



## EDITORIAL

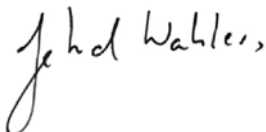
Dear Readers,

This year, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung celebrates an important anniversary: 50 years of development cooperation and promoting democracy around the world. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's efforts to promote the spread of democracy began in Latin America in the 1960s. In January 1962, the foundation made its first contacts with Christian Democratic politicians in Venezuela. These contacts deepened and spread to other countries, so that before long international development cooperation became a major focus of the foundation, alongside its work in Germany in the area of political education. Since then, the "Institute for International Solidarity" has become the "European and International Cooperation" department, which has over 80 offices around the world and is active in 120 countries.

Over the last year, many of the staff in our numerous Latin American offices have reported some positive developments. For the first time ever, Latin America in general has come out of a global economic crisis stronger than before. However, our resident representatives have also reported how people have a sense of dissatisfaction with the failings of their democratic institutions and political systems when it comes to turning economic growth into social progress. Despite strong economic data, Latin America is still a continent with a considerable gap between rich and poor. Only a few countries have managed to introduce lasting social policies: Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay have lower rates of poverty than other countries in the region, thanks to positive steps on the part of their governments. In contrast, although Brazil and Mexico have taken some positive actions in terms of social policy, for example by directly allocating welfare to people in need, which depends on certain conditions like regular school attendance of the children. Still these improvements will only be sustainable if they also undertake institutional reforms, particularly in the areas of education and health.

This conflicting picture of economic growth and certain improvements in social policy on the one hand, and the weaknesses and inefficiencies of democratic institutions on the other, is also reflected in our latest Latin America Democracy Index. The IDD-Lat 2011 also shows that, with just a few exceptions, elections on the continent are being run in line with democratic rules. We are pleased to see this development, particularly because our experiences in other parts of the world show that this is certainly not a given. But, unfortunately, progress in the conduct of democratic elections in Latin America has not necessarily led to a marked improvement in the quality of democracy. Instead, we have observed a hardening of presidential democracies, in some places with power becoming strongly personalised and with state institutions being forced to toe the party line. In some countries, we have seen populist heads of state developing a cult of personality, as is exemplified by Venezuela's president, Hugo Chávez. In contrast to this, countries such as Brazil, Uruguay and Chile stand out because of their respect for institutional systems, their depersonalisation of power and their strong democratic leadership.

Civil society plays a major role in the success of democracy. The growth of democracy in Latin America is not only due to the fact that politicians have led their countries in a democratic and transparent way and shown respect for state institutions. Democracy can only work properly if a country's citizens are prepared to get involved in contributing to the common good. This is why the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung will continue to work at all levels to promote civic engagement and good governance, both in this anniversary year and in the years to come.



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