

Statement by the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, at the Democracy Summit

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[Foreign policy](#)

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Mr. President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First, let me thank President Biden for bringing us together.

I firmly believe democracies should be more visible globally and display responsible leadership.

Latvia knows the value of democracy. We regained independence from the Soviet regime and renewed democracy 30 years ago.

We cannot take our freedoms for granted. Aware that people yearn for freedom and empowerment, some autocracies are relentless in their efforts to undermine democratic systems.

They use our openness, freedoms and transparency to erode the fabric of our society and democracy. Enabled by borderless technologies, they wage disinformation campaigns and even weaponize migrants to undermine and divide democratic partnerships.

This calls for common efforts to strengthen the resilience of our societies.

I want to outline three directions.

First. It is vitally important to build resilience against disinformation. Social networks have become the main source of disinformation and fake news, which facilitates populism. Populism lowers the quality of democracy.

Thus, we are working on European Union level regulations to mitigate the destructive impact on democratic societies. The NATO Strategic Communications Centre, established by Latvia, has ten years of accumulated knowledge in this field.

At the same time, the freedom of speech in global platforms should be guaranteed. Censorship, even if well-intended, contradicts democratic principles.

We are also committed to strengthening independent quality media. Media literacy in Latvia will be enhanced in all sectors of society and is already included in our school curriculum.

Second. The role of civil society is essential in building a strong fabric of democracy. In Latvia NGOs are always consulted in the process of drafting legislation. Our government meetings are public. We also have a digital civic initiative platform (manabalss.lv) where any citizen can submit legislative proposals that our parliament must consider if it collects at least 10 000 signatures.

Looking ahead, our efforts are focused on reducing the digital divide in society, beginning with schools and especially supporting women.

Third. Autocratic regimes tend to store their stolen assets in Western banks and properties, thereby facilitating corruption in our democracies. This chain must be broken. Latvia has increased transparency, for instance by improving public access to information on beneficial owners of joint-stock companies.

Mr President,

A rules-based international order is fundamental to the sustainability of democracies. We are grateful that in 1940 the US declared its non-recognition of the Soviet occupation of Latvia, as well as Lithuania and Estonia. This was the legal basis for the restoration of our independence and democracy after fifty years of occupation.

Given this experience, Latvia intends to hold an international event next year to support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, building on the recently launched Crimea Platform.

Mr President,

I look forward to the next Democracy summit in 2022 to take stock of our achievements.

<https://www.president.lv/en/article/statement-president-latvia-egils-levits-democracy-summit>