

# Chapter 5

## The state of democracy in Europe

This chapter begins by offering a brief overview of the long-term democratic trends in the Europe region, followed by an analysis of the current democratic landscape. It follows the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) conceptual framework as an organizing structure, covering issues linked to Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement, and highlighting the current opportunities for democracy in the region, as well as the democratic challenges it faces. The analysis is based on the GSoD Indices as the principal data source but includes other sources to complement the analysis.

### EUROPE AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



#### Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Europe is, together with North America, the region that scores best on the GSoD indicators linked to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16).

However, it is also the region that has seen most declines on the indicators that measure progress on SDG 16 since 2015. On 17 of the 18 GSoD indicators used to measure SDG 16, the number of countries with significant declines outnumber those with advances. This is the case for SDG 16.1 on violence, SDG 16.3 on rule of law, SDG 16.5 on absence of corruption and SDG 16.6 on effective institutions. This is

also the case for all of the indicators on SDG 16.7 on inclusive decision-making, while only Social Group Equality has seen stagnation.



#### Gender Equality

After North America, Europe is the region that scores highest on levels of political Gender Equality and political representation as set out by SDG 5.5. The region has largely stagnated on this indicator since 2015, with no countries making statistically significant gains and only Italy suffering a significant decline.

### 5.1. Introduction

After North America, Europe continues to be the region in the world with the largest share of democracies (39, or 93 per cent of countries in the region). Overall, the level of democracy in Europe is still firmly above that of most other regions, with only one country classifying as a hybrid regime (Russia) and two as non-democracies (Azerbaijan and Belarus). The largest share of the world's older, as well as third-wave, democracies is located in Europe.

However, as the GSoD Indices show, in recent years the quality of democracy in Europe has witnessed a general decline and a number of democracies—both older and newer—are experiencing democratic erosion and democratic backsliding. The decline of democratic quality in Europe cannot be disassociated from the rise of anti-establishment parties. The GSoD Indices indicate correlations between non-traditional and non-mainstream parties in government and the decline in democratic quality. These developments

## KEY FINDINGS



### Positive developments

- **After North America, Europe is the second-most democratic region in the world, with 93 per cent of countries classified as democracies.** Europe has the largest share of the world's democracies, with 39 countries classifying as democracies, which constitutes 40 per cent of the global share.
- **The largest share of third-wave democracies can be found in Europe.** Since 1975, a total of 28 countries in the region have transitioned to democracy, of which almost half (12) are new countries that gained independence following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet/Communist bloc. Europe's democracies have proven remarkably resilient. While two third-wave democracies (Albania and Georgia) backslid into hybridity for some time, they have since returned to democracy.
- **Of the 21 democracies in the world with high scores on all five GSoD attributes, 14 are in Europe.** The majority (11) are older democracies in North and West Europe, while one is in South Europe (Spain) and two more (Estonia and Slovenia) are in East-Central Europe.
- **In countries such as Denmark, Finland, Latvia and the United Kingdom,** an increasing number of initiatives give European citizens potential avenues for direct participation in public decision-making, including citizen initiatives at the local level, e-petitions and e-platforms.
- **Armenia was the only country in Europe to transition from being a hybrid regime in 2017 to a democracy in 2018.** It also recorded the highest number of statistically significant advances in Europe for 2018: on Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement, and on eight related democratic subattributes.



### Challenges to democracy

- **Although the largest concentration of democracies is in Europe, the region has seen a decline in the quality of its democracies in the last 10 years.** The share of countries with high levels of Checks on Government, Civil Liberties, Media Integrity and Civil Society Participation has declined. Therefore, most democratic declines in Europe are related to weakening Checks on Government and a shrinking civic space, and are occurring in contexts of democratic erosion and democratic backsliding.
- **More than half (56 per cent) of democracies in Europe suffer from democratic erosion.** Of the 10 democracies in the world currently experiencing democratic backsliding, 6—Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Turkey and to a lesser extent, Ukraine—are in Europe.
- **There is a general malaise within mainstream political parties across most of Europe and particularly in Western European countries.** This contributes to the rise of non-traditional parties, such as populist, extremist and anti-establishment parties. Democratic backsliding is often associated with such parties gaining access to government. The phenomenon of ruling political parties showing autocratic tendencies can be discerned in several countries in the region, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe.
- **Europe has recently experienced a populist wave.** Its origins can be traced back to several interacting factors, including economic and cultural globalization, which have transformed the social structure and political culture of many countries in the region. Political drivers of populism include reduced trust in political parties and a crisis of representation as well as the fragmentation and polarization of the public sphere further deepened by the emergence of new technologies and social media. Socio-economic drivers of populism include labour market transformation, an increase in domestic socio-economic disparities and a gap between citizens' expectations of what democracy can deliver and disenchantment with democracy's perceived failure to deliver wellbeing for all.

have raised the stakes for non-populist parties which, to keep attracting votes and fight off the wave of populism, should be prepared to tackle societal problems more effectively.

In terms of the main gainers, Armenia is currently leading the list with statistically significant advances on eight GSoD subattributes, transitioning from a hybrid regime to democracy in 2018. North Macedonia as a reverse backslider is also bucking the trend in the region, with significant democratic advances on three of its democratic subattributes in the past five years. Improvements on one or two aspects of democracy are also noted in countries such as Georgia, Ireland, Kosovo, Portugal and Spain in the last five years.

## 5.2. Taking the long-term perspective: democratic developments since 1975

**Of the world's 27 older democracies, 14 (52 per cent) are located in Europe, of which 12 are in North and West Europe, and 2 in South Europe.** These democracies have proven to be remarkably resilient: none have experienced an undemocratic interruption since 1975. **The largest share of the third-wave democracies can be found in Europe.** Since 1975, 28 countries have transitioned to democracy, of which almost half (12) are new countries that gained independence following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet/Communist bloc. Most of these are located in Eastern and East-Central Europe, although some are also found in Southern Europe. These countries, which are referred to as third-wave democracies, have also proven remarkably resilient. Only two (Albania and Georgia) have experienced partial democratic breakdowns during this period, with both countries slipping into spells of hybridity but then returning to democracy.

Globally, only a small percentage of countries covered by the GSoD Indices (22 per cent or 21 countries) have high performance on all of their democratic attributes. Of these 21 countries, 14 are in Europe, including 11 older democracies in North and West Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), 1 in South Europe (Spain) and 2 in East-Central Europe (Estonia and Slovenia).

Europe is the region in the world with the largest share of democracies (39, or 93 per cent of countries in the region) (see Figure 5.1.).

## 5.3. The current democracy landscape in Europe

The analysis in this section covers issues linked to Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks

on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement, highlighting the current opportunities for democracy in the region, as well as the democratic challenges it faces.



### Representative Government

The GSoD Indices use the Representative Government attribute to evaluate countries' performance on the conduct of elections, the extent to which political parties are able to operate freely, and the extent to which access to government is decided by elections. This attribute is an aggregation of four subattributes: Clean Elections, Inclusive Suffrage, Free Political Parties and Elected Government.

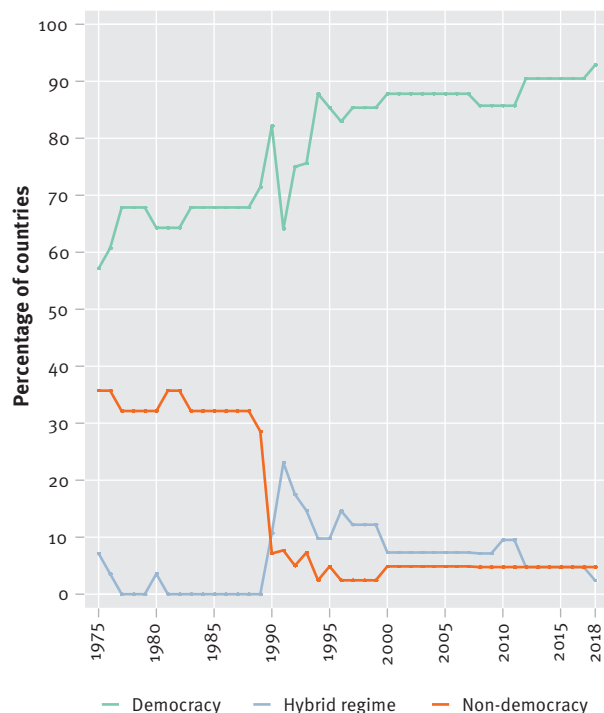
### Summary: Representative Government in Europe, 2018

Regional average: Mid-range (0.68)	
High (>0.7)	Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom
Mid-range (0.4–0.7)	Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, Israel, Kosovo, Latvia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine
Low (<0.4)	Azerbaijan and Belarus

**The democratic performance patterns and quality of democracy in Europe show multi-faceted variation from country to country.** As illustrated in Table 5.1, of 39 democracies in the region, 14 score high on all five GSoD attributes. Following that, 14 democratic performance patterns can be discerned. For example, Ireland, Portugal and Slovakia score highly on four out of five attributes (although each records different performances on Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement). Croatia, Hungary, Poland and Romania score highly on just one attribute (and mid-range on the remaining four). Another group of seven democracies, starting with Albania, score mid-range on all attributes. Towards the end of the table are several countries which, although still defined as democracies, show low performance on one or more attributes (referred to

FIGURE 5.1

### Regime types in Europe, 1975–2018



**Notes:** This graph shows that the percentage of democracies in Europe has increased since 1975, and all but 7 per cent of countries in Europe are considered democracies according to the GSoD Indices.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

as weak democracies). Turkey is the most extreme example, scoring low on four out of five attributes but mid-range on Representative Government.

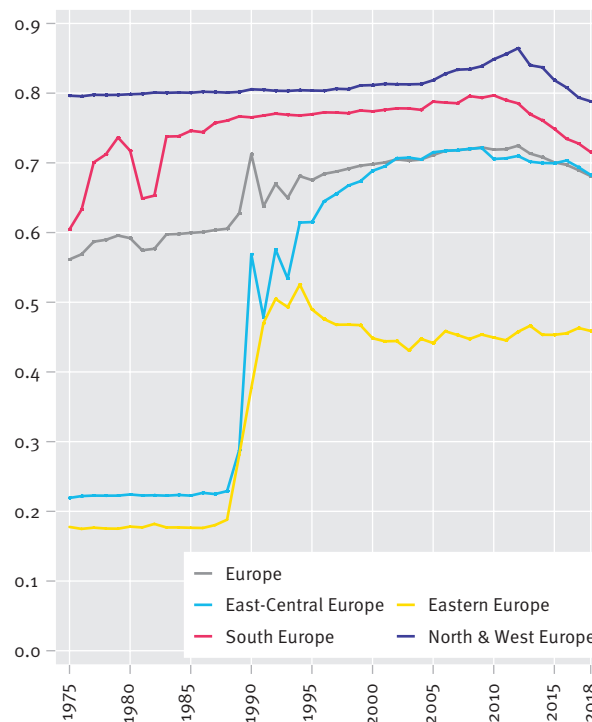
### Warning signs of democratic erosion and democratic backsliding

**After North America, Europe is the second most democratic region in the world, with 93 per cent of countries in the region classified as democracies.** Europe has the largest share of democracies, with its 39 democracies making up 40 per cent of the global share. Of these, 25 have high levels of Representative Government.

**The most democratic subregions in Europe are North and West Europe, South Europe and East-Central Europe, which only have democracies** (see Figure 5.2). However, while the quality of democracy in most European countries continues to be above that of other regions, Europe has seen a decline in the quality of its democracies in the past 10 years. Although there is a relatively large share

FIGURE 5.2

### Representative Government in Europe and its subregions, 1975–2018



**Notes:** The y-axis denotes the attributes score, ranging from 0 to 1 where 1 indicates a government that is completely representative and 0 indicates no representation. The graph presents both a temporal and spatial comparison by subregion. Eastern Europe (i.e. post-Soviet Europe) has increased its score over time. However, in 2018 Eastern Europe performed well below the regional and subregional averages on Representative Government.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

of countries with high performances on Representative Government, in the recent past Europe has witnessed setbacks related to checks and balances on government, as well as curtailment of civic space.

As a result, the share of countries with high levels of Checks on Government, Civil Liberties, Media Integrity and Civil Society Participation has been declining. These declines are occurring both in contexts of democratic erosion (declines on one or more aspects of democracy) and in the particular form of erosion termed democratic backsliding.

**More than half of the democracies in Europe have suffered democratic erosion in recent years.** Of the 10 democracies in the world currently experiencing democratic backsliding, six—Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Ukraine—are in Europe.

The region's third-wave democracies have been more prone to democratic erosion than the older democracies, with more than half (61 per cent) suffering from different degrees of erosion, versus a little more than one-third (36 per cent) of the older democracies. More than half (14) of the countries suffering democratic erosion are found in East-Central Europe and Eastern Europe, but a little less than one-quarter (5) are found in Western Europe and 3 in South Europe. Most of the declines are concentrated in aspects linked to civic space, namely Media Integrity and Civil Liberties, particularly Freedom of Expression.

**A number of democracies in Europe have also suffered from more severe forms of democratic erosion, referred to in the GSoD Indices as democratic backsliding.** The GSoD Indices refer to (modern) democratic backsliding as the gradual weakening of checks on government

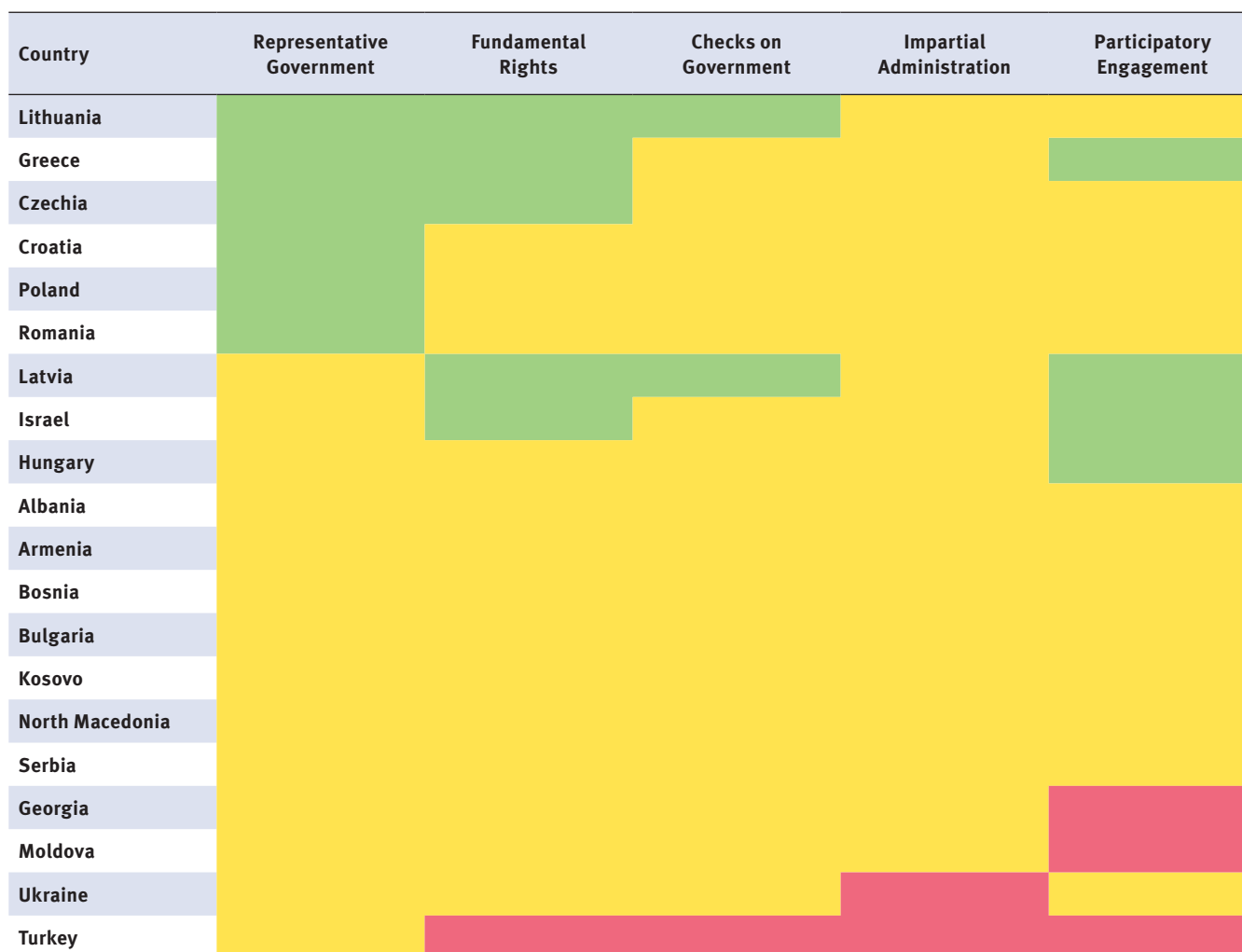
accompanied by declines in civil liberties in democracies. This tends to be the result of intentional policies to weaken accountability institutions and checks and balances. The GSoD Indices record moderate and severe forms of democratic backsliding, linked to the severity of declines in Checks on Government and Civil Liberties average indicators. According to the GSoD Indices, 10 democracies in the world are currently experiencing democratic backsliding. Of these, six are located in Europe, out of which five suffer from severe forms of democratic backsliding and one suffers from moderate democratic backsliding.

**Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Turkey are currently experiencing severe forms of democratic backsliding.** Although each country context differs, common characteristics include weakening of

TABLE 5.1

## Heat map of democratic performance patterns in Europe, 2018

Country	Representative Government	Fundamental Rights	Checks on Government	Impartial Administration	Participatory Engagement
Austria					
Belgium					
Denmark					
Estonia					
Finland					
France					
Germany					
Netherlands					
Norway					
Slovenia					
Spain					
Sweden					
Switzerland					
United Kingdom					
Portugal					
Slovakia					
Ireland					
Cyprus					
Italy					



■ High ■ Mid-range ■ Low

**Notes:** This heat map shows the performance of the 39 democracies in Europe by attribute in 2018. Green indicates high performance, while yellow denotes mid-range performance and red shows low-range performance.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

accountability institutions, executive aggrandizement of officials in leadership positions, curtailing of dissent, and efforts to ensure long-term rule by stifling opposition and civil society (International IDEA, CoD and UNDP 2017: 75; Mechkova, Lührmann and Lindberg 2017; Bermeo 2016). Ukraine has been facing a more moderate form of democratic backsliding, while North Macedonia was in the same category until 2016. In some cases, democratic backsliding is so severe that it results in partial (to hybrid) or full (to non-democracy) democratic breakdown. This was the case in Russia which, as a result of backsliding leading to democratic breakdown, backslid to a hybrid regime in 2004. See Table 5.2 for examples of episodes of democratic backsliding in the GSoD Indices data set.

**Severe democratic backsliding represents a top-down, orchestrated hollowing-out of democratic institutions, via the means and instruments of democratic decision-making.** Ruling parties in countries such as Hungary, Poland and Turkey have skilfully used democratic rules to dominate democratic institutions (including the parliament, judiciary and media), and change the rules (e.g. electoral laws, judicial appointment procedures and constitutional provisions) with the purpose of maintaining hold on those institutions indefinitely (Bieber, Solska and Taleski 2019). Encroaching political interference in judicial matters, stifling of parliamentary opposition voices and the curtailment of civic space and media freedoms have slowly led to severe democratic backsliding, which in turn translates to declines in the GSoD Indices on Checks on Government and Civil Liberties.

**Other countries, such as Serbia, face predicaments associated with state capture.** In these contexts, elites have taken control of the state to further the private political or commercial interests of a select group. The Western Balkans is characterized by regimes that formally accept democratic rules but retain power through authoritarian practices (Levitsky and Way 2010). In 2018 the European Commission referred to the Western Balkans as a subregion where ‘countries show clear elements of state capture, including links with organized crime and corruption at all levels of government and administration, as well as a strong entanglement of public and private interests’ (European Commission 2018a: 3). As a result, Serbia has been marked as a country undergoing severe democratic backsliding since 2010. The severe democratic backsliding in neighbouring Romania started more recently (in 2017) but is also of great concern in terms of its severity, with significant declines in Civil Liberties, Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence, and also Civil Society Participation and Access to Justice.

**In South Europe, Turkey is suffering severe democratic backsliding.** The backsliding in Turkey began in 2010 and continues to date. Turkey is the country in the world that has suffered the most democratic declines in the past five years, declining on 11 of its democratic subattributes.

**Ukraine presents a situation of moderate democratic backsliding, which it has experienced since 2010.** Ukraine is a weak democracy, with mid-range levels of Representative Government, declining from 0.6 in 2009 to 0.45 in 2018. Ukraine performs in the mid-range on

four of its attributes of democracy, and records a low score on Impartial Administration. In the recent past, it has experienced declines in Checks on Government. According to GSoD Indices data, in 2018 it also suffered significant declines in the subattribute of Civil Liberties (specifically, Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Movement). Ukraine’s declines in Civil Liberties are partially a consequence of the country’s political tension with Russia and the events leading up to, and following, the Maidan Revolution. Ukraine has also suffered consecutive declines on Clean Elections and Free Political Parties since 2013. The evidence behind such declines can be seen in government institutions that favour the political party of the president, the curtailment of opposition parties’ manoeuvring space (OSCE ODIHR 2018c), and the encroaching influence of the business sector in politics (Razumkov Centre 2017).

**North Macedonia had an eight-year spell of moderate democratic backsliding commencing in 2008 and ending in 2016.** These deteriorations were noted on Checks on Government and Civil Liberties, largely due to political interference in the judiciary, the media and civil society by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (known by its Macedonian acronym, VMRO-DPMNE) led by Nikola Gruevski. The situation has seen some improvement since the 2017 elections which brought about a new government headed by Zoran Zaev (Reef 2017; Ceka 2018).

**In some countries, state capture has taken the form of long-ruling families and close acquaintances bringing**

TABLE 5.2

## Episodes of democratic backsliding in Europe in the GSoD Indices data set

Moderate democratic backsliding	Severe democratic backsliding	Severe democratic backsliding resulting in democratic breakdown	
		Partial democratic breakdown (from democracy to hybrid regime)	Full democratic breakdown (from democracy to non-democracy)
Ukraine 2010–2018	Hungary (2006–2018) Poland (2013–2018) Romania (2017–2018) Serbia (2010–2018) Turkey (2008–2018)	N/A	N/A
North Macedonia (2008–2016)		Russia (1999–2010)	N/A

**Notes:** The data in the GSoD Indices reflects events up to the end of 2018. Cases of democratic backsliding listed as occurring up to and including 2018 may therefore have since evolved or changed. For more information on the definitions of moderate and severe democratic backsliding see the Methodology section of this report.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.



**under their control large sectors of the economy and political power.** Azerbaijan and Belarus fit this mould. They are the only countries in Europe to classify as non-democracies in the GSoD Indices data set. Azerbaijan is the only country in the region with low performance scores in all five attributes. Belarus scores mid-range on Fundamental Rights, but overall it is still classified as a non-democracy, with no clear signs of a potential democratic transition in the near future.

### Political parties in Europe: between renewal and calcification

The Free Political Parties subattribute of the GSoD framework measures the extent to which political parties are free to form and campaign for office, including the competitiveness of political participation, the autonomy of opposition parties and the extent of multiparty elections (International IDEA 2018b).

**Europe has the largest number of countries (13) scoring highly on Free Political Parties, while 27 countries score in the mid-range, and 2 have low scores** (see Figure 5.3).

In some countries political parties are also experiencing a surge in membership. For instance, the British Labour Party greatly increased its membership in recent years, in partnership with a grassroots movement, Momentum. The movement presented itself as a new form of politics that bridged traditional party structures and civic activism. Momentum led the development of new digital campaign and recruitment techniques, including peer-to-peer texting and mobile-banking applications. Its community-level organization has fed into a national movement that has more than doubled the Labour Party's membership since September 2015, including many young people (Hobolt 2018; Whiteley et al. 2019), although membership is reported to have fallen by around 10 per cent in 2019 due to the party's stance on Brexit (Stewart, H. 2019).

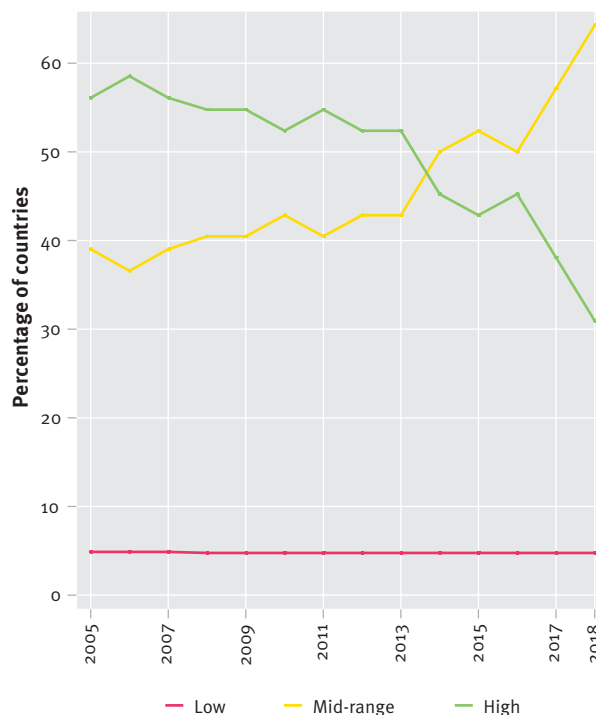
Similarly, in France, the new *La République en Marche!* party has shaken up traditional political alignments. Moreover, it has done so from an avowedly liberal and democratic position. The party took root and grew in record time. It was in some ways a top-down phenomenon, organized to service Emmanuel Macron's presidential bid. In other ways, however, it resembled a bottom-up movement, growing out of local circles and policy deliberations with ordinary citizens (Chwalisz 2018). The party drew heavily on crowdsourced ideas and donations, and was organized around a decentralized network of local councils where people of all ages and backgrounds were empowered to contribute to decision-making with minimal red tape. These councils engaged with citizens in a range of informal

ways, including meals and youth events. Prior to the 2017 elections it prided itself on breaking ranks with traditional politicking by leading a door-to-door campaign in a project titled 'La Grande Marche pour l'Europe' (March for Europe), interviewing and talking to hundreds of thousands of citizens (Schultheis 2018). Macron's presidency and level of support, however, have since also suffered setbacks, as exemplified by the *Gilets Jaunes* (Yellow Vests) movement that began in November 2018 with protests against rising fuel prices and turned into a wider protest movement against worsening living conditions and rising inequalities (*The Economist* 2019).

**Mainstream parties—mainly across Western and Northern Europe—are facing increasing pressure, therefore contributing to the rise of non-traditional parties.** This has consequently helped produce populist, nativist, extremist or simply non-traditional political parties on both the left and right of the political spectrum. Some examples include the right-wing populist party Vox in Spain,

FIGURE 5.3

#### Free Political Parties in Europe, 2005–2018



**Notes:** The graph illustrates that the percentage of mid-range countries has increased and now makes up the majority of countries in Europe, while the percentage of high-performing countries has nearly halved since 2005.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.



which won 10 per cent of votes and entered parliament for the first time in the 2019 elections, or the far-right Alternative für Deutschland, created in 2013 and now the third-largest party in Germany. Despite the initial surge in the popularity of parties such as La République en Marche! and the British Labour Party, the impact of populist and extremist parties has been increasingly felt across many other countries in Europe and has left a mark in France and the UK. The ongoing developments stemming from the Brexit referendum, and the strain it has placed on the British political spectrum, are a vivid case in point.

**In several countries in Central and Eastern Europe, political parties do not evolve to become membership-based mechanisms that articulate and channel citizens' concerns.** Instead, most parties are driven by narrow party leadership and lack intra-party pluralism, which results in the calcification of these parties. Political parties play quite a dominant role in public life in these countries (Günay and Dzihic 2016). Moreover, ruling parties attract high membership rates as this is crucial for employment in the public sectors. In such scenarios, the measurement of indicators for this subattribute—such as the autonomy of opposition parties, or the competitiveness of party participation, or multiparty elections—can only be fully understood by recognizing the extent to which these parties are centralized (Bochsler 2010; Lavery 2015). This is reflected in the mid-range Free Political Parties scores for Kosovo (0.55), North Macedonia (0.61) and Serbia (0.56). See Figure 5.4 for a summary of the evolution of the GSoD subattribute of Free Political Parties in the Western Balkans.

This pattern can also be identified in some post-Soviet Europe countries with 'parties of power'—pragmatic groups that aim to support ruling governments and are defined by their relationship to the state, without significant independent policy agendas, combining civil servants, business elites and government officials (Lavery 2015). Such parties have, until recently, prevailed in Armenia (scoring mid-range at 0.62) and Ukraine (scoring mid-range at 0.46), and have been the main parties in hybrid regimes or non-democracies such as Russia (scoring mid-range at 0.40) and Azerbaijan (scoring low at 0.36), respectively.

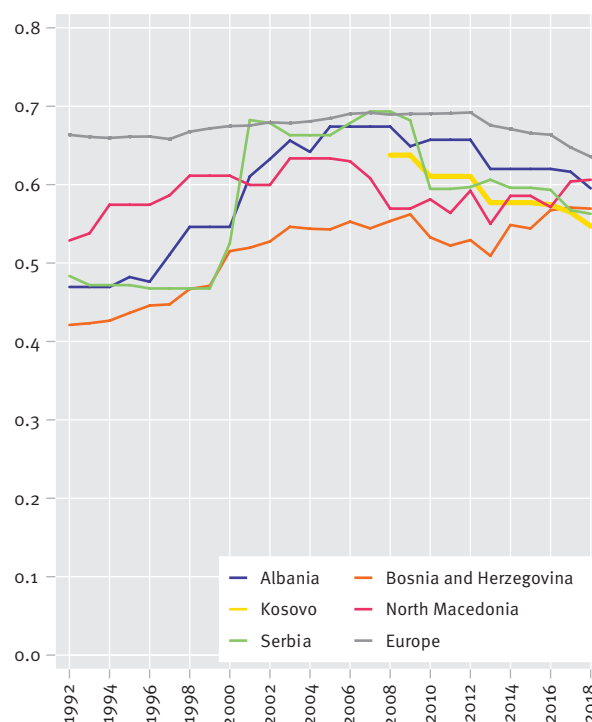
**Some political parties, including several ruling parties, exhibit autocratic tendencies.** This phenomenon can be discerned in several countries in the region, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. Such parties, and the regimes led by them, are based on ideological platforms combining conservatism, nationalism and a rejection of liberal democracy, as epitomized by Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law

and Justice, PiS) in Poland, Fidesz in Hungary, and the VMRO-DPMNE in North Macedonia (in power until 2016). These regimes often claim to rule in the name of the people and describe their opponents as traitors whom they rhetorically exclude from the nation (Petkovski 2016). Historically embedded narratives, nativist ideologies and global conspiracy theories are recurring motives for these regimes and parties.

When referring to parties in Central and Eastern Europe, and the Western Balkans more specifically, some have noted the dominance of 'Big Men' (Kanin 2003)—politicians with authoritarian tendencies, or patrons of family-based and clientelist networks who continue to dominate the region and co-opt international support by speaking the language of modernity and offering promises of stability and reform (Dolenec 2013). Others have noted these parties' centralization: most parties in the Western Balkans are 'controlled by a small circle of elites, who have

FIGURE 5.4

#### Free Political Parties in the Western Balkans, 1992–2018



**Notes:** The score for Kosovo begins in 2008 as that is the year the country gained independence.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

managed to centralize power in their hands’, which gives them ‘excessive influence over candidate selection and thereby making every MP more dependent’ (Keil 2018: 68). There are several distinct patterns of ‘state capture’ within the region (Bieber 2018: 347). Albania and North Macedonia are in essence two- to three-party states, with a number of minority (i.e. ethnic Albanian) parties in the latter. Croatia and Serbia have a single heavily-dominant party and several smaller opposition parties. Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina are predominantly communal: at the national level, all decisions are made by a virtually unchanging group of six to seven party leaders, while single parties dominate in some regional and most municipal jurisdictions. Kosovo’s parties are based on loyalty to a small leadership cadre dating back to the pre-independence period; most have little or no clear ideological leaning. The common denominator of all these examples is that governing parties function as patron–client machines, and party loyalty usually trumps other considerations in decision-making (Keil 2018; Wise and Agarín 2017; Stewart, B. 2019; Bajovic and Manojlovic 2013).



### Fundamental Rights

The Fundamental Rights attribute aggregates scores from three subattributes: Access to Justice, Civil Liberties, and Social Rights and Equality. Overall it measures the fair and equal access to justice, the extent to which civil liberties such as freedom of expression or movement are respected, and the extent to which countries are offering their citizens basic welfare and political equality.

### Summary: Fundamental Rights in Europe, 2018

Regional average: High (0.73)	
High (>0.7)	Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom
Mid-range (0.4–0.7)	Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine
Low (<0.4)	Azerbaijan and Turkey

### Declining civil liberties and democratic backsliding

**In the last decade Europe has seen a gradual decline in Civil Liberties.** The share of countries with high levels of Civil Liberties declined from 80 per cent in 2008 to 71 per cent in 2018. In the early 2000s, for the first time since the start of the GSoD Indices data set (1975), there was a sharp spike in the number of countries with significant declines on Civil Liberties. The deterioration was particularly seen in East-Central Europe and South Europe. Turkey’s levels of Civil Liberties have declined from mid-range to low; its score on this dimension (0.35) has nearly halved since 1975. As it stands, Turkey is the only democracy in Europe with low levels of Civil Liberties.

Figure 5.5 shows the GSoD Indices levels for Europe on the Fundamental Rights attribute, while Figure 5.6 shows the levels for the Civil Liberties subattribute. Since 1975, there have consistently been more high scoring countries than any other category in Europe on both indicators, while those countries with mid-range scores have outnumbered those with low scores since 1985 (for Fundamental Rights) and since 1990 (for Civil Liberties).

**Freedom of Expression has seen a downward trend in Europe, particularly in the last five years.** As a GSoD aspect that focuses on issues of harassment of journalists, self-censorship of journalists, freedom of discussion for men and women, and freedom of opinion and expression, this downward trend should be of great concern for the region. The share of countries with high levels has declined from 74 per cent in 2008 to 60 per cent in 2018. A total of 13 countries have seen significant declines on Freedom of Expression between 2013 and 2018—the highest regional total. These declines have all occurred in democracies, predominantly positioned around the subregion of East-Central Europe.

**However, a few advances on Civil Liberties have been identified in certain parts of East-Central Europe and Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe.** North Macedonia and Kosovo have seen improvements on Freedom of Association and Assembly, while Armenia has recorded gains on Freedom of Movement.

**Europe’s performance on Gender Equality has plateaued considerably in the last five years.** There are more troubling signs: while the performance of countries such as Croatia, Poland, Serbia and Turkey do not show significant declines, their downward trend in the last five years is cause for concern.

FIGURE 5.5

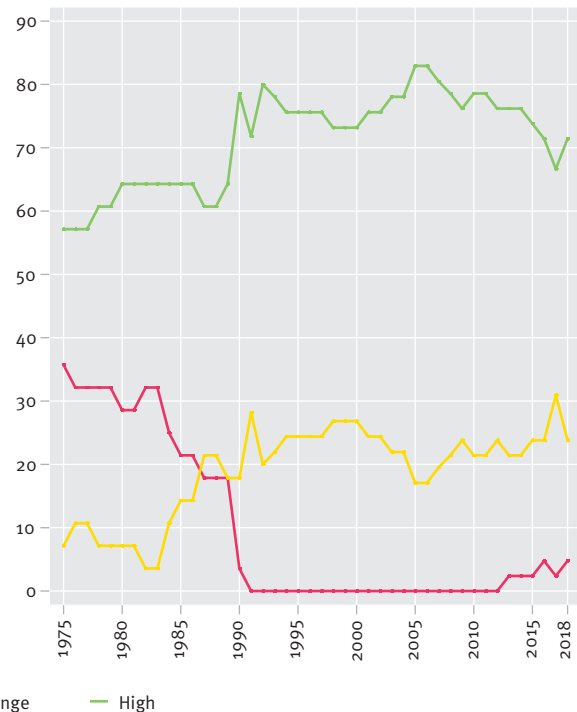
### Fundamental Rights in Europe, 1975–2018



Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

FIGURE 5.6

### Civil Liberties in Europe, 1975–2018



Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

Azerbaijan and Turkey are the two countries in the region that score the lowest on Gender Equality. Turkey is one of the three democracies in the world that has low levels of Gender Equality. For more information see Figure 5.7.

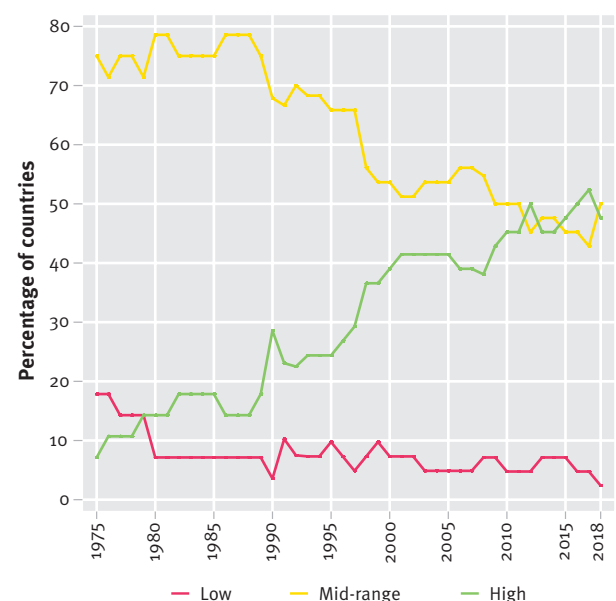


Along with Papua New Guinea (0.26) and Iraq (0.39), Turkey is one of three democracies in the world to score low on Gender Equality (0.34).

**Turkey stands out as the country with most declines in the GSoD Indices subattributes in the last five years—11 of them overall.** By 2018, despite being classified as a democracy, Turkey is a fragile and very weak one, and the only country in Europe to have suffered statistically significant declines in four of the five GSoD attributes: Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement. Turkey now scores mid-range (0.44) on Representative Government.

FIGURE 5.7

### Gender Equality in Europe, 1975–2018



Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

Approximately a decade ago, Turkey's score on Representative Government was relatively high: it was on par with the rest of Europe, slightly below the scores recorded in Southern Europe but above the world average. It was increasingly celebrated as a model of how other countries—especially countries in the Middle East—could combine Islam as the majority religion with a pluralist, representative democracy that respects minorities and fundamental freedoms. Turkey's soft power as a successful democratic reformer in the Middle East region was on the ascendancy and further democratic reform was on the agenda (Altunışık 2008).

Today, on most attributes, Turkey scores lower than the European average (see Box 5.1). Its democratic standards have deteriorated sharply and in a very short timeframe. Its GSoD Indices scores even suggest a return to its 1980s standards in some respects. Today the country has become a reference point for authoritarian regimes which seek ways to minimize their democracies around the conduct of elections while showing disregard for civil liberties, civil society and clear separation of powers (Özbudun 2015; Schedler 2006). The March 2019 municipal elections (and the June rerun in Istanbul) might have heralded the turn of a new page in Turkish politics. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) conceded defeat in both Ankara and Istanbul, bringing to an end 16 years of the party's rule in Ankara, and 25 years in Istanbul (BBC News 2019a; Gall 2019). This undoubtedly represents a significant blow to the party's dominance over local politics. However, the removal of three Kurdish opposition mayors in August 2019 and the crackdown on opposition politicians show that Erdoğan uses other tactics to silence critics.

The deterioration of Turkey's democracy has occurred in juxtaposition with the country's deteriorating prospects for accession to the European Union. As its chances of EU membership became fraught with difficulties and mutual acrimony, Turkey's political and administrative reforms towards more freedoms, accountability, openness and reduced corruption lost pace and were eventually reversed. Relations with the EU have now acquired a pragmatic and transactional character (Economist Intelligence Unit 2018) centred on mutual gains from cooperation on a select number of policy areas, such as the fight against terrorism and migration. In March 2019, the European Parliament even called for a freeze on Turkey's membership talks as a rebuke to the country's human rights violations (Reuters 2019).

**Hungary, a country suffering from severe democratic backsliding, has seen significant erosion of democratic checks and balances for the best part of a decade.** After coming to power in 2010, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party began using its parliamentary majority to introduce a series of changes, including undercutting judicial independence; transforming public television and radio into mouthpieces of the government; attacking critical media outlets; disempowering local self-government; mobilizing popular fears and resentment through governmental propaganda campaigns; and assaulting civil society (Bánkúti, Halmai and Scheppele 2012).

Monitoring of the April 2018 elections documented the Hungarian Government's unequal distribution of electoral resources, control of media coverage and influence over

#### BOX 5.1

##### **Turkey: a precipitous slide towards authoritarian rule**

Many factors have contributed to Turkey's democratic decline, not least military influence over civilian politics, undue political influence over the judiciary, limited press freedom and curtailment of civic space. More recently, this negative trend, which overturned previous gains, has seen a drastic acceleration. See Figure 5.8 and Figure 5.9 for illustrations of how this is reflected in Turkey's GSoD Indices scores.

President Erdogan has continued to tighten his grip on power, particularly since the failed coup attempt in July 2016, which led to the declaration of a state of emergency. In operation until 2018, this provided space for the government to circumvent principles of the rule of law (Barkey 2017; Al Jazeera 2017). The June 2018 elections 'marked the transformation of the political

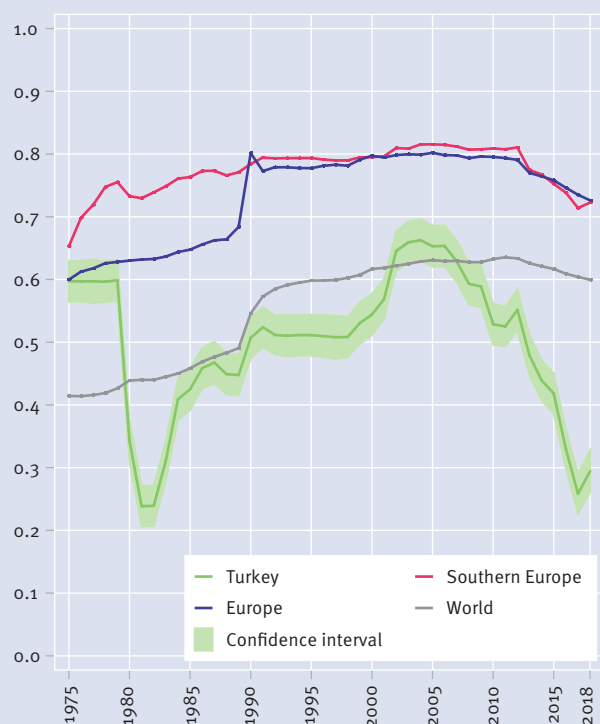
system in Turkey into one with extensive presidential powers, limited parliamentary oversight and reduced independence of the judiciary' (OSCE ODIHR 2018b).

There have been renewed incursions by Turkish security forces into Kurdish settlement areas in Turkey. The work of civil society has been under threat, with NGO closures and arrests without due legal process. Civil society organizations (CSOs) whose views do not match those of state officials have been increasingly marginalized; only preferred organizations with access to power are now able to influence policy (Aybars, Copeland and Tsarouhas 2018). In addition, elected mayors have been replaced by government appointees, squeezing the opposition out from hundreds of municipalities. In particular,

nearly all those held by the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party have been replaced by pro-government figures. The Turkish Government has brought spurious judicial cases against members of the Republican People's Party, the largest opposition party, and an increasing number of journalists have been detained.

FIGURE 5.8

### Freedom of Expression in Turkey and the rest of the world, 1975–2018



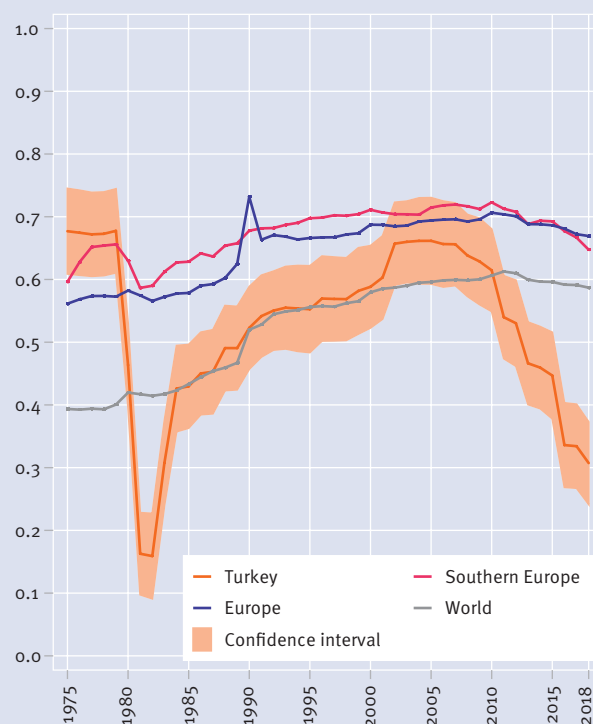
**Notes:** The shaded band around Turkey's score indicates the 68 per cent confidence bounds of the interval.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

It remains to be seen if, and how, the consequences of the 2019 local elections, and the end of the AKP's political dominance in Ankara and Istanbul, will affect the democratic landscape of the country and lead to a reversal of the democratic backsliding that Turkey has experienced since 2008.

FIGURE 5.9

### Civil Society Participation in Turkey and the rest of the world, 1975–2018



**Notes:** The shaded band around Turkey's score indicates the 68 per cent confidence bounds of the interval.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

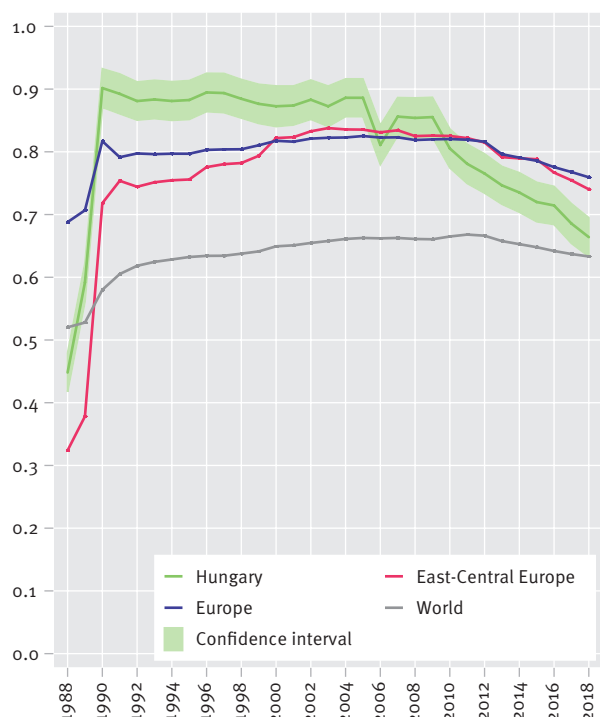
the national electoral commission. One monitoring report stated that the elections were characterized by a 'pervasive overlap between state and ruling party resources, undermining contestants' ability to compete on an equal basis' (OSCE ODIHR 2018a: 1). Treatment of the Roma minority has worsened and is a particularly serious concern. Moreover, from mid-2017 onwards, the government has advanced legislation severely restricting non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It even moved to close one of

Hungary's most prestigious independent universities, the Central European University (Redden 2018).

These developments are captured by the GSoD Indices data, showing that in the last five years alone Hungary has experienced statistically significant declines on four subattributes: Clean Elections, Free Political Parties, Civil Liberties (see Figure 5.10) and Media Integrity. On Civil Liberties, Hungary has also seen statistically significant

FIGURE 5.10

### Civil Liberties in Hungary and the rest of the world, 1988–2018



**Notes:** The shaded band around Hungary's line indicates the 68 per cent confidence bounds of the interval.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gso-d-indices>>.

declines on two subcomponents: Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Association and Assembly. It now falls below the average in Europe and the subregion. On Freedom of Association and Assembly, Hungary is on a par with Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Turkey. Furthermore, it has gone from high levels of Representative Government in 2008 to mid-range levels in 2018.

**The democratic backsliding in Poland is illustrated by six declines in the country's GSoD subattributes for 2018.** Of particular concern are the country's overall declines on Civil Liberties and Checks on Government. On Civil Liberties, there is a general deterioration noted on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Association and Assembly. Checks on Government have experienced setbacks on all three subattributes measured in the GSoD Indices: Media Integrity, Judicial Independence and Effective Parliament. This is reflective of the PiS regime's actions in controlling

the parliament and diluting its oversight role, its political encroachment in the judiciary, and its stifling of free speech and free media (see Box 5.2).



#### Checks on Government

The Checks on Government attribute aggregates scores from three subattributes: Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence and Media Integrity. It measures the extent to which parliament oversees the executive, as well as whether the courts are independent, and whether media is diverse and critical of the government without being penalized for it.

#### Summary: Checks on Government in Europe, 2018

Regional average: Mid-range (0.66)	
High (>0.7)	Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom
Mid-range (0.4–0.7)	Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine
Low (<0.4)	Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Turkey

**Europe has suffered declines on Checks on Government in recent years.** At the country level, Poland, Romania and Turkey have seen statistically significant declines on this attribute, which has caused a downward pull on the regional average. Armenia is the only country to score a statistically significant advance between 2013 and 2018, but this has proven insufficient to offset the regional European average (see Figure 5.13).

There is an ongoing debate on the underlying causes which might explain the weakening of Checks on Government in the region. Many of these discussions point to the rise of illiberalism, the increasing polarization of the political spectrum, or the EU's disconnect with the electorate at the local level (see e.g. Bieber, Solska and Taleski 2019; Dawson and Hanley 2016; Greskovits 2015; Havlík 2016; Krastev 2018; Mair 2013).



## BOX 5.2

**Poland: backpedalling on democratic gains**

Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice, PiS) came to power in Poland in 2015 and has since sought to increase the power of the executive and transform the legislative and constitutional structure of the political system to advance its continued stronghold on power.

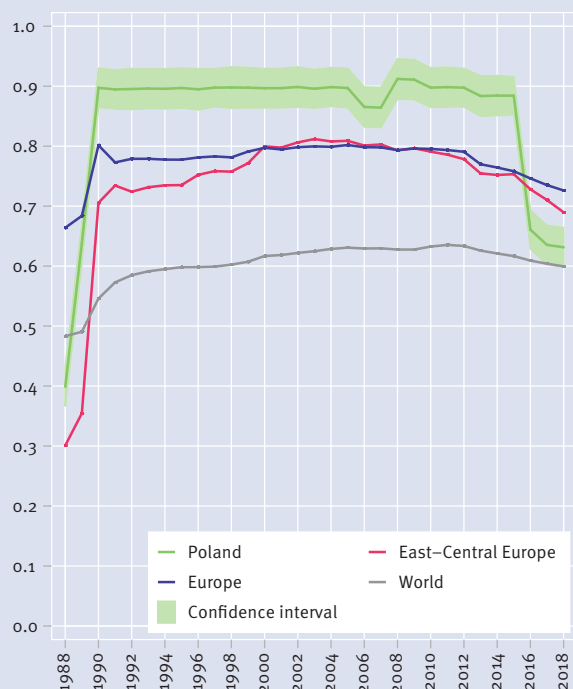
In coming to power, and to justify the sweeping changes it undertook, PiS emphasized moral and traditional values. It focused on social redistribution and re-establishment of public trust in state institutions. It consistently appealed to young people, pensioners and inhabitants of rural and suburban areas (Markowski 2016). Judging by the pattern witnessed in the country, which aims to centralize power and control opposition voices, Poland resembles other regimes in the subregion that have recently shown signs of authoritarian tendencies (Giordano and Hayoz 2013; Markowski 2019; Kotwas and Kubik 2019).

PiS has sought control over key media appointments. It has changed the rules governing the Constitutional Tribunal, the National Council of the Judiciary and the Supreme Court, in a

manner that gives it control over key decisions, such as the appointment of judges. Furthermore, the party has placed its supporters in key positions in these courts and placed courts of general jurisdiction under the strict control of the minister of justice (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016). PiS has also centralized the management of civil society funding, creating a new organization, the National Freedom Institute, overseen by the deputy prime minister (Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights 2017).

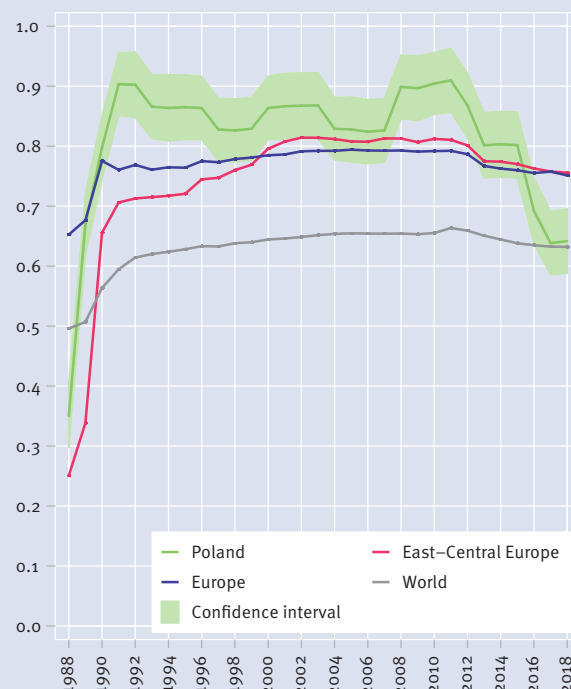
In addition, in 2016 PiS introduced anti-terrorism legislation which extended options for Internet surveillance without a court order (Amnesty International 2017). It has also increased the period that suspects can be held without charges and broadened the Internal Security Agency's access to data (Matthes, Markowski and Bönker 2018: 20; Human Rights Watch 2017).

Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12 show Poland's GSoD Indices scores on Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Association and Assembly, respectively, compared with the scores for East-Central Europe, Europe and the world.

**FIGURE 5.11****Freedom of Expression in Poland and the rest of the world, 1988–2018**

**Notes:** The shaded band around Poland's score indicates the 68 per cent confidence bounds of the interval.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

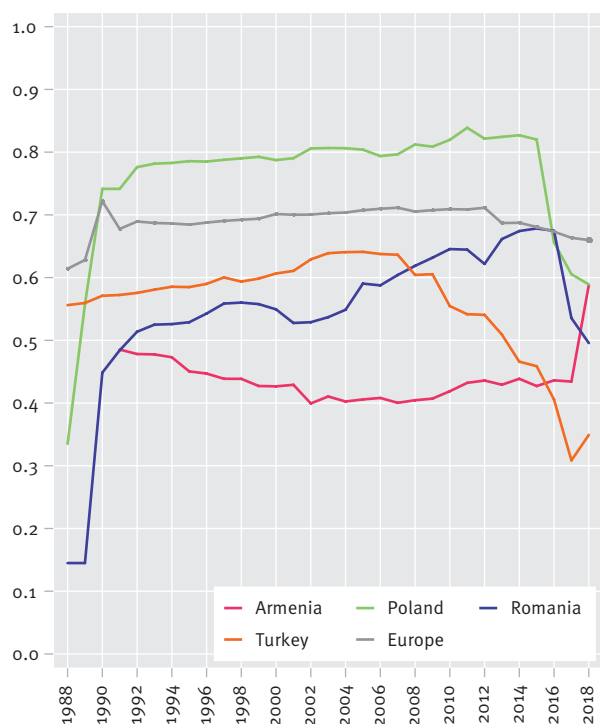
**FIGURE 5.12****Freedom of Association and Assembly in Poland and the rest of the world, 1988–2018**

**Notes:** The shaded band around Poland's score indicates the 68 per cent confidence bounds of the interval.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

FIGURE 5.13

### Checks on Government in selected European countries, 1988–2018



Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

### The rise of illiberalism and polarization, and the hollowing of the centre

**One of the main backdrops of Europe's democratic malaise is the rise of illiberal identities and disappointment with mainstream politics.** Many factors point to this rise, not least the fear, felt by many citizens, that globalization and technological advancements are putting pressure on their traditional values; and the increase in economic uncertainties and inequalities. Certain political parties are exploiting these fears, suggesting simple answers to not-so-simple questions.

The decline of democratic quality in Europe is linked to the misuse of governmental powers to dismantle constitutional checks and balances. Incumbent political elites have eroded the rule of law to become less accountable in the public realm, appropriate state resources for partisan and private purposes, and expand informal patronage networks in order to penetrate society. These elites have been voted into office by citizens disappointed with the performance of democracy and mainstream political forces. Such popular

dissatisfaction has translated into electoral support for anti-establishment and populist parties that have further contributed to the polarization of political competition in many countries. Faced with these challengers, mainstream parties are struggling to find appropriate policy and political responses.

Many surveys in recent years have shown rising support for illiberal and even quasi-authoritarian values in some parts of Europe (Foa and Mounk 2017). Most of the extreme right-wing parties in Europe today appeal to such sentiments. In this political climate, the protection of minorities and tolerance of their views is counterbalanced by a perceived fear that majority values are under pressure. Examples of this can be seen in Austria and Italy (until August 2019), where far-right parties have become part of government. In Austria, the far-right Freedom Party was in a coalition with the conservative People's Party since December 2017 (Heinisch 2017). However, in May 2019 the coalition collapsed, following revelations that Heinz-Christian Strache, the leader of the Freedom Party, had promised state contracts in exchange for financial support for his party (Karnitschnig 2019). In Italy, the right-leaning, populist Lega Nord (Northern League, recently rebranded as Lega) formed a governing coalition with the left-leaning Five Star Movement in 2018 (Horowitz 2018). However, in August 2019, Matteo Salvini, the League's leader and the country's Deputy Prime Minister, broke ranks with his coalition partners, seemingly motivated by a gamble to obtain more power in early elections. By the end of August 2019, the gamble appeared to have gone amiss, with the caretaker Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte, reaching a deal to form a new government with the centre left (BBC News 2019b).

**Declines in Checks on Government are contributing to an increasing polarization across Europe that puts at risk consensual trust in democratic institutions.** Societies in many European states are withdrawing into opposing camps that not only contest each other politically but also have little interaction with each other at a social or cultural level, or through any shared media use. The result of this polarization has been that voters are dragged away from centrist political parties.

Across the EU, the centre ground has suffered as parties follow voters towards more extreme positions. In Denmark, the Social Democrats won the 2019 elections after moving to a more restrictive stance on issues such as immigration (Orange 2019). In the Netherlands, the Labour Party attempted to implement a centrist programme but lost support in the 2017 elections (Graham 2017). The

2018 elections in Latvia saw traditional parties and the centrist coalition lose out to two new—populist and anti-corruption—parties (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2018a). Other recently successful populist parties are arguably Smer–Sociálna Demokracia in Slovakia and ANO 2011 in Czechia (Havlík 2016; Matthes 2016), which are closely tied to non-transparent business interests and display limited respect for the rule of law and institutional independence (Greskovits 2015).

The result of these developments is that mainstream political parties and mainstream politics can no longer operate unchallenged. Instead, they are under constant threat from other, newer political forces on the left and right. The weakening pull of the EU and the somewhat embattled model of liberal democracy have encouraged authoritarian actors. Russia has become a more important player, supporting populist and authoritarian leaders and parties, fermenting political instability, and cultivating close ties with leaders such as Hungary's Orbán (Buzogány 2017). Other countries, such as China and Turkey, have also increased their influence, particularly in South-East Europe. By doing so, they counterbalance the EU by encouraging or condoning authoritarian impulses.

### The European Union and the disconnect with democracy

Any analysis of the European democratic landscape is incomplete without acknowledging the role of the EU. Democratic gains and challenges are so tightly entwined with EU-level developments that they have a concrete impact on national politics. In fact, many analysts identify the disconnect between the EU and grassroots democracy, and the perceived distance of citizens from technocratic EU institutions, as key explanatory factors driving illiberal

populism and anti-democratic opinion in European countries (see e.g. V-Dem 2019; Rupnik 2018). It is also seen as one of the explanatory factors for the popular support for Brexit in the UK referendum in 2016.

One of the key developments relates to the financial recession of 2011 and the Eurozone's difficulties with addressing the debt crises emerging in several of its member states. The ensuing austerity measures undertaken in countries such as Greece, Italy, Spain and the UK were accompanied by years of economic difficulties that are felt to this day (McDowell 2011). These developments, which were not just political but also economic and financial in nature, helped deepen the EU's democratic deficit in the eyes of the electorate.

Additionally, the supranational powers of oversight and intervention that have been transferred to the EU's decision-making bodies over the years are viewed by parts of the electorate as having reduced the scope of action of national governments, and simultaneously having exacerbated the distance between citizens and decision makers. Various studies point to the interplay between the democratic malaise in Europe as a whole and the lack of trust in EU institutions (Brechenmacher 2018; Pew Research Center 2017).

Furthermore, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey, more than half of people in the EU (56 per cent) do not trust government institutions, while more than 40 per cent do not trust the legal system, and 61 per cent do not trust the media (European Commission 2017). Such survey results correspond to a considerable degree with the GSoD Indices data. As shown in Table 5.3, between 2013 and 2018, there are more countries with significant declines than gains on Checks on Government.

TABLE 5.3

### Significant declines and gains on Checks on Government subattributes in Europe, 2013–2018

Country	Score		
	2013	2018	Change
<b>Effective Parliament</b>			
Poland	0.77	0.62	–
Moldova	0.70	0.55	–
Romania	0.63	0.48	–

Country	Score		
	2013	2018	Change
Lithuania	0.79	0.70	–
Turkey	0.51	0.37	–
Spain	0.62	0.70	+
Armenia	0.43	0.66	+

#### Judicial Independence

Germany	0.74	0.65	–
Poland	0.81	0.53	–
Czechia	0.70	0.63	–
Romania	0.70	0.42	–
Denmark	1	0.87	–
Turkey	0.54	0.32	–
North Macedonia	0.29	0.37	+
Armenia	0.34	0.46	+

#### Media Integrity

France	0.96	0.83	–
Germany	0.91	0.73	–
Poland	0.84	0.59	–
Hungary	0.61	0.49	–
Croatia	0.77	0.63	–
Serbia	0.57	0.43	–
Slovenia	0.78	0.68	–
Turkey	0.49	0.39	–
North Macedonia	0.50	0.60	+
Armenia	0.52	0.60	+

■ High   ■ Mid-range   ■ Low

Notes: – denotes decline; + denotes gain.

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

However, the increase in voter turnout in the 2019 European elections, at levels not seen in 20 years, provides reason for hope that voters have begun to re-engage with European politics.



### Impartial Administration

Impartial Administration is the aggregation of two subattributes: Absence of Corruption and Predictable Enforcement. It measures the extent to which the state is free from corruption, and whether the enforcement of public authority is predictable.

### Summary: Impartial Administration in Europe, 2018

Regional average: Mid-range (0.64)	
High (>0.7)	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom
Mid-range (0.4–0.7)	Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia
Low (<0.4)	Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine



A total of 16 European countries score highly on Impartial Administration, of which 12 are in North and West Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK), 2 are in East-Central Europe (Estonia and Slovenia), and 2 are in South Europe (Portugal and Spain).

### Performance on Impartial Administration is inconsistent across the region

**Performance on Impartial Administration reveals uneven progress across Europe's subregions.** The majority of countries in North and West Europe score highly, while most countries in East-Central Europe score in the mid-range. Five countries have low scores, of which four are in Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine) and one is in South Europe (Turkey).

The older democracies (e.g. Belgium, Germany, Sweden and the UK) generally tend to perform better on Impartial Administration. Countries that made the transition to democracy during the post-Cold War era (e.g. Bulgaria, Czechia, Georgia, Slovakia and Slovenia) tend to fall in the mid-range category. However, there are several exceptions. Cyprus, Greece, Israel and Italy, all of which made the transition to democracy before the 1990s, score in the mid-range on Impartial Administration. North Macedonia has also experienced significant gains in Impartial Administration and Absence of Corruption (see Box 5.3).

### BOX 5.3

#### North Macedonia: a case of reverse democratic backsliding with potential for the future

After experiencing a downward spiral towards authoritarian rule, a series of scandals related to deep and massive government malfeasance led to a second transition to democracy and the installation of a new government in 2017. Since then, North Macedonia has reversed course and is now making promising strides towards democratic consolidation, recovering quicker than any other Western Balkan state.

Early in 2015 a large quantity of evidence of illegal behaviour by the ruling Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) had begun leaking into public view. The evidence included thousands of illegal wiretaps of opposition leaders and a wide range of corrupt, criminal or otherwise embarrassing acts.

The amount and seriousness of the revelations required a drastic response. Under strong pressure from the EU and the United States, North Macedonia called early parliamentary elections and set up a special prosecutor. In May 2017, the opposition Social Democratic Union took office in coalition with several ethnic Albanian parties (Ceka 2018; Keil 2018; Reef 2017).

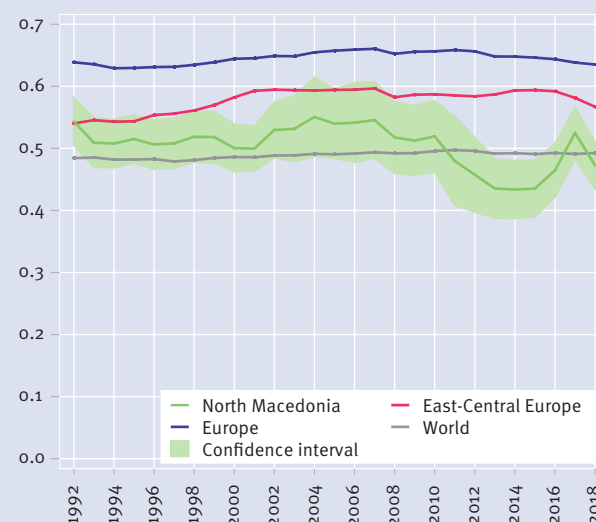
The country's relationship with Greece is on the mend, following the adoption of a new name ('the Republic of North Macedonia') in January 2019 (Stamouli 2019). This has helped accelerate the country's long-stalled integration into the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Relations between North Macedonia's Macedonian majority population and its considerable ethnic-Albanian minority need careful monitoring, building on full respect for the 2001 Ohrid Agreement. In this context, the signing of the Language Law, which recognizes Albanian as the second official language of the country, by the Speaker of the Macedonian Parliament in January 2019 is encouraging (European Western Balkans 2019).

North Macedonia's most dramatic gains in the GSoD Indices have been on the attributes of Checks on Government and Impartial Administration (see Figure 5.15). Within the region, North Macedonia has moved from last place on both attributes to fourth and second place, respectively. Many other attributes and subattributes show significant improvement, notably Representative Government, Judicial Independence, Predictable Enforcement, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Association and Assembly (see Figure 5.14 for 2018 scores).

FIGURE 5.15

### Impartial Administration in North Macedonia, 1992–2018



**Notes:** The shaded area around North Macedonia's line indicates the 68 per cent confidence bounds of the interval.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

FIGURE 5.14

### Overall GSoD Indices scores, North Macedonia, 2018



**Notes:** The lines in the middle of each column indicate the 68 per cent confidence bounds of the interval.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.



TABLE 5.4

**Low Absence of Corruption scores in Europe by subregion, 2018**

Country	Score on Absence of Corruption	European subregion
Albania	0.29	East-Central Europe
Azerbaijan	0.12	Eastern Europe/ post-Soviet Europe
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.39	East-Central Europe
Moldova	0.32	Eastern Europe/ post-Soviet Europe
Russia	0.25	Eastern Europe/ post-Soviet Europe
Turkey	0.36	South Europe

**Note:** Absence of Corruption scores range from 0 to 1, with a lower score indicating high levels of corruption (0–0.4) and a higher score indicating lower levels of corruption (mid-range 0.4–0.7).

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

**Judging by the large number of countries with high levels of corruption, Europe as a region performs particularly poorly on the GSoD subattribute of Absence of Corruption.** As illustrated in Table 5.4, the majority of countries in North and West Europe have high scores on Absence of Corruption. Most of the countries that score in the mid-range on this dimension are in East-Central Europe. Of the five countries that score low on this subattribute, two (Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) are in East-Central Europe; three (Azerbaijan, Moldova and Russia) are in Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe; and one (Turkey) is in South Europe (see Table 5.4). In 2018, significant declines on Absence of Corruption were recorded in Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Moldova and Turkey.

Europe's generally poor performance in fighting corruption is reflected in the Eurobarometer surveys. According to its November 2018 special edition, while 65 per cent of the EU population is generally satisfied with the functioning of democracy in Europe, only a minority of respondents (36 per cent) were satisfied with the fight against corruption (European Commission 2018b).



In the last five years only two countries in Europe saw significant improvements on Predictable Enforcement: Ireland (0.86) and Kosovo (0.48). However, during the same period four countries saw significant declines on the same subattribute: Germany (0.88), Poland (0.50), Greece (0.54) and Turkey (0.23).

**Levels of Predictable Enforcement are generally high in Europe**, with 15 countries (36 per cent) having high performance, and 21 (50 per cent) having mid-range performance in 2018. Only six countries (14 per cent) have low performance. The subregional spread is similar to that for Absence of Corruption and Impartial Administration: high scores are concentrated in North and West Europe, mid-range countries are mainly situated in East-Central Europe, and low performance can mainly be found in Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine). Of the two low-performing countries, one is in South Europe (Turkey), and one in East-Central Europe (Romania).

**Participatory Engagement**

Participatory Engagement is the only attribute that does not have a score, as its four subattributes (Civil Society Participation, Electoral Participation, Direct Democracy and Local Democracy) are not aggregated. The subattributes measure citizens' participation in civil society organizations and in elections, and the existence of direct democracy instruments available to citizens, as well as the extent to which local elections are free.

**Summary: Participatory Engagement in Europe, 2018**

Regional average: Mid-range	
High	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom
Mid-range	Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine
Low	Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Ireland, Moldova, Russia and Turkey

## There are signs of a shrinking civic space

**Civic space in Europe is shrinking.** The GSoD Indices envisage civic space as a nexus that integrates a country's performance on Media Integrity together with Civil Liberties (e.g. Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Association and Assembly) and Civil Society Participation. Considering this nexus, the data shows that Europe as a region is regressing on its average performance on civic space. In fact, Europe is the region in the world with the most countries declining on both Civil Liberties (12 countries) and Media Integrity (8 countries) since 2013. Two countries have also seen significant declines on Civil Society Participation in the last five years: Romania (from 0.67 in 2013 to 0.47 in 2018) and Turkey (from 0.47 to 0.31).

Figure 5.16 shows the performance of countries in Europe on the subattribute of Civil Society Participation. Since the early 1990s, the share of countries with low performance has remained at or under 10 per cent, while the shares of high-performing and mid-range countries

fluctuate between 35 and 55 per cent. However, since 2012, the percentage of high performing countries has seen a steep decline, while the share of low-performing countries has increased.

## One underlying reason for the shrinking of civic space is the fact that several European governments have placed direct or indirect restrictions on CSOs.

These restrictions may take different forms, including more bureaucratic registration rules for CSOs; a wider interpretation of what constitutes inadmissible 'political' activities; restrictions on CSO meetings under counter-terrorism laws against large-scale assembly; wider limitations on 'insulting' governments and leaders; and controlling access to, and the uses of, public funding (Civil Society Europe 2018; EU Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017).

Some of those restrictions on civil society relate to an overall deterioration in the rule of law, and in Civil Liberties, Fundamental Rights or Checks on Government. They are often linked to severe democratic backsliding, as witnessed in countries such as Hungary, Poland, Serbia and Turkey. In addition, the rise of right-wing and populist parties and the spread of hate speech have acted as a discouraging or marginalizing factor for civic space, particularly for representatives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, or migrant communities. The evidence shows that CSOs working on 'human rights issues, including with migrants and refugees, LGBT rights, and ethnic minorities are often the target of political representatives of conservative parties all across Europe, including in countries traditionally supportive of civil society like Austria, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom' (Civil Society Europe 2018: 22).

**Restrictions on Civil Society Participation are most notable across East-Central Europe and Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe.** Of the 18 countries that scored in the mid-range on this dimension in 2018, 15 are in these two subregions: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Kosovo, Lithuania, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. The remaining three are in South Europe (Israel, Italy and Portugal). The low-performing countries on this dimension are Azerbaijan, Belarus and Russia (all in Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe) as well as Turkey (South Europe).

FIGURE 5.16

### Civil Society Participation in Europe, 1975–2018



Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsoi-indices>>.



Ireland represents a somewhat anomalous case in terms of its GSoD Indices scores. While it has very high scores on four attributes, placing it on par with other mature European democracies, Ireland scores low on the fifth attribute, Participatory Engagement. However, this is not due to the country's performance on Civil Society Participation, which in 2018 was high (0.81). Instead, it reflects Ireland's performance on two other subattributes.

First, Ireland records a low score on Direct Democracy (0.27), owing to the fact that the country's legal framework does not envisage frequent direct democracy mechanisms (e.g. plebiscites). Second, Ireland recorded a low score on Electoral Participation for 2018 (0.39), partly because of the relatively low voter turnout in the 2016 national elections (Kerrigan 2016; Kelly 2016).

## Direct democracy and democratic accountability are on the rise at the local level

**An increasing number of initiatives give European citizens potential avenues for direct accountability over public institutions at the local level.** According to the GSoD Indices, 26 countries score high on the Local Democracy subattribute, spread across the subregions of North and West Europe, East-Central Europe and South Europe. A further 11 countries score in the mid-range, of which 6 are in East-Central Europe, 2 are in Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe (Armenia and Ukraine), 2 are in South Europe (Cyprus and Turkey), and 1 is in North and West Europe (Ireland). The five low-scoring countries are all in Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe.

However, citizens do not only participate through local-level elections. Examples of direct-democracy mechanisms at the local and national levels abound. Finland introduced citizens' initiative provisions at the national level in 2012 (Population Register Centre n.d.) and Denmark created a similar tool in early 2018 (Danish Parliament 2018); both are widely used. The British Government introduced an e-petition website in 2015 (BBC News 2015). Latvia's Manabalss.lv online petitioning platform has become a widely emulated leader in the field. Estonia has similar provisions and, most notably, has incorporated direct citizen engagement in formal decision-making processes (Mangule 2016).

The EU is also making efforts to move beyond the so-called Brussels bubble, and to reflect this participatory ethos through new initiatives at the European level (International IDEA 2018a). For example, the European Commission has intensified its long-running series of Citizens' Dialogues, which involve Commissioners attending meetings with

citizens to explain key EU policies and answer questions (European Commission 2018c). In addition, in 2018 an EU-wide process of Citizens' Consultations, which grew out of French President Macron's idea for 'democratic conventions' across Europe, took place in all member states (Thillaye 2019).

## The grassroots power of citizen mobilization is growing

Despite a shrinking civic space, social movements, non-violent protests and civic engagement make a difference in governance and constitute an opportunity for democracy across Europe. Throughout the region there have been compelling success stories of the power of social movements, from Solidarity in Poland culminating in 1989, to Otpor! in Serbia almost a decade later, to Maidan in Ukraine in 2013–2014. In North Macedonia, several waves of protests, the last being the Colourful Revolution, led to a change of government following the 2016 elections (Reef 2017).

In the late 1990s, waves of democratization, spearheaded by people power, unseated a number of authoritarian regimes and leaders in the region, from Ion Iliescu in Romania to Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia, followed by Croatia and Serbia (Boduszyński 2010). This second wave of breakthroughs, also described as coloured revolutions, spread to the post-Soviet space with the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004.

These regime-changing developments, while spearheaded by political opposition groups, fed on rising public discontent with the ruling elites and outbursts of discontent in mass public protests not seen before in these countries (Bunce and Wolchik 2011). The gradual build-up of anti-government sentiments, particularly in Georgia and Ukraine, was to a large extent the product of active civic education, investigative journalism and strategic outreach by civic groups on issues such as fraudulent elections, impunity for corruption and lack of effective governance by incumbent regimes.

Civic protests have continued to occur in various contexts. Between May and August 2013, Turkish security forces put down the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, but other activist forums remained active in their wake. France has seen several rounds of protests, from the *Nuit Debout* (Up all night) to the Yellow Vests movements. In 2017 Hungarians protested against the regime's efforts to close the Central European University, and again in large numbers in April 2018 after President Orbán won a third election.

Finally, in April–May 2018, Armenia was engulfed by weeks of popular anti-government protests that led to the removal

of an entrenched political elite. The opposition leader, Nikol Pashinyan, who in May 2018 began his tenure as Prime Minister of an interim cabinet, went on to score a landslide victory with his alliance in the December 2018 elections (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2018b; Human Rights Watch 2019). Armenia is the latest example showing clear and tangible results emanating from citizen mobilization. It remains to be seen whether Armenia's improving scores in the GSoD Indices will translate into long-lasting positive changes for the country.



Armenia is the only country in Europe to have transitioned from a hybrid regime in 2017 to a democracy in 2018. The country has recorded statistically significant advances on eight GSoD subattributes in 2018: Clean Elections, Free Political Parties, Civil Liberties, Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence, Media Integrity, Absence of Corruption and Civil Society Participation. This is the highest number of advances for any country in the region in 2018. Moreover, Armenia has achieved statistically significant advances on three GSoD attributes: Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement.

Russia was shaken by a wave of protests in the summer of 2019, protesting the authorities' decision to ban opposition and independent candidates from running in the local elections, resulting in a decline in support for the ruling party.

Popular anti-government initiatives led by civic activists do not always reach their purported goals—whether they involve regime change, or reversal of policies—but they do provide an essential watchdog function and may help steer further developments in a direction more conducive to transparent and effective decision-making. The example of Ukraine's Maidan Revolution and the ensuing important steps towards reforming the country's judicial and anti-corruption institutions, is a case in point. Although Ukraine still faces a number of governance challenges, not least on corruption, its record on civic engagement is in many respects an example for others (see Box 5.4).

#### BOX 5.4

##### Ukraine and civic activism

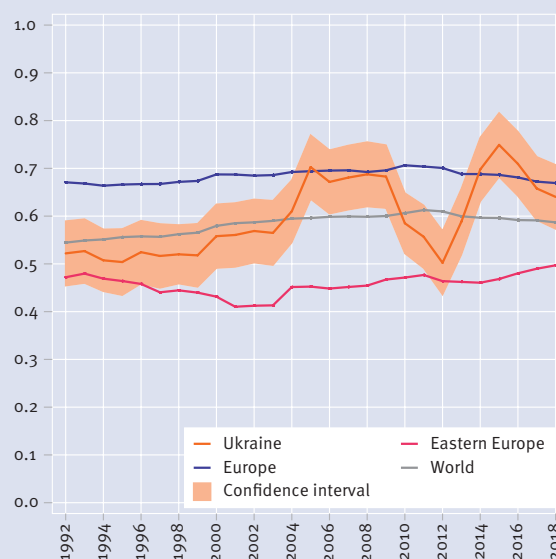
After gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine underwent several major shifts in terms of its democratic development. The country's willingness to pursue democratization was demonstrated by the first democratic turnover of power in the 1994 parliamentary and presidential elections, and the new 1996 Constitution. However, hopes for democratization and quick economic and human development gave way to democratic fatigue with the so-called transition period as the promises for changes and institutional reforms failed to materialize.

Democratic consolidation in the country was hindered, as successive Ukrainian presidents attempted to concentrate power in their own hands, undermining the independence of institutions such as the legislature and the judiciary. State capture and lack of political will to break the tight connection between the business and political sectors led to oligarchs gaining control of political parties, the judiciary and the media. The combination of collusion of interests between political leaders, the lack of strong political parties, and problems of state capture led to a failure to govern efficiently and execute meaningful reforms (Sydoruk 2014).

However, the people's resilience and willingness for change was demonstrated during the Orange Revolution. Since the Maidan protests, civil society has remained active and seeks

FIGURE 5.18

##### Civil Society Participation in Ukraine, 1992–2018



Notes: The shaded area around Ukraine's line represents the 68 per cent confidence interval.

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <http://www.idea.int/gso-d-indices>.

to hold the government to account. Following the protests, important reforms occurred in the judiciary and in anti-corruption efforts. Examples include the creation of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Anti-Corruption Court (Al Jazeera 2019), the transparent merit-based appointment of judges, as well as the demand to declare conflicts of interest. However, the failure to prosecute high-level corruption cases has undermined the popularity of the former administration (Transparency International 2019). In the case of the media, the introduction of reforms is stalled to a considerable degree. The media is greatly conditioned by the interests of oligarchs, and journalists are still subjected to harassment and surveillance (Reporters Without Borders 2019).

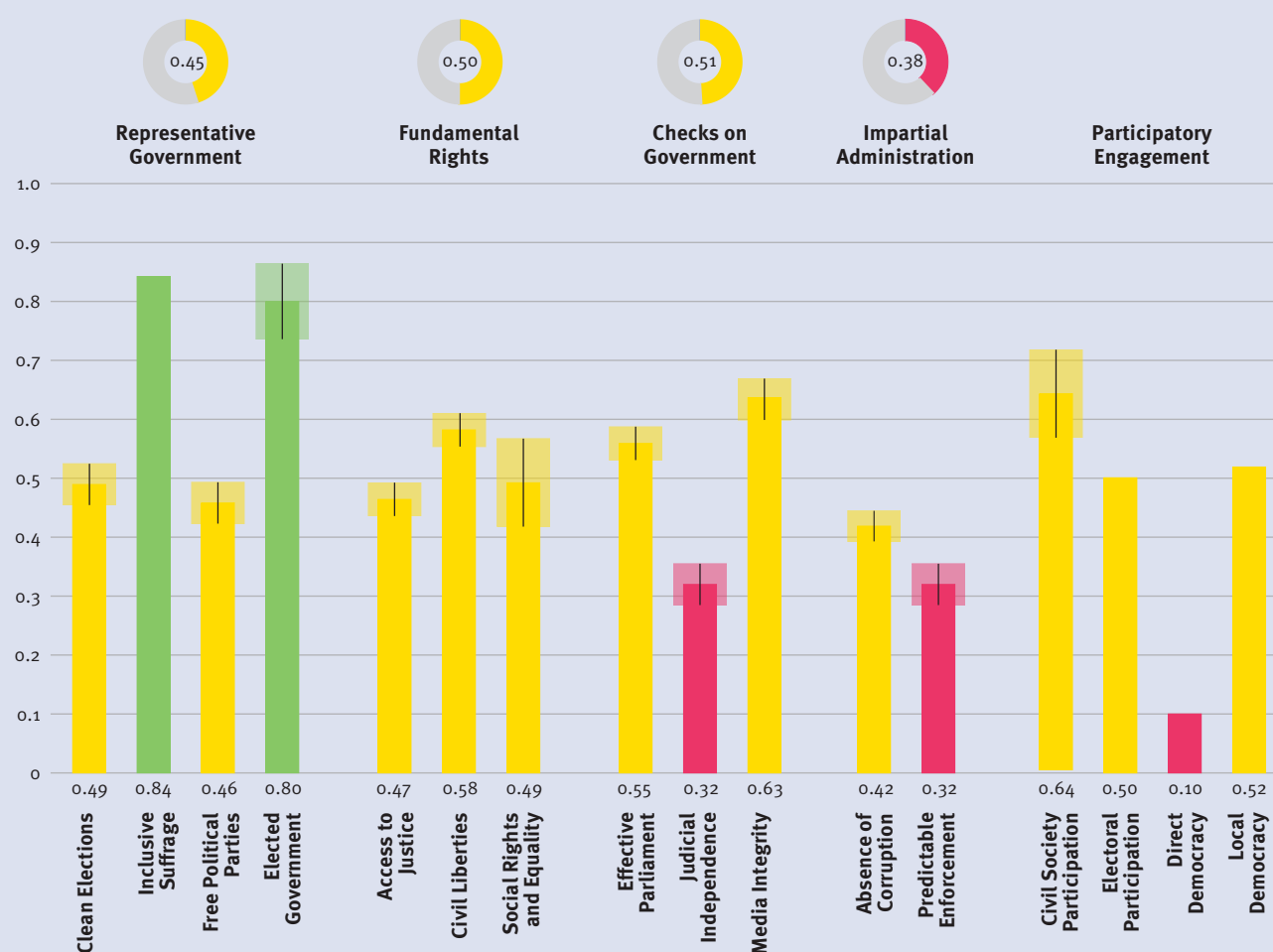
Ukraine's economic crisis, as well as the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the ongoing conflict in the eastern part of the

country and the related raised tensions with Russia, could also significantly jeopardize the country's democratic prospects.

It remains to be seen whether Ukraine's gains on the GSoD Indices attribute of Civil Society Participation (see Figure 5.18) will be sustained in the future. The March 2019 presidential election was characterized as competitive and was held with respect for fundamental freedoms (OSCE ODIHR 2019). The election in April 2019 of President Volodymyr Zelensky, a former actor who became popular via a television series in which he played a fictitious Ukrainian president (Yaffa 2019), is arguably another sign of the public's willingness to hold leaders accountable at the ballot box. It also echoes examples in other countries in which voters replace mainstream and well-established candidates with relatively inexperienced leaders who promise to start with a clean slate and stand up for ordinary citizens (see Figure 5.17 for 2018 scores).

FIGURE 5.17

### Overall GSoD Indices scores for Ukraine, 2018



Notes: The shaded area with vertical lines represent confidence intervals.

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.



## 5.4. Conclusion

Europe continues to be the region with the largest share of democracies, after North America. The trajectory of advances in the European democratic landscape has been constant and on the rise since the dawn of the third wave of democratization. However, the GSoD Indices data shows that in the last 10 to 15 years Europe's expansion has slowed down considerably. In the last five years there has even been a reversal of previously achieved gains and a dwindling of the quality of democracies in the region.

Europe faces a number of challenges related to democratic erosion and its more severe form, democratic backsliding, as well as the authoritarian tendencies manifested by a number of regimes in the region, including Turkey in




South Europe, and Hungary, Poland and Romania in East-Central Europe. These countries record the highest number of declines in GSoD subattributes in the region and exhibit a significant, gradual and intentional weakening of checks on government, accountability institutions and civil liberties.

Further challenges to democracy are posed by the rise of extremist parties and ideologies, the rejection of liberal principles, and the consolidation of executive power by regime leaders who seek to weaken democracy while using democratic instruments. At the same time, several countries in the region, including Armenia and North Macedonia, have recently shown potential signs of rekindling their democratic ideals and reversing democratic backsliding.

TABLE 5.5

### The GSoD Indices snapshot: Policy considerations for Europe

This table offers a snapshot of the state of democracy in Europe, using the GSoD conceptual framework as an organizing structure. It presents policy considerations across the five main attributes of democracy—Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement.

	Representative Government	GSoD Indices score: Mid-range (0.68)
	<p><b>Elected Government:</b></p> <p>Europe is the most democratic region in the world after North America, with 93 per cent of countries classified as democracies. Of the region's 39 democracies, 25 have high levels of Representative Government. The highest levels can be found in North and West Europe. The region is also home to two non-democracies (Azerbaijan and Belarus) and one hybrid regime (Russia).</p>	<p><b>Priority countries for reform:</b></p> <p>Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia and Turkey (countries with mid-range performance in Elected Government)</p> <p><b>Priority areas for reform:</b></p> <p>Initiate and implement legislation that accounts for more inclusive, free and fair elections, and which ensures adherence to European values of democracy and human rights.</p> <p><b>Good-practice countries for regional learning:</b></p> <p>Estonia, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden (sample of five out of 39 countries with high performance in Elected Government)</p>
	<p><b>Clean Elections:</b></p> <p>A large majority of countries in the region (67 per cent) have high levels of Clean Elections.</p>	<p><b>Priority countries for reform:</b></p> <p>Azerbaijan and Belarus (countries with low performance in Clean Elections)</p> <p><b>Priority areas for reform:</b></p> <p>Ensure and build stakeholder trust in the impartiality and neutrality of EMBS to strengthen public confidence in electoral processes. Invite domestic and international elections observers, and welcome and implement their recommendations on the free and fair election processes.</p> <p><b>Good-practice countries for regional learning:</b></p> <p>Estonia, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom (countries with the highest performance in Clean Elections)</p>





#### Inclusive Suffrage:

All countries in Europe have high levels of Inclusive Suffrage.

N/A



#### Free Political Parties:

Europe has the largest number of countries (13) scoring highly on Free Political Parties, while 27 score in the mid-range, and 2 have low scores.

#### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan and Belarus (countries with low performance in Free Political Parties)

#### Priority areas for reform:

Take a holistic approach to political representation and establish long-term ideology-based political parties with programme-oriented goals. Develop and strengthen the culture of programme-based party platforms and party organizations that seek close links with citizen constituents and are accountable to voters.

#### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (countries with the highest performance in Free Political Parties)



### Fundamental Rights

GSoD Indices score: High (0.73)



#### Access to Justice:

In Europe, 24 countries (57 per cent) score high on Access to Justice, while 16 (38 per cent) score in the mid-range.

#### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan and Turkey (countries with low performance in Access to Justice)

#### Priority areas for reform:

Support the work of the judiciary by ensuring clear division of powers and non-interference in the completion of judicial tasks.

#### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Norway (countries with the highest performance in Access to Justice)



#### Civil Liberties:

In the last decade Europe has seen a gradual decline in Civil Liberties. The share of countries with high levels of Civil Liberties declined from 79 per cent in 2010 to 71 per cent in 2018. In fact, for the first time since the start of the GSoD Indices data set in 1975, the early 2000s saw a sharp spike in the number of countries with significant declines on Civil Liberties.

#### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan and Turkey (countries with low performance in Civil Liberties)

#### Priority areas for reform:

Reverse decisions that curtail freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly, and abide by European standards and conventions such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR 1950).

#### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland (countries with the highest performance in Civil Liberties)



#### Gender Equality:

Europe's performance on Gender Equality has plateaued in the last five years.

#### Priority countries for reform:

Turkey (country with low levels in Gender Equality)

#### Priority areas for reform:

Increase efforts to strengthen political gender equality in all spheres and at all levels. Strive to enforce quota laws where they exist and adopt parity laws, to ensure equal representation of women at national and local government levels (for more detailed recommendations, see International IDEA, CoD and UNDP 2017).

#### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

France, Finland, Norway and Sweden (countries with the highest performance in Gender Equality)



#### Social Group Equality:

Levels of Social Group Equality are high compared to the global average (and on par with North America) but Europe's score is in the mid-range (0.63) in absolute levels. A total of 17 countries (40 per cent) in the region score in the high range; the majority of these are concentrated in North and West Europe. A group of four countries score in the low range on Social Group Equality.

#### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine (countries with low performance in Social Group Equality)

#### Priority areas for reform:

Introduce legislative and policy measures to enhance and advocate for the representation of disadvantaged groups such as minorities, people living with disabilities and people of minority ethnic or religious backgrounds to ensure that they are represented in national legislative and local government assemblies.

#### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Denmark and Norway (countries with the highest performance in Social Group Equality)



#### Basic Welfare:

Levels of Basic Welfare are high in Europe, with 35 countries (83 per cent) scoring in the high range. While there are no low-range performances, the following countries score in the mid-range: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, North Macedonia and Turkey.

#### Priority countries for reform:

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, North Macedonia and Turkey (countries with mid-range performance in Basic Welfare)

#### Priority areas for reform:

Introduce legislative framework reforms to ensure inclusive and equitable delivery of basic services such as education, healthcare and social security.

#### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the UK (countries with the highest performance in Basic Welfare)



#### Checks on Government

GSoD Indices score: Mid-range (0.66)



#### Effective Parliament:

On Effective Parliament, while only two countries recorded statistically significant gains between 2013 and 2018, five countries experienced declines for the same years.

#### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Turkey (countries with low performance in Effective Parliament)

#### Priority areas for reform:

Strengthen the oversight functions of parliaments by ensuring that the executive branch of the government is always accountable and responsive to the legislature.

#### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom (countries with the highest performance in Effective Parliament)



#### Judicial Independence:

While Europe has a relatively large share of countries (almost one-third) with high levels of Judicial Independence, this is one of the weaker performing aspects of European democracy. The second-largest share of countries (six countries in total) score low on this aspect.

#### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan, Belarus, North Macedonia, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine (countries with low performance in Judicial Independence)

#### Priority areas for reform:

Carry out sustained judicial reforms to build a more robust, accountable and results-oriented judiciary. Avoid political interference by building a consolidated legal framework and providing robust financial support for judicial authorities.

#### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Norway and Switzerland (countries with the highest performance in Judicial Independence)



### Media Integrity:

Europe is the region with the largest number of countries (eight) with significant declines in their Media Integrity scores in the past five years.

### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Turkey (countries with low performance in Media Integrity)

### Priority areas for reform:

Reform and align media legislation, regulatory frameworks and institutions to international standards on media freedom, independence and pluralism. Governments should prioritize the journalists' safety and prevent attacks and harassment on members of the media.

### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (countries with the highest performance in Media Integrity)



### Impartial Administration

GSoD Indices score: Mid-range (0.64)



### Absence of Corruption:

Absence of Corruption is one of the poorest-performing aspects of democracy in Europe. A total of 21 countries have mid-range levels of corruption, and 6 have high levels of corruption (i.e. low scores on Absence of Corruption).

### Priority countries for reform:

Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Russia and Turkey (countries with low performance in Absence of Corruption)

### Priority areas for reform:

Political goodwill and consensus are preconditions for improving public administration and fighting corruption. Necessary legislation should be passed and enacted on matters related to party and political finances.

### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (countries with the highest performance in Absence of Corruption)



### Predictable Enforcement:

Levels of Predictable Enforcement are generally high in Europe, with 15 countries (35 per cent) having high performance, and 21 (50 per cent) having mid-range performance in 2018. Only six countries (15 per cent) have low performance.

### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan, Belarus, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine (countries with low performance in Predictable Enforcement)

### Priority areas for reform:

Governments should strengthen the capacity and independence of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary to improve the rule of law and the predictability of law enforcement.

### Good practice countries for regional learning:

Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (countries with the highest performance in Predictable Enforcement)



## Participatory Engagement

GSoD Indices score: Mid-range



### Civil Society Participation:

Europe's levels of Civil Society Participation are now in the mid-range (0.67), having slipped from the high range since 2012.

### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Turkey (countries with low performance in Civil Society Participation)

### Priority areas for reform:

Using the inherent strength and resilience of civil society, relevant actors should stimulate the inclusion of civil society representatives, young professionals and external experts in policymaking and political debates and encourage deliberative democracy.

### Good practice countries for regional learning:

Norway, Denmark and Switzerland (countries with the highest performance in Civil Society Participation)



### Electoral Participation:

Levels of Electoral Participation are only mid-range in an overwhelmingly democratic region and have even dropped slightly in the last 10 years.

### Priority countries for reform:

Ireland and Switzerland (countries with low performance in Electoral Participation)

### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Belgium, Denmark, Sweden and Turkey (countries with the highest performance in Electoral Participation)



### Direct Democracy:

Levels of Direct Democracy in Europe are the highest in the world.

### Priority countries for reform:

Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Germany, Israel (5 out of 33 countries with low performance in Direct Democracy)

### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Switzerland (country with high performance in Direct Democracy)



### Local Democracy:

Levels of Local Democracy are in the mid-range (0.64). Every subregion except for Eastern Europe/post-Soviet Europe has a 50 per cent share (or higher) of countries with high levels of Local Democracy.

### Priority countries for reform:

Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Russia (countries with low performance in Local Democracy)

### Priority areas for reform:

New forms of civic participation and citizens' forums have multiplied across most European countries. Yet their impact on overall democratic quality remains limited. Emerging forms of citizens' participation need to be broadened in scope to speak more directly to the political trends of today.

### Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden (countries with the highest performance in Local Democracy)

TABLE 5.6

**Regime classification for Europe, 2018**

Regime classification for all of the countries in Europe covered by the GSoD Indices, as well as their respective scores on the five GSoD attributes.

Country	GSoD attribute				
	Representative Government	Fundamental Rights	Checks on Government	Impartial Administration	Participatory Engagement
<b>Democracies</b>					
Albania	0.62 =	0.68 =	0.58 =	0.44 =	Mid-range
Armenia	0.54 =	0.64 =	0.59 +	0.52 +	Mid-range
Austria	0.77 =	0.80 =	0.74 =	0.77 =	High
Belgium	0.80 =	0.89 =	0.78 =	0.89 =	High
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.50 =	0.57 =	0.56 =	0.45 =	Mid-range
Bulgaria	0.68 =	0.69 =	0.64 =	0.49 =	Mid-range
Croatia	0.75 =	0.65 =	0.60 =	0.55 =	Mid-range
Cyprus	0.72 =	0.82 =	0.73 =	0.66 =	Mid-range
Czechia	0.74 =	0.83 =	0.69 =	0.62 =	Mid-range
Denmark	0.80 =	0.94 =	0.88 =	0.91 =	High
Estonia	0.81 =	0.87 =	0.85 =	0.83 =	High
Finland	0.80 =	0.90 =	0.82 =	0.86 =	High
France	0.80 =	0.86 =	0.73 =	0.75 =	High
Georgia	0.62 =	0.68 =	0.61 =	0.65 =	Low
Germany	0.78 =	0.91 =	0.78 =	0.89 =	High
Greece	0.80 =	0.81 =	0.69 =	0.57 =	High
Hungary	0.61 =	0.66 =	0.54 =	0.54 =	High
Ireland	0.73 =	0.86 =	0.81 =	0.87 =	Low
Israel	0.63 =	0.71 =	0.68 =	0.63 =	High
Italy	0.78 =	0.85 =	0.78 =	0.64 =	Mid-range
Kosovo	0.56 =	0.52 =	0.50 =	0.51 +	Mid-range
Latvia	0.60 =	0.82 =	0.78 =	0.69 =	High
Lithuania	0.78 =	0.79 =	0.74 =	0.65 =	Mid-range
Moldova	0.58 =	0.64 =	0.57 =	0.44 =	Low
Netherlands	0.81 =	0.85 =	0.86 =	0.85 =	High
North Macedonia	0.63 =	0.61 =	0.52 =	0.47 =	Mid-range
Norway	0.78 =	0.93 =	0.91 =	0.91 =	High
Poland	0.77 =	0.68 =	0.59 =	0.59 =	Mid-range
Portugal	0.82 =	0.86 =	0.83 =	0.74 =	Mid-range

Country	GSoD attribute				
	Representative Government	Fundamental Rights	Checks on Government	Impartial Administration	Participatory Engagement
Romania	0.71 =	0.64 =	0.50 -	0.42 =	Mid-range
Serbia	0.57 =	0.58 =	0.46 =	0.48 =	Mid-range
Slovakia	0.80 =	0.72 =	0.74 =	0.61 =	High
Slovenia	0.78 =	0.84 =	0.77 =	0.72 =	High
Spain	0.81 =	0.84 =	0.79 =	0.84 =	High
Sweden	0.84 =	0.89 =	0.88 =	0.91 =	High
Switzerland	0.79 =	0.92 =	0.86 =	0.91 =	High
Turkey	0.44 -	0.35 -	0.35 -	0.30 -	Low
Ukraine	0.45 =	0.50 =	0.51 =	0.38 =	Mid-range
United Kingdom	0.77 =	0.82 =	0.78 =	0.88 =	High
<b>Hybrid regimes</b>					
Russia	0.41 =	0.45 =	0.26 =	0.33 =	Low
<b>Non-democracies</b>					
Azerbaijan	0.27 =	0.36 =	0.17 =	0.18 =	Low
Belarus	0.33 =	0.55 =	0.26 =	0.32 =	Low

■ High   ■ Mid-range   ■ Low

**Notes:** = denotes no statistically significant increase or decrease in the last five-year period; + denotes a statistically significant increase in the last five-year period; - denotes a statistically significant decrease in the last five-year period.

**Source:** International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.



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