not just an external concern, but also a shared responsibility due to our historical ties and current interests.

Petit mentioned that Ukraine had managed to gather all of the nations and democratic institutions around them, despite being a young democracy. The ministers, MPs, and presidency were all working hard and showing their dedication towards building a democratic country that was maturing with time.

Mr Petit recognized the long-standing history of conflicts between humans and stressed that while there was no surefire way to prevent war, the emphasis should be on promoting democracy and steering clear of war. He believed that it was necessary to break away from the conventional thinking that pitted democratic individuals against soldiers and promoted a readiness to engage in combat.

According to Mr Petit, it is important to defend and uphold democracy and diversity, as they represent the core of their identity and must be fought for.

Petit revised his opinion regarding propaganda and freedom of the press. He used to believe that every citizen should have access to both true and false information. However, during times of war, when there is an increased risk of murders and other dangers, he came to the view that some measures of repression may be necessary. He clarified that his change of opinion did not imply that there was an error in not implementing such measures earlier since the context was different.

During the time of the Republic of Two Nations, they established something novel for Europe by demonstrating that differences did not necessarily prevent people from fighting together.

According to Mr Petit, it is necessary to assist Ukraine with reconstruction before considering their potential accession to the EU. He believed that helping them build infrastructures would be a priority, and acting quickly would be crucial in establishing connections with Ukraine through the reconstruction efforts. One of the main challenges that had to be addressed was corruption. Mr Petit also pointed out that after the Maidan protests in Ukraine, citizen action was necessary, and volunteers helped the government ministers manage the sudden influx of aid.

## DISCUSSIONS AND EXTRA-MEETINGS

During our stay, we had a number of workshops and internal meetings in addition to the informative conferences. These sessions were instrumental in shaping our perspective on the issues discussed with the speakers. The Hotel provided excellent facilities that enabled us to brainstorm and form opinions on complex matters that required careful consideration. We debated topics such as whether the EU should reduce its reliance on oil and gas imports, whether Ukraine should be fast-tracked to join the EU, and what measures the EU could take to better integrate young people into its policies. The discussions were highly beneficial, and even now, the 40 participants are still processing all the information they absorbed.

Our stay in Reims was rounded off with a lovely dinner and a tour of the Cathedral, which helped us gain a deeper understanding of French and European history. It was fascinating to witness how closely connected we were to the European architects who constructed the Cathedral, as well as many other buildings in the area.



## DEMOCRACY, POLITICS, ECOLOGY & SOLIDARITIES

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2022/youth-dialogue-krakow.php>

On the morning of Saturday 11 June, the IED hosted the first chapter of its yearlong project EU Youth Dialogues at the Krakow University of Economics.

The aim of the project was to provide a partial yet vivid picture of the current situation of the younger generations in Europe. It surveyed their aspirations, state of mind, hopes, anxieties, world views, civic involvement, and personal ambitions.

The Dialogues invited all participants to share their motives, explore their goals, and renew their purposes based on a conversation between those who have chosen a path to political commitment and those who preferred to stay away from politics.

With the help of Liliana Smiech on the ground and the Students' Scientific Circle for the Green Challenges, the IED brought together 12 university students and young professionals for a friendly discussion on democracy, politics, ecology, solidarity, and the contemporary challenges for Poland and Europe.

The lively and intense exchanges revealed a broadly shared consensus on the unsatisfactory situation of the political system, the unfortunate weakness of the current political class, and its lack of leadership – especially in the face of the major challenges represented by climate change, European construction, and economic development. Another shared concern was the increasing polarization of the public debate and within society. The cohesion of the social fabric is gradually threatened by a more brutal partisan confrontation and receding solidarities as middle ground and moderate views are waning.

While some participants appeared more optimistic and others less so, the entire group, whether politically active or not, defended the idea of reinforced political and civic education, a more expert- and knowledge-driven public action, and their own commitment to making an impact on society.



## SHARING MOTIVES, EXPLORING GOALS & RENEWING PURPOSES

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2022/youth-dialogue-nuernberg.php>

On the afternoon of Monday 27 June, the IED hosted the second installment of its yearlong project EU Youth Dialogues in Nuremberg, Germany. The project aims to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date snapshot of the current situation of European youth and younger generations. The Dialogues bring together participants who have chosen a path to political engagement and those who have preferred to stay away from politics, in order to explore their motives, goals, and purposes.

With the assistance of Kerstin Dowdell and the patronage of IED Vice-President Gabi Schmidt and Tobias Gotthardt (MdL), the event saw six young professionals and university students engage in a friendly conversation on topics such as democracy, politics, ecology, solidarity, and the contemporary challenges facing Germany and Europe.

The discussions revealed some interesting and crucial points. The participants expressed a sense of anxiety about the future, particularly with regards to the ecological crisis. While their individual situations and political inclinations varied, they generally agreed that this crisis would have a deep impact on their generation. They also acknowledged that education is essential at all stages of life, and that the current education system does not adequately prepare young people for the reality of the world. As a result, there is a need for collective awareness and reform of the system.



The issue of radical actions and speech was also discussed, as was the importance of respecting the voices of the younger generation. Some participants deplored the lack of understanding from older generations, which they felt justified a louder voice in the debate. However, those who were more involved in public debate and action stressed the need for a balanced yet equal dialogue. They expressed concern about the gradual disappearance of nuance and middle ground from the public sphere and highlighted that everything is political, even if it does not necessarily have to be partisan.

Finally, Europe was a constant horizon that was referred to throughout the discussions. Whether it was the promise of opportunities that they enjoyed, or the belief that everyone should have the same opportunities, or simply the recognition of Europe as a relevant level of action for real change, with local government of course, Europe was seen as a defining part of their identity.



## DEMOCRACY, POLITICS, ECOLOGY & THE SITUATION IN CYPRUS

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2022/youth-dialogue-cyprus.php>

On the afternoon of October 22nd, the IED held the third chapter of its EU Youth Dialogues project in Limassol, a coastal city in southern Cyprus. This initiative seeks to capture a vivid snapshot of the current situation of young Europeans. By facilitating conversations between politically active individuals and those who prefer to stay away from politics, the Dialogues encourage participants to share their motivations, explore their aspirations, and renew their sense of purpose.

With the help on the ground of Marina Demetriou and Irene Mandole from the Citizens Platform, a group of 11 young professionals and university students gathered for a cordial conversation on democracy, politics, ecology, solidarity, and the pressing challenges facing both Cyprus and Europe.

In the general context of a still divided and occupied country, following the 1974 Turkish invasion of the island's northern shores, the discussion was marked by a regular insistence on this idiosyncratic situation that enduringly impacts and redefines the political priorities in the public debate. Although generally belonging to the former generations, painful memories still loom over the younger ones and tend to trump many other preoccupations – including environmental urgencies or social concerns.

Against the backdrop of a tension between the desired liberation of the country and the necessary reconciliation, these mature and energetic students voiced their utter disbelief and disenchantment as regards their current political system, where rampant corruption and sheer clientelism strengthen the grip of established parties on the public life. In one particularly strong and unanimous lament about their representatives from the older generations, they also deplored the especially poor quality of an obsolete education system, that they consider to have dramatically failed them in its mission of preparing them to the actual world.

This reflection on education led to a collective and committed call for deeper and better mobilisation in the society, to raise awareness among their peers and the greater public, as well as initiate the necessary changes. Here, those who prefer the involvement in the social and cultural movements and the ones who believe that the party-based system remains an irredeemable reality to compose with, converged in a mutual acknowledgment that both tactical inclinations should not be opposed – but associated, in the hope to bring about the systemic change.

Finally, in spite of the prevailing sentiment of being on the “edges of Europe”, small and estranged from the EU’s political and diplomatic decisions-making centres, the discussion ended up on the necessity for a stronger and proactive commitment to the island’s anchorage in Europe.



## A CONVERSATION ON DEMOCRACY, POLITICS, ECOLOGY, SOLIDARITIES

<https://www.iedonline.eu/events/2023/nantes.php>

With the precious help on the ground of Alexandra Leuliette and Adrien Baron on behalf, and under the patronage, of French minister for Youth, Sarah El Hairy, also a board member of the IED, 12 young professionals and university students gathered at the Maison de l'Europe de Nantes, for a friendly conversation on democracy, politics, ecology, solidarities and the contemporary challenges for France and Europe.

In their lively exchanges, they presented the encouraging picture of a youngsters that have absorbed and keep outgrowing the cumulative crises hitting them. Concerned about the world and especially about the state of the planet, they pleaded for rekindling the increasingly failing solidarities, whether between generations, or between individuals. With a mixed balance of optimism and realism, they argued for a common effort to mobilise, particularly on the ecological urgencies and the cause of the violence against women, and have a positive and constructive impact on the society, through their professional and personal activities.

Enthusiastically committed to the dialogue and the exchanges amongst citizens of all persuasions, whether politically active as party members or more independently involved in the causes of ecology, gender equality or democracy, they seemed to share a common sense of belonging to a "generation with a task".





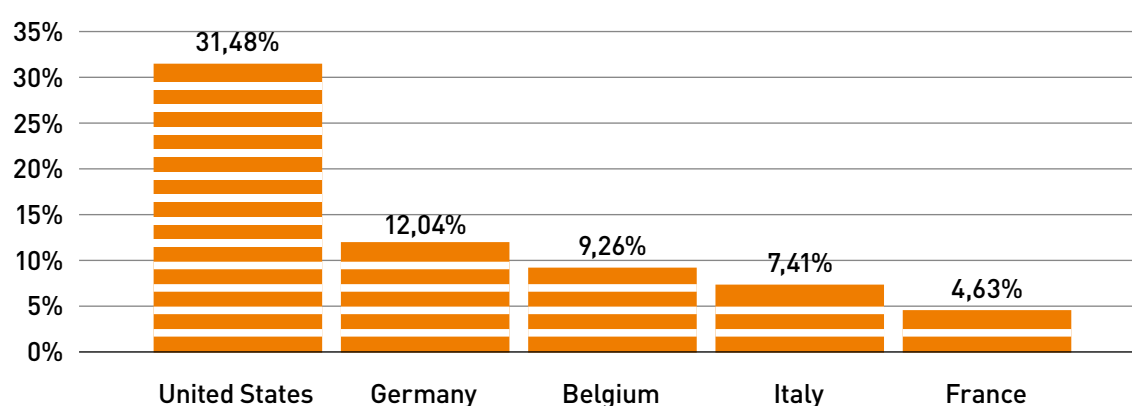
3.

**EUROPEAN  
DEMOCRACY LAB  
PODCAST**

To address challenges such as the Climate Crisis and Covid-19, which pose economic and financial difficulties, Europe requires global and democratic solutions. How can democratic institutions and a democratic consensus help Europe tackle these new global challenges? In July 2020, the IED launched its podcast channel in French and English to provide European citizens with a better understanding of European and international affairs.

The podcasts are available for the audience to listen on various platforms, such as Acast, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.

#### AUDIENCE STATISTICS TOP 5 COUNTRIES



## 1. WHAT IF DIGITAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES WERE THE KEY TO RESTORE TRUST IN POLITICAL PROCESSES?



*European Democracy Lab Podcast, Season 2, 6 / 11.01.2022*

Representative democracy is in crisis. Public confidence in the accountability of democratic representation has experienced a steady decline, both within and outside the EU. For many citizens, political actors are distant figures and legislative processes appear too complex to follow and control. However, grassroots participatory democracy initiatives have mushroomed across Europe. This phenomenon speaks to a more promising reality. We discussed it with a Research from Croatia, Iva Paska, a sociologist and lecturer at the University of the North in Croatia and Vincent Chauvet, Mayor of Autun, in central France and member of the European Committee of the Regions.

 Audience score: 201 listeners



## 2. THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES ON DEMOCRACY



*European Democracy Lab Podcast / 22.07.2022*

In this podcast we discussed the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the impact of digital technologies on democracy with Paulina Mazgaj and Szymon Polewka, from Poland. Both, Paulina and Szymon participated in the first round of the EU Youth Dialogues workshops, a yearlong project organised by the Institute of European Democrats with the aim of making the voices of young European citizens count.

 Audience score: 334 listeners

## 3. REPRESENTATION OF THE YOUTH IN PUBLIC DEBATES



*European Democracy Lab Podcast / 01.09.2022*

In this podcast we discussed the perceptions of young citizens in Germany vis à vis their representation in media and politics, both at the national and European level.

 Audience score: 263 listeners



## 4. YOUNG PEOPLE IN CYPRUS LOOK FOR SOLUTIONS TO THEIR COUNTRY'S DIVIDE



*European Democracy Lab Podcast / 06.12.2022*

Two young Cypriots discussed the country's divide, explored solutions and asked for more attention from the European institutions to help solve the years-long problem that befalls the country.

 **Audience score: 401 listeners**



4.

**RESEARCH  
ACTIVITIES**

**Our research activities have engaged both external research experts and young people under the age of 35, who were selected through a Call for Papers.**

### **1. FROM MEASURING IMPACT TO THE CREATION OF A EUROPEAN SUSTAINABILITY LABEL**

*IED Research Paper by Tsvetelina Tsvetanova/Wijsbroek (available in EN/FR/DE) / 17.01.2022*

In a constantly changing world, economic, biodiversity and climate issues require a constant assessment of the impact of our lifestyles, production and consumption. Changing behaviour and thus acting on these consequences is a difficult task. Therefore, it seems necessary to pay more attention to the sustainability labels that surround us in order to better understand them. This study set out a framework for analysis that allowed for a comprehensive consideration of the main environmental and socio-economic issues, their interactions and above all their measurement.

<https://www.iedonline.eu/publications/2022/european-sustainability-label.php>

## **EXTERNAL RESEARCH PROJECTS**

### **1. IED RESEARCH PAPER PROJECT 2022: THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

*28.02.2022*

The aim of this research project was to reflect on the future of democracy in the European context and to analyse the characteristics of the political culture that emerge in some spaces of public opinion in the context of the crisis of liberal democracy and in post Covid-19 societies; a crisis that was manifested in the disaffection of citizens with respect to actors, institutions and the political system of liberal democracies and also in the weakening of the political structures of representation and management of public policies. Through this research, the IED intended to deepen our knowledge of the factors that were influencing the transformation of the democratic political culture of citizens in post Covid-19 societies and the impact of this political culture on the democratic system. We also explored the alternative of Collaborative Governance and civil initiative with the aim of strengthening democratic systems.

<https://www.iedonline.eu/publications/2022/future-democracy.php>

### **2. CALL FOR PAPERS: WHY THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IS SUPERIOR AND HOW IT CAN DEFEAT AUTOCRACY**

*18.10.2022*

The IED is proud to present the 15 Papers which were selected following the IED Call for Papers launched in May 2022. Through this external research project called "Democracy versus autocracy – Why the democratic system is superior and how it can defeat autocracy", the Institute of European Democrats (IED) intended to award in the course of 2022 several contracts for "Research Fellowships" to young researchers and policy analysts. The young selected authors came from countries such as Poland, Italy, Spain, Romania, France, Belgium, Greece, Albania, North Macedonia, Finland, Bulgaria, Turkey. Their policy studies were meant to define and support with arguments why the democratic system is superior and how it can defeat autocracy. The gathered proposals dealt with the impact of new technologies, digital democracy, fighting autocratisation and supporting the civil society, disinformation, the political impact of the green transition, challenges at the global level and many other fields.

View the 15 papers here: <https://www.iedonline.eu/publications/2022/democracy-versus-autocracy.php>



**THE SPATIAL DISPERSION OF POPULIST VOTING IN THE EU**

*Anton Tzonev*

**DEMOCRACY “WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS”?**

*Laia Comerma Calatayud*

**INFORMED CONSENT: MISSION (IM)POSSIBLE AND OTHER RISK REMEDIES IN DATA PROCESSING**

*Nikiforov Liubomir*

**INVESTIGATING AUTOCRACIES. HOW AND WHY THE EU SHOULD SUPPORT INVESTIGATIVE MEDIA IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES**

*Simone Benazzo*

**WHAT, WHERE AND WHOSE DEMOCRACY?**

*Francesco Trupia*

**EUROPEAN INTERFERENCE IN AUTOCRATIC PROCESSES**

*Thibaut Le Forsonney*

**THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT AND EU INSTITUTIONS AFTER CRISES: IMPROVEMENT OR DETERIORATION?**

*Alexandros Kyriakidis*

**TACKLING THE GROWING DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT IN EUROPE**

*Dawid Aristotelis Fusiek*

**THE DIGITAL AGE: RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMOCRACY**

*Sofia af Hällström*

**TACKLING DISINFORMATION: FINDING ALTERNATIVE ROADMAPS FOR EUROPE TO FOLLOW**

*Özge Çakır-Somlyai*

**DIGITALIZATION AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY**

*Lula Lutjona*

**TACKLING ANTI-DEMOCRACY DRIVERS: CIVIL SOCIETY RESILIENCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**

*Dimitar Nikolovski*

**NEW TECHNOLOGIES, A TWO WAYS ROAD FOR THE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT**

*Areitio Ibarlucea Asier*

**THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE AS A NEW FRAMEWORK OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AT THE EUROPEAN UNION LEVEL**

*Ionuț Mircea Marcu*

**HOW TO CONSOLIDATE AND ENHANCE EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY SUPPORT TODAY?**

*Elena Luiza Roman*





5.

ANNUAL  
REPORT



## IED ANNUAL REPORT 2021

**JULY 2022**

Through this report, the IED wishes to share the topics and findings of the activities conducted in 2021.

[https://www.iedonline.eu/download/ied/IED\\_Annual\\_REPORT\\_2021.pdf](https://www.iedonline.eu/download/ied/IED_Annual_REPORT_2021.pdf)





6.

**MEMBERS  
2022**



The Institute of European Democrats held its General Assembly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November of 2022 in Bilbao.

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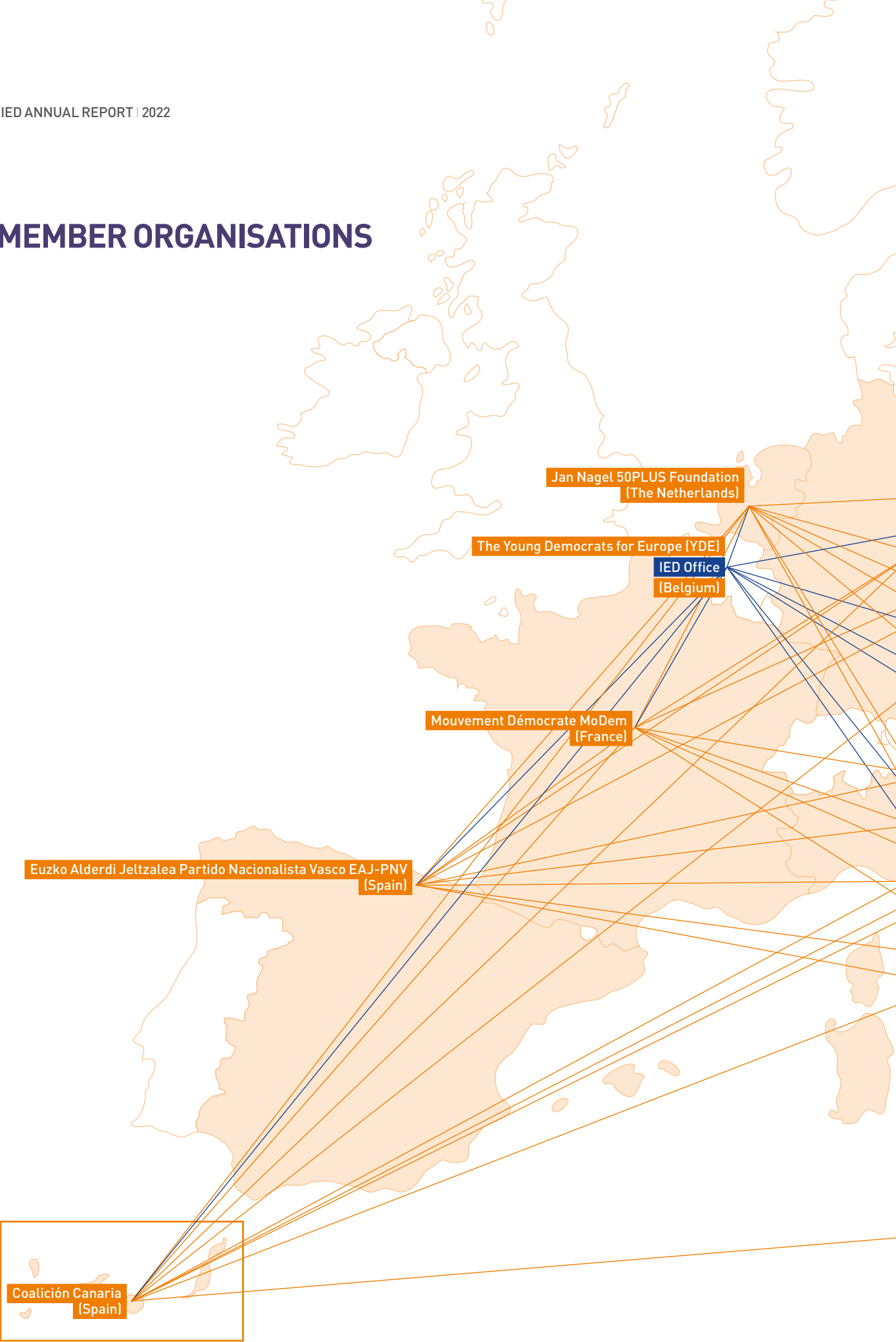


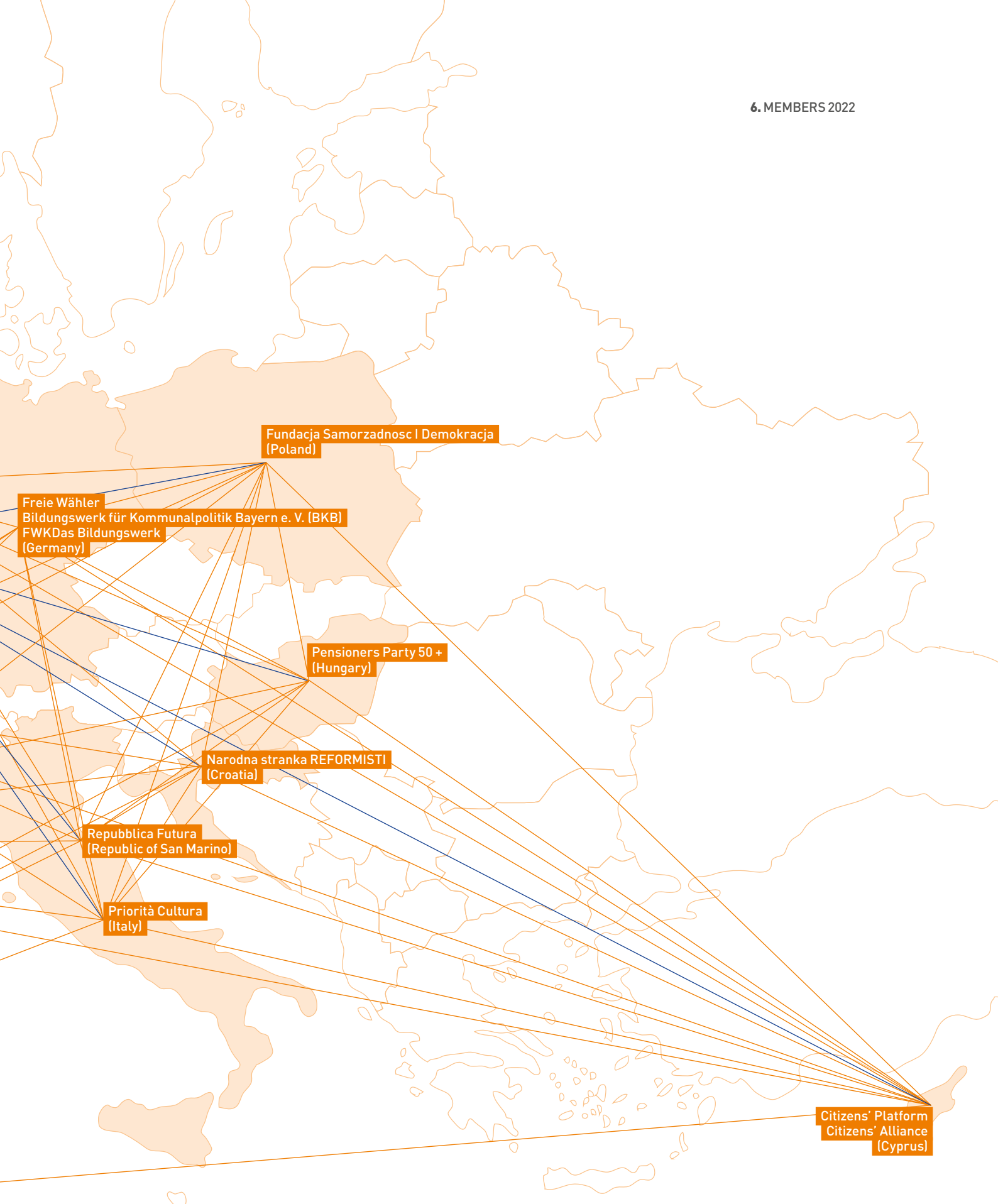
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