

Summary

Business Engagement for Democracy Protection

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Businesses are developing [corporate political responsibility](#) initiatives to protect democratic values like electoral integrity, civic participation, and governance. Examples include: the [Business & Democracy Initiative](#), [Business for America](#) in the US, or [We Stand for Values alliance](#) in Germany. Not just in domestic initiatives, businesses also take part in global efforts to protect different democratic institutions, such as through the [UN Global Compact](#), or funding initiatives like the [IFPIM](#). In addition to principled support for democratic institutions, commercial interests have also motivated businesses in a number of countries to come out against [populist trade protectionism](#), internet shutdowns, or foreign agent laws.

However, businesses' global role in safeguarding democracy still remains underdeveloped. So far, there has been insufficient cross-sectoral collaboration between the private sector and international democracy protection stakeholders. In some contexts, the ecosystem suffers from unproductive conversations in silos, failing to reach out to non-traditional actors. As a remedy, on November 28, 2024, we organized a panel in Berlin titled "[Corporate Civic Responsibility for Safeguarding Democracy](#)," which brought together representatives from different sectors and business associations. The insights from these debates have informed our logic of intervention:

- **There is a clear value-added to engage businesspeople for democracy protection as non-traditional/emerging actors.** As a powerful social group, businesspeople may use market influence to incentivize democratic norms, help bridge business, civil society, and policy domains for democracy protection purposes, and reframe democracy as a business-critical infrastructure by demonstrating the economic benefits of stable democratic systems.
- **Engagement with businesspeople requires a new toolkit and framework of conservation.** Democratic resilience should be packaged as business risk management and democratic stability should be highlighted as a necessary condition for good economic performance, as democratic erosion is shown to produce higher compliance costs, and increased market uncertainty. A new engagement strategy should include business-centric democratic resilience indicators.
- **National-level corporate programs may not be enough to counter global-level autocratization trends.** To that aim, a unified response would help leverage combined economic influence and coordinated economic pressure on anti-democratic actors with knowledge-sharing and networking mechanisms for CPR programs.

We envision the following activities and outputs:

- A **desk review** of existing business initiatives and corporate political responsibility programs that support different types of democratic institutions;
- Series of structured, frank, and discreet conversations on democratic resilience in a **flagship event** that brings together business representatives from Europe, the US, and the democracy protection ecosystem in a fixed location; creating a **loose network of businesses** with clear commitments to specific democratic institutions, allowing businesspeople to prioritize a specific topic, which makes coordination easier and avoids generic pro-democracy statements.
- Case-study-based learning modules including **AI-empowered democratic stress test simulations** targeting businesses, offering insights into how businesses should react to different types of executive aggrandizement or incumbent overreach.