



REDEMOS

RECONFIGURING EU DEMOCRACY
SUPPORT. TOWARDS A SUSTAINED
DEMOS IN THE EU'S EASTERN
NEIGHBOURHOOD

Policy Brief 1

Trends and patterns in democracy assistance to the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood between 2005-2022

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Setting the Scene

Over the past five years, Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the EU's six eastern neighborhood countries has steadily increased. Yet, the EU and its member states, collectively the world's largest ODA donors, face challenges in effectively coordinating aid due to the multiplicity of donors and their differing priorities. **Ensuring coherent democracy assistance is particularly complex**, given the contested nature of democracy assistance itself and Russia's destabilising influence in the region. **Effective governance of democracy aid requires a shared understanding of democracy models and its intersection with related concepts** like human rights, rule of law, and gender equality.

With a view to provide greater clarity to these challenges, the REDEMOS research team has analysed **democracy funding patterns in the EU's eastern neighbourhood**, based on a [dataset](#) which covers **1.474 democracy assistance projects from 2005 to 2022**. The dataset includes contributions from EU institutions (USD 184.25 million), EU member states (USD 146.62 million), the USA (USD 139.07 million), and international organisations (USD 26.33 million). The analysis categorises democracy aid into six models—electoral, liberal, participatory, egalitarian, peacebuilding, and feminist—while also considering funding for good governance, human rights, and rule of law projects.

The findings highlight the need for **improved donor coordination, standardised reporting, and sustained engagement in priority areas** to maximise the impact of democracy assistance in the EU's eastern neighbourhood.

Key Findings

- The analysis of democracy assistance is complicated by the **lack of a unified standard for project titles and descriptions in the OECD Library**. The EU and member states contribute to this problem, as their reporting is marked by inconsistencies. Whereas some projects provide clear insights into funded measures, others offer vague or absent descriptions, making it difficult for researchers and policymakers to assess projects' relevance and effectiveness.
- **Democracy assistance funding to the EU's eastern neighborhood countries rose considerably between 2005-2022**: EU aid peaked in 2015, reaching US\$23.7 million, EU member states' democracy assistance reached a record high in 2021 with a total amount of US\$22.2 million and US aid – amounting to US\$20.3 million – was the highest in 2020. These developments present opportunities for expanded initiatives and, at the same time, pose challenges for donor coordination, as shifting funding priorities and diverse democracy models require improved alignment to prevent duplication and maximise impact.
- Despite over 1.000 democracy assistance projects in the EU's eastern neighborhood between 2005-2022, only 65 received funding exceeding USD 1 million. **Most of these projects were short-term and fragmented, lacking continuity, particularly in the context of the electoral and feminist models**. This raises concerns about their long-term impact and the need for sustained engagement beyond electoral cycles and crisis-driven interventions.
- Despite the broad scope of the electoral democracy model – including suffrage, party financing, media use, election monitoring, and institutional capacity – **EU and EU member states' funding for electoral support in the eastern neighbourhood between 2005 and 2022 was minimal, rarely exceeding USD 1 million annually**. The few notable spikes were mainly linked to elections in Ukraine, highlighting the need for stronger engagement, particularly in countering Russia's election interference.
- The analysis of **EU democracy assistance** reveals a complex, multi-model funding landscape, balancing both strategic and reactionary approaches, with donors adapting to political events while maintaining long-term engagement across various democracy models.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the empirical analysis of all 1.474 projects registered in the OECD Library for the period 2005-2022, REDEMOS puts forward the following policy recommendations:

- **Introduce** unified standards as to the scope of data on the EU and EU member states' democracy assistance projects, reported through the OECD library, as well as their classification.
- **Ensure** greater alignment of funding priorities and better coordination with respect to the substance of democracy projects between the EU, its member states and other actors active in the EU's eastern neighbourhood.
- **Strengthen** the EU and EU member states' engagement with the electoral model in EU eastern neighbourhood countries, particularly with a view to enhance their resilience to digital threats to elections.
- **Explore** opportunities for the European Commission and EU member states to ensure continuity in democracy assistance, particularly when this is deemed to contribute to increased effectiveness and impact of support actions.
- **Consider** multi-stakeholder action in support of decentralisation and local empowerment in Ukraine "U-LEAD with Europe" as a potential model for long-term support of priority reforms in EU eastern neighbourhood countries and beyond.
- **Refrain** from considering long-termism and continuity as imperatives for EU and EU member states' engagement in EU eastern neighbourhood countries but rather use portfolio assessments to assess the relevance and potential contribution of projects in a long-term perspective.



The full study – **REDEMOS Policy Paper: Trends, patterns and coordination in the EU, Member States' and international institutions' assistance to the eastern neighbourhood countries** – can be found at <https://redemos.eu/resources/publications/policy-papers/>



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Towards a sustained demos in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood**

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