

EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY: THE REQUIRED INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Rationale

As we are heading towards the 2024 European elections we, as European citizens, are facing some important political challenges. Some are internal and are linked to the nature of the European institutions and elections. The last electoral cycles for the European Parliament have shown a reduced interest on behalf of the electorate as we have yet accomplished the full “Europeanisation” of elections both as regards the topics and the actors involved.

Other challenges are related to the need to reflect more on questions such as transparency as well as the already well-known challenges of the energy crisis, war against Ukraine, the need to ensure a just and fair green and digital transition, etc.

In that context the pending [electoral reform](#) is still under a rather unfavorable context and the implementation of **transnational lists** is still uncertain for the 2024 elections. Although there is a European Parliament [mid-term agreement](#) endorsed by the EPP Group, the S&D Group and the Renew Europe Group on supporting a lead candidate process combined with **transnational lists** with a sufficient number of seats to be in place for the next European elections, this process seems to have remained in the phase of negotiations. Moreover any decision should bear in mind the Venice Commission 2002 recommendation included in its [“Code of good practice in electoral matters”](#) concerning the stability of electoral law: “The fundamental elements of electoral law, in particular the electoral system proper, membership of electoral commissions and the drawing of constituency boundaries, should not be open to amendment **less than one year before an election**, or should be written in the constitution or at a level higher than ordinary law.”

Another issue that emerged following the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) is the need to **strengthen the participatory democracy**. The citizens’ participation matter if we want to have a true democracy, defined as the *governance of the people, by the people and for the people*. In order to tackle the perceived democratic deficit the participatory democracy is one of the answers. In fact that is why some of the recommendations of the *Conference on the Future of Europe* mentioned aspects such as: [“Improving the effectiveness of existing and developing new citizens’ participation mechanisms, in line with EU acquis, by better informing on them.”](#)

We need also to better learn how **to prevent and, if needed, punish the authoritarian abuses by a Member State**. 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, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the EU [Member States](#) in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. If they are breached the [Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union \(TEU\)](#) institutes a **preventive mechanism** (Article 7(1) TEU) that allows the [Council of the European Union](#) to give the Member State concerned a warning before a serious

breach has actually materialised. If it do not suffice then its **sanctioning mechanism** (Article 7(2) TEU) allows the Council to suspend certain rights deriving from the application of the treaties to the Member State in question, including its voting rights in the Council. In that case, the serious breach must have persisted for some time. An [EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights](#) that is working properly is thus key in upholding our common values,. It also needs to take into consideration the current (geo) political risks and the need of a balance between the Member States, the founding principles and national interests.

The research papers would need to tackle one of these three main sub-topics, either one, two or all of them (if need) in order to respond to the main topic EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY: THE REQUIRED INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

A. Transnational lists

- *What are the opportunities and challenges associated with the transnational lists as regards the aspects related to democracy? What is the impact of: social media, artificial intelligence, e-voting? Etc.*

B. Strengthening participatory democracy

- *What are the lessons learned from the Conference on the Future of Europe? What can we do better in the future? How can we protect democracy during emergency situations? What new mechanisms for participatory democracy can we develop? How can we optimise the existing ones?*
- *Often, when analysing the EU institutions, a series of analysts spoke about the “democratic deficit” of the EU. What is the situation nowadays? Etc.*

C. Punishing authoritarian abuses by a Member State

- *Another important aspect is related to the European instruments meant to support the democracy such as the European Democracy Action Plan. What is their current status? What are the problems that affect their successful implementation?*
- *Possible challenges to the democratic system (the cost related to the Green and Digital transition, etc.)*
- *What are the tools that the EU can use in preventing and punishing the authoritarian abuses by a Member State? What is the impact of the current war in this regard? Etc.*

Research format and outcome

The aspects related to the topic EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY: THE REQUIRED INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS, should be addressed and developed by **young researchers and policy analysts** through a series of **Policy Studies** meant to define and support with arguments the required institutional reforms needed to support democracy.

The Research papers would address several key issues related to this topic, whilst:

- **anticipating possible European and regional trends,**
- **sticking to the concerns of the European and national societies**
- **having in mind that we are heading towards the 2023 European elections**
- **bringing specific and concrete policy recommendations.**

The main purpose is to have a **pragmatic approach** that identifies the opportunities and challenges related to the required institutional reforms needed to support democracy in order to come up with a series of **policy recommendations** and also **prospective scenarios**, with concrete action plans, that can provide viable solutions to the relevant stakeholders

The contributions should be policy orientated and have **approx. 8 - 10 pages** (maximum) (without Annexes and Bibliography). Template and stylistic guidelines will be provided to the selected candidates.

In the frame of this fellowship, the selected candidates should:

- Draft a specific research paper on the proposed subject;
- Be prepared for the possible presentation of the research paper during conferences or similar events in 2023-2024;
- be prepared to work on a possible publication.

Funding

- 1 500 € gross amount
- the selected candidate is responsible for paying all the due taxes

A maximum number of 15 Research Papers may be selected for financing!

Eligibility criteria:

- Bachelor degree;
- Age limit of 35 years old by the 30 June 2023;
- Proven excellence in writing skills in English.
- Citizen of an EU Member State or of a state from the European Economic Area (EEA) or of a candidate or a potential candidate country or from a country member of the Eastern Partnership.

Candidacy to be sent by 30 June 2023 midnight (Brussels time) to callforpapers@iedonline.eu with the subject "IED Call for papers 2023 Candidacy"

Please do not wait the last day or hours to send your candidature in order to avoid reception problems of your email.

- Candidatures are only on an individual basis; no research teams or multiple candidatures are accepted.

The candidature dossier must contain:

- **Europass Resume in English** (maximum 3 pages)
- **Research Proposal** which must contain the title of the research proposal, the name of the candidate and a short description of the research proposal (**maximum 4 000 signs spaces included**) which presents the way in which the candidate wants to tackle the topic, the basic structure, research methodology and selected references.

Indicative Timetable*

- Publication of Call and period for candidature proposal: 22 May – 30 June 2023 at midnight.
- Selection period: 1 July – 17 July 2023
- Results of the selections: 18 July 2023
- Confirmation of selected researchers and signature of research contracts: 18 -31 July
- Research period: signature of the contract – 10 September 2023

- **Deadline for submission of the research papers: 10 September 2023 (at the latest)**

- Internal evaluation period: 10 – 24 September 2023
- Communication of results & things to improve (if any) – 25 September 2023 (at the latest)
- Improvement period (if necessary): 26 September – 8 October 2023
- Final publications submitted: 8 October 2023 (at the latest)
- Preparation of publications for putting them online: 9 – 15 October 2023
- Publication: 16 October 2023.

**** The above-mentioned timetable is tentative and subject to change by IED following the general evolution of this Call for papers***