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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

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Subject: Presidency conclusions on strengthening EU democratic resilience

Following the meeting of the Council (General Affairs) on 27 May 2025, delegations will find in Annex the text of the Presidency conclusions that was supported by 25 delegations.

Conclusions on strengthening EU democratic resilience

THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. RECALLS its previous conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship¹, on democratic resilience: safeguarding electoral processes from foreign interference², on enhancing and protecting free, open and informed democratic debate³, on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: funding to promote, protect and enforce fundamental rights⁴, on the role of the civic space in protecting and promoting fundamental rights in the EU⁵ and on memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe⁶.
2. ACKNOWLEDGES that the evolving geopolitical landscape, including the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, poses serious challenges to our democracies, which can lead to aggravation of societal friction, polarisation, radicalisation and decrease in trust in institutions and elections.
3. UNDERLINES that democracy cannot thrive without the freedom of expression and that democratic resilience must be based on the rule of law, fundamental rights and the values upheld by the European Union as enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In turn, STRESSES that democracy, freedom and equality are mutually reinforcing; RECALLS that respect of these values is a shared responsibility of Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies as well as of Member States.

1 15738/23
2 10119/24
3 10533/24
4 6878/25
5 7388/23
6 11268/11

4. UNDERLINES that the EU institutions and the Member States have a common responsibility to promote and safeguard the rule of law through all available instruments, in accordance with the Treaties. In this context, STRESSES the importance of mainstreaming fundamental rights in all EU policies, legislative initiatives, and in the implementation of applicable EU law.
5. ACKNOWLEDGES that strengthening democratic resilience is a cornerstone in protecting Europe's security. This requires free and diverse public discourse, the ability to recognise and counter foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) campaigns, including disinformation, especially those targeting EU values or the democratic functioning of institutions, the rules-based international order, and the manipulation or falsification of historical facts for political means, as well as long-term efforts in the areas of supporting free, independent and pluralistic media, ensuring free and fair elections, promoting civic education, strengthening civil society and protecting the rule of law.
6. UNDERLINES that democratic resilience at local, regional, national and Union level are mutually reinforcing with the need for comprehensive and joint action, in the spirit of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.
7. RECALLS that in recent years the EU has made important efforts to strengthen democratic resilience, notably the Defence of Democracy package presented by the Commission in December 2023, which builds upon the European Democracy Action Plan adopted in 2020, the EU Hybrid Toolbox, the FIMI toolbox, the Rapid Alert System as a secure platform for information sharing on FIMI related incidents, the Code of Conduct on Disinformation, the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation, the Digital Markets Act, the Digital Services Act, the AI Act, the European Media Freedom Act and the Anti-SLAPP Directive. CALLS upon the Commission, in full respect of Member States' competences, to proactively enforce these rules and to use the tools it has at its disposal, notably its investigative and sanctioning powers under the Digital Services Act.

8. STRESSES that the protection of free and fair elections from any foreign interference, including in the information domain, by state or non-state actors, as well as election transparency, is essential for democracies. To this end, UNDERLINES the importance of efficient and effective use of the European Cooperation Network on Elections, fully respecting the primary role of national authorities in safeguarding electoral integrity within their respective competences.
9. STRESSES the need to ensure election transparency and in this respect, NOTES the entry into force and the upcoming full application of the Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising and ACKNOWLEDGES the Commission recommendation to promote free, fair, and resilient elections and ongoing work on transparency of interest representation on behalf of third countries, as well as on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations.
10. UNDERLINES the critical role of and access to free, independent and pluralistic media providing balanced and objective information to the strengthening of our democracies, as well as the respective responsibilities of the tech industry, in particular of social media platforms, governments and other stakeholders for upholding freedom of expression and open democratic discourse in the digital space; ENCOURAGES Member States, the Commission, public authorities, civil society and private actors to consider ways to further support fact-checking initiatives and European-wide independent media projects, such as pan-European audiovisual platforms, as well as investigative journalism to ensure the generation of content produced in line with journalistic standards and in full respect of the principles of editorial responsibility, liability and independence.
11. ACKNOWLEDGES that FIMI campaigns, including disinformation, have become a threat to democracy and to the rule of law, particularly in the context of social media. The failure to address these risks may pose serious threats to the integrity of democratic processes and citizens' engagement by undermining public trust in democratic institutions and procedures.

12. Further ACKNOWLEDGES that an integrated and multi-stakeholder approach is key for countering-FIMI campaigns, including disinformation, in order to promote transparency and foster digital, cyber, information and media literacy, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) literacy, as part of civic education.
13. HIGHLIGHTS in this regard the need to continue efforts to promote and support the media literacy provisions under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and take into account, as appropriate, the 2023 Commission guidelines on media literacy. Against this background, SUPPORTS the responsible use of AI, preventing and mitigating the generation and dissemination of harmful content, including that created with deep fake technologies and behavioural-based targeting, and promoting the transparent use of algorithms.
14. STRESSES the importance of supporting citizens' participation in democratic life, and in this context, RECALLS the European Citizens' Initiative as a tool frequently used by EU citizens to directly participate in the democratic process.
15. EMPHASISES the importance of supporting civil society organisations (hereinafter 'CSOs') in the promotion and the protection of the values and rights enshrined in Article 2 TEU and the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union; in this context, ACKNOWLEDGES the Commission's ongoing mid-term review of the 2020 strategy on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights on the occasion of its 25 years anniversary and REITERATES the importance of finalising the Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, in accordance with Article 6, paragraph 2 TEU.
16. EMPHASISES that ensuring adequate financing for CSOs and human rights defenders – who remain an essential element of the system of checks and balances, as well as contribute to the promotion and protection of Union values, including the rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy– is crucial to building and maintaining a society in which Union values prevail; RECOGNISES the need to ensure transparency and accountability in funding practices.

17. UNDERLINES the importance of CSOs in protecting democracy and the rule of law, in particular through monitoring the respect of the rights and freedoms of individuals, scrutinising the actions of state actors, drawing attention of the public to instances of breaches of law, and promoting interests and perspectives of persons belonging to minorities or underrepresented groups, and of those most vulnerable.
18. EMPHASISES the importance of a continuous and active engagement in an open and transparent dialogue with CSOs and human rights defenders, taking into account their expertise in the process of policy-making, and of supporting CSOs in examining and addressing fundamental rights issues, in enhancing citizens' participation in decision-making processes and in strengthening democratic resilience, including at the grassroots level.
19. RECOGNISES that, based on the Financial Regulation, when implementing Union funding and the EU budget, Member States and the Commission have the responsibility to ensure compliance with the Charter in accordance with its Article 51, and to respect the Union values enshrined in Article 2 TEU that are relevant in the implementation of the budget.
20. RECALLS that the fight against corruption is indispensable for strengthening the EU's democratic resilience, and INVITES Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, as well as the Member States to step up their efforts in fighting corruption.
21. RECALLS that these Council Conclusions are without prejudice to the negotiations on the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework; HIGHLIGHTS the need to map measures aimed at strengthening democratic resilience and to secure the appropriate EU funding to support such measures.

22. INVITES the Commission and the High Representative, within the remit of their respective mandates and in full respect of Member States' competences, to step up their actions in safeguarding information integrity and countering FIMI campaigns, including disinformation, in particular when they are targeting EU security and values or the democratic functioning of institutions, undermining the rule of law, the rules-based international order, or manipulating and falsifying historical facts. Such actions should also include the use of strategic communication, diplomatic outreach to partners and constructively approaching new partnerships to promote EU values.
23. INVITES the Commission and the European External Action Service to explore ways to bring together all relevant stakeholders including Member States, EU institutions, civil society, research, academia, private entities and other relevant experts from different areas in a systematic manner in order to share best practices and to provide strategic guidance on policies pertaining to democratic resilience, making best use of existing efforts and with due respect for Member States' competences.
24. INVITES the Commission to take leadership, together with Member States, in promoting European remembrance across Europe, including by issuing a report on the subject to be addressed by the Council in early 2027. In this context, ACKNOWLEDGES the progress made by the Platform of European Memory and Conscience (PEMC) in the creation of a pan-European memorial in Brussels dedicated to the victims of the 20th century totalitarian regimes; and RECALLS the value of a coordinated approach by making best use of all existing structures and entities at national and EU level, such as the PEMC.
25. STRESSES the need to consider further how to enhance resilience, preparedness, crisis-prevention and response capacity in a coherent manner to prevent and respond effectively to emerging crises and threats, such as climate-related disasters and large-scale technical disruptions; in this context, NOTES the joint communication on an EU Preparedness Union Strategy for the EU to be ready to protect its citizens and the key societal functions that are crucial for democracy and daily life.

26. In this context, UNDERLINES that preparedness and crisis response capacities should be taken into account in democratic resilience frameworks, namely to address the dangers posed by the spread of disinformation during systemic emergencies and to guarantee that emergency response frameworks contribute effectively to the dissemination of fact-based information, while upholding the right of freedom of expression and access to information.
 27. INVITES the Commission to take into account these issues in its forthcoming European Democracy Shield initiative.
 28. COMMITTS to returning regularly to the matter of strengthening EU democratic resilience.
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