



International Day of Democracy: Joint statement by the High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and Vice-President Dubravka Šuica

Brussels, 14 September 2021

Whether you care about climate change, jobs, the economy, or racial and social justice, your voice will only be heard and your vote will only count if you live in a democracy.

However, European citizens' trust in democracy cannot and should not ever be taken for granted. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested citizens' confidence in the democratic institutions designed to serve them, while the threats and violence against journalists and political polarisation have increased.

In these challenging times, the EU will remain a steadfast and outspoken supporter of democracy, human rights and the rule of law worldwide and within the EU. Collective efforts are needed, together with a new perspective on supporting democracy that delivers for citizens are needed. This work starts at home.

Promoting free and fair elections, ensuring rule of law and media freedom are building blocks to create a space where every citizen feels free and empowered. More than ever, we must defend the ability of free and pluralistic media to provide timely access to reliable and accurate information, and fight disinformation. We will continue working to make our own democracies more resilient and innovative, benefitting from the opportunities offered by new technologies. We will create ever more possibilities to engage citizens through a range of deliberative democracy approaches. The European Democracy Action Plan sets out measures to promote free and fair elections, strengthen media freedom and pluralism, and counter disinformation.

Across the world, we are scaling up our financial and political support for those who, regardless of gender or background, promote democratic participation and inclusion, ensure institutional checks and balances, and hold decision makers to account. We are building alliances with all those committed to upholding universal rights and freedoms, with democratic governments but also with international organisations, civil society organisations, parliaments, political parties, independent media, bloggers, human rights defenders and activists. The EU election observation missions remain an integral part of our commitment to assisting our partners across the world when it comes to democracy, human rights and the rule of law across the world.

Young people and teenagers around the world are calling for climate action or defending human rights. They are active citizens and agents of change. This year's EU comprehensive Strategy on the Rights of the Child defines concrete actions to empower children in the EU and across the globe, taking on board their ideas, hopes and dreams. Next year, we will launch an EU Child Participation Platform and step up our efforts to increase child participation in our societies.

This year has seen the start of the Conference on the Future of Europe, a unique and timely opportunity for European citizens to debate on Europe's challenges and priorities. The Conference brings citizens into the heart of policy-making in the EU. We have committed to listen to Europeans and to follow up on the recommendations made by the Conference. Their vision can drive the change towards a democracy fit for the future. It is only the beginning.

With this, we renew our commitment to build healthier, stronger and more equal societies for all, where everyone is included, respected, protected and empowered. This is how we will strengthen our democracies.

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