

# EU democracy promotion in Eastern Partnership

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Webinar “Democracy in the neighbourhood and EU enlargement:  
Horizon Europe research insights”

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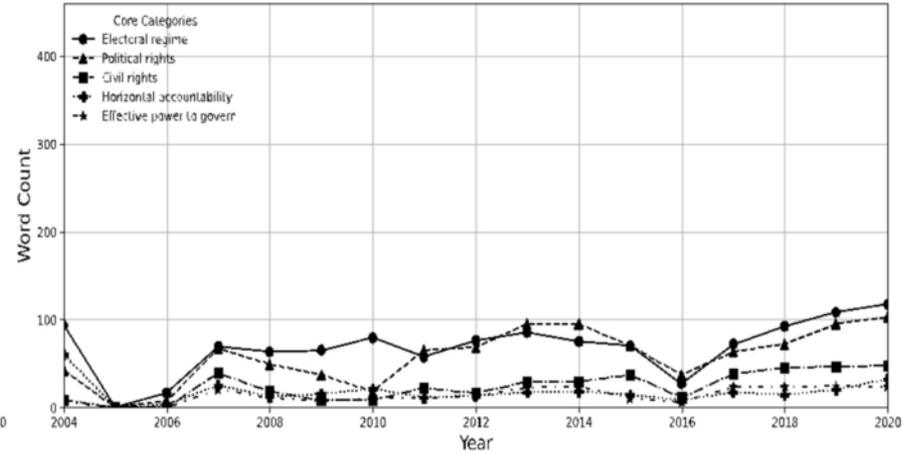
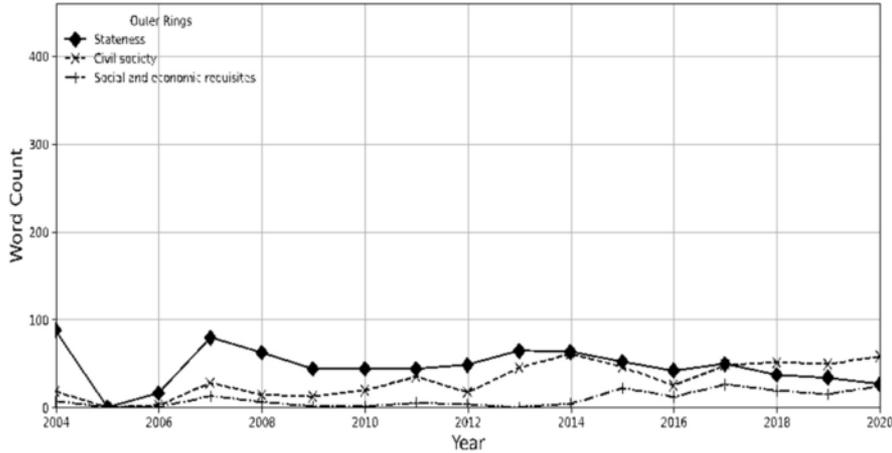
## Structure of the presentation

- The elements of embedded democracy that the EU promotes in Eastern Partnership countries
- EU internal factors facilitating and obstructing effective democracy promotion

# Does one size fits all?

## Core regimes and outer rings of embedded democracy

Eastern Neighbourhood

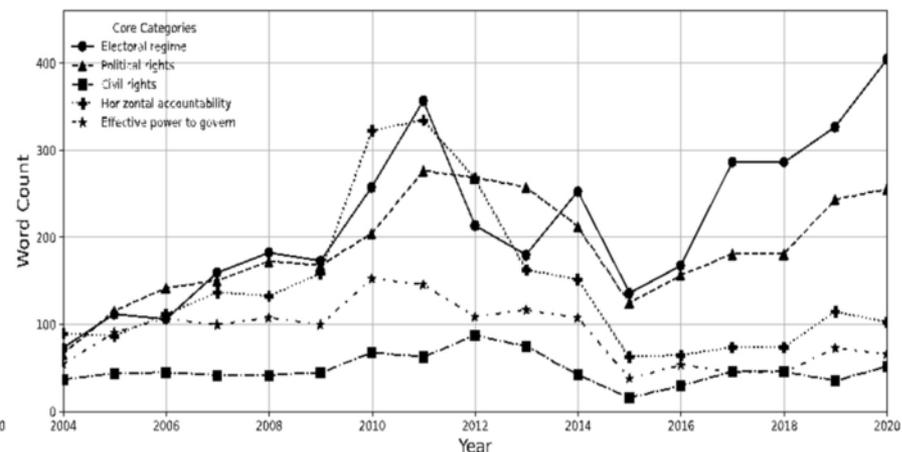
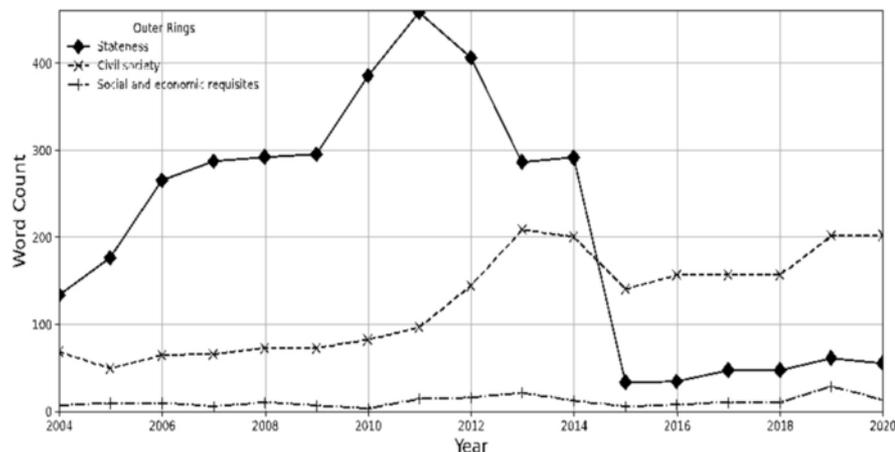


*Note: Progress reports cover all Eastern neighbours except Ukraine in 2004; Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in 2005; Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2006 and Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2016 (Grimm, Shyrokykh, and Solander, 2025).*



## Core regimes and outer rings of embedded democracy

Western Balkan



*Note: Progress reports cover all Western Balkan neighbours except Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro in 2005 and Montenegro and Serbia in 2006 (Grimm, Shyrokykh, and Solander, 2025).*

## EU internal factors facilitating and obstructing EU's democracy promotion

**Inconsistency** in policy vis-à-vis democracy in third countries and (competing) strategic interests:

- *Although disbursement of aid is conditional on democratic performance, higher level of democratic performance is associated with more aid in countries from which the EU imports energy.*
- *Additionally, countries from where migration originates receive more aid, disregarding their level of democracy (Shyrokykh and Solander, 2025).*

## EU internal factors facilitating and obstructing EU's democracy promotion

### Internal democracy and political dynamics:

- *The European Parliament tends to issue democracy-related resolutions when democracy declines in neighbouring states.*
- *However, this association is not shared uniformly across party groups. Populist radical-right parties' engagement is strategically selective, connecting to their core agenda, particularly migration (Solander, Shyrokykh and Grimm, 2025).*
- *As democracy declines among member states, so does EU's ability to use conditionality as an effective instrument to promote liberal c, 2025).*

## Take-away messages

The EU's democracy promotion in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries is highly sensitive to local political and institutional contexts.

Beyond internal democratic resistance in EaP countries, EU-level obstacles can also hinder effective democracy promotion in the region.

For democracy promotion to be effective, it must be consistent and credible.

External promotion of democracy is most effective when democratic standards are safeguarded internally within the EU.

## Bibliography

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**Thank you!**

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