

The European Democracy Shield: An overview



Naja Bentzen, Members' Research Service

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The communication on the European Democracy Shield (EDS) aims to boost the protection of democracy against attacks, including from foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) and disinformation. Proposed actions reflect the EU's whole-of-society approach, with a new Centre for Democratic Resilience complementing a broad set of proposed actions across three key pillars.

European Commission proposal

On 12 November 2025, the Commission and the High Representative published a joint communication on the 'European Democratic Shield: Empowering Strong and Resilient Democracies' (EDS), in line with the July 2024 [political guidelines](#). The EDS aims to protect democracy against increasingly complex threats, including 'interference and distortions in the information space' as well as hybrid threats, aimed at impacting elections and eroding trust in democratic processes.

In parallel and linked to the EDS, the Commission also launched a strategy for civil society.

Actions, to be rolled out by 2027, fall under four key pillars:

1. a new European Centre for Democratic Resilience;
2. safeguarding the integrity of the information space;
3. strengthening our institutions, fair and free elections, and free and independent media;
4. boosting societal resilience and citizens' engagement.

The EDS further builds on the EU's whole-of-society approach, including its evolving regulatory framework to threats against democracy. A key dimension is digital regulation, including the [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#) and the [Artificial Intelligence Act](#). The 2023 [defence of democracy package](#), the [regulation on transparency and targeting of political advertising \(TTPA\)](#), the European Media Freedom Act ([EMFA](#)) and the [Audiovisual Media Services Directive \(AVMSD\)](#) are other core pieces of legislation. The framework for restrictive measures in view of Russia's destabilising actions was broadened in [May 2025](#) to enable the suspension of Kremlin-controlled broadcasters. Other steps include the EU's hybrid toolbox and FIMI [toolbox](#). In May 2025, the Commission [announced](#) €5 million in funding for a European network of fact-checkers, expanding work by the European Digital Media Observatory ([EDMO](#)) and the European Fact-Checking Standards Network ([EFCSN](#)). As part of the new multiannual financial framework (MFF), the Commission proposes a number of programmes to support the EDS. AgoraEU aims to promote shared values, including democracy, and support the European audiovisual

and creative sectors, media freedom and civil society. Other programmes include Horizon Europe, Erasmus+ and the Global Europe Instrument, and possibly defence spending.

A new European Centre for Democratic Resilience

The proposed European Centre for Democratic Resilience is the most visible innovation in the EDS. The Centre would bring together expertise and capacities across Member States, EU candidate countries and potential candidates, and EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, including the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Centre would be developed progressively, based on Member States' voluntary participation, and their input and needs for support and cooperation. In coordination with the EEAS-led Rapid Alert System, the Centre will link existing networks and structures. It will host a stakeholder platform for dialogue with civil society, researchers and academia, media providers, and a new European network of fact-checkers. The Centre would support operational cooperation to counter common threats, particularly FIMI and disinformation, and aim to increase situational awareness and the capacity to detect and anticipate threats, develop a strong early warning system and support rapid response capacity.

Safeguarding the integrity of the information space

Proposed actions to support information integrity complement the existing measures listed above, with implementation and enforcement of the digital legislation as key priorities. Together with the European Board for Digital Services, the Commission will prepare a DSA incidents and crisis protocol in response to large-scale, transnational information operations. The Commission will work with signatories of the Code of Conduct on Disinformation to increase transparency of recommender systems, demonetise disinformation, and explore further measures, including improving the detection and labelling of AI-generated and manipulated content circulating on social media services. Based on the FIMI Toolbox, a Blueprint for countering FIMI and Disinformation will be prepared. The independent European network of fact-checkers will help counter online manipulation, and EDMO's extended mandate will support situational awareness around elections or crises. A common research support framework will enhance monitoring of information manipulation and disinformation. Moreover, the European Board for Media Services will develop common criteria for media regulators to act against rogue non-EU media operators presenting risks to public security.

Stronger democratic institutions, free and fair elections and free and independent media

In the face of internal and external challenges and attacks on European democracies and electoral processes, a series of proposed measures include stronger cooperation with Member States under the European Cooperation Network on Elections (ECNE) to enhance electoral integrity; guidance on the use of AI in electoral processes; updating of the Digital Services Act Elections Toolkit; and setting up a voluntary EU network of influencers. A proposed new pan-European platform is to make real-time news and information from professional media outlets available to wider audiences in multiple languages. Actions to support and revitalise free, plural and independent media and journalism include

reviewing the AVMSD; increasing transparency of online advertising; assessing the fitness of State aid rules for public service broadcasting in the evaluation of the 2009 broadcasting communication; reinforcing measures for the safety of journalists and combating abusive litigation (SLAPPs); and supporting quality independent media and journalism beyond EU borders. Moreover, the Commission will support common work with the Member States on the transparency and integrity of funding in politics, looking at issues of common interest such as anonymous donations and cryptocurrency.

Boosting societal resilience and citizens' engagement

Actions to empower citizens and boost societal resilience include the 2026 basic skills support scheme for schools, including citizenship and digital skills; and a media resilience programme for all age groups across rural and urban areas. In addition, the communication envisages an EU democracy guide for citizens, to promote citizens' awareness of their democratic rights, and a European Citizens' Panel on democratic resilience. Other whole-of-society actions include a high-level event on democracy and an annual award for democratic innovation, and support for voluntary commitments by the private sector to build a business coalition for democracy. To safeguard evidence-based decision-making, the Commission will issue a recommendation on supporting scientific evidence and its use in public policymaking; enshrine the freedom of scientific research in EU law under the European Research Area Act; and assess options for setting up a European Centre of Expertise on Research Security. In addition, the Commission will explore future pathways for the EU's tech environment, with an initial focus on future social networking/social media platforms, supporting EU digital sovereignty.

Role of the European Parliament

Over the past two legislatures, Parliament has used a [mix of tools](#) – non-legislative resolutions, hearings, and its budgetary power – to address challenges to democracies, including from information manipulation and interference. On 18 December 2024, Parliament voted to set up a special committee on the European Democracy Shield (EUDS), which was [constituted](#) on 3 February 2025. EUDS further builds on work by two previous special committees on foreign interference ([INGE](#) and [ING2](#)). In resolutions adopted in [March 2022](#) and [June 2023](#) respectively, Members called for the creation of a European centre for information integrity to facilitate exchange between Member States and EU institutions and agencies. This idea was further developed in the April 2025 EUDS [working document](#). The EUDS is set to [propose further solutions](#) to protect democracy in a forthcoming own-initiative report.

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CONTACT

E-mail: ep@ep.europa.eu

Intranet: <https://ep.in.ep.europa.eu/>

Internet: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank>

Blog: <https://epthinktank.eu>