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## Conference Report


### **Worldwide Promotion of Democracy – Challenges, Role and Strategy of the European Union**

**05-06.06.2007**

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The Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (KAF) organized a two days workshop to discuss the issue of „Worldwide Promotion of Democracy – Challenges, Role and Strategy of the European Union“.

Democracy Promotion is gaining importance at the European and International discourse and political level. After the rise and fall of the external Democracy Promotion Strategy, propagated mainly by the US, the design of a European strategy seems to be more urgent than ever.

The first day the workshop, aimed at clarifying preconditions for democratic development in different country situations and discussed potential priorities/sequences of democracy promotion agenda's as well as the crucial role for an effective cooperation between internal and external actors on the ground. Based on these findings, the discussion on the second day focused on the analysis of the European Democracy Promotion Policies and its targets, results and instruments.

### **Introductory remarks**

In his opening remarks Frank Spengler, Deputy Head of the Department of International Cooperation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Berlin, gave a short overview over core elements and preconditions of democracy. Mr. Spengler underlined, that democracy is in itself an essential prerequisite for poverty reduction.

Dr. Peter Koeppinger, Project Director of the Dialogue on Development Policy of the European Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation in Brussels pointed out that a more coherent and effective instruments for Democracy Promotion at the EU level are needed, which comprises actions targeted to political and civil society.

Elmar Brok, Member of European Parliament, referred to the normative dimensions of EU policies as they are well reflected in Human Rights Clauses, EU treaties and other legal documents. Brok also stressed the importance of the intrinsic value of democracy. In order to cope with failed states, terrorism and refugee problems the promotion of Human Rights, rule of law and democracy is crucial.

Specific assets and strengths of the European Approach to Democracy Promotion are its focus of cooperation with multilateral institutions, acknowledging the necessity of ownership of democratization processes and its long-time approach and commitment.

Mr. Brok emphasized the success of monitoring processes (Copenhagen Criteria) on democratic reforms for the former candidate countries. With the new European Neighborhood Policy and the Stability Instrument, as well as other cooperation agreements with third countries the European Union introduced new incentives (governance facilities) for third countries to engage in political reform processes.

Parliamentary State Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of the FR of Germany Karin Kortmann stressed in her Key Note Speech “Democracy Promotion – Key to Peace, Stability and Development in a Globalised World” the universal value of democracy as a human right.

Ms Kortmann spoke about the challenges which democracy support is facing: the problem of country ownership restricting the possibilities for foreign democracy

promoters and the destabilizing effects transformation processes can have on societies. Moreover, the conflicts of interests between the EU and its Member States, between long-term and short-term approaches and between economic and developmental paradigms are challenges for a coherent Democracy Promotion Policy.

Ms Kortmann highlighted that Germany, actually chairing the presidency of the G8 and of the European Union, is one of the key players for Democracy Building within Europe. The political foundations play a pivotal role in the promotion of democracy within the scope of the German development policy which seeks its like at international level.

The clear value orientation of the political foundations makes it easier for partners to establish relationships of trust based on shared political convictions. Key activities of the political foundations can be seen in the fields of consultancy services, political education and promotion of free access to information. Through their local presence, the foundations' field staffs establish networks, build trust and secure access to functional elites. Political foundations have opportunities to act in areas where official development cooperation must exercise restraint. A further advantage is their range of instruments that is more flexible and can respond more rapidly to political swings.

## **Panel One**

### **Democracy Promotion – Definition, Priorities, Preconditions**

Dr. Cor Van Beuningen, Director of Socires in the Netherlands, spoke about the features and fundamentals of democratic systems. He elaborated the notions of legitimacy and effectiveness, governance and governability, the nation-state concept, the question of collective identity and social cohesion and of moral values as fundamental analytical and practical tools for understanding and implementing democratic structures.

Dr. Kristina Kausch, researcher at Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior (FRIDE) in Madrid focussed on areas of shortcomings within the Democracy Promotion Policies of the EU and its Member States. She explained that the clarity of the objective is often missing and measures are too selective. Besides, the communication of the EU and its Member States on Democracy Promotion Policies are not coherent enough. The missing joint communications efforts are accompanied by a missing clarity on how explicit Democracy Promotion should be. Indirect measures like capacity building often fail to verify their positive effects on democratic development. Finally, the EU and its Member States either focus too much on civil society capacity building favouring a bottom-up approach or on the governments (top-down approach). The intermediary level of political institutional reform is too often neglected.

Hauke Hartmann, representing the Bertelsmann Stiftung, mentioned three European dimensions of Democracy Promotions Policies. The first dimension is the comprehensive approach in the preparatory phase that allows distinctions between cultural and universal criteria. In the implementation phase, the linkage of social, economic rights and political rights is a special European feature allowing for a combination of pro-poor policies and Democracy Promotion. Not to forget the third dimension which incorporates the diversity of intervention and interplay of measures that takes place in different country contexts.

Mr Hartmann ended with a demand for a more systematic and coherent evaluation of the multitude of measures taken by the EU and its Member States in the field of Democracy Promotion. To avoid waste of funding and initiate a continuous learning process, the EU and its Member States should collect and analyse the successes and shortcomings of their interventions.

The Head of Unit Democratisation, Gender and Human Rights in the Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation in Germany, Dr. Eduard Westreicher, underlined the importance of well-tailored country strategies. Notably, the pluralism of actors is a positive feature of the German Democracy Promotion policy. The coming challenges within the field of Democracy Promotion will lie, besides a socio-cultural openness needed for effective Democracy Promotion, in the successful integration of the gender question and the young generation within these processes.

In the discussion Mr Koeppinger referred to the strategy paper leading to the annual action plans under the EIDHR. He underlined the important role of multiparty systems for a functioning democracy and called for their consideration and incorporation in the annual action plans. The necessity for a focus on political society e.g. parties and parliaments was widely acknowledged.

Mr Spengler highlighted the importance of political education as a long-term challenge for ensuring democratic structures. This includes the education of the young generation, one of the main focus areas of the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung in their activities in Germany and abroad.

## **Panel Two**

### **Internal Actors, External Actors: Country Categories, Country Approaches**

Mr Spengler opened the second panel discussion by stressing the importance of values on which Democracy Promotion is based and the indispensable precondition that internal actors are taking the ownership of the process.

Roel von Meijenfeldt, the Director of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy outlined the complexity, long duration and the process-character of Democracy Promotion. The European democratic diversity, the transition through peaceful dialogue, the linkage between democracy and social security, Human Rights and rule of law and the multilateral approach stand out in the European approach to Democracy Promotion. The problems in the partner-countries face can be often explained with dysfunction of multiparty systems and power sharing and a lack of trust between the institutions and actors.

Vidar Helgesen, Secretary-General of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in Stockholm argued for a knowledge driven approach in Democracy Promotion in opposite to an ideological driven approach. This process should rely on the sharing of knowledge, building of professional networks and a clear assessment and evaluation of policies implemented by the European Union, the Member States and Civil Society Organisations.

He called out for a closer partnership between the Democracy Promotion Community and the Development Community, and not to forget possible negative effects between

these two sectors. He seized the danger that the space needed for national politics could be reduced by development processes as the PRSP process, depriving national actors of the necessity to communicate their actions to the civil society.

As last speaker of the panel, Julia Leininger of the German Development Institute in Bonn explained a typology of fragile states using as main criteria whether socio-economic security alone or also physical security was absent. Depending on the type of fragile states, different measures should be taken. When physical security is existent, state building and democracy assistance should be implemented in a complementary approach. When physical security is absent, she called for democratic institution building.

In the following discussion two main topics evolved. The first topic was the call for powersharing through constitutional reforms by implementing an inherent system of checks and balances. Thus Democracy Promotion policies should concentrate more on the support of multiparty systems.

The second point was taken up by Ms Foster who stressed the importance of cooperation between the field of Democracy Support and development. The call of the panelists for greater coherence within and between these fields was accompanied by stressing the importance of the diversity of measures as a positive feature of European Democracy Promotion Agenda. The participants agreed on the objective to establish this unity in diversity.

### **Conclusions first Day**

Dr. Karsten Grabow, Research Associate of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Berlin, stressed in his conclusion of the first day on three points.

First of all there was obviously a consensus for the setting up of an elaborated concept of Democracy Promotion not only by a single European country, but by the EU itself. This concept shall emphasize the complexity of democracy. Democratic values shall be placed at the center of all activities since democracy begins not at an institutional level, but in heads, minds, attitudes and behaviour. Democracy Support should furthermore be seen as an integral part of foreign policy.

Secondly, there has been a wide agreement that Democracy Promotion should focus on institutions such as elections and parliaments and individual and collective actors such as parties to build democratic multiparty systems.

Thirdly, the multitude and pluralism of organisations are an decisive asset for all the actions in European Democracy Promotion. To promote multiparty systems it seems to be a question of logic to use decentralised structures based on and committed to universal values of democracy. Political foundations, party institutes and similar organisations can serve here as a model.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Day

Ms Danièle Smadja, the director for multilateral relations and human rights at the DG External Relations of the European Commission opened with her Keynote Speech “The European Union – Key Actor in Worldwide Democracy Promotion” the second day of the workshop.

Ms Smadja underlined right from the beginning the intrinsic value of democracy and the inseparability of democracy and human rights. Democracy she stated has to be seen “as a process, developing from within, involving all sections of society and a range of institutions that should ensure participation, representation, responsiveness and accountability”. She also emphasized the instrumental value of democratic processes with regard to effective poverty alleviation, economic development, being a prerequisite for government accountability. Democracy is required to sustain an independent judiciary, a free media and a framework for protecting human rights.

Turning to approaches, methods and instruments Ms Smadja highlighted the European Union’s commitment to supporting democracy as not only being part of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy but also a key commitment in development, economic, financial and technical cooperation with third countries. The EU Enlargement Strategy towards Central and Eastern European Countries, the accession process became the EU’s first major experience of Democracy Promotion.

Sophisticated positive political conditionality as a democracy promotion instruments is also represented in the governance facility within the European Neighborhood Policy and the Cotonou Agreement.

Ms Smadja also mentioned the crucial relevance of the two new Financing Instruments, EIDHR (support of an integrated approach to democracy building and the protection and promotion of Human Rights and the Stability) and the Instrument for Stability which has been designed to prevent conflicts and to support post-conflict political stabilization.

She outlined two elements which could be seen as inherently European, the broad scope of its approach and the ability to react to the very different needs of the partner countries with its tailored instruments and tools.

The first group of questions inquired whether a concentration on certain actors in the field of Democracy Building and on certain geographical zones (e.g. “the ring of friends”) as well as on actors who handle the public diplomacy would not bring a higher efficiency and visibility of the Union.

Ms Smadja was very clear that a limitation of the EU Democracy Building either on instruments, actors or geographical zones is not in the interest of the Commission. The diversity is very much perceived as a positive feature of the EU and the worldwide activity is perfectly in order with the claim to be a global player. The concentration on the neighbors of the EU is not in contrast to a worldwide activity. The major challenge lies not within the concentration but within the striving for greater coherence and therefore efficiency and visibility.

Furthermore, Ms Smadja pointed out, that political parties are extremely important actors in Democracy Building, but that support for these actors is well done from the Member States. The Commission, due to its neutrality and commitment to impartiality, will not support political parties. In spite of this clear opposition of the European Commission to directly support political parties, the promotion and support of political pluralism and democratic space between political parties and civil society is covered by the EIDHR.

### **Panel Three**

#### **The Perspectives of the EU Approach – Targets, Expected Results, Instruments**

Michael Gahler, Member of the European Parliament and Vice Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, highlighted the importance of a functioning democratic political system and the necessity to include the support for democratic actors in the EIDHR. Referring to the challenges of Democracy Promotion by the EU, Mr Gahler argued that the European Commission should cooperate with original and experienced actors of Democracy Building like political foundations to implement projects and not to rely too much on professional consultant companies.

The lack of detailed comprehensive information on programs and projects for Worldwide Democracy Promotion of European actors should be solved through a firmer evaluation and better visibility of these projects as long as this does not endanger the project implementation itself.

Annette Hübinger, Member of the German Bundestag, addressed the importance of democratic processes as a precondition for sustainable development. She considered democracy as a key factor for development. Ms Hübinger called on the EU to strengthen, besides their technical and financial cooperation, the political cooperation with third countries.

She criticized the gap between the strategies and their implementation in the EU Democracy Promotion policies. For a successful implementation of instruments, the unity of the donor-community and the coherence of targets and strategies are vital. The strengthening of civil society and the support of multiparty systems are the natural activities of political foundations. She pleads for a stronger integration of the political foundations into the formulations of strategies and activities of Democracy Promotion policies of the EU.

Sean O`Regan, Policy Advisor in the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit in the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU underlined the diversity of the EU. To reach a better coherence, clarity, and visibility, Mr O`Regan demanded to bridge the divide between Brussels and the Member States, between the foreign policy community and the development community and between government and civil society.

He outlined the challenges Democracy Promotion actors are confronted with; he mentioned the overthrow of autocratic regimes often comprising economic reform and social upheaval which endanger the transformation process towards a democracy and the reputation of democracy in general.

He indicated that non-democratic role models exist, such as China with their authoritarian model of economic development or Russia with the active promotion that free media and civil society are threats to stability. Furthermore, many traditional societies equal democracy with the western model of society which is viewed as morally decayed and oppose therefore democratic change.

Finally, Mr O`Regan picked up the challenges which Mr Westreicher had mentioned, namely the role of women in developing democracies, the problem of low average age in some countries and the necessity to carefully listen to local communities.

Jean Bossuyt, Programme Coordinator in the Actors of Partnership Programme at the European Center for Development Policy Management focused in his presentation on the implementation strategy of the EU. The danger of a gap between policy ambitions and delivery on the field has to be avoided. Though the knowledge about the processes and underlying necessities are good within the institutions (Democracy Promotion is a complex, internal process which demands ownership, tailor-made solutions, a systemic view and a combination of the security sector and the development sector) the lessons have yet to be internalized and be effectively used to change the approaches. Starting from the perspective of the EU Delegations in the partner countries, Mr Bossuyt underlined the necessity of a new institutional culture among the European Union actors and the EU delegation staff, comprising decentralisation, subsidiarity, the removal of EU internal barriers by the government concept, the need for networking and the engagement and strengthening of the partner country actors.

Rolf Timans, Head of Unit, Human Rights and Democratisation in the DG External Relations at the European Commission highlighted the need for a stronger political impulse for Democracy Promotion. *“Unless we succeed together to convince the political level in a very operational and determined way to take this matter seriously we will continue to be unable to cope with the expectations that many actors are addressing to the Commission”*. A greater coherence of instruments is needed.

Mr Timans outlined the positive evolution of the EIDHR while at the same time he warned not to overestimate its impact due to financial limits and broad geographical scope.

Mr Bossuyt mentioned in the discussion that the EIDHR has to create space in which the process work should be done by the political foundations and NGOs instead of consultant agencies. The EU should function as a political backup for foundations and NGOs in case of pressure from the partner countries.

Mr O`Regan warned not to forget the Member States and their Embassies in this process.

The second question referred to the similarity of EU and US agenda's in the field of Democracy Promotion and the request to better coordinate their activities.

Mr O`Regan mentioned that the EU and the Member States were still recovering from the aftereffects of the divisions caused by the Iraq conflict.

Mr Timans underlined that it is in the interest of the EU and the US to cooperate on an informal agenda taking into account the still very negative perception of US Democracy Promotion Policy. The communication through established channels is important, but he also clearly underlined his preference for a unique EU approach with the support of



political foundations, NGOs and related organisations, which are very capable and well placed in implementing Democracy Building projects.

Mr van Meijenfeldt from the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, called out to identify a common agenda and to bring it to the attention of the political leadership. A more structural dialogue between the three institutions, the political foundations and other civil society organizations should be built up to start trying to address this unifying doctrine, to work out the subsidiarity agenda and to bring them to the attention to the top leadership in Europe.

Mr Timans admitted that the dialogue between EU institutions, political foundations and civil society actors active in Democracy Promotion is absolutely crucial. Thanks to the initiative of the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation there have been considerable proliferations of such occasions. The event today and yesterday showed that there is a rather broad based interest. Mr Timans underlined that there is yet no structured dialogue but we ought to think about the creation of a table on a more regular bases in order to shape guidelines and get them to the political attention.

Mr Bossuyt highlighted, that the creation of such a “quadrilogue” was a positive example of the institutional change he had demanded for. He pleaded for the inclusion of the voice of the partner countries in such a consultation process.

### **Conference Conclusions**

Dr. Peter Koeppinger focused in his conclusion of the workshop on four major issues. The joint European approach to Democracy Promotion worldwide is necessary and has to be pushed higher on the political agenda. Neither the priorities nor the preconditions have been agreed on by the European actors active in Democracy Assistance nor have they been clearly formulated. He called for an European Consensus of Democracy or at least European agreed guidelines on Democracy Assistance worldwide. Mr Koeppinger underlined the need for such a binding joint document and appealed to the participants of the European Parliament to draft a declaration demanding the establishment of a working group at the European Commission, with involvement of the European Parliament, the Council, political foundations and other European actors in the field of Democracy Promotion to prepare such a document. Once in place, such a document would be the fundament for a much more coherent and effective cooperation of all the actors from the EU in their programs and projects worldwide.

Secondly, a well-tailored strategy in partner countries founded on a thorough European assessment is needed. To arrive at this end, joint analysis should be carried out in selected pilot countries to listen to the local stakeholders, define priorities and strategies and evolve guidelines for an effective orchestration of the different instruments of the country and thematic programs of the EU.

Another key point of the workshop has been the agreement on the importance to strengthen democratic parties and party systems. This is absolutely crucial for an effective strategy of Democracy Building. The political foundations should work together with the European Commission and with the support and the monitoring of the European Parliament to make sure that the support for the establishment and strengthening of democratic party systems as it was included in the legal document for the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights will be spelled down to the objectives and

priorities in the annual programs and the calls for proposals. There is a need for an exchange of ideas on how to formulate such objectives and priorities and in which countries this would be a priority.

The fourth issue is the diversity and pluralism of the European actors, programs and projects in this field of Democracy Promotion. This has been considered to be one of the big assets of Europe in this field. However, the participants of this workshop are aware that it also creates the challenge to bring all these actors and programs together in a coherent and effective country strategy. The different groups of actors in this field should take the initiative to sit together and to work out such a mechanism of regular or even continuous mutual information and exchange. This also would – at least partly – solve the problem of low visibility of the European Democracy Promotion agenda and activities. However it should be clear that such a mechanism should in no way be the setup of an official institution.

An exhaustive publication including the speeches, debates and other contributions will be available in about 4 weeks on the Webpage of the European Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation.