WFD's Strategy 2022-25

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This strategy describes the focus of WFD's work from 2022 to 2025, setting out a clear direction for WFD's staff and for our partners. It includes:

- An analysis of the challenge we face
- and how WFD can contribute to this work
- Our Vision, Mission and Values
- Our goals for the next 3 years
- What WFD will do to achieve those goals



What the appropriate UK and international response should be



Why democracy and the challenge we face

Goal 1



Who we are and where we work

Goal 2

Mission, Vision

and Values

Goal 3

Key themes





Introduction



Why Democracy?

It is clearer than ever that human dignity and social progress are closely linked to democratic freedoms. As we write this strategy, we bear witness to attempts to suppress freedom by force and atrocity. But we also see that people are willing to die for the freedom and rights that democracy brings.

Democracy is important not just as a concept, but as a practical defence against the abuse of power. Citizens that are excluded from the political process cannot live up to their potential.

The evidence is clear that a commitment to accountability, inclusion, representation, openness, and tolerance helps to protect individual rights, reduces the risk of conflict, and increases the likelihood of sustainable economic growth and effective social policies.

But democracy is not easy or inevitable.

Uzhhorod, Ukraine - February 26, 2022: A man says goodbye to his wife who is fleeing Russian aggression.



A protestor in Myanmar raises a three finger salute in opposition to the February 2021 military coup.

Introduction

The challenge we face

Democracy has been in global decline for 15 years.

We live in a period of increased risk to democratic freedoms around the world. Today, most of the world's people live in autocracies: either where democracy is entirely absent, or where democratic institutions and processes have been hollowed out so they do not deliver democratic practices or freedoms. We are experiencing a more competitive global context; and Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows how significant the risks are.

Many of the major risks to our national security – such as conflict, public health emergencies, and organised crime – are rooted in or exacerbated by autocratic regimes or weak democracies. Reversing the decline in global democracy is a national security priority.

Meeting the challenge

The most recent UK national security review was published in March 2021 and had a significantly stronger focus on democratic governance than previous similar reviews. The Integrated Review analysed the global context and set out that the UK would, among other things, need to focus more on supporting open societies and open international systems.

Reversing the 15-year downward trend in global democracy requires new approaches and more ambitious efforts. We need to be politically smart. We need extensive alliances. And we need to be ready to act around the world.

Moreover, we need to use a full range of tools to support democratic change including security alliances, economic partnerships, and new investment instruments, all deployed with their impact on democracy as part of the decision-making about how and when to use them.

To be secure and sustainable, these approaches need to be complemented with targeted support to deepen democratic practices, especially effective parliaments, greater inclusion and political participation, electoral integrity, and responsive political parties.







Who we are



WFD is the UK's democracy support organisation. For more than 30 years we have actively helped democracies to grow stronger, so that freedom and prosperity can flourish.

We help solve problems of democracy so that democracies can address challenges that people face around the world – from climate change to corruption.

We draw on Britain's long history of addressing democratic challenges at home and on the diversity and dynamism of British society and politics when we engage with partners elsewhere.

We complement this with expertise and experience from other countries and institutions. Political parties and parliaments in the UK are integral to our work, drawing on their domestic and international networks for our programming.



Local expertise

WFD works to support local leadership, not replace it. Our partners include parliaments, political parties, electoral bodies, civil society organisations and others that are addressing critical policy and governance challenges.

Our role is to provide support in a range of ways:

- analysis and learning based on our own experience and independent research
- mentoring and knowledge sharing by counterparts in other countries
- connections with other relevant national and local leaders.

Through the staff in our offices around the world, who are local to the places where we work, we build long-term, trusted relationships that are sensitive to local politics. We work at national and sub-national levels, as well as with territories and regional bodies. Our teams provide reliable support to local partners who will lead the changes that will build democratic resilience.

- Country offices
- Regional and network programming





Our Vision

WFD's vision is of a world in which freedom and democracy thrive, and where inclusive and accountable governments serve people fairly and effectively.





Our Mission

WFD will mobilise British and international expertise to support people around the world to strengthen democracy in their communities. We will help them address problems their citizens face while building long-term democratic resilience.





Our Values

We will at all times reflect WFD's values of accountability and integrity, excellence, people-focus and being mission-oriented.

We believe in open, inclusive, representative, accountable, responsive, multi-party political systems.





Excellence



Accountability and integrity

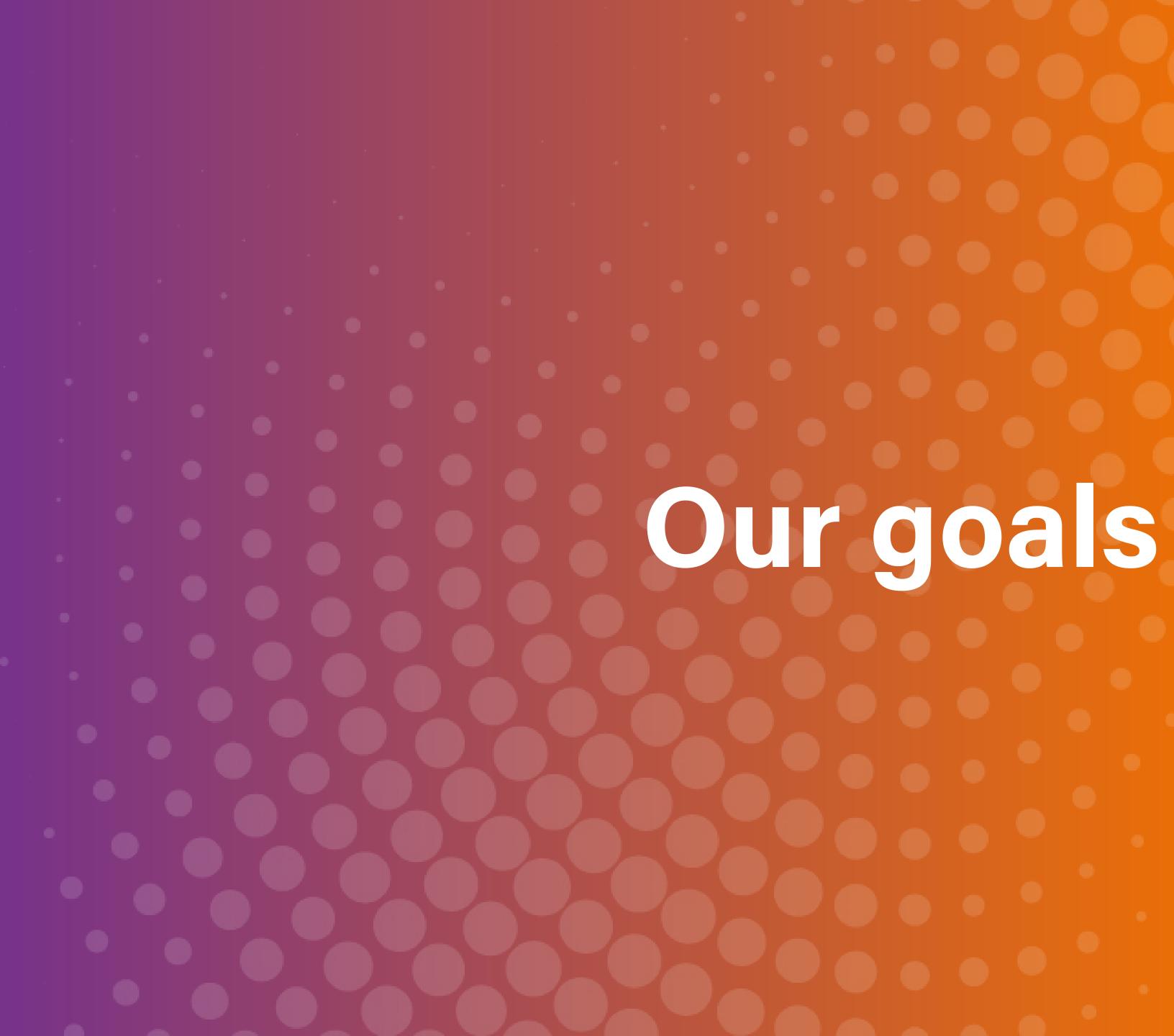


People-focus



Being mission-oriented



















Goal 1 Deliver impactful programmes and policy support

Our goals

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We will support those working to strengthen democracy around the world through impactful programmes and policy support.

Our work lies at the intersection of policy and practice. Effective programming can be improved by robust evidence, and good evidence is best derived from practical experience. Investing in this beneficial feedback loop makes WFD a better partner and a better organisation.

Through our programmes, we will contribute directly to promoting inclusive political processes, enabling accountable political systems, supporting the protection of freedom and rights, and fostering pluralist societies.

Leveraging the technical skills and knowledge of our staff, our academic partners, and our other networks, WFD will establish itself as a Centre of Expertise on Democratic Governance and Elections that provides valued advisory support to funders, programme managers, and partners.

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Goal 1 Deliver impactful programmes and policy support

How we will achieve this goal?



Through our programmes

We will continue to design and deliver problem-driven programming that gets to the root of problems and helps the core democratic institutions of parliaments, political parties, civil society actors, and electoral systems deliver meaningful outcomes for their societies.

We will strengthen and expand our adaptive programming methodology that reflects the complex problems at the heart of democratic and governance challenges. Our methodology:

- is based on gender and conflict-sensitive political economy analysis using a bespoke WFD framework. Political understanding of the local context is fundamental to WFD's programme design.
- uses a practitioner-led, consultative process to identify important, locallydefined problems and the factors that are creating or sustaining these.
- identifies multiple realistic pathways with the potential to deliver positive change – even in small increments – and scales interventions to align with what is working and changes in context.



What themes we will focus on

We will maintain and build professional expertise on key themes so that we provide the tools, information, environment, and approach for complex problems to be solved locally, contributing to political trust, the quality of democracy and democratic resilience.

Where we will work

We will be ambitious in deciding where to work and we will build on our existing relationships and presence. We will expand our presence in response to demand from partners and funders. We will never work in locations or on issues that do not match our own principles, values, and strategy. Who will deliver our programmes

Our people don't just implement our programmes; they are our programmes - they create and maintain relationships with parliaments, political parties, and civil society organisations in the places we work. This is critical to effective democracy support programming. Our local and regional staff, in particular, will remain at the centre of our trusted partner approach.

Through a new Centre of Expertise on Democratic Governance

We will invest in policy-relevant research that can provide effective support at country level to UK and other diplomatic missions, funders, programme managers and other partners.

We will find new ways of working with security, economic, investment, and development organisations to consider their impact on democracy in partner countries. By doing this, we can find the best ways of supporting accountability, inclusion, and political freedom while securing other UK national interests.

We will work to establish and develop a Centre of Expertise on Democratic Governance and Elections: an authoritative source of expertise for the UK and global democracy support community, drawing on WFD's own resources and those of our academic and practitioner partners.

In collaboration with



Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office



Our goals

Goal 2 **Convene supportive** coalitions for democracy







WFD's engagement with international partners and national leaders will strengthen public commitment to, and mobilise resources for, supporting democracy around the world.

Through engagement with other organisations, WFD will help accelerate international action to reverse the decline on global democracy.

WFD will provide information to UK parliamentarians about global democracy and demonstrate its relevance to citizens and UK national priorities. WFD will secure more third-party funding to deepen our existing work and incrementally increase our geographic presence.

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WFD will work with the community of democracy support organisations to share knowledge, bear witness, and raise our voices on the urgency of supporting democracy. That work will continue to include support for initiatives that build democratic standards, e.g., for parliaments or election observation, as well as policy initiatives or advice in international settings.

We will build on our membership of a range of networks and communities of practice. We will also build on our range of international collaborations, such as our previous work revising the Inter-Parliament Union indicators for democratic parliaments.

Within the UK, WFD will broaden and deepen our engagement with UK parliamentarians across parties and the UK nations to share information that they and their constituents need on the struggle to support global democracy

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures meeting.



DEMOCRACY

Our goals

Stern Balkans
Scracy Initiative

Goal 3 Reinforce our outstanding organisation





WFD's systems, culture and values will support our people to have a direct impact on democratic governance in their countries and globally.

Through our commitment to a strong culture built on wellbeing, professional development, and our values, WFD's staff will be enabled to deliver outstanding work that increases our impact and expands our engagement.

Through the development and delivery of outstanding systems that are agile and better aligned, WFD's staff will be enabled to focus on delivering impact and equipped with the tools to efficiently manage the resources of our donors.





We expect a range of thematic and technical areas to be 'democratic pinch points' during the life of our current strategy. We will maintain and build professional expertise in these areas, so that we can help provide the tools, information, environment, and approach for complex problems to be solved locally.

Accountability and transparency



Women's political leadership

Democratic action on climate and the environment



Electoral integrity

Digital democracy



Disinformation and political discourse









Inclusion and equality of participation

Political parties and political pluralism



Democratic resilience













Accountability and transparency

Accountability and transparency are at the heart of the functioning of democracies.

WFD will continue to partner with parliaments and sub-national institutions, as well as the independent institutions with whom they share the task of accountability. We will provide the technical expertise, information resources, and peer-to-peer engagements that allow parliaments and MPs to craft practices and systems that are context-appropriate and meet essential democratic standards. We will focus on pre- and post-legislative scrutiny, including engagement with independent oversight institutions, civil society, and citizens, addressing issues like financial accountability, anticorruption, and public debt management. We will continue to deliver our successful mentorship programmes to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff and expand our inter-parliamentary exchanges, bringing more UK parliamentarians into our work.

Women's political leadership

When women can access formal political spaces and exercise leadership in a manner that is authentic to them, the whole of society benefits. However, politics continues to be a hostile environment for women.

WFD will continue to prioritise women's political leadership in our programming. This approach goes beyond simply bringing women into current practices and instead requires working with local partners to adapt these practices and the institutions that deliver them to women's participation and leadership. We will strengthen our information resources and programme offerings on 'what works' to help bring women into politics and keep them there to advance their policy priorities.





Inclusion and equality of participation

Evidence suggests that social, political, and cultural inequalities can have a corrosive effect on political trust.

We will continue to focus on inclusive political processes and equality of participation. We will expand our work on the engagement of young people in politics. We will also continue to prioritize disability equality, working with people with disabilities and disabled peoples' organisations to ensure all aspects of the political ecosystem are designed for their full participation.

Many states retain laws and policies that discriminate against women, girls, and LGBT+ persons. We will continue to work with partners and reform actors to make and implement informed, meaningful legislative change.

We will develop programming to support the organisational development and strengthening of civil society organisations – especially women-led and women's rights organisations – as democratic actors through technical assistance and subgrants.

Democratic action on climate and the environment

The grave disruptions to people's lives because of the environmental and climate crises are destabilising democracies. Environmental democracy is based on the vision that decisions on natural resources must adequately and equitably address citizens' interests, and that they must be part of these decisions through access to information, justice, and decision-making processes. Rather than setting a standard for outcomes, environmental democracy sets a standard for how decisions should be made. At the same time, there is a robust nexus between higher standards of democratic practice and more appropriate environmental and climate action.

WFD will expand our work on environmental democracy to help local actors address the urgency of the climate crisis and strengthen democratic practices and resilience.





Electoral integrity

Credible elections are a baseline requirement for functioning democracies. The growth of electoral autocracies and increased sophistication of efforts to subvert electoral processes threaten the integrity of even this most basic democratic act.

WFD will continue to address stress points within the electoral cycle through our whole-cycle approach to electoral integrity, supporting electoral environments that enable participation and peaceful dialogue and debate, credible Electoral Management Bodies and effective management of outcomes, results and recommendations for reform. We will also continue to train and deploy UK observers to missions conducted by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Our unique Electoral Political Economy Analysis (EPEA) and bespoke Electoral Advisory Missions (EAM) will deploy technical expertise to match the issues and challenges within a specific electoral context and provide technical recommendations that are accessible and achievable.

Political parties and political pluralism

Political parties play a critical role in democracies, garnering and amplifying the views and voices of citizens. When the internal workings of parties are weak, divisive, or opaque, this has a knockon impact on their ability to perform in elected office and leads to low levels of public trust.

WFD will continue to deliver support for political party development through our offices with the Labour Party, Conservative Party, Scottish National Party, and the Multi-Party Office. The WFD political party offices will maintain initiatives to support sister parties worldwide and will also progress joint initiatives on the role of political parties. WFD will also expand our roll-out of the Political Party Transparency Index, a unique analytical tool to assess the performance of individual parties in the areas of internal democracy, citizen engagement and financial transparency.





Digital democracy

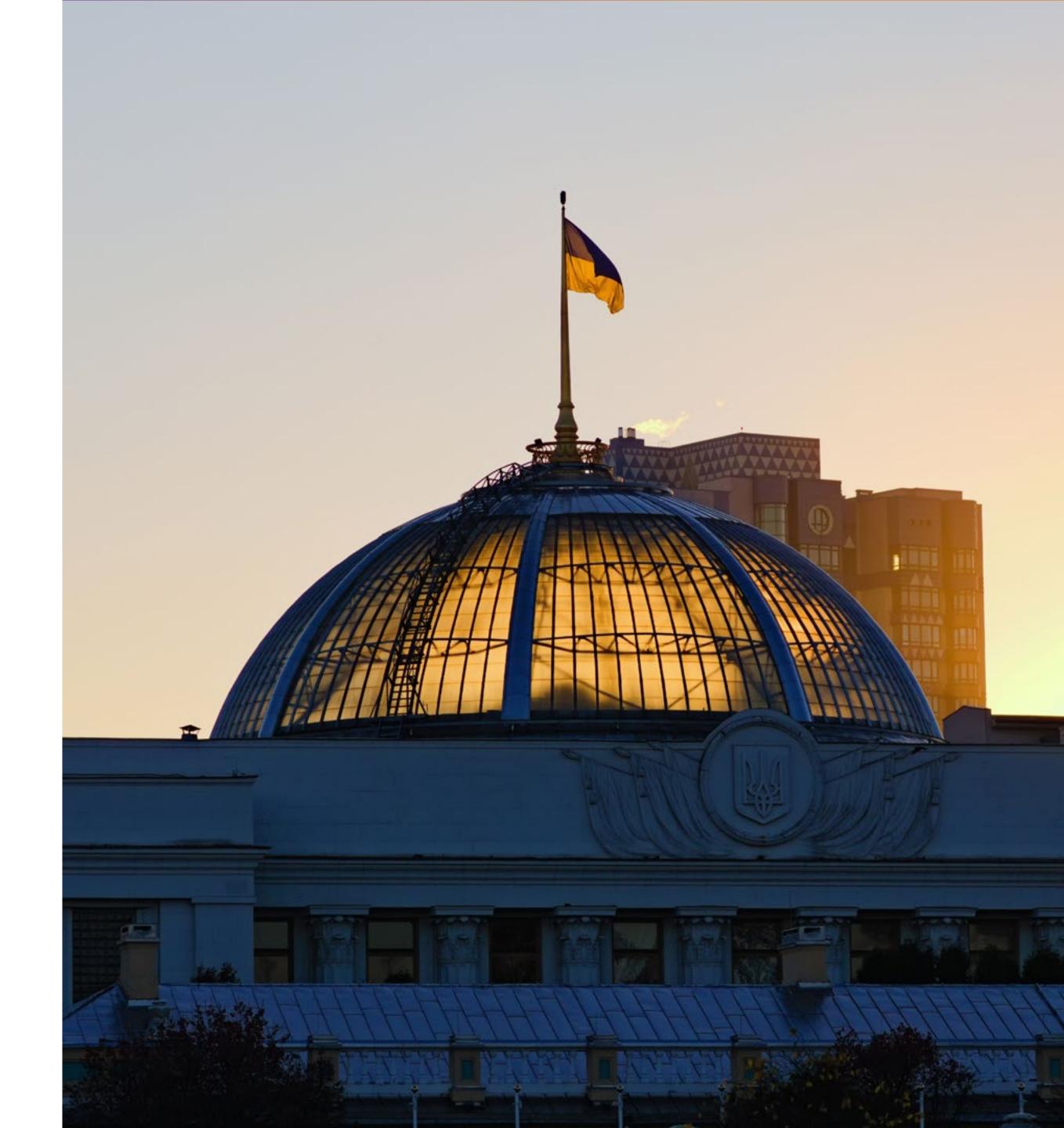
At its best, digital democracy can help break down barriers to citizen participation and access to information, creating higher levels of accountability, transparency, and equality in decisionmaking. However, the use of digital tools can also deepen existing inequalities and amplify disadvantage. In addition, many platforms are linked to growing political polarisation, disinformation, violence and abuse, as well as data collection and surveillance at odds with the values of liberal democracies.

WFD will work with democratic institutions and partners to address the impact of and response to existing and future digital shifts on inclusive political processes, accountable political systems, and pluralist electoral processes to prioritise a human-centred approach to the use of digital tools.

Disinformation and political discourse

Disinformation and the growth of technologies able to rapidly disseminate false information are directly impacting political trust and increasing polarisation. As disinformation has multiple sources and complicated behaviour drivers, tackling this trend is complex.

Where WFD has a role to play in challenging disinformation is in the quality of political discourse and the extent to which this contributes to division, mistrust and even the potential for conflict within societies. Political leaders hold prominent positions in society and so have an immediate influence on standards for public debate. We will take the lessons from programmes we piloted that look at the impact of political discourse on voter behaviour – including facilitating dialogue on what constitutes hate speech – and expand their application into new regions, prioritising those most threatened by autocratic creep.





Democratic resilience

Democratic resilience requires democratic institutions and practices that can withstand internal fluctuations and challenges as well as external influences that undermine core democratic standards and destabilise the agreed social contract.

WFD will continue to build stronger connections among frontline actors and experts working to address the threat of authoritarian expansion, including in established electoral democracies, as well as contribute to the global dialogue on what works to help stave off democratic decline.

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