

Defending Democracy, Delivering Answers

Democracy is under attack in every region of the world. In the US, so-called election deniers are working on undermining the legitimacy of the upcoming 2024 presidential elections in order to prepare Trump's comeback, to set up a system fundamentally opposed to a representative, constitutional democracy. In Brazil, the threats to independent journalists and environmental defenders, and discrimination and violence towards Indigenous and LGBTQI+ communities have constantly risen under Bolsonaro. In the United Kingdom, the government is using Brexit as a cover for increasingly draconian legislative initiatives, such as the proposed Elections Act 2022, which if enacted, will make it more difficult for voters to participate in the democratic process.

Globally, democracy has been in constant and accelerating decline since 2006, resulting in one forth of the world's population living in a closed autocracy and additionally almost halve living in an electoral autocracy.

In Europe, we have also been witnessing a backlash on democratic progress, attempts to dismantle our democracies undermining our fundamental rights and the rule of law. In Serbia, the ruling party has steadily put pressure on the independent media, the political opposition and civil society. In Poland, the independence of the judiciary is heavily at risk, while women's, LGBTQI+ and reproductive rights are being harshly restricted. In several EU Member States, corruption remains a major obstacle to transparency and accountability, both of which are cornerstones of democracy. Civic space is shrinking, and NGOs, human rights and environmental defenders, independent journalists, academics and scientists are under threat. Right-wing leaders, such as Viktor Orbán, Jarosław Kaczyński or Giorgia Meloni only pay lip service to the democratic model. Political actors like VOX in Spain, the Sweden Democrats or the Rassemblement National in France openly undermine our democratic values under the pretence of representing the people.

In the current wave of backlash against democracy, we can witness that certain characteristics are repeated across socio-political contexts. Often, democratically elected leaders and governments themselves dismantle the institutions that are meant to keep democracy alive, such as civil society, civil rights, media freedom, independent judiciary and academia. As changes take place incrementally, it is harder to detect the exact point of democratic breakdown before it is too late. Anti-pluralist leaders often use populist and polarising tactics to divide people along cultural, ethnic and religious lines. Right-wing populists and anti-gender organisations are teaming up to gain support of religious-conservative actors and in turn, they give away the rights of women and LGBTQI+ people.

They use the multiple crises that we currently face to fuel protests supportive of their populism, their illiberal model of society and stand for far right, anti-democratic and/or fascist politics that do not deliver for citizens. Often, they rely on support and funding from Russia and right-wing non-governmental organizations. They unite in their goal to push the boundaries of the acceptable closer and closer to fascism – and we must unite in fighting back!

For us European Greens it is very clear: we will do everything in our power not to let them win. We will continue to take a strong stand against the far right and fascism in Europe. We will continue to work towards societies where we welcome everyone's voice, and each person can contribute. We will continue to fight to make sure everyone can make use of their right to political participation as the basis of our democracy.

However, we must not take democracy for granted. With all our energy, we will multiply our efforts to protect human rights for all by ensuring that women, LGBTQI+ people, Black and People of Colour, disabled people, ethnic and racial minorities, and others who are marginalised have a direct say on the issues that impact them the most. We defend and strengthen civil society and its organisations both at EU and national level, thereby also supporting freedom of association and freedom of speech - in particular those civil societies actors who are under attack for their engagement for democracy, LGBTQI+ and women's rights as well as social and climate justice. We work towards an EU regulatory framework establishing a specific legal form of European Association and common minimum standards to empower and safeguard NGOs and Non-Profits and to provide an enabling level-playing field and to protect in particular organisations put under pressure in authoritarian Member States. We also support the joint European CSO call for an EU civil society strategy including meaningful and structured dialogue. We will defend the rule of law, academic freedom (also ensuring adequate public funding) and the freedom of the media, (both idealistically and materially), and we will fight to hold governments accountable when they do not take action against corruption. This also entails actively funding civil society in their struggle for democratic societies and stronger linking the funding of organisations and governments to the rule of law and democratic values. Additionally, we need to strive towards a Europe that is largely independent from authoritarian regimes on a global scale and that takes a clear stance towards human rights. Only by overcoming European dependencies on autocracies can we build a fully sovereign and democratic Europe.

Even more so in times of crises when social cohesion declines our democracy suffers. This is why we will fight for social justice, support legitimate social protests by people facing the fear of poverty and exclusion, for instance against the undermining of public services, and we are ready to channel their demands into policies that deliver. We will strongly fight for social justice in order to leave no one behind and we will never give into right-wing and fascist political actors exploiting protest and dissatisfaction in their own interest. We strongly deplore conservative forces ignoring their democratic responsibility but helping far right, anti-democratic and/or fascist parties and politicians into power – as the only answer to imminent division, polarisation, uncertainty and anger is solidarity. We demand political parties be more responsible and take active measures to prevent anti-pluralistic actors from gaining power within the party. We call for awareness-raising on the incremental process in which the democratic backsliding takes place through, for instance, demonising the opposition, undermining the independence of courts, media and academia, constraining the freedom of the Internet, intimidating autonomous civil society and business communities, gaining political control over the state bureaucracy and security services.

We call on the EGP and its Member Parties to lead by example.

This is what we will fight for in the upcoming European elections in 2024: a Europe built on our core value of democracy and human rights.