



Time for Good News: Advancing Research on Democracy Promotion!

Dear Readers,

Democratic erosion continues worldwide. Knowing how to **protect democracy** from dismantlement is becoming increasingly important. The members of the EDP Network are therefore thrilled that the **German Research Foundation (DFG) will support the network for the next three years** (Project number: 555510500).

What is the **goal** of our work in the EDP Network? We are searching for answers to the overarching questions: What effects does autocratization have on the strategies and practice of international democracy promotion? How can these effects be conceptualized and theorized? What does this mean for the practice of democracy promotion? See below for a more detailed research agenda of the project.

The EDP Network is growing in its **new phase**, bringing together researchers at different stages of their careers. We kicked off this new phase with a two-day workshop from April 15 to 16, 2025, in St. Gallen. We featured presentations by network members on their research interests and ongoing projects. As part of the program, the EDP Network also welcomed Dan Drezner for a thought-provoking research talk, which sparked a lively discussion on democracy promotion and sanctions in light of the recent USAID shutdown.

This 18th edition of our newsletter is a special one, as it includes two additional pages beyond the usual two-page format. We've dedicated this extra space to **introducing our new members**—Roman, Malin, Maurice, and Tainá—who will enrich the EDP Network with their expertise. Each of them shares a brief personal introduction and insights into their research. We warmly welcome them to the EDP Network!

We are looking forward to researching ways to protect democracy. Stay tuned for more!

Julia and Ulvi for the EDP Network

News

10. July 2025 | News

[Reflections on the Research Workshop: International Democracy Promotion at Times of Global Autocratization](#)

29. June 2025 | News

[Brigitte Weiffen Participates in Workshop on the Role of External Actors in Young Democracies](#)

Read all **News** [here](#).

1. June 2025 | News

[Sonja Grimm Advances Research on External Influences in Democratization: International Workshop Leadership in Prague](#)

20. May 2025 | News

[Sonja Grimm's Visit to Ilia State University, Georgia: Deepening Erasmus+ Partnership and EU Dialogue](#)





EDP Research Agenda

The EDP Network has a new work program entitled "Conceptualizing and Theorizing International Democracy Promotion in Times of Global Autocratization." Our goal is to understand how the following three dimensions of autocratization influence international democracy promotion, as well as how they are interconnected:

- (1) The autocratization of recipient countries influences the goals, strategies, resources, and potential impact of democracy promotion.
- (2) Current autocratization trends affect democratic countries that act as donors in democracy promotion, namely the United States and the European Union (EU) member states.
- (3) Autocratization is changing the global context in which democracy promotion operates. It challenges and alters the material means of influence and the normative foundations of international democracy promotion.

The EDP Network's main objective is to develop a multi-perspective concept and theory on the effects of autocratization on the politics of international democracy promotion. On the one hand, the network aims to co-create a comprehensive contribution to the theorization of democracy promotion. On the other hand, we translate our results into actionable policy advice.

Policy Advice

[Thirty years of democracy supported by International IDEA.](#) Julia Leininger, a member of the organization's international advisory board, participated in the celebrations in Stockholm. There was incredible energy and knowledge about how to deepen and protect democracy. After the meeting, she asked herself: How can the many crowds who support democracy be scaled up to make a far-reaching case for it?

Research Corner

Democracy promotion has preventive effects finds Christopher Wingers' (IDOS) [dissertation](#) at the University of Bonn supervised by Wolfram Hitz (University of Bonn) and EDP member Julia Leininger (IDOS).

Selected Publications

Inken von Borzyskowski, Felicitas Vabulas | 2025

[Exit from International Organizations - Costly Negotiation for Institutional Change](#)

In: Cambridge University Press, 2025.

Lisa Garbe, Seraphine F. Maerz, Tina Freyburg | 2025

[Authoritarian collaboration and repression in the digital age: balancing foreign direct investment and control in internet infrastructure](#)

In: Democratization, 1-24.

Maurice Schumann | 2025

[Legalizing control: the rise of restrictive internet regulation in sub-Saharan Africa](#)

In: Democratization, 1-26.

Leonie Holthaus | 2025

[Pierre Bourdieu, Colonial Experiences, and Methodological Reflexivity in International Relations](#)

In: International Political Sociology 19(2).

Marina Nord et. al. | 2025

[When autocratization is reversed: episodes of U-Turns since 1900](#)

In: Democratization, 1-24.

Julia Leininger, Karina Mross, Jonas Wolff | 2025

[Strategic responses to autocratization in international democracy](#)

In: Democratization, 1-23.

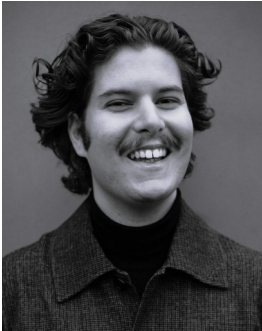
See all **Publications** [here](#).





Introduction of our New Members - 1

Roman Stolzenberger



"My name is Roman Stolzenberger, and I am currently working as a research associate and lecturer in International Relations at Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg. In addition to teaching a course on external democracy and autocracy promotion, I am primarily involved in the EU-funded EMBRACE project, which identifies democratization blockages in the EU's neighborhood and develops practical policy solutions.

My academic expertise lies in the field of external democracy promotion strategies, particularly in the context of current global autocratization trends. The focus of my research is on the group of actors known as the "Democratic Emerging Powers," which includes India, Brazil, and South Africa.

Through my involvement in the EDP network, I contribute both general expertise in democracy promotion strategies and their links to models of democracy, as well as specific knowledge of the Democratic Emerging Powers."

View Roman's [profile here](#).

Malin Nissen



"I am Malin and in my dissertation at the University of Leipzig I am investigating the interaction of liberal and illiberal ideologies as well as the effects of geopolitical polarisation between the EU and Russia within transnational civil society networks in the post-Soviet space.

Within the framework of the network, I would like to contribute to the work on sub-question 3 and in the areas of conceptualisation and theorisation and contribute to a better understanding of transnational civil society relations and the role of the EU's and Russia's spheres of influence in the region. I can well imagine, for example, contributing to a synthesis article and/or a monograph or working on the structure for the Cambridge Elements contribution.

The network meeting in St. Gallen was a great opportunity for me to get to know the network members and to receive helpful feedback in the early stages of my dissertation project. I am looking forward to future collaboration and the valuable exchange within the network and, of course, especially to seeing everyone again at the next meeting!"

View Malin's [profile here](#).





Introduction of our New Members - 2

Maurice Schumann



"My interest in external democracy promotion is grounded in my previous research experience in two domains: civil war research and the study of internet control by autocratic or autocratizing governments. In both areas.

Drawing on my knowledge of international interventions in civil wars, I am particularly interested in how democracy promotion can be effectively leveraged to support people living under new regimes emerging from war in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, I want to explore how patterns of autocratization in such countries shape the space and possibilities for external engagement in these post-conflict settings.

Building on my current work on the changing nature of internet control in the Global South, I also seek to identify where democracy promotion can make inroads to halt repressive digital trends and support open and secure internet access. I am especially curious about how changing global and regional norms and the growing influence of non-democratic models are reshaping the space for digital rights and democratic resilience. Ultimately, I aim to contribute to the development of strategies that highlight the tangible societal benefits of a free and open internet and to inform democracy promotion efforts that are responsive to the challenges posed by digital authoritarianism."

View Maurice's [profile here](#).

Tainá Siman



"As I am glad to join the network, my contribution relates to my doctoral thesis, which investigates why some regional organizations that have adopted democracy clauses have chosen to never fully activate them in response to democratic backsliding, understanding the institutional and political conditions that lead to inaction.

Along these same lines, I look forward to sharing insights on how such clauses evolve and why some organizations—despite not formally adopting them—still choose to sanction democratic backsliding. I hope that over the next few years, by engaging with others in the network working on democracy, governance, and regional cooperation, we can contribute to developing better regional tools to address democracy backsliding—considering both the perspectives of promoters and receivers."

View Tainá's [profile here](#).

