

# Commission Prepares European Democracy Action Plan



Thomas Wahl

News

As announced in the [political guidelines](#) by Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen* and in the Commission Work Programme, the current Commission is stepping up its efforts to protect the EU's democratic systems and institutions. *Ursula von der Leyen* promised to put forward a European Democracy Action Plan under the headline "A new push for European democracy." Preparations for this Action Plan started in mid-July 2020. The Commission presented a [roadmap](#) and launched a public consultation in this context. The [public consultation](#) runs until 15 September 2020 and seeks to gather input from a broad range of stakeholders on the following three key themes:

- Election integrity and how to ensure electoral systems are free and fair;
- Strengthening media freedom and media pluralism;
- Tackling disinformation.

In addition, the consultation also covers the crosscutting issue of supporting civil society and active citizenship. The major aim of the European Democracy Action Plan is to ensure that citizens are able to participate in the democratic system through informed decision-making - free from interference and manipulation affecting elections and the democratic debate. It will particularly address threats of external intervention in European elections. Lessons learnt from the Covid-19 crisis will also be considered.

On 10 June 2020, the Commission and the High Representative [outlined](#) the way forward as regards the fight against disinformation surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. In their [joint communication "Tackling COVID-19 disinformation – Getting the facts right,"](#) they list numerous immediate measures against disinformation that can be taken using existing resources. The actions focus on the following:

- Strengthening strategic coordination within and outside the EU;
- Better cooperation within the EU;
- Intensifying cooperation with third countries and international partners;
- Greater transparency on the part of online platforms and support for fact-checkers and researchers;
- Ensuring freedom of expression and pluralistic democracy debate;
- Raising citizens' awareness;
- Protecting public health and consumers' rights.

The Communication concludes that the COVID-19 crisis has become a test case showing how the EU and its democratic societies deal with threats posed by disinformation, misinformation, and foreign influence operations. It is expected that the proposed short-term solutions will make the EU more resilient in the longer

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term. The proposed actions will also feed into the European Democracy Action Plan (announced by Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen*) and the Digital Services Act.

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