# The Defence of Democracy Package: Strengthening or Restricting EU Democracy?



The **Defence of Democracy Package** is a 2023 European Commission initiative aimed at **protecting the EU's democratic processes** from foreign interference, disinformation, and internal threats to the rule of law. It introduces **greater transparency requirements**, safeguards elections, and strengthens citizen participation in policymaking. However, while it is seen as a necessary response to growing democratic vulnerabilities, some argue it **risks restricting civic space and limiting freedoms** if not properly implemented.

## Key Features of the Package:

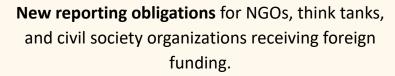
- Transparency of Political Influence
- Election Integrity & Media Freedom
- Preventing Foreign Interference
- European Citizens' Panels: Strengthening
  Participatory Democracy



## What Is the Defence of Democracy Package?

- Your The package is designed to counter democratic backsliding and protect against foreign interference in EU decision-making.paragraph text
- European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) and the Digital Services Act (DSA), which address online disinformation and media freedom.

## 1. Transparency of Political Influence



Aims to prevent hidden foreign influence in EU policymaking.



#### **Example:**

Concerns over Russian and Chinese funding of think tanks and political parties influencing EU policies, especially in areas like energy security and technology regulation.

## 2. Election Integrity & Media

Freedom

Monitoring of social media platforms to counter foreign propaganda.

Stronger rules against disinformation in political campaigns.

Enhanced media protections to ensure press independence.



#### **Example:**

The EU has faced disinformation campaigns from Russia, particularly during the 2019 European Parliament elections. The package sought to prevent similar manipulation in 2024 and beyond.

### 3. Preventing Foreign Interference

New measures to identify and sanction foreign actors attempting to sway public opinion or influence EU institutions.

Strengthening of cybersecurity protections to safeguard democratic infrastructure.



#### **Example:**

Concerns over Russian and Chinese funding of think tanks and political parties influencing EU policies, especially in areas like energy security and technology regulation.



The EU is expanding citizens' panels to involve ordinary Europeans in democratic policymaking.

These panels allow citizens to **debate**, **deliberate**, **and make recommendations** on key democratic issues.



#### **Example:**

Citizens' panels were used in the Conference on the Future of Europe to shape EU reforms.

Now, they will help guide democratic resilience policies under the Defence of Democracy Package.

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# The Debate: Pros and Cons of the Package

While the Defence of Democracy Package is widely seen as a step toward protecting the EU's democratic foundations, it has sparked controversy.

### Pros: Strengthening Democratic Resilience

Protects Against Foreign Influence – Ensures transparency in foreign-funded organizations and prevents external manipulation of EU policies.

**Defends Free Elections** – Strengthens electoral integrity by tackling **disinformation** and **foreign funding of political campaigns.** 

**Boosts Civic Engagement – Citizens' panels** and public consultations ensure democratic reforms reflect the **will of the people**.

Reinforces Media Freedom – Ensures journalists and independent media can operate without political or foreign pressure.

### Cons: Risks to Civil Society & Freedoms

Could Restrict Civic Space – New transparency rules on foreign-funded NGOs might be used against civil society, particularly in authoritarian-leaning EU governments.

Potential for Misuse – Governments might weaponize transparency rules against opposition groups under the guise of fighting foreign interference.

Limits on Free Expression? – Stricter disinformation rules might inadvertently limit legitimate debate if platforms over-censor political discussions. See in this regard Mark Zuckerberg's communication on social platform moderators.

#### **Example:**

The EU's ban on Russian state-funded media like RT and Sputnik demonstrated a commitment to tackling foreign propaganda—this package institutionalizes such protections.

#### **Example:**

Hungary and Poland have already introduced laws targeting NGOs with foreign funding, labeling them as "foreign agents." Some fear the package could legitimize similar tactics.



#### **CONCLUSION: HOW FAR SHOULD THE EU GO?**

The Defence of Democracy Package reflects a **broader dilemma** in European politics: how to **protect democracy without restricting** freedoms. Can the EU enforce democratic rules while respecting national sovereignty?

The role of citizens' panels in shaping these policies is key to ensuring the package remains balanced and accountable. If implemented transparently and fairly, the package could strengthen EU democracy. But if used to restrict dissent, it could do more harm than good.



#### What do you think?

Should the EU be stricter in regulating political influence, or could this package go too far?

