EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

1. Ukraine
2. Georgia
3. Moldova
4. Tunisia
5. Western Balkans
6. Pan-African Parliament

II. THEMATIC AREAS

1. Pre- and post-election activities
2. Mediation and dialogue, including Young Political Leaders programme
3. Human rights and Sakharov Prize activities

ANNEX 1: List of DEG members and Lead Members
ANNEX 2: 2021 Budget breakdown for EP democracy support activities
Executive summary

In line with the “Implementing Provisions on Democracy Support and Election Observation Activities”, the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) is responsible for four main areas of activity, namely - election observation, parliamentary capacity support, human rights actions, as well as mediation, facilitation and dialogue. The Annual Work Programmes (including the current one for 2021) cover the latter three areas, with EP election observation delegations being subject to a separate bi-annual procedure in DEG.

The DEG, constituted in October 2019, reconfirmed the Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA) - applied since 2014 - as a guiding principle of the Group’s work in the 9th parliamentary term.

In line with the Approach, the DEG carries out the bulk of its activities in a manner that is coherent with, and complementary to, the electoral cycles of a limited number of third countries. These are presented in the form of the Annual Work Programme (AWP) adopted by the DEG and submitted to the Conference of Presidents for endorsement. The Annual Work Programme takes into account the DEG experience, impact of activities and lessons learnt from previous years.

The activities of the DEG during the 9th parliamentary term were suddenly halted in March 2020 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and following the measures taken by the European Parliament to protect the health and safety of its members and staff.

The DEG will resume its activities under a new AWP 2021. The DEG acknowledges the persisting difficulties related to the COVID-19 pandemic and, while Parliament measures against the pandemic are in place, it will endeavour to carry out some activities contained in the AWP remotely, where possible, while fully aware that many activities are conceived to be carried out in person. This approach will entail:

1) Reinforcing the coordination within Parliament, with the EEAS, EU delegations in third countries and other relevant partners;
2) Being more flexible and innovative in the planning of the AWP activities and seeking stronger synergies between the different actions;
3) Refocusing and strengthening those activities that can be carried out remotely, where possible, and until Parliament is ready to resume its normal activity.

In light of the above, the present AWP 2021 is a continuation of the work already started in 2020.

In 2019, DEG confirmed the following six priority countries/regions for enhanced democracy support activities under the CDSA: Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Tunisia, Western Balkans (as a priority region), and the Pan-African Parliament (as a priority regional parliament).

Activities with Turkey are being mainstreamed throughout the thematic areas of DEG’s work. The choice of priority countries will be reviewed at mid-term and adjusted along urgent EP political priorities.
In addition, as per usual practice, a number of activities, also covering countries/regions beyond the priority ones, will be organised under **three specific thematic areas**.

1) **Pre-and post-election activities**, including the new instrument of *Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues (PEDs)*. 2021 is the new pilot year for the PEDs which, as a first step, could be organised virtually in a couple of DEG priority countries. In addition, should the anti-Covid measures still be in force, election-related virtual discussions will continue to be the main tool of DEG’s pre- and post-electoral activities. Finally, the EP - under DEG’s guidance - will co-host jointly with EEAS in the second half of 2021, the 15th annual Implementation Meeting of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP).

2) **Parliamentary mediation and dialogue** is now a well-recognised and successful tool within the overall EU democracy support activities. It focuses on priority countries/regions and beyond. It is based on political demand and implemented through established instruments that continue to innovate within overall EU approaches, namely: Parliamentary Mediation; Inter-Party Dialogue and consensus building, including the Jean Monnet Dialogues for Peace and Democracy; the Prevention of Election-related Violence; support to conflict prevention and peace processes; and a new programme to support Women Peace-builders. In addition, the well-established Young Political Leaders (YPL) Programme will continue as a highly visible and innovative peace building and conflict prevention instrument.

3) **Human Rights actions, including the Sakharov Prize Community and Fellowship**, are focused on the support to partner parliaments in mainstreaming human rights into legislation and overseeing their implementation, strengthening the links between parliaments/government authorities and civil society, supporting human rights defenders (in particular Sakharov laureates), strengthening free and pluralistic media. The newly developed Simone Veil programme - to empower women parliamentarians - will also be an essential element of human rights activities in 2021.

Activities in priority countries/regions and in certain thematic areas will be developed and implemented under the political guidance of Lead MEPs, as appointed by the DEG (See Annex 1). As always, these activities will be conducted in **close cooperation and coordination with AFET and DEVE and the relevant EP inter-parliamentary delegations**, with a view to fostering consistency and visibility of parliamentary diplomacy, as well as with other EU institutions and the international donor community, where relevant.

For 2021, a specific budget of EUR 1,400,000 will be available to implement the DEG activities that are presented in this Annual Work Programme.
I. PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

In its priority countries/regions, DEG uses - as much as possible - the full spectrum of its wide range of actions, focusing its assistance and resources for the greatest and most sustainable impact.

Six countries/regions were reconfirmed by DEG for enhanced democracy support activities, namely Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Tunisia, Western Balkans (as a priority region), and the Pan-African Parliament (as a priority regional parliament). Activities with Turkey will be mainstreamed throughout the thematic areas of DEG’s work. The DEG had already worked closely with these countries/regions during the previous parliamentary term (or longer, in certain cases). Until March 2020, it had continued to provide their parliaments and parliament-related players with relevant democracy support and assistance via its well-established election observation activities, capacity-building programmes, human rights actions and mediation and dialogue initiatives.

Separate programmes for each country/region are explained below and will be carried out under the political guidance of the appointed Lead Members. Due to the halting of 2020 activities and in light of recent or expected changes in the political environment in a number of these countries, the programmes (namely for Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Tunisia) will start with a fact-finding mission by the Lead Member (based on the previous work). If the mission is not possible, alternative virtual activities will be organised to prepare the terrain. They will serve to present to interested parties (parliamentarians, political factions, civil society, other international donors and democracy support providers, think tanks, etc.) the type and range of activities the EP can develop through its Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach and to identify and discuss the relevant needs. Based on the findings of these missions and virtual activities, the specificities of the proposed programmes below will be further enhanced and concrete topics for activities in the coming years will be established, in full partnership with the parliament(s) of the priority country/region. With regard to the Pan-African Parliament, in line with the end-of-legislature recommendations from the previous DEG, the Group will provide democracy support activities on one selected topic in a very targeted, in-depth and structured way, under the “Train the trainers” approach, aiming to build in-house capacity more effectively.

In addition, regional initiatives - especially for the three associated countries, i.e. Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, which share similar expectations and face challenges of the same nature - will be encouraged and organised, where possible. They will focus on parliamentary dialogue (such as the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly between the three associated countries), but could also include other activities, as appropriate (such as actions under the Simone Veil programme).

Finally, it should be noted that all election observation activities with and beyond the priority countries are subject to a separate DEG procedure, and have thus been included in the six-monthly programmes for EP election observation delegations.

All the proposed activities will take place, as has been the case since 2014, in close cooperation and coordination with the relevant EP bodies, other EU institutions and international actors.
1. Ukraine

Lead Member: Michael GAHLER

Following the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014 and the subsequent election of pro-Western authorities, the EP engaged in an unprecedented level of cooperation with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) in the field of democracy support. In the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Speakers, various activities were organised based on a Needs Assessment Mission. A number of study visits for parliamentarians and/or VRU officials took place, complemented by seminars and training events presented by MEPs and EP officials in Kiev. The EP has also established an innovative and highly visible mediation process of inter-party dialogue under the concept of the Jean Monnet Dialogue, focusing on compromise and consensus building. The EP has observed most of the elections in Ukraine (parliamentary, presidential and local) since 2014.

All these activities have had a noticeable positive impact on the work and organisation of the VRU. The new political landscape in Ukraine - although still fragile in its democratic transition - is conducive to the continuation and development of the reform efforts and should be encouraged in line with EU reform objectives for the country. The continuation and possible diversification of the democracy support activities with the VRU is therefore especially relevant.

In this context, taking into consideration the evolution of the political situation and the restrictions imposed by the public health situation, and with a view to starting or resuming activities that have a positive impact on developments in the country and on parliamentary reforms, the democracy support activities for Ukraine in 2021 could include the following:

- a fact finding mission by the Lead Member, whenever the public health situation allows and, until then organisation of online meetings with the different key stakeholders.
- the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding between the EP and VRU in an online ceremony, followed by an official handover when conditions allow, in line with the proposal made by President Sassoli to Speaker Razumkov in June 2020.
- the continuation of the meetings and activities in the context of the Jean Monnet Dialogue for Peace and Democracy with the Verkhovna Rada. This is particularly important as deepening the parliamentary culture of dialogue will ensure a strong, independent, transparent and effective Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, essential for the country's democratic and European future and in line with the aspirations of Ukrainian citizens. Three Jean Monnet Dialogues were foreseen in 2020 but were postponed sine die due to the COVID pandemic. However, in order to continue engaging with and supporting the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during the pandemic, a number of bilateral online meetings with the key stakeholders have taken place. These online encounters should continue until the fully-fledged Jean Monnet Dialogue encounters can be organised.
• the organisation of a training course in the format of a “summer school” for political staff of the VRU and of the EP.
• carrying out of capacity development activities\(^1\), conducted in cooperation with key partners (inter alia UNDP’s “Rada za Evropu project”, NDI, CMI and others), inter alia:
  o improvement of the end-to-end legislative process;
  o number of individual members’ legislative initiatives;
  o role of committees in the legislative process;
  o improve the coordination between the VRU and the cabinet of ministers;
  o political oversight;
  o reinforcement of the capacities and the organisation of the secretariat of parliamentary committees;
  o Business Continuity Management in the VRU: sharing EP good practices on virtual meetings and remote votes.

These activities should be carried out remotely through webinars, e-conferences and online trainings until the public health situation allows in-person meetings. In 2020, a virtual training session to tackle COVID-19-related corruption risks was notably organised for parliamentary staff of the VRU. Furthermore, online meetings with UNDP were organised to gather information on the legislative process, the modernisation of the parliamentary secretariat and the use of new technologies to increase the transparency of the VRU. These meetings should be followed up in 2021.

• Virtual or in-person Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues (PEDs), in the form of post electoral dialogues and online meetings with relevant local stakeholders could be envisaged for the implementation of those recommendations formulated by international observers that have not yet been addressed. Moreover, they could be aimed at improving future elections in Ukraine and supporting efforts to bring them fully in line with international obligations and standards for democratic elections.
• Empowerment of women parliamentarians (through the Simone Veil programme, modules on women’s leadership, and through specific mediation activities) fostering exchanges between the VRU and civil society and facilitating its inclusion in democracy support activities.
• Possible activities in response to the situation in the east of the country.
• Support to regional initiatives involving the three associated countries.
• Explore the possibilities of developing of a Young Political Leaders platform, at national and/or regional level.
• Democracy Fellowship Programme, which will allow 10 officials from priority countries to be placed in the equivalent EP services for 6-12 weeks. The programme is directly linked with efforts to build the capacities of their home parliament and will be offered as soon as travel restrictions are lifted.

\(^1\) These activities, based on recommendations of the NAM Report, will be further developed after the fact-finding mission.
2. Georgia

Lead Member: Viola VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL

Georgia has been a priority country for the European Parliament since 2017 and several democracy support activities have been organised with the Parliament of Georgia on a wide range of topics with high-level and committed participants.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the European Parliament to suspend sine die most of its activities with the Georgian Parliament, including the electoral observation mission that the EP was invited to deploy in order to monitor the 2020 parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, the European Parliament organised online activities with key stakeholders on the ground ahead of the 31 October 2020 parliamentary election, namely virtual meetings with the OSCE-ODIHR-LEOM (Limited Electoral Observation Mission) and the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED).

Furthermore, a virtual training session to tackle COVID-19-related corruption risks was organised for parliamentary staff of the Georgian Parliament.

Notwithstanding the 8 March Agreement that was strongly supported by the European Union, political frictions continued after the first round of elections. It will be necessary to wait for the second round (21 November 2020) and the establishment of the new Parliament to resume activities.

In this context, taking into consideration the evolution of the political situation after the election and the restrictions imposed by the public health situation and with a view to starting or resuming activities that have a positive impact on developments in the country and on parliamentary reform, democracy support activities for Georgia in 2021 could include the following:

- **a fact finding mission by the Lead Member**, whenever the public health situation allows and, until then, **organisation of online meetings** with the different key stakeholders;

- **Launch of remote preparatory activities for a Jean Monnet Dialogue** and maintenance of continued online dialogue and exchanges with key interlocutors until health conditions allow to start a **Jean Monnet Dialogue** process to address the chronic political tensions between government and opposition;

- Virtual or in-person **Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues (PEDs)**, in the form of post electoral dialogues, and online meetings with local relevant stakeholders could be envisaged for the implementation of the recommendations formulated by OSCE ODIHR LEOM (Limited Election Observation Mission);

- **Empowerment of women parliamentarians**, under the Simone Veil Programme (modules: women’s leadership in the COVID-19 crisis; and gender sensitive budgeting and legislation); empowerment of **civil society actors** and facilitating their inclusion in democracy support activities;
• carrying out of **capacity development activities**\(^2\) conducted in cooperation with key partners, *inter alia*:

  o study visits for newly elected Georgian MPs: introduction on DEG activities and meetings with relevant MEPs dealing with Georgia;
  o training for staff from the Georgian Parliament on the EU *Acquis*: support in the process of approximation of legislation as required by the Association Agreement;
  o Business Continuity Management in the Parliament of Georgia: sharing EP good practices on virtual meetings and remote votes;
  o Support to the newly established research service of the Georgian Parliament;
  o Open parliaments: sharing EP and EU National Parliaments’ good practices in hosting citizens’ visits to Parliament’s premises.

• Support to **regional initiatives** involving the three associated countries

  o **Democracy Fellowship Programme**, which will allow 10 officials from priority countries to be placed in the equivalent EP services for 6-12 weeks. The programme is directly linked with efforts to build the capacities of their home parliament and will be offered as soon as travel restrictions are lifted.

• More activities could be developed following the FFM, upon request from the Georgian Parliament.

\(^2\) These activities will be further developed after the fact-finding mission. They should be carried out remotely through webinars, e-conferences and online trainings until the public health situation allows in-person meetings.
3. Moldova

Lead Member: Dragoș TUDORACHE

Moldova has been a priority country for the EP since 2014 and a range of capacity building activities have taken place during this period. These have covered topics such as the oversight role of parliament; the functioning of committees; empowerment of women parliamentarians; the management of the process of transition from one parliamentary term to another; the role of parliaments in promoting human rights; and the implementation of a code of conduct and effective rules of procedure. The EP has also supported the dialogue on the issue of Gagauz between the Parliament in Chisinau and the People’s Assembly in Comrat.

Political instability - to a greater or lesser degree - has been a key feature in Moldova for many years. In 2018, there was uncertainty about the date of the next parliamentary elections, which eventually took place in late February 2019. During this period, the EP focussed on capacity building support to staff of the Moldovan Parliament, which took place mainly through the Democracy Fellowship Programme and covered a wide range of functional areas.

The parliamentary elections of February 2019, which were inconclusive, have been followed by a period of further political uncertainty and problems in forming a stable government. In addition, presidential elections are currently taking place in the country, with the second round scheduled on 15 November. There are fears that political uncertainty will continue after the electoral period, as both candidates in the second round declare that they would dissolve the current Parliament and trigger early elections.

The first round of the presidential elections showed once again, according to the international observers on the ground (OSCE ODIHR Limited Electoral Observation Mission - LEOM), that several aspects of the legislation contain gaps and ambiguities, particularly regarding candidate registration, campaign financing and electoral disputes. The recommendations to improve future elections should remain on the to-do list of the Moldovan authorities and the DEG can give its support to bridge the existing gaps and ensure legal certainty and the respect of international democratic standards.

The previous EP activities were carried out in close cooperation with the EU Delegation in Chisinau, the Moldovan Parliament and with other partners, particularly the UNDP’s Democracy Programme (2012-2016) and Strengthening Parliamentary Governance (SPG) in Moldova (2016-2019). EP support has become even more important following the end of the SPG programme in December 2019.

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic and the related public health measures imposed, the proposed activities for 2021 will be carried out remotely, when possible, until the public health situation allows in-person meetings.

In 2020, a regional online seminar “Anti-corruption and the COVID-19 crisis - Strengthening institutional resilience and accountability in a time of emergency” took place with parliamentary staff from the Parliaments of Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.
Activities in the framework of the Simone Veil Programme are being prepared and the first online debate on Women Parliamentarians’ Leadership in times of the Covid19 pandemic is scheduled before the end of the year. Cooperation with the UNDP, which is supporting the creation of a Women’s Caucus in the Moldovan Parliament, will be re-enacted in the framework of the Simone Veil Programme.

Against this background and in synergy with the EP’s resolution of 20 October 2020 on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with the Republic of Moldova, the democracy support activities for Moldova in 2021 could include the following activities/topics:

- **Bilateral meetings** by the Lead Member with relevant interlocutors (authorities of the Moldovan Parliament, political parties, civil society and international actors supporting democratic development of the country) to assess the needs of the partner Parliament and present the EP’s offer;

- **Launching preparatory activities for a Jean Monnet Dialogue** until public health conditions allow for the establishment of a Jean Monnet Dialogue (JMD) for Peace and Democracy with the Parliament of Moldova in order to build cross-party consensus on the reform agenda based on the implementation of the Association Agreement and the strengthening of the country’s democratic institutions;

- **Dedicated programmes to promote a more inclusive and equal society, through:**
  - the empowerment of women parliamentarians under the Simone Veil Programme through five modules (equality; negotiation, mediation and advocacy; leadership; personal well-being and resilience; and pre-elections) that can be offered separately or combined;
  - activities to support the eradication of the violence against women and to foster the ratification of the Istanbul Convention;

- **Encounters to facilitate:**
  - the swift implementation of the new law on non-commercial organisations, to ensure the full respect of the rights and freedoms of the civil society,
  - the cooperation of the Parliament of Moldova and government authorities with civil society actors and encourage meaningful involvement of the civil society in policy making and implementation processes;

- **Programmes to support free and pluralistic media and to help Moldovan journalists to combat disinformation;**

- **Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues (PEDs), in the form of post electoral dialogues, and meetings with local relevant stakeholders could be envisaged for the implementation of the recommendations formulated by OSCE ODIHR LEOM;**

- **Carrying out of capacity development activities, conducted in cooperation with key partners, on, inter alia:**
  - Supporting the Parliament of Moldova in the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement;
  - the budgetary role of parliaments;

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- the Parliament’s representative and legislative functions;
- the role of parliaments in external policy, including parliamentary diplomacy;
- parliamentary ethics and conduct;
- strategic communication and the role of parliaments in tackling disinformation.

- **EP Democracy Fellowship Programme** - participation of officials from the Parliament of Moldova in the programme; enhancing capacity building areas related to key matters in the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement;
- Support to **regional initiatives** involving the three association countries.
4. Tunisia

Lead Member: Emmanuel MAUREL

Tunisia remains the success story of the 2011 Arab Spring, the only Middle East/North Africa country that has preserved its transition towards democracy. As a priority country since 2015, several capacity-building activities have been organised over the past parliamentary term, from Tunisia Week as a scene-setting event to election observation, study visits by parliamentarians and staff, and human rights work on civil liberties and violence against women.

The EU’s willingness to maintain its support Tunisia’s efforts to sustain democratisation remains unbroken, notwithstanding the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections that have changed Tunisia’s political landscape and have been followed by political instability. The COVID-19 pandemic risks exacerbating the underlying political, economic and social tensions in the country, particularly in a very fragmented and antagonised “Assemblée des Représentants du Peuple” (ARP). The EP democracy support tools can have a clear added value and the EP should step up its activities to support sustainable reforms. In this context, democracy support activities for Tunisia will be designed to answer the outcome of the fact-finding mission undertaken in February 2020 by the Lead Member.

Given the current pandemic and the related public health measures imposed, the proposed activities for 2021 will be carried out remotely, when possible, until the public health situation allows in-person meetings.

The activities for 2021 could therefore include the following:

- **Bilateral meetings** by the EP Lead Member with relevant actors in the ARP, to complement the information from Tunisian civil society and international actors in the country and enable the Lead Member to assess the real needs of the ARP. Such meetings would be supplemented by a follow-up in-person mission, when public health conditions permit, notably to assess the need for particularly sensitive activities such as a Jean Monnet Dialogue/Inter-Party Dialogue;
- **Bilateral encounters** with key stakeholders until the public health conditions allow the **launch of a Jean Monnet Dialogue / Inter-Party Dialogue** to address the political fragmentation amongst the political parties and focusing on compromise and consensus building;
- **Parliamentary electoral dialogue** on the implementation of EU EOM recommendations, depending on the political will within the ARP; **Dedicated projects to promote a more inclusive and equal society** through gender equality, such as:
  - supporting the **empowerment of women**, in particular women parliamentarians, under the Simone Veil programme through five modules (equality; negotiation, mediation and advocacy; leadership; personal well-being and resilience; and pre-elections) that can be offered separately or combined;
- activities in support of the eradication of violence against women, including cyber violence and the implementation of the law 58/2017, in particular on victims’ access to justice, both at local and national level;
- activities to raise awareness on the importance of gender equality in the fight against extremism and radicalisation;
- activities to facilitate the cooperation of the ARP and government authorities with civil society both in the legislative process and in fulfilling the role of parliamentary scrutiny over the government. Specific topics such as addressing the impact of Covid-19-related measures on fundamental freedoms in the country, would be designed with input from all stakeholders, including trade unions and political foundations;
- engaging with Tunisian young political leaders through the Young Political Leaders programme (see YPL section for more details).
- capacity development activities conducted in cooperation with key partners, on, inter alia:
  - the role of parliamentarians in ensuring transparency and fighting against corruption;
  - enforcement of the Rules of Procedures;
  - coordination between the Parliament and government authorities on the legislative agenda;
  - parliamentary oversight;
  - the role of the parliament in budgetary oversight;
  - Human resources management for parliamentary staff;
  - support to the Moldovan Parliamentary Research Service.
- Democracy Fellowship Programme, which will allow 10 parliamentary staff members from priority countries to be placed in similar EP services for 6-12 weeks. The programme is directly linked with efforts to build the capacities of their home parliament and will be offered as soon as travel restrictions are lifted.
5. **Western Balkans**

**Lead Members: Vladimír BILČÍK and Tanja FAJON**

The European Parliament in its resolution of 19 June on the Western Balkans recommended “to support the European perspective of the Western Balkans countries” as well as “to bring the primacy of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms back to the very centre of the enlargement process”.

Despite the restrictions and limitations created by the pandemic, in 2020 the European Parliament was able to carry out core democracy support activities for the region.

A virtual training session to tackle pandemic-related corruption risks was organised for parliamentary staff of the six countries of the region. An information session for parliamentary officials, highlighting the European Union’s economic support for the Western Balkans also took place. In addition, informal virtual exchanges of views between MEPs and Parliamentary Monitoring Organisations were organised.

Regarding the Inter-Party Dialogue (IPD) with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, follow-up consultations were conducted in 2020. The third round of the Jean Monnet Dialogue (JMD) with the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia was organised in January 2020. A follow-up online consultation between the MEPs, facilitators of the JMD and the Speaker of the Parliament was conducted following the parliamentary elections and the constitution of the Parliament.

2020 was marked by important parliamentary elections in North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia highlighting the need for EP democracy support activities in the region.

The 2021 Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) programme for the Western Balkans encompasses a vision of the enlargement as a transformative process aimed at strengthening democracy in the region.

Through the instruments of Jean Monnet/Inter-Party Dialogues, capacity building, human rights activities and election observation and follow-up, democracy support activities will focus on supporting the transformation of the political culture of the region to reduce polarisation towards a culture of consensus building and dialogue. In order to increase the accountability of parliamentary institutions, DEG activities will also focus on empowering agents of democratic change - women parliamentarians under the Simone Veil programme, as well as civil society actors and independent and pluralistic media, with the aim of creating effective channels between citizens and institutions.

The DEG support programme for the parliaments of the Western Balkans will also reflect possible involvement of these countries in the ongoing debate on the Future of Europe within the EU.

In light of the growing importance of the region for the European Union, when normal conditions resume, DEG could organise a **Western Balkans Week**, which aims to strengthen the relationship between the European Parliament and the region. The Western Balkans Week will emphasise the parliamentary dimension of the enlargement process and offer a platform for discussion to actors of change in the region.
Co-ownership with the Western Balkan Parliaments will be ensured through a coordination meeting with European Parliament counterparts in the parliaments of the region.

**Regional Activities**

In 2021, the inter-parliamentary conferences programme will focus on those topics that structurally alter the political level playing field, including unfair electoral laws, lack of media freedom and state capture (corruption and organised crime). The programme will be held when normal conditions resume but meanwhile, country-specific virtual workshops could prepare the ground at the national level for the regional conferences. The programme “Improving the level playing field” could be composed of the following conferences at regional level:

- **State Capture.** The aim of the conference is to serve as a platform for discussion on how the Western Balkan Parliaments could share best practices and develop common strategies to tackle corruption, organised crime and its connection to politics. In particular, the conference will address the issues of vote buying, financing of political campaigns and conflicts of interest for elected officials and parliamentary staff. Country-by-country virtual workshops focusing on developing effective national anti-corruption frameworks could be organised in preparation for the regional conference.

- **Media freedom.** According to the European Federation of Journalists, more than a third of all media freedom violations across Europe for 2018-2019 took place in Southeast Europe. The inter-parliamentary conference will therefore focus on freedom of expression for journalists, media ownership and access to media by political parties and will allow parliamentarians to discuss these challenges in light of the EU’s mechanisms for support of media freedom, such as providing legal assistance, monitoring of policies and providing financial support through IPA programmes. Country-by-country virtual workshops could also be organised in preparation for the regional conference.

- **Electoral Rules.** Conflict between political forces on electoral rules is a major source of polarisation in the Western Balkan political systems. The inter-parliamentary conference on electoral rules will address the relevant issues raised by the reports of the EU and OSCE/ODIHR long-term election observation missions in the region. In particular, it will assess the follow-up initiatives taken by the national authorities to implement the findings of these observation missions. Virtual or in-person Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues (PEDs) both in the form of pre or post electoral dialogues, could be envisaged on the implementation of any outstanding recommendations of International observation missions.

**High-Level Roundtable EP/ Western Balkan Parliaments.** The conference will bring together parliamentary leaders from the Western Balkans and MEPs interested in the region and will take place when conditions resume.
In addition, virtual sectoral conferences could be organised on the two following topics:

- **Environmental challenges.** Although the countries of the Western Balkans face serious environmental challenges, environmental issues are only recently making slow inroads to the region’s political agendas. Hence, the inter-parliamentary conference on the topic will serve the goal of fostering dialogue about pressing environmental concerns among political elites and civil society representatives from the EU enlargement countries.

- **Fostering support for socio-economic development and tackling the “brain drain” problem.** The so-called “brain-drain” phenomenon remains the most pertinent migration problem across the Western Balkans. An inter-parliamentary conference could focus on how to stop these trends by fostering socio-economic developments in the respective countries.

Civil society participation and contribution will be sought in the organisation of the regional and sectoral conferences.

To empower women parliamentarians and promote inclusive societies, virtual or in-person modules of the Simone Veil Programme will be organised: exchanges on female leadership in the Covid-19 crisis; presentation of the EU gender acquis, sessions on gender-sensitive budgeting and legislation and social media coaching. The sessions will be offered separately or combined, to Western Balkan countries individually or in small groups, eventually covering the whole region.

The DEG could continue to engage with young people in the region through its Young Political Leaders programme (YPL). The aim in 2021 is to continue with the regional “Bridging the Gap” platform by creating an online forum of exchange between young Parliamentarians and youth organisation activists from the region on horizontal topics relevant for the youth participation and policy making in driving forward the EU reform agenda. This initiative will be organised together with the European Commission, Parliaments from the region and relevant organisations active in regional youth policymaking. Once conditions allow, organise a fully-fledged regional “Bridging the Gap” conference in Brussels.

**b/ Country-specific activities**

Various activities could be promoted at the national level targeting MPs, parliamentary staff and civil society. They would consist of “country support programmes”; **Jean Monnet Dialogue /Inter-Party Dialogues** (which could progressively be expanded to all countries in the region); **study visits** (including a dedicated offer for women parliamentarians under the Simone Veil Programme) and **expert missions. Due to the current situation, many of these activities will be carried out virtually until normal conditions resume.**

**Pre-Accession Fellowship Programme,** which will allow eight officials from enlargement countries, including Turkey, to be placed in the equivalent EP services. The programme will
resume once conditions allow. A seminar for the Pre-Accession Fellows is also foreseen to consolidate the regional network and to boost their work on strengthening the parliaments of the region.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

A specific “country support programme” could take place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2019, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the EU Office in BiH had prepared together a “Convention for Democracy” in BiH which was scheduled for April 2020. The Convention aims at improving the accountability and legitimacy of the Bosnian parliamentary institutions and provide Members of Parliaments with innovative tools to connect more effectively with citizens. However, due to the COVID-19 limitations, the Convention was postponed to a further date. The event will take place once health conditions allow.

Meanwhile, online preparatory meetings could take place and could focus on some dimensions necessary to strengthen BiH democracy including institutional consolidation and design as well as enhancing the role of members of parliament.

Empowering actors of change in Bosnian society is of crucial importance for the democratic future of the country and DEG will step up its engagement with them by supporting specific capacity development activities.

**Kosovo**

A country-specific programme on Kosovo could focus on strengthening the role of the Parliament as an engine of democratic reforms with a focus on the integrity of the electoral process. In particular, building on the recommendations of the European Union long-term Election Observation Mission and on the request from the Kosovar parliament, it foresees a seminar/Parliamentary Electoral Dialogue (PED) with MPs focusing on two issues. Firstly, the adoption of a new legal framework for campaign and party finance through a revision of the Law for Financing of Political Parties. Secondly, the adoption of the Draft Code of Criminal Procedure, which includes new provisions concerning the suspension of officials from duty in relation to abuse of office power. The Chief Observer and the Head of the EP election observation mission would take part in the event.

**North Macedonia**

In 2018, a Jean Monnet Dialogue process was launched with the Macedonian Sobranie, following up on the work of the three MEPs who acted as mediators, together with the Enlargement and Neighbourhood Commissioner, during the negotiations and the implementation of the Przino agreement. Since its establishment, the JMD process continues to focus on the parliamentary Rules of Procedure and the ambitious administrative reform of the institution, also providing a much-needed platform for dialogue and consensus-building to the Sobranie. In 2021, remote preparatory activities
and online consultations with key interlocutors will be conducted until health conditions allow the organisation of a new round of Jean Monnet Dialogues with the Sobranie with a prior preparatory mission on the ground.

Following the July 2020 legislative elections DEG will organise a virtual study visit for the newly elected Members of Parliament.

**Serbia**

The Inter-Party Dialogue (IPD) with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia was established in 2019 with three rounds of Dialogues in its first phase. Following the elections in June 2020 and the constitution of the National Assembly the second phase will be prepared in 2021 with the launch of remote preparatory activities and maintenance of continued online dialogue and exchanges with key interlocutors until health conditions allow the holding of a fully-fledged Inter-Party Dialogue with a prior preparatory mission on ground.

Moreover, since more than 55% of the Members of the National Assembly have been elected for the first time, a cycle of virtual study visits could be organised for them. The goal of the programme is to improve the understanding of the European Union and the enlargement process and support the development of a parliamentary culture of compromise and pluralism.

**Albania**

Despite the positive outcome of the agreement reached on 5 June 2020, the political dialogue in the country needs to be improved, in particular on electoral reform and its implementation.

In order to reduce polarisation and promote a culture of dialogue, a pre-electoral conference involving both majority and opposition could be organised in the first trimester of 2021.

The next parliamentary elections in Albania will take place on April 25, 2021. Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues (PEDs) on the implementation of the outstanding recommendations of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) could be organised.

The six-monthly programmes for EP election observation delegations, in compliance with the ad hoc DEG selection procedure and with respect to the anti-covid rules, could also include election observation activities in the country.

In 2021, a series of remote consultations with key interlocutors in Albania and its Parliament are foreseen in prospect of establishing a Jean Monnet Dialogue process once health conditions permit.
Montenegro

Montenegro experienced a significant political change in the August 2020 legislative elections. In particular, a large number of Members of Parliament have been elected for the first time. A series of virtual study visits for newly elected Members could be organised. Specific virtual activities for Members can also be foreseen including activities on the EU enlargement process and the role of parliaments as well as long-term sustainability of macro-economic policies.

Exploratory online consultations with the new parliamentary leadership of the Parliament of Montenegro could also serve as a basis for establishing a Jean Monnet Dialogue process.
6. Pan-African Parliament

Lead Member: Assita KANKO

PAP has been on DEG’s list of priority countries/regions since the last EP term. Taking into account the wide range of democracy support topics and activities already carried out with the PAP, and in line with the end-of-legislature recommendations from the previous DEG, in the beginning of 2020 it was decided that in the 9th parliamentary term, activities with the PAP would mainly focus on a “Train the Trainers” approach. This will involve sharing EP best practices and working methods on one selected topic in a very targeted, in-depth and structured way, aiming to build in-house capacity more effectively.

In 2020, the pilot topic to be covered under the “Train the Trainers” approach was "Enhancing the PAP capacities in election observation, conflict prevention and mediation: best practices from the European Parliament", which included a plethora of activities. These comprised the launch of the programme during a PAP plenary session; fellowships to the EP; shadowing of an EP election observation delegation and a Jean Monnet Dialogue; possibly setting up a body similar to DEG and a Mediation and Election Observation Unit in the PAP.

Given the very practical/hands-on approach of these activities (which could not have been carried out remotely), the connection challenges faced by different countries in Africa (as PAP parliamentarians are spread throughout the continent), and even the mere prioritisation in the work of both EP and PAP due to the Covid pandemic (the topic being outside of parliamentary core business, while priority and relevant technical support is given almost exclusively to Committee and Plenary work), these activities were frozen.

Moreover, as the challenges would most probably remain well into next year, it would be necessary to select another topic under the “Train the Trainers” approach to be carried out with PAP in 2021, while the 2020 topic could be postponed to 2022.

In line with PAP’s current needs, the topic to be covered under the “Train the Trainers” approach in 2021 would be “Parliamentary oversight, monitoring and evaluation – challenges, opportunities and best practices in regular times and in times of crisis”. It should be noted that:

- The topic is extremely timely given the challenges presented by the impact of Covid-19 outbreak to the regular functioning of a large number of parliaments around the world (and especially on Government oversight);
- The Programme would include a number of specific sessions/activities – some focusing on parliamentarians, others on staff - which could be adapted both to the virtual environment or carried out in person when health conditions allow;
- The content of the specific sessions will be fine-tuned throughout 2021, but it would cover aspects such as Committee tools for parliamentary oversight, the role of the European Parliament Research Service as a provider of high quality independent data-based information, the functioning of the plenary mechanisms, lessons learned from moving the EP work online etc.
- Furthermore, activities could include a training event under the Simone Veil programme for key PAP women parliamentarians with a focus on advancing
equality (gender-sensitive legislation and budgeting), negotiation and advocacy and empowering leadership: participation by PAP in the EUVP programme (again focusing on oversight and monitoring), etc.

- In the specific sessions, besides MEPs and relevant EP staff, MPs from EU national parliaments could be involved to share good practices on how they carry out oversight in these times of crisis.

Taking into account the volatile situation, additional ad hoc democracy support activities could be carried out with the PAP during the course of 2021, in line with its urgent or arising needs and priorities.
II. THEMATIC AREAS

1. Pre- and post-election activities

a/ Parliamentary electoral dialogues (PEDs) and other election-related discussions

In line with Article 3 of the "Implementing provisions on democracy support and election observation activities", the DEG should develop specific pre-election and post-election/follow-up activities, which would complement the EP's longstanding election observation activities and become an important pillar of DEG's work around the electoral cycle during the 9th parliamentary term. The main instrument for such activities would be the Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues (PEDs) where a limited number of MEPs (including the former Chief Observer/Head of EP Observer Delegation and/or DEG Lead Member) discuss in-depth election-related issues with relevant parliamentarians, political leaders and other relevant actors from the partner country.

The PEDs were supposed to be piloted in 2020, where specific countries were selected for a pre- (Ethiopia, Cote D'Ivoire) or a post-electoral dialogue (Lebanon, Zimbabwe). These Dialogues had to be organised either jointly or in close cooperation with other EP activities (e.g. the AFET mission to Ethiopia) or planned EU follow-up missions (Lebanon, Zimbabwe), none of which took place because of the pandemic. In view of the EP's restrictive travel measures in 2020, and due to the volatile electoral context in some of these countries (elections in Ethiopia have been postponed; elections in Cote d'Ivoire took place in an extremely challenging environment, with no EU EOM deployed), no PEDs were organised by DEG. It should be noted that, similar to election observation activities, which cannot be done remotely, PEDs also need, to a large extent, physical presence in the third country to be able to be established from scratch (which is the case for this new instrument) and to be effective (as they need a high level of trust between stakeholders).

Nevertheless, in 2020 a limited number of pre- and post-electoral activities took place, mainly in the form of virtual election-related discussions between DEG (and other) MEPs and the EU Ambassador/electoral experts on the ground, in key countries holding elections such as Georgia, North Macedonia and Bolivia. These discussions have proven to be an extremely informative and useful way of exchanging electoral information, as well as a flexible mechanism in terms of scheduling.

In 2021, should the anti-Covid measures still be in force, such election-related virtual discussions will continue to be the main tool of DEG’s pre- and post-electoral activities. In geographic terms, these discussions will be closely linked to the list of priority countries for EU EOMs (e.g. Peru, The Gambia, Ethiopia, Honduras) and expert missions (e.g. El Salvador, Ecuador, Iraq), as well as OSCE ODIHR-led missions (e.g. Albania). They could be extended to other countries where an EU delegation encourages a debate with MEPs - or vice versa - on the electoral process in the country. Moreover, the invitation to participate could be extended to representatives from organisations with a ground presence in order to gain a more complete understanding of the situation.

Furthermore, with regard to the launching of the PEDs – while accommodating the possible continuation of the pandemic and EP’s restrictive measures on travelling in 2021 – the following could be envisaged for 2021:
1) virtual PEDs

- **Pilot PEDs in one or more DEG priority country/regions** (where cooperation is already ongoing, trust has been built and it would be feasible to establish a dialogue - even virtually - with the counterpart parliament and relevant political bodies on an electoral dialogue) – e.g. in **Georgia, Moldova, Serbia, North Macedonia**;
- in addition to the priority countries, **on a case-by-case basis and following a specific request by a DEG MEP or an EU Delegation**, explore the possibility of carrying out a PED in a given country virtually, taking into account the limitations of hosting such discussions virtually;

2) in-person PEDs

- **on a case-by-case basis, explore feasibility of kick-starting** or paving the way with the relevant counterpart parliament to **a possible PED in a country where an EU EOM would be deployed** in 2021 (e.g. Peru, The Gambia). The **Chief Observer** (CO), in these cases, would be the key person to familiarise the third country’s stakeholders with the PEDs, possibly upon their return visit to present the final EU EOM report (profiting from their actual presence in the country and high profile role);
- **on a case-by-case basis, explore the possibility of carrying out a PED via an EU Follow-up mission** in 2021 (e.g. Tunisia, Lebanon, Zimbabwe, Nigeria). During the former CO’s EU Follow-up visit, a number of meetings with key stakeholders in the counterpart parliament (on the EU EOM recommendations that require legislative changes) could be set up and prepared in coordination with the EP.

b/ Election-related events

**Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP)**

In November 2020, the EP and the EEAS were supposed to jointly host the 15th annual Implementation Meeting of the Declaration of Principles at the European Parliament premises in Brussels. The DEG mandated MEP Ignacio Sánchez Amor to steer the DEG input on updating the election observation methodology, ahead of the DoP meeting. Due to the pandemic and the EP’s restrictive measures on external visitors, this meeting has been postponed to November 2021. A number of meetings at working group level have taken place in 2020 in several working groups.

The 15th Implementation meeting in 2021 will gather a large number of representatives from the DoP endorsing international and regional organisations. These representatives will share knowledge, experiences and best practices related to international election observation, including on topics such as the follow-up to electoral recommendations, the use of technology in elections, alternative voting methods, and the role of internet and social media. It will also provide a valuable opportunity for the community of international election observers to reaffirm the values and importance of election observation and promote greater synergy between their work, ranging from policy making at the highest level to specific activities on the ground.
2. **Mediation and dialogue, including Young Political Leaders programme**

The added-value of the European Parliament’s activities in parliamentary mediation, dialogue and conflict prevention, as well as the key role of Members of the European Parliament engaged in the mediation processes, has been recognised as complementary to the overall EU capacities and strategies in this field, most notably in the European Parliament’s Resolution from March 2019⁴ and in the recent European Commission’s Communication on EU enlargement policy⁵.

Following the 2019 elections, DEG and Lead Members have successfully built on the well-established concept, methodology and activities developed during the past parliamentary term. They have contributed to advancing the European Parliament’s unique role within the broader EU mediation efforts through a peer-to-peer approach whereby equals talk to each other about challenges they face in their parliamentary work. This work has resulted in tangible improvements in the functioning of the partner parliaments.

MEPs acting as mediators or facilitators have shown their added-value in effectively addressing conflicts but also in providing cost-effectiveness and high visibility for the European Parliament. As such, this successful instrument should be further developed and better communicated inside and outside the EU.

Mediation and dialogue are now among the key instruments in DEG’s Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA). They will thus continue to be offered to all priority countries and, in line with the DEG’s Implementing Provisions, to additional countries deemed a priority for the European Parliament⁶.

As far as possible, planned activities in the field of mediation and dialogue will be implemented remotely / as virtual activities in view of the prevailing health situation. While this will not be possible for all activities (e.g. Jean Monnet Dialogues require carefully prepared in-person meetings), certain activities can be adapted to online/virtual models.

- **Jean Monnet Dialogues for peace and democracy** (JMD) will be continued for Ukraine and North Macedonia and expanded to DEG priority countries and regions (see relevant priority country activities). **Inter-Party Dialogues**, using the Jean Monnet Dialogue methodology, will be provided to those countries requiring more immediate mediation support (e.g. the Inter-Party dialogue with Serbia) and for those countries further away from the EU which may not meet the criteria for EU membership (See Jean Monnet Dialogues and Inter-Party Dialogues section below for more information on the process);

  - **Young Political Leaders** (YPL) Programme, including its online projects and virtual community of YPL alumni, will be further developed with particular emphasis on the continuity of the well-established platforms (Israel/Palestine, Armenia/Azerbaijan and Western Balkans) as well as on exploring new formats with

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⁴ European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2019 on building EU capacity on conflict prevention and mediation (2018/2159 (INI)).
⁶ In line with these provisions and notably the Article 2, should an urgent situation emerged in another country, mediation activities could be organised on a short notice.
priority CDSA countries and regions and innovative thematic issues (See “Young Political Leaders” section for more information);

- **Regional Parliamentary Dialogue (RPD)** - will continue to provide support to regional parliamentary dialogue initiatives, such as the initiatives between Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia and also in the Western Balkans (see High Level Conference in the Western Balkans);

- **Mediators and Facilitators** - based on the successful model of the joint EP/European Commission mediation in North Macedonia (2015-2017), MEPs could be appointed, in line with EP priorities and DEG Implementing provisions (including in situation of urgency), to act as Mediators or Facilitators on behalf of the EP and within an overall or joint EU response to political conflicts and crises;

- **Pre-election - Prevention of Election-related Violence (PEV)** will continue to be a focus for roundtable policy dialogue to enhance the EU’s ability to mitigate the impact of election-related violence. As well as policy dialogue, this pre-election focus will be an integral part of the **new Parliamentary Electoral Dialogues (PED)** (see relevant section);

- **Women and peace building** - within the activities on mediation, it is essential to ensure that women are fully involved and provided with specific capacity building. It is also essential that they are not left behind during the implementation phase. Focusing on women and mediation is a new aspect of mediation activities that the EP could offer and further develop in 2021 (in line with EP Resolution March 2019 and in recognition of UNSCR 1325).

- **Parliamentary Mediation Training Programme** - for Members of the European Parliament and adapted as mediation and dialogue capacity building for MPs, political parties and key stakeholders in third countries.

Plans for 2021 also include a further strengthening of Parliament’s methodology on mediation, dialogue and its support activities. To this end, existing mediation instruments will be reviewed, refined and consolidated, with an additional focus of adapting this methodology to multiple forms of engagement (traditional activities requiring physical presence as well as online or hybrid platforms).

**a/ Jean Monnet Dialogues and Inter-Party Dialogues**

The Jean Monnet Dialogue for Peace and Democracy is an instrument developed by the European Parliament as a soft power tool in the area of parliamentary mediation and dialogue. With the Jean Monnet Dialogue, the European Parliament strengthens the ability of political actors to develop true inter-party dialogue and to build the consensus necessary for generating a democratic parliamentary culture and trust. The Jean Monnet Dialogue complements traditional capacity-building programmes and contributes to institutional reform processes. It also provides political group leaders with a dialogue platform to seek consensus on national priority policies.

The methodology is inspired by Jean Monnet’s working method, implying a pragmatic dialogue to achieve concrete results by consensus. The EP’s Jean Monnet Dialogue is not a series of “single issue conferences”. Rather it is a process, led by a Member or Members, consisting of a cycle of preparatory activities with the political leaders, leading to *in camera* meetings and their follow-ups that enable parliaments and/or political parties to build consensus and to resolve concrete issues.
During the EP 2014-2019 Parliamentary Term, the Jean Monnet Dialogue was successfully applied in the framework of the EP’s cooperation with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the Sobranie of the Republic of North Macedonia. In addition to this well-established cooperation, which continued successfully during the new parliamentary term, the European Parliament adapted the methodology to the specific conditions and political environment of the Serbian National Assembly and facilitated three rounds of an Inter-Party Dialogue inside the Skupština.

Additional Jean Monnet Dialogues/Inter-Party Dialogues can be established with CDSA priority countries (see the different priority country/region for more details) as well as with third countries, the latter requiring ad hoc DEG decisions in accordance with article 2 of the Implementing Provisions on democracy support and election observation activities.

As regards to Turkey, several democracy support instruments could be put in place in 2021. These could include an Inter-Party Dialogue with Turkish political leaders to discuss serious concerns about the state of parliamentary democracy and democracy in general in the country. The Young Political Leaders Programme could be used to promote dialogue with the next generation of leaders to ensure parliamentary and democratic standards in the country (see dedicated section for more details).

N.B. the situation in Turkey will continue to be followed closely and the democracy support activities with this country will be reassessed if needed.

b/ Young Political Leaders programme (YPL)

Lead Member: Fabio Massimo CASTALDO, EP Vice-President responsible for Human Rights and Democracy

The Young Political Leaders (YPL) programme is a flagship initiative of the European Parliament designed to promote dialogue and understanding as a means to contribute to longer term peace and trust amongst future leaders outside the EU. Due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic, the YPL in-person activities for 2020 have been suspended sine die. However, a series of online events have been organised with YPL alumni during the lockdown, to ensure that despite the isolation imposed by the pandemic, they are still actors of change. Among the online events organised in 2020, a series of online debates with the Anna Lindh Foundation were organised and YPL alumni also participated in an exchange of views during a SEDE Sub-Committee meeting on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council resolution 1325, in the margins of the EP gender equality week.

Until the resumption of in-person YPL activities, when health conditions allow, the YPL programme will continue to develop its online debates and events at regional or country level, or on specific horizontal topics. In the future, the YPL programme is aiming at keeping online activities as a complementary tool to in-person encounters.

Requests from institutional partners, especially the EEAS, European Commission and EU Delegations, will be considered on a case-by-case basis, according to available budget and the capacity to carry out online activities.
Western Balkans

See “Western Balkans” section for more information.

Eastern Partnership countries

Further develop activities, including online, focused on the Armenia-Azerbaijan YPL on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, when political conditions allow, following the EU approach to the conflict (i.e. new role for DG NEAR, a successor programme for European Partnership for Nagorno-Karabakh).
Explore the possibility to develop together with DG NEAR a ‘Bridging the Gap’ regional platform for the EaP countries, including online activities.

MENA region

Develop further the YPL programme on Israel and Palestine and (re)initiate the YPL programme with Tunisia, including through online activities.
Based on the well-established cooperation with the HRVP’s initiative for the region “Young Med Voices Plus Initiative” explore the possibility to develop joint YPL events with the EEAS and the Anna Lindh foundation.

Africa

Pan-African-Parliament (PAP): in-line with the priority partnership with the PAP, continue to promote support to the youth parliamentary caucuses as a platform for reaching a wider African audience.
Sudan: Following the recent developments and in response to the request of the EU Delegation, (re)initiate the YPL programme for Sudan in 2021, including through online activities, and seek the participation of the Sudanese YPL in multilateral fora such as the EU-AU Youth Summit.

Turkey

Engaging with the next generation of leaders will be key to ensure parliamentary and democratic standards in Turkey. Therefore, the Young Political Leaders programme frozen in 2016 following the failed coup could be resumed, including through online activities.
The programme would include issues of common concern, to both young MEPs and young Turkish parliamentarians (as well as other young leaders), such as: the challenges and importance of young people participating in political life; the role of social media and communicating effectively with citizens; defending the rule of law and human rights; developing a culture of peaceful political dialogue and consensus building; cross party cooperation to promote issues of concern to the youth.

Youth, Peace and Security agenda

Organise YPL activities in the framework of the 2021 EP’s European Youth Event; encourage the involvement of YPL alumni in relevant hearings and in Committees and Delegations activities; explore partnerships with EU institutions and Member States - Presidency, Commission, EEAS, Delegations, Youth events in the framework of the Berlin Process,
Eastern Partnership initiatives, etc.; follow closely and arrange for the participation of YPL alumni in relevant UN and Regional Organisations activities, as well as in initiatives of key international CSOs.

**Thematic priorities**

Develop dedicated initiatives on “Youth and Climate Change” and “Women and Peacebuilding” as part of YPL activities.
Human rights and Sakharov prize activities

Human rights action adds a key component to overall democracy support efforts led by the DEG and promotes Parliament’s human rights agenda and visibility at large. This includes supporting partner parliaments in mainstreaming human rights into legislation and overseeing their implementation, linking civil society as a crucial vector of human rights to parliaments and government authorities, and capacity building for agents of democratic change by investing in human rights defenders including under the Sakharov fellowship programme, empowering women under the Simone Veil programme, and strengthening free and pluralistic media. The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and the activities of the Sakharov Prize Community of laureates are an integral part of this agenda.

1/ Human rights activities (lead Member DROI Chair Maria ARENA)

Action empowering agents of democratic change

- The Simone Veil Programme helps empower women parliamentarians to promote inclusive societies and democratic change. It addresses them in both their professional and their human and individual dimensions. It therefore offers a component of personal development in addition to insights in the spectrum of tools women parliamentarians can activate to trigger progress on gender equality. Training modules (equality, negotiation and advocacy, leadership, social media coaching, personal well-being and resilience, and pre-elections) can be offered separately or combined. Duration and scope of the modules can be tailored to specific needs. Human rights-oriented training, seminars, workshops or study visits can also be organised for all parliamentarians and staff from partner parliaments in Brussels or Strasbourg.

- A new Solidarity with Parliamentarians Programme provides peer-to-peer support to parliamentarians who face intimidation, pressure, abuse, and even risk their lives. Members can take over the responsibility to help protect threatened fellow parliamentarians in third countries. A DEG lead member will be appointed to oversee the programme and endorse the inclusion of paired-up parliamentarians in coordination with the DROI Chair and Enlargement Bureau. Confirmed sponsor Members would then take the lead on the support of the respective persecuted parliamentarian through public action or silent diplomacy. The EP Global Democracy Support website will feature existing partnerships, paired-up parliamentarians’ biographies and public actions taken under the programme. A dedicated DEG twitter account could allow for timely reactions to urgencies with regards of violations of the human rights of parliamentarians.

- Empowering civil society actors in their interaction with partner parliaments and government authorities. The European Parliament can build on and share its own experience by facilitating events bringing together civil society actors and decision-makers to build trust and identify avenues of cooperation. These events can be organised in and beyond DEG priority countries and regions. Activities empowering civil society could also be offered to Turkey and Belarus.

- Activities strengthening free and pluralistic media as a crucial component of democratic systems. In 2021, projects in this area could focus on pre-accession countries.
• **Outreach activities to strengthen local human rights debates and campaigns** in priority countries. This activity involves cooperation with partner parliaments, NGOs, EU Delegations or other organisations. Members, Sakharov Prize laureates, finalists, fellows or other relevant personalities embodying universal human rights could participate where appropriate.

• **Support for the Members** representing the European Parliament in the governing bodies of the European Endowment for Democracy.

**Action in support of the EP human rights agenda, raising human rights awareness and enhancing the visibility of EP human rights work**

• **Support and promotion of ongoing DROI activities** and the work of DROI rapporteurs or other MEPs with a relevant human rights focus, including through the production of audiovisual material.

• **Invitation of human rights defenders** to contribute to the EP human rights agenda including through fact-finding, reporting and participation in inter-parliamentary meetings, delegation meetings, conferences or other relevant meetings in Brussels, Strasbourg or elsewhere.

• **Organisation of film screenings and debates or participation in events and debates organised by third parties**, including the annual One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival and the School on Cinema, Human Rights and Advocacy, Venice. Members, Sakharov Prize laureates, finalists, fellows or other relevant personalities could be invited where appropriate.

2/ **Sakharov Prize activities (lead Member Vice-President Heidi HAUTALA)**

In 2008, a network was launched as a platform for the human rights activities of the Sakharov Prize laureates and MEPs. It aims at building a culture of human rights, raising awareness on human rights issues in and outside the EU, and supporting human rights defenders around the world through common action. Since 2020, the network features under the name **Sakharov Prize Community**. It is co-chaired by the President of the European Parliament and the most recent laureate.

**Monitoring and support of Sakharov Prize laureates who are at risk or in difficult situations** via silent diplomacy and/or public action. Support action is coordinated with the President, the Vice-President responsible for the Sakharov Prize Community, relevant committees and delegations. Monitoring and supporting activities involve close cooperation with the EEAS and the European Commission and can also extend to Sakharov finalists and fellows.

**Participation of laureates, finalists or fellows in committee, delegation or other relevant meetings, including**

• Participation of Sakharov Prize laureates and fellows in the European Youth Event (EYE)

**Events enhancing the visibility of the Sakharov Prize.** Participation of laureates, finalists, fellows or other relevant personalities in events promoting the spirit of the Sakharov Prize, increasing public awareness of human rights and EP engagement. These events can be
organised in EU Member States in cooperation with the EP Liaison Offices or outside the EU together with international partners or in the framework of international fora.

**Meetings of laureates, finalists or fellows with EP delegations on mission, including Election Observation Missions** to be set up in liaison with the concerned bodies according to 2021 programme of committee and delegation visits and list of priorities for EOM.

**Support human rights projects and advocacy initiatives of individual laureates and cooperation among laureates in line with the EP human rights agenda, including**

- Promotion of the film SEMA, written and acted by survivors of sexual violence in Congo including its placement at film festivals and the organisation of debates on sexual violence against women. DEG supported the production of the film in 2019 in cooperation with the Dr Denis Mukwege Foundation. Since 2020, the film has been used as an awareness-raising tool on violence against women.

- Continuation of the campaign against torture in cooperation with 2017 Sakharov Prize laureate Lorent Saleh around the DEG-sponsored documentary short film Torture26 and the theatre performance “White torture: underground poetry” as awareness-raising tools on modern forms of torture inflicted on prisoners of conscience.

**Sakharov Traineeship** - a special section of Parliament’s Schuman traineeship initiated by the Sakharov Prize Community. Organised twice a year, it allows young human rights professionals from the EU and third countries to gain practical insight in Parliament’s human rights policies.

**Sakharov fellowship for human rights defenders**

This annual capacity-building programme initiated by the Sakharov Prize Community grows an alumni network intertwined with EP human rights activities. The lead Member proposes to the EP President and the DEG a selection of up to 14 human rights defenders per year, including candidates recommended by EU Delegations and Sakharov Prize laureates.

- The fellows follow a human rights training at the European Parliament with a particular focus on EU human rights policies and instruments, Parliament’s role in human rights, and practical aspects of human rights defenders’ work including advocacy. A new contract is being launched for a service provider of a human rights school, where fellows take complementary training together with international students. From 2016-2020 this training was delivered by the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice. A remote edition of the fellowship can be organised if needed, albeit with lower ambitions in terms of empowerment and community building. Beyond the training, fellows are encouraged to build strong links with the local EU Delegations to ensure continuous support for their human rights work.

- **Stay-in-touch programme, follow-up action and events**: after the training, the EP may offer the fellows opportunities to act as multipliers and spread the values of the Sakharov Prize; it may draw on fellows’ expertise to nourish parliamentary work on human rights; and it may support their proposals for action and events related to their human rights engagement. In addition, remote-only activities could be organised to enhance the spirit of the Sakharov Prize Community and encourage
debates between relevant MEPs, laureates, fellows and a broader audience on regional or topical issues.

**Sakharov week 2021**
The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is an annual prize the European Parliament awards to honour individuals or organisations for their efforts on behalf of human rights. The Prize has been awarded since 1988. It is awarded by the EP President at a solemn plenary session in Strasbourg in December. Around the award ceremony, a comprehensive programme of meetings, interviews and public events is organised for the laureates or their representatives and the finalists, including follow-up events to promote the Sakharov Prize in EU Member States.
**ANNEX I**

**LIST OF DEG MEMBERS AND LEAD MEMBERS**

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<th>Co-Chairs</th>
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<td>Mr David McALLISTER</td>
<td>Chair AFET, EPP</td>
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<td>Mr Tomas TOBÉ</td>
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<td>Mr Michael GAHLER</td>
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<td>Mr György HÖLVÉNYI</td>
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<td>Ms Kati PIRI</td>
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<td>Ms Isabel SANTOS</td>
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<td>Ms Inma RODRÍGUEZ-PIÑERO</td>
<td>Chair CDC, S&amp;D</td>
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<td>Ms Izaskun BILBAO BARRY</td>
<td>RENEW</td>
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<td>Mr Urmas PAET</td>
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<td>Ms Viola VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL</td>
<td>Greens/EFA</td>
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<td>Mr Thierry MARIANI</td>
<td>ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Anna FOTYGA</td>
<td>ECR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Marisa MATIAS</td>
<td>GUE/NGL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex-officio Members (without voting rights):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms Maria ARENA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Heidi HAUTALA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Fabio CASTALDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country / Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pan-African Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Balkans</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Political Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakharov network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights and civil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>society activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including Simone Veil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**NB!** For all activities concerning **Turkey** - as foreseen in the 2021 DEG Annual Work Programme - **Kati Piri (S&D group)** will have a coordinating role, taking also into consideration an active role of Members from the other political groups.
### 2021 Budget Breakdown for EP Democracy Support Activities

**Total Allocation EUR 1,400,000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>EUR</th>
<th>Programmes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAC/ELEC</td>
<td>440,000</td>
<td>Capacity-Building activities in priority countries and pre- and post-election activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>Capacity building activities in pre-accession countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>MED</td>
<td>360,000</td>
<td>Mediation support</td>
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<td>HRAC</td>
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<td>Sakharov Prize</td>
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<td>Sakharov network activities</td>
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<td>Human rights actions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Units**

- **ELEC: Election Observation and Follow-Up**
  - Pre- and post-election activities and events

- **PAC: Parliamentary Support and Capacity Building**
  - Capacity building activities in priority countries, including pre-accession countries

- **MED: Mediation and Dialogue Support**
  - Mediation activities; Jean Monnet Dialogues; Young Political Leaders; conflict prevention

- **HRAC: Human Rights Actions**
  - Targeted human rights activities in priority countries and Sakharov-related activities