

What are the most democratic countries in Europe? How would we find out? This pamphlet sets out to answer these questions through a new approach to comparing the democratic health of nations: the Everyday Democracy Index (EDI). The EDI attempts to measure the lived experience of democracy in 25 European countries. It takes as its starting point the idea that this experience is only partially defined by what happens in the traditional arenas of elections and formal politics. The pamphlet demonstrates that how effectively countries empower individuals in more everyday spheres like families, communities, workplaces and public services makes a big difference to the health of their formal democracy. It also shows that the strength of Everyday Democracy is very closely related to levels of life satisfaction, social trust, and social and gender equality.

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The Everyday Democracy Index | Paul Skidmore · Kirsten Bound

DEMOS

“We need to dig deeper than voter turnout to find out how European democracies really measure up...”

THE EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY INDEX

Paul Skidmore
Kirsten Bound

DEMOS



Who we are

Demos is the think tank for everyday democracy. We believe everyone should be able to make personal choices in their daily lives that contribute to the common good. Our aim is to put this democratic idea into practice by working with organisations in ways that make them more effective and legitimate.

What we work on

We focus on seven areas: public services; science and technology; cities and public space; people and communities; families and care; arts and culture; and global security.

Who we work with

Our partners include policy-makers, companies, public service providers and social entrepreneurs. Demos is not linked to any party but we work with politicians across political divides. Our international network – which extends across eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, Brazil, India and China – provides a global perspective and enables us to work across borders.

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As an independent voice, we can create debates that lead to real change. We use the media, public events, workshops and publications to communicate our ideas. All our books can be downloaded free from the Demos website.

THE EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY INDEX

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Paul Skidmore, Kirsten Bound
January 2008

Foreword

What are the most democratic countries in Europe? How would we find out? These are the two questions this pamphlet sets out to answer. It does so through a new approach to comparing the democratic health of nations: the Everyday Democracy Index (EDI).

We want to make clear from the outset that we see the EDI as a way of answering both questions – the what and the how – and that we consider each to be as important as the other.

In answer to the first question, the EDI attempts to measure the lived experience of democracy in different countries, so that judgements can be reached, comparisons made, and inferences drawn. It takes as its starting point the idea that this experience is only partially defined by what happens in the traditional arenas of elections and formal politics. These are important, indispensable, irreplaceable. But they are also insufficient, and we aim to show why. Our essential claim is that modern democracies must be Everyday Democracies: they must be rooted in a culture in which democratic values and practices shape not just the formal sphere of politics, but the informal spheres of everyday life. In support of this contention, we offer evidence that the countries that have most successfully practised Everyday Democracy have managed to empower individuals in private as well as public domains, and show that our measure of Everyday Democracy is closely correlated with a range of other measures of national success.

In answer to the second question, we approach this task in an experimental spirit. We argued long and hard about the design of the Index and the indicators that compose it. We believe our methodology, though leaving plenty of room for improvement, is robust. But in the end, we view this as a prototype. We want it to provoke debate and raise as many questions as it answers. We want the process of communicating it to generate ideas for refining and improving it. Above all, we want it to start conversations, not end them.

To join the conversation visit
www.everydaydemocracy.com

*We are children of our age,
it's a political age.*

*All day long, all through the night,
All affairs – yours, ours, theirs –
are political affairs.*

*Whether you like it or not,
your genes have a political past,
your skin, a political cast,
your eyes, a political slant.*

*Whatever you say reverberates,
whatever you don't say speaks for itself.
So either way you're talking politics.*

From 'Children of our age'
by Wislawa Szymborska¹

Executive summary

Introduction

This pamphlet sets out a new approach to measuring the democratic health of European countries: the Everyday Democracy Index (EDI).

Over the last few years there has been much discussion of the 'democratic deficit' in European countries. Many Europeans share a collective disappointment with democratic *institutions* and are pessimistic about the future of society as a whole. They are less likely to vote, join political parties, or trust their elected representatives than they were 30 years ago. On the other hand, their commitment to democratic *values* and their desire to shape the decisions that affect their lives – to be 'authors of their own scripts' – has never been stronger.

This disconnect between personal and collective life is not coincidental: it is the product of democracy itself. The same emancipatory experience that has enlarged personal freedom has made governing more difficult, and disappointment with democracy more pervasive.

To overcome this, modern democracies must be Everyday Democracies: they must be rooted in a culture in which democratic values and practices shape not just the formal sphere of politics, but the informal spheres of everyday life: families, communities, workplaces, and schools and other public services.

The results of the Everyday Democracy Index show that countries which have done the best job of empowering individuals in these everyday domains are much more likely to maintain a vibrant democracy in traditional political settings. Everyday Democracy also appears to be closely correlated with other measures of national success, including gender and social equality, life satisfaction and social trust.

The European context

Europe is beset by a democratic malaise. This is epitomised by, but not limited to, a widespread decline in voter turnout and trust in government. This disengagement engenders four main risks:

- Less faith in governments makes it harder for them to deal with the complex problems facing their populations.
- Disappointment creates political opportunities for extremists.
- The European Union project, crucial to solving many twenty-first-century problems, is put at risk by a lack of legitimacy.
- The threat is not imminent, so we don't act and the problem gets worse.

Within individual countries there have been efforts to address these issues, such as the Commission on Swedish Democracy and the UK's Power Inquiry. But there has been a tendency to assume that problems are distinct to each country rather than part of a broader trend, and to reach for institutional quick-fixes when many of the issues are about culture, values and public expectations.

What the EDI measures

The EDI compares 25 European democracies along six dimensions to create a rich picture of the lived experience of democracy in each country:

- 1 *Electoral and Procedural democracy*: the basic integrity of the formal political system. To what extent does this country get the basics right? To what extent do people value the right to vote that is at the foundation of democracy?
- 2 *Activism and civic Participation*: the associational life that surrounds these formal institutions. How vibrant is it?
- 3 *Aspiration and Deliberation*: the broad cultural orientation to democratic practice. How much do people value democracy as a way of solving problems?
- 4 *Family democracy*: the degree of empowerment in relation to family structures and roles within them. How free are people to choose the kind of family structure they want?

What roles are expected of women and children, and how able are they to define these roles for themselves?

- 5 *Workplace democracy*: the degree of empowerment in relation to daily working life. How much autonomy do workers have over their tasks? How much creativity can they show? How much can they influence what happens to them in the workplace?
- 6 *Democratic Public Services*: the degree of empowerment in public services. What channels for formal control or engagement exist? Do citizens see themselves as 'co-producers' of public services?

For each of these dimensions, we identify three to five indicators that together capture that aspect of Everyday Democracy. We use 21 indicators in all. Scores are calculated for each individual dimension, and combined to give an overall EDI score. More weight is given to the dimensions that seem to be most closely related to the underlying concept of Everyday Democracy we are trying to measure.

Because there is some degree of uncertainty around any specific score, we focus on the patterns that emerge and the clusters into which countries coalesce rather than individual rankings.

The results

Electoral and Procedural democracy

While all the countries in our study enjoy relatively good governance and well-developed political rights, this dimension helps to distinguish between the nominal and effective value of these rights in different countries. We see a relationship between a country's score on this dimension and the longevity of its democratic institutions. The Scandinavian countries are leaders, but Luxembourg denies them the top spot. It is not all bad news for the younger democracies, with Slovenia performing strongly.

Activism and civic Participation

The results for this dimension show that European countries differ markedly in the vibrancy of their civic life. Sweden outperforms other countries by a considerable margin. The results seem to confound the argument that bigger

government crowds out active citizenship. In fact, it seems that larger governments tend to have more active citizens.

Deliberation and Aspiration

To measure commitment to open and inclusive decision-making in society we look at public engagement in science, political efficacy and attitudes to authoritarianism. A familiar geographic divide emerges, with northern and western Europe in the top half of the distribution and central and eastern Europe in the bottom half. Among the northern and western European countries, there is relatively little to choose between them.

Family democracy

The results of this dimension suggest that giving people more freedom to renegotiate family structures and roles does not necessarily lead to social breakdown, provided we support people’s choices in the right way. For example, those countries with the highest score in the Families dimension also tend to do a better job of tackling child poverty.

Democratic Public Services

We look at fiscal autonomy of local government, parent and pupil empowerment in education, and the co-production of healthcare by citizens and patients. Denmark is a major outlier at the top, but three central and eastern European countries appear in the top ten. This surprising result could point to problems with the quality of the available data, although it’s also possible that patterns of *citizen empowerment* in public services are different from patterns in the *quality* of public services.

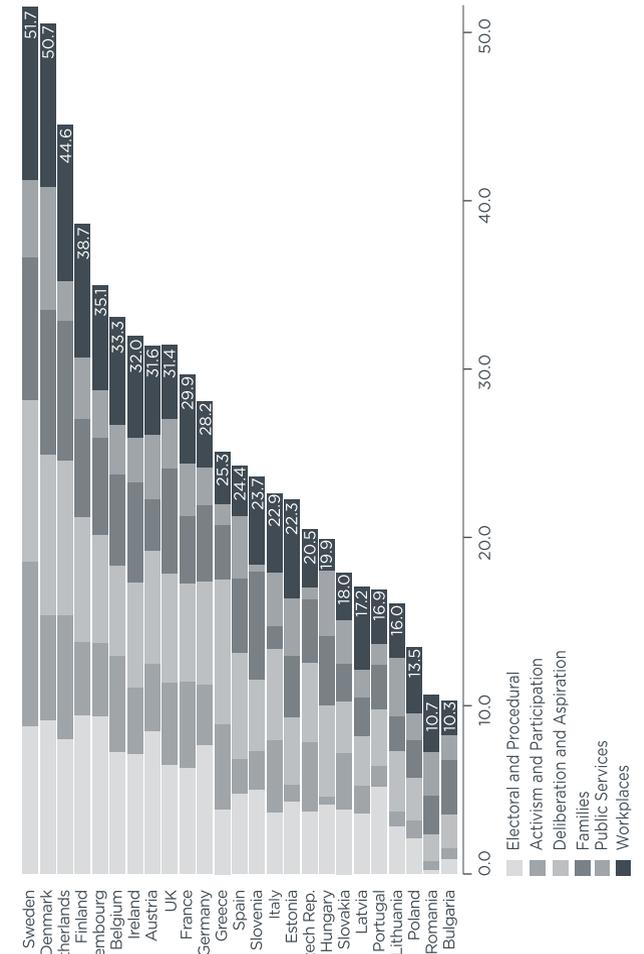
Workplace democracy

Rather than focus on formal structures we focus on the experience of empowerment in the workplace. One surprising result of this approach is the relatively low score of Germany. It is possible that Germany’s well-developed worker participation structures do not have the impact on ordinary workers’ experience of the workplace that we might expect. At the same time there does seem to be a correlation between Workplace democracy score and trade union density.

Overall results

Figure 1 shows the combined scores for the EDI.

Figure 1 EDI Combined score



Note: Electoral and Procedural dimension score recalculated without Malta and Cyprus

Two striking patterns emerge from the results overall:

- *Consistency*: There is a very striking consistency in countries' scores across these ostensibly very distinct domains. This lends support to our key claim about Everyday Democracy: that the richness of the democratic culture in the domains of everyday life does seem to be associated with the strength of democracy in more formal domains.
- *Geography*: There is a clear geographical pattern to the result. The Scandinavian countries dominate, with the northern European countries behind them. Southern Europe and central and eastern Europe tend to do less well, which is perhaps unsurprising given the relative immaturity of democracy in the countries in those areas. Slovenia is the best performer among the central and eastern European countries, scoring above Spain, Italy and Portugal.

Explaining and exploring the patterns

EDI, development and social values

There is a close relationship between Everyday Democracy and a country's level of social and economic development. But this relationship breaks down beyond a certain level of affluence. Countries at these levels of development differ a great deal in their ability to translate widespread commitment to democratic values and self-expression into a shared sense of collective possibility. The implication is that development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for Everyday Democracy, and that different cultures and practices at a micro level may have a big impact on the performance and perceptions of democratic institutions at the macro level.

EDI and other features of national success

There is a very strong relationship between a country's performance on the EDI and aggregate measures of life satisfaction. This is consistent with psychological research at the individual level linking happiness to a sense of control over one's life. We also find that people in countries with high EDI scores are much more trusting of each other, and that their governments tend to do a much more effective job of tackling poverty and gender inequality.

1 The case for Everyday Democracy

The aim of this pamphlet is to tell a story about democracy, what Winston Churchill famously called ‘the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time’.² The setting for this story is Europe, and more specifically the countries of the European Union. But its main characters are not governments or politicians but the 425 million ordinary people who call those countries home.

Like a lot of the best stories, the plot of this one revolves around a tragic irony: that, in recent years, more and more of those people have come to think that Churchill was right on *both* counts. On the one hand, Europeans’ disappointment with democratic *institutions* has grown dramatically over recent decades. As we show in the next chapter, we Europeans are less likely to vote, join political parties, or trust our elected representatives than we were 30 years ago. On the other hand, Europeans’ commitment as individuals to democratic *values* – our desire to shape the decisions that affect our lives, to be ‘authors of our own scripts’³ – has never been stronger.

This contradiction is borne out in our daily lives. In many areas of our lives, our personal freedom is greater than ever: more of us have more freedom about what we eat and what we buy, about where we live and where we travel, about which jobs we take and how we do them, and about whom we befriend and – as box 1 below shows – whom we fall in love with, than previous generations ever did. But at the same time, we typically have much less faith than those generations had in government’s ability to liberate us from the collective problems that we cannot tackle alone.

Box 1 Tolerance of homosexuality

One illustration of our increasing personal freedom is how much more tolerant Europeans are of homosexuality today than they were 25 years ago (see table 1 below). In 1981, about half of Europeans surveyed believed that homosexuality could never be justified; 25 years later, that figure had halved to just under a quarter.

Table 1 Tolerance of homosexuality

Country	1981 Survey	1990 Survey	1999 Survey	% change
Belgium	51.7	41.2	26.5	25.2
Denmark	37.9	36.4	20.7	17.2
France	51.6	39.5	23.1	28.5
Germany	45.3	35.5	18.6	26.7
Ireland	60.4	51.0	37.5	22.9
Italy	66.0	45.7	29.9	36.1
Netherlands	25.4	12.9	7.0	18.4
Spain	57.3	46.6	38.0	19.3
Sweden	38.8	37.4	8.7	30.1
UK	47.5	40.3	24.5	23.0
Total	48.2	38.7	23.5	24.7

Source: World Values Surveys 1981–2004

Note: Question asked: 'Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between using this (1–10 scale).'

One of the most visible signs of this contradiction is the gap between our sense of personal optimism about the future and our sense of collective pessimism – or what David Whitman has described as the 'I'm ok – they're not' syndrome.⁴ As Table 2 shows, this optimism gap is a strikingly consistent feature of early twenty-first-century politics in most European nations.

Table 2 Personal optimism and collective pessimism in 25 European nations

Country	Net personal optimism ^a	Net collective optimism ^b	Optimism gap ^c
Austria	16	-7	23
Belgium	28	1	27
Cyprus	23	8	15
Czech Republic	19	20	-1
Denmark	44	31	13
Estonia	45	38	7
Finland	34	0	34
France	26	-49	75
Germany	0	-5	5
Greece	1	-11	12
Hungary	35	-13	48
Ireland	49	49	0
Italy	20	-24	44
Latvia	42	19	23
Lithuania	30	37	-7
Luxembourg	30	20	10
Malta	30	1	29
Netherlands	30	4	26
Poland	25	-4	29
Portugal	30	-19	49
Slovakia	23	-13	36
Slovenia	21	20	1
Spain	40	11	29
Sweden	46	6	40
UK	43	-7	50
EU average	29.2	4.5	24.7

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 65; Special Eurobarometer 251; data for Bulgaria and Romania not available

Notes:

- Defined as the percentage of people saying they expect their personal situation to improve in the course of the next five years less the percentage of people saying they expect it to get worse.
- Defined as the percentage of people who think things are going in the right direction in their country less the percentage of people who think things are going in the wrong direction.
- The difference between the net personal optimism and the net collective optimism of that country's citizens.

Explaining the contradiction

So if individually we have never had it so good, why collectively do we feel so gloomy? The key point is that this disconnect between our personal and collective lives is not coincidental: it is the product of democracy itself. The same, fundamentally emancipatory experience that has enlarged our personal freedom has made governing more difficult – and we, the governed, more demanding – in three important ways.

The first is the impact of rising personal liberty on our societies' complexity and interdependence – a combination Geoff Mulgan has termed 'connexity'.⁵ This connexity is both cause and effect: it results from greater individual autonomy but it is also what makes this autonomy possible. When we go to the supermarket, for example, the reason that we can choose from upwards of 30,000 different items⁶ – about six times more than the typical grocery store carried in the 1950s – is not just that consumers are more affluent and their preferences more diverse, but also that corporate supply chains are more sophisticated and transnational. The problem is that connexity makes governing more difficult. For starters, it creates new types of risks and problems for government to deal with, at the same time as it reduces the effectiveness of its traditional tools for managing them. Take the economy. The integration of international financial markets has made it cheaper and easier for businesses in one country to raise capital from abroad. But it has also blunted what were once thought to be some of government's most potent tools for managing the economy, and increased the exposure of firms in one market to events in markets on the other side of the world. The global fall-out of the 2007 crisis in the US sub-prime mortgage market, when bad debt in Mississippi helped trigger a run on a bank in northern England, illustrated this point vividly.⁷

This pattern is repeated in issue after issue. Carbon emissions in one country cause climatic changes in another, globalising a problem without globalising its solution. The same infrastructure of mobility that creates unprecedented opportunities for travel and for the sourcing of goods also makes it much more difficult to control migration or tackle trafficking in banned substances. Pouring money into health services is less

and less effective when what makes people healthy – lifestyle, diet and even their social status – are not particularly amenable to traditional healthcare provision.⁸ In short, there seems to be a mismatch between the level and style of governance that is most well developed and the level and style of governance we actually need to tackle our most pressing problems.

The second is the impact of rising personal liberty on social diversity – that is, diversity of attitudes, views and identities. One consequence of more and more of us feeling that we can be authors of our own scripts is that the demands placed on government have become much more varied. Simply put, voters don't just want governments to do better, they want them to do more (and, we might add, to do more with less). Governments have responded: despite Margaret Thatcher's aspiration to 'roll back the frontiers of the state', states across Europe are more deeply involved in more aspects of our lives than they were 30 years ago, even if their style of intervention now emphasises arm's length regulation more than public ownership or other direct forms of intervention.⁹ This is not a bureaucratic conspiracy: it is a response to the demands of publics that no longer focus solely on the materialist, 'pocketbook politics' issues of jobs and taxes. Those issues remain important, but they have been joined by a broader array of 'post-materialist' concerns for protecting the environment, securing individual rights and freedoms, or defending particular social and cultural identities.¹⁰ Amid this growing diversity, governments have found it harder and harder to keep everyone happy.¹¹ For example, in the early 1960s about two-thirds of Germans who identified with one of the two main parties thought that their party was the most competent on most of the main policy issues; by the late 1990s, that had fallen to a third, and the trends are almost certainly more pronounced for the majority of the population who are not party identifiers.¹²

The third is the impact of rising personal liberty on our attitude towards authority. Decades of post-war peace and prosperity, and the fall of communism after 1989, have removed the shadow of mass conflict and economic insecurity from most of Europe's people. As Ronald Inglehart has

shown, this new landscape has had a dramatic impact on the values of the generations of Europeans who have grown up within it, wearing away our deference to traditional forms of public authority.¹³ This might be less challenging if it were accompanied by a decline in public expectations about what public authority can achieve. But as noted above, the reverse is true: we expect more, not less, from government. A 1999 survey in the UK reveals the contradiction.¹⁴ Sixty-two per cent agreed that ‘The government does not trust ordinary people to make their own decisions about dangerous activities’. Yet almost exactly the same number – 61 per cent – also agreed that ‘The government should do more to protect people by passing laws banning dangerous activities’. It seems that whether the debate is about doing more or doing less, Europeans are simply much less willing to give our political leaders and institutions the benefit of the doubt.

In that sense, the timing could not be worse. Democratic governments in Europe are being asked to tackle new and more complex problems just at the moment when citizens’ tolerance for the disappointments that are part and parcel of democracy – the conflicts and the compromise, the overreactions and the inertia, and above all the recognition that things will not always go our way – is at a low ebb.¹⁵ Our problems seem more intractable but our patience with politics more limited; legitimacy harder to win but quicker to lose; policy failure more likely but less acceptable. Little wonder so many of us are disenchanted.

Beyond formal political rights: the case for Everyday Democracy

As we point out in the next chapter, the temptation is to reach for institutional fixes to this disenchantment with democracy. But our claim in this pamphlet is that there are limits to what these fixes can achieve, in part because so much progress has already been made, and in part because that’s not how institutions really work.

Europeans today are lucky enough to have more and better defended political rights than the citizens of virtually any other region on Earth, and far more than was the case even 30 years ago. But what’s becoming clear is that while these electoral and procedural rights are necessary for a healthy democracy, they are not sufficient. They are necessary because without them the personal freedoms that we now prize so highly cannot be protected. But they are not sufficient because their real meaning depends on the kind of democratic culture that underpins them. The imagination and energy to see and exploit the true value of these rights is not innate: it is learned, and it is learned first and foremost in the everyday places where people actually live their lives: in families, schools, workplaces and communities.

The primary problem with our political institutions is thus not so much that the rules and structures themselves have become less effective or that the politicians in charge of them are more ineffectual, but that they have become cast adrift from the rest of our lives. That’s why attempting to solve our current democratic malaise through institutional reengineering, without due concern for the cultures that surround and support those institutions, will not work. Of course the design of the political system matters to a degree, in so far as it creates different incentives for these everyday democratic values and habits to be learned. But in the long run it seems that values shape institutions more than institutions shape values.¹⁶ So we would do well to pay much more attention to which particular patterns and arrangements of everyday life tend to give rise to democratic habits, and which do not.

This, then, is the essence of our case for Everyday Democracy, and for the Everyday Democracy Index. If we want to renew democracy, we need to reconnect representative politics and the informal sphere of people’s everyday lives, so that the two support and sustain each other. No model of democracy can succeed in the long term if the effect of its nominal success is to anaesthetise its citizens from the awareness of collective possibility that made it possible in the first place.¹⁷ Instead, we need to extend people’s power

to shape their experience of family life, of the workplace, of their community and of public services, at the same time as we enlarge their freedom to hold politicians to account and participate in political decision-making.

This is a vision of democracy that reserves a central place for the individual, but not for unrestrained individual choice as an end in itself. It emphasises the importance of individuals' engagement in the decisions that affect their lives, but does not claim that to renew democracy everyone must participate in politics all the time. What it says is that any workable approach to democracy today needs to reckon with, and be able to reconcile, our need for both a personal and a collective sense of agency.

The EDI provides a way of measuring how successfully different countries have managed to do this. It measures and compares the lived experience of democracy along six dimensions. Instead of only focusing narrowly on electoral participation and formal political rights, our goal is to capture a richer sense of what it means to live a democratic life. So we explore people's commitment to democratic deliberation as a way of solving problems. We explore democratic empowerment within family life, from the ability to choose family structures to the ability of parents and children to choose their roles within them. We explore people's ability to shape their local public services, like local councils, schools and healthcare. We explore their commitment to and participation in community life. And we explore their experience of working life, and the degree of autonomy their jobs and organisations afford them over what happens nine to five.

In each case, the goal is to show that it is possible to strengthen both personal and collective agency at the same time, but that this does not happen automatically. From the 12 or 13 great, ritual, but fleeting moments in a person's life when they might enter a polling station to cast a vote for a president or parliament, to the thousands of informal interactions they might have every day with their colleagues, family members, teachers, doctors and neighbours, the opportunities to be 'authors of our own scripts' must be compelling and accessible enough to

change the way we feel about collective action as a means of pursuing our goals. As we argue in the chapters that follow, it turns out that the right combination of institutional and cultural supports is crucial in determining whether this is so.

Everyday Democracy and Demos

This is not the first time Demos has explored these ideas. Demos first began to talk about Everyday Democracy in a pamphlet by Tom Bentley published shortly after the UK general election of 2005.¹⁸ But for us, it was simply a new way of describing what Demos had been interested in since it was founded in 1993: the origins of people's dissatisfaction with politics, and the potential sources of democratic renewal, that lay within the big social and economic trends reshaping modern societies. We began to call ourselves 'the think tank for Everyday Democracy', and the idea of Everyday Democracy has been a thread running throughout the work we have done since then, from understanding how users can take the lead in redesigning public services like health and social care,¹⁹ to explaining the role that local communities need to play in combating Europe's terrorist threat,²⁰ to helping the residents of the city of Glasgow imagine a different future for their city in 2020.²¹

But in the two and a half years since the original pamphlet *Everyday Democracy* was published, two questions have preoccupied us. The first was whether our diagnosis of what had been happening to British democracy over the last few decades was also a helpful way of making sense of developments elsewhere. Our growing portfolio of international projects and partnerships, from Finland to France and Belgium to Brazil, had given us a chance to test our ideas and learn from the experience of other countries. But we wanted to develop a way of talking about Everyday Democracy that allowed us to make comparisons between different countries more systematically, and which gave people in those countries a clearer sense of what Everyday Democracy might mean for them.

The second question was an empirical one. We might have found a way of describing Everyday Democracy, but how would we go about measuring it? What were the elements of it that really mattered, and how could we find ways of evaluating them in different places? In philosophy, ‘everydayness’ is an important analytical category, but it is frustratingly rare to come across an ‘everyday’ explanation of ‘everydayness’ that does not veer off into some of the more abstract recesses of phenomenology. But despite the apparent distance between Demos’ version of everydayness and these philosophical variants, we share some of the same concerns: How do we compare and generalise from our individual experiences of everyday life? Can these experiences be translated to a collective, political level? If so, how do we know which everyday things are most valuable?

From trying to answer these questions, the Everyday Democracy Index was born. We chose to start close to home, by looking first at the EU countries. But we believe that the analysis and approach of the EDI could be applied much more widely, and we look forward to doing that in the future; for now, let us lay out the structure of the remainder of this pamphlet, and preview some of its conclusions.

Structure of the pamphlet and key conclusions

In the next chapter, we explain why we think this set of ideas is so important to understanding democracy in Europe. We point to common trends in democratic disengagement across many European countries in recent decades, and argue that the standard institutional reforms proposed in response to these trends are not going to be effective. We tell the story of Hellerup Primary School in Copenhagen, and explain why to us it is an apt example of Everyday Democracy in action, and an illustration of its promise as an account of where the sources of democratic renewal are to be found.

In chapter 3, we review the ways in which scholars and experts, beginning with the pioneering work of Robert Dahl, have sought to translate their conceptions of democracy into something that can be measured and compared across countries. We show how these approaches have informed our own, but also why we think they cannot answer what to us, through the notion of Everyday Democracy, now seem the most pressing questions about democratic renewal.

Readers primarily interested in the technical details of the Index itself should skip straight to chapter 4, which lays out in some detail the design of the EDI and the methodological approach we have pursued in developing it.

By contrast, readers who just want to find out our results should skip straight past chapter 4 to chapter 5. Chapters 5–10 constitute the core of the pamphlet. They explore each of the EDI’s six dimensions in turn, explaining how it has been constructed and how countries compare. Chapter 11 offers an overview and analysis of the Index as a whole, looking both at the overall patterns and their relationship to broader social and economic realities in the countries we have studied. Briefly, we reach four main conclusions:

- First, there is a striking consistency to the results, with a country’s scores on one dimension typically closely related to its scores on the others. This lends support to our claim that the richness of the democratic culture in the domains of everyday life is associated with the strength of democracy in more formal domains.
- Second, there is a clear geographical pattern, with the Scandinavian countries tending to get the highest scores. The northern European nations come next, followed by the southern European nations, with central and eastern Europe tending to score the lowest.
- Third, GDP per capita seems to be a good predictor of EDI scores up to a point, but the relationship then breaks down. This suggests that economic development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for Everyday Democracy: the self-expression values that are an essential part of Everyday Democracy do not come to predominate until a certain

material standard has been reached. But once it is reached, whether these values are translated into a societal commitment to Everyday Democracy depends on institutional and cultural factors not linked to economic development itself.

- Fourth, Everyday Democracy appears to be associated with various other forms of national success, including aggregate levels of life satisfaction and social equality.

We conclude in chapter 12 with a story about the everyday power behind one of European democracy's most iconic moments, and one that for us captures why Everyday Democracy is so important.

2 Europe's democratic malaise

Europe is home to some of the world's oldest democracies, and some of its youngest. Many of the great waves of democratisation over the last two centuries and more – 1789, 1945, 1989 – have crested in Europe. Europe is also home to the European Union, arguably the world's most successful experiment in democracy promotion. Of the 27 countries that constitute its member states today, almost half had previously been authoritarian regimes shortly before joining, and the EU can claim a fair share of the credit for their transition to democracy.

Yet less than 20 years after celebrating their defeat of communism, European democracies young and old are beset by a malaise that they cannot shake off. This malaise manifests itself differently in different places, but it is pervasive, and persistent. In 'old' Europe – the western European countries that were members of the EU before 2004 – it is marked by the gradual erosion of the cultural and institutional bases of representative democracy; in the central and eastern European accession countries of 'new' Europe, by the failure to consolidate these bases now that the democratic euphoria of the early 1990s has subsided.

The most visible expression of this democratic malaise is declining electoral participation. Table 3 reports trends in voter turnout in European countries since 1978.

On average, turnout in these countries has fallen by more than 2.5 per cent per election. Turnout has consistently fallen in 17 of the 27 countries, and fluctuated up and down in the other ten. In no countries has it consistently risen. Historic post-war lows in electoral turnout were recorded in the Netherlands in 1998, in Austria and Portugal in 1999, in Spain in 2000, in Britain and Italy in 2001, in Ireland

Table 3 **Decline in electoral turnout, 1978-2007**

Country	Number of elections in period	Lowest turnout (%)	Highest turnout (%)	Average (%)	Consistent trend? ^b	Trend in turnout per election ^c (%)	Electoral system ^d
Slovenia	4	60.6	85.9	72.7	Yes	-7.92	PR
Lithuania ^a	5	52.5	78.6	62.3	Yes	-7.32	TRS
Slovakia	6	54.7	96.3	77.6	Yes	-6.94	PR
Czech Republic	6	57.9	96.3	75.7	Yes	-6.89	PR
Bulgaria	5	55.8	83.9	68.0	Yes	-6.48	PR
Romania	4	58.5	76.3	69.0	Yes	-6.41	PR
Estonia	6	57.4	78.2	65.3	Yes	-3.60	PR
Portugal	10	61.1	87.5	72.2	Yes	-2.95	PR
UK	7	59.4	77.8	70.6	Yes	-2.66	FPTP
Ireland	7	62.6	76.2	69.7	Yes	-2.11	STV
Austria	8	80.4	92.6	86.8	Yes	-1.59	PR
Germany	8	77.7	89.1	82.2	Yes	-1.56	MMP
Sweden	8	80.1	91.4	86.8	Yes	-1.53	PR
Greece	8	75.0	84.5	79.4	Yes	-1.46	PR
Cyprus	6	89.0	95.7	92.6	Yes	-1.32	PR
Italy	8	81.4	90.4	86.2	Yes	-1.25	PR
Belgium	8	90.6	94.6	92.8	Yes	-0.61	PR
Latvia	5	71.2	89.9	77.2	No	-3.80	PR
Hungary	5	56.7	75.4	67.8	No	-1.74	MMP
Poland ^a	4	51.0	68.2	58.4	No	-1.43	TRS
Netherlands	8	73.2	87	80.6	No	-1.17	PR
France ^a	5	79.7	84.2	82.2	No	-0.33	TRS
Denmark	11	82.8	89.9	86.2	No	-0.32	PR
Finland	7	68.3	81.3	73.9	No	-0.24	PR
Malta	6	94.6	97.2	95.8	No	0.13	STV
Luxembourg	6	86.5	91.7	88.6	No	0.23	PR
Spain	8	68.1	79.8	73.5	No	0.33	PR
ALL	—	69.9	85.9	77.6	—	-2.63	—
EU15	—	76.3	87.1	81.5	—	-1.20	—
NMS12	—	64.0	85.0	76.0	—	-4.00	—
CEE10	—	52.4	75.4	63.1	—	-4.80	—

Source: Authors' calculations using data from International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; data updated through September 2007

Notes:

- a Presidential elections
- b Defined as consistent if R² of regression line greater than 0.6
- c Least squares regression coefficient

d PR, list proportional representation; TRS, two-round system; FPTP, first-past-the-post; STV, single transferable vote; MMP, mixed member proportional

EU15, 15 western European EU members before 2004 accession; NMS12, 12 new member states who joined in 2004 and 2007; CEE10, ten central and eastern European EU members (NMS12 without Cyprus and Malta).

in 2002 and in Germany in 2005. There is also a big divide between Europe's established and newer democracies. In the 15 'old' European (pre-2004 accession) countries, turnout has fallen by an average of 1.2 per cent per election over the last 30 years, while in the central and east European countries that joined the EU after 2004, turnouts have both been lower on average (by almost 12 per cent) and have fallen more quickly, by an average of 4.8 per cent per election since they began to be held after 1990.

Voter turnout is not the only sign of this malaise. Evidence from different national election studies shows consistently declining levels of political trust and party identification:²²

- Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, public trust in government has fallen on average by about 0.8 per cent *every year* in Britain and by about 1.1 per cent every year in Italy.
- In the same period, the proportion of people who think that politicians lose touch with the public as soon as they are elected has increased on average by about 0.6 per cent every year in Austria and Sweden, and by about 0.5 per cent every year in Finland and Germany.
- From 1980 to 2000, party membership in the established democracies of western Europe almost halved.
- Since 1980, political parties in Britain have on average lost one of their members approximately every 12 minutes.
- In Ireland, between 1978 and 1999, the proportion of people who identify with a political party fell on average by about 1.5 per cent per year; in Italy and Austria, over a similar period, by about 1 per cent per year; and in France and Sweden, by about 0.7 per cent per year.

We describe these trends in this way not in order to claim that they are exactly linear but to make the point that the decline in support for representative institutions has been more erosion than earthquake: it has been gradual, but persistent, and in the long term, dramatic.

Why it matters

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to ask whether any of this really matters. In our view, two principles ought to guide the way we think about that question. The first principle is moderation. In itself, this malaise is not yet a crisis: if it were, it would have been easier to spot, and easier to rally support for addressing it. While there are similarities between the present discontent and the dissatisfaction with democracy that surfaced in Europe, with disastrous consequences, in the interwar years, the social and cultural conditions are so dramatically different as to make a Weimar scenario highly unlikely. Scholars have also cried wolf before: in the mid-1970s, Samuel Huntington warned of an imminent crisis of western democracy, which then failed to materialise.²³

But the second principle is the precautionary principle. We should have no truck with the fatalistic and complacent view that democratic disengagement doesn't matter, that it is inevitable or, worse, that it is a sign of our underlying contentment.²⁴ The truth is that we don't know for sure how much it matters: we are in uncharted territory, because earlier challenges to democratic governments resulted from excessively authoritarian instincts, not excessively democratic ones. What we can say from recent experience is that by weakening the legitimacy of politics itself, this malaise makes four risks more pronounced.

The first risk is that without a sufficient degree of popular legitimacy European governments will find it harder and harder to dispose of the complex problems their countries now face – from reforming their labour markets and welfare systems to tackling climate change and managing much higher levels of migration. There are no easy answers to these questions. Many involve trade-offs, distributional choices or outright sacrifices: to persuade people to reduce their carbon footprint, should we make it more expensive to fly, or make it more expensive to heat their homes? Many involve challenging existing social norms and expectations: to shore up pensions systems, is it better to compel older workers to work longer, or younger workers to save more and pay higher taxes? And many involve

a more intrusive role for public policy in people's everyday lives: to tackle Europe's emerging obesity epidemic, should parents be held more accountable for their children's diet? Should overweight people be denied access to health treatment? Should food be taxed according to its nutritional value? What all these problems have in common is that their solutions depend on the consent and participation of citizens themselves – and in the present climate, they seem less willing to give it.

The second risk is that the difficulty of governing creates openings for extremists who promise disgruntled electorates that they can wish these difficulties away, as the rise and in some cases election to high office of far-right parties and candidates in France, Austria, the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe attests. It is true that where these parties have made it into government, they have frequently found the responsibility of office more challenging than the irresponsibility of opposition, and their popular support or internal cohesion has crumbled under the strain. But their capacity to foment tensions between different communities should not be underestimated, especially when those tensions outlast their often brief tenure in power. The evidence also suggests that political distrust tends to stimulate higher levels of unconventional, elite-challenging political action – including violence.²⁵

The third risk is the one that faces the European Union itself, which has been among the biggest victims of this malaise. By any reckoning, the EU's achievements in the last 25 years have been extraordinary: the completion of the single market, the resolution of the German question, monetary union, eastern enlargement. Similarly, by any reckoning the EU will be an indispensable part of any coherent response to the challenges facing European countries in the future. Yet after the French and the Dutch referendums in 2005 yielded a decisive 'No' to the proposed EU constitution, the Union has been plunged into a fit of despair about its supposed 'democratic deficit'. The European Commission has launched its Plan D for

Democracy programme²⁶ to try to bring the EU closer to its citizens. This is no doubt a noble aim, and the EU has certainly not helped its cause by some of the bureaucratic excesses that emanate from Brussels. But what few seem prepared to admit is that the real origins of the EU's democratic deficit, if it has one, lie in the national capitals more than in Brussels. For example, the evidence suggests that most Europeans – and especially those in the new member states – trust the EU significantly more than they trust their own national parliaments and governments.²⁷ Moreover, the referendum 'No' votes themselves almost certainly had little to do with the content of the constitution itself, since the campaigns in France and the Netherlands were dominated by largely unrelated, but domestically salient, political issues.²⁸ The EU may have caught the democratic malaise, but it was Europe's national democracies that infected it, and which can probably do most to cure it.

The final risk is that we simply don't have a lot of experience of how democratic systems change and renew themselves. That's partly because democracy, and certainly the expectation that it would become a universal norm, is a fairly recent phenomenon.²⁹ But it's also because the most radical innovations in governance – like the EU itself – have frequently arisen in response to the experience or imperatives of war,³⁰ moments when the whole social and institutional fabric has been ripped up and remade. Today's times call for a more routine process of renewal, but one that is in some ways more difficult because the urgency of change is less palpable and the templates for change less familiar.

Awakening

The good news is that within and outside the EU, Europe's publics and policy-makers are waking up to the danger.

The Scandinavian countries have been in the lead. In 1997, the Norwegian parliament commissioned a five-year study 'Power and Democracy in Norway'.³¹ It reported back in 2003, concluding that 'the parliamentary chain of government

is weakened in every link'.³² The Swedish government was so shaken by falling voter turnout that it established its own Commission on Swedish Democracy in 1997, and followed that a year later with the appointment of a Minister for Democratic Issues and the reservation of a special place for democracy issues in the 2001 Budget Bill. In 2002, it introduced the 'Democracy in the New Century Act', and more recently has established *Participating Sweden*, a three-year programme to promote public participation.³³ Spurred on by its Scandinavian neighbours, the Finnish government of Matti Vanhanen concluded in 2005 that 'it is now time to subject democracy to a kind of "general checkup"' and launched a Citizen Participation Programme.³⁴

But this introspective mood has spread beyond Scandinavia. To inform its own democracy programme, the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations commissioned researchers to find out what other OECD countries were doing to make democracy more robust.³⁵

In the UK, the Power Inquiry's 2006 report into the causes of public disaffection with politics, *Power to the People*, offered a devastating critique of a political system 'significantly out of step with the values, expectations and interests of the individuals and many groupings that make up British society'. It made a raft of recommendations designed to allow citizens 'a more direct and focused influence on the political decisions that concern them' and 'bring greater flexibility and responsiveness to politics so that new alliances can form and new ways of debating be generated'.³⁶ While the Labour government's response to the report was initially muted, and opposition party leaders were the first to embrace its conclusions, it proved influential with the new administration under Gordon Brown. One of Gordon Brown's first acts as prime minister was to publish a wide-ranging green paper, 'The governance of Britain',³⁷ which accepted many of the Power Inquiry's criticisms, and sketched out a broad set of policy proposals for constitutional modernisation and devolving more power to local communities.

These efforts are important and welcome, not least in creating lines in the sand. As 12-step addiction programmes remind their users, the first step on the road to recovery is to admit you have a problem. They are also a welcome corrective to the hubris of the immediate post-Cold War period, when the triumph of liberal democracy created a degree of complacency about what would be required to sustain it.

The problem with some of these efforts is that they tend to look for explanations close to home, in specific events or scandals that have seemed particularly toxic to public confidence in politics: Watergate in the US, the 'cash-for-questions' affair in the UK, the strains of unification in Germany, the six-fold increase in corruption convictions among elected officials from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s in France.³⁸ Yet logically it makes little sense for common cross-national trends to have specific local causes. As Russell Dalton puts it, 'the pattern [of political disengagement] is generally apparent across nations – which tends to discount "proper name" explanations that are linked to the unique history, or policy performance of the nation'.³⁹ This is not to deny the possibility that scandals and other 'proper name' events have had a catalytic effect on declining confidence. But they are more likely to be a proximate than an underlying cause.

They also tend to focus on institutional fixes to the problem: more proportional voting systems, more power devolved from the centre to the local, greater use of citizens' juries and other novel methods for involving the public in decision-making. Again, the value of a comparative approach is that it exposes how inadequate institutional reengineering is likely to be as a solution. For the very institutional models being offered as a panacea in one country already exist in plenty of other countries that are nevertheless still suffering from the same democratic malaise: they have not helped, or at most have only partially helped, to protect against it. That is not to say that there may not be good arguments for reform, but rather that the promise of immediately restoring the public's faith in politics is unlikely to be one of them.

Take proportional representation (PR), for instance. It is often claimed that voter turnout is higher in systems that use proportional representation compared with first-past-the-post (FPTP), and it is – by about 6 per cent on average.⁴⁰ But it is wrong to conclude from this, as many in Britain have, that switching to PR will help reverse the decline in turnout. In the first place, there is no clear evidence that PR systems have fared better in preventing the decline in electoral turnout – as table 3 showed, it has occurred consistently across countries with very different electoral systems. Second, where countries have switched to PR, the results – at least in relation to turnout – have been disappointing. When New Zealand switched to PR in the mid-1990s it experienced a brief improvement in turnout in the first election when PR was used, but steep declines in the subsequent three elections, reaching a level substantially below where it was under FPTP. Now, there are good arguments besides turnout for switching to PR, not least among them political equality: PR systems tend to do a better job of engaging those least interested in politics – and hence most likely to stay at home on polling day – than FPTP systems; they tend to promote voter choice by making a larger number of political parties viable; they tend to increase the formal political representation of women and minorities; and they are associated with lower levels of income inequality.⁴¹ All of these are important potential benefits, which in the long term could yield dividends. But by itself none of these institutional effects is likely to turn around the long-term trends in democratic disengagement.

The lesson applies more broadly. We need to consider more than just different institutional designs for democracy: we need to understand the cultures that sustain them, and the places in which these cultures develop. If, as we argued in chapter 1, these places are primarily the everyday spaces in which people spend their time, that means we need to find new ways to understand and measure what is going on within them. Before we do so, let us take a closer look at what one such space looks like.

Hellerup Primary School: democracy through education, and education through democracy

Jane Jacobs said that ‘the look of things and the way they work are inextricably bound together’,⁴² and a glance inside Hellerup Primary School, near Copenhagen, shows what she meant. Instead of crowded, narrow stairwells there are wide, wood-panelled stairs that double as seats for meetings and presentations. The light, open space is divided not into classrooms but into a number of different ‘home areas’ to promote visibility and interaction between different parts of the school. Each class begins the year with an important project. After the teachers have discussed with them the idea of different ‘learning styles’ and the options that are available to them, the pupils work together to design and construct their own home area. They might have cushions or pillows in a shaded area for reading, while in another place they may decide to put some tables or chairs.

Johan Abrahamsen, 12, has been a pupil at Hellerup since it opened its doors seven years ago. The pupils have a different schedule from week to week, so Johan and his fellow pupils meet their teacher each week to agree what they are going to cover. There are several meeting spaces in the school designed for making such decisions. Rather than having ‘lessons’ as such, Johan says the teachers give them ‘tasks’. When the teacher has explained the task, the pupils have the responsibility of deciding where in the school to go and do it. ‘Since we are all spread out we know the teacher can’t get to us all; this means we learn really quickly to ask each other before the teacher if we have a problem. Of course some children make the wrong choice – and they have to live with the consequences of that. This means staying with the teacher or going back to the home area.’

Johan thinks this gives pupils at Hellerup a powerful responsibility for their peers. ‘The teachers make clear to us the dangers of abusing the system – they tell us that you can ruin a person’s future life by destroying their school time – and we take that seriously I think.’

As well as this day-to-day decision-making, the pupils at Hellerup are also involved in a range of more formal structures.

Two pupils are elected to sit on the school board, where they play a role in all decisions except personnel matters. Each class also elects a council that meets once a month, and brings issues to the school board. Johan himself also sits on a regional schools' council that reports to the mayor of the city council. Some of these structures are mandated under Danish legislation requiring schools to teach their pupils about democracy. But for Johan it is the informal culture of reciprocity, not the formal structure, that is the real learning experience. 'Democracy', he says, 'is about taking responsibility for the other students.' Headteacher Knud Nordentoft agrees that it's not the legal obligations but the broader culture that counts: 'I think Hellerup is democratic because everything is visible, open – right from the design to the way we work, the demands of teachers, the choices of students and how they take responsibility and are accountable for them.' Johan understands that Hellerup is not like other schools, and the effect this has had on his own development. 'There are lots of schools where you just have your own little table and your own little chair,' he says, 'but we have to know how to move around, how to cooperate, to be a team, to work in a group and to understand which role we suit best in that group.' Johan's mum, Mette, has noticed the same thing. 'The way the school works has had a huge influence on Johan's life outside the classroom. He's a very reflexive 12-year-old and it's not only about how he is as a person, it's about the way he works in a team or a group.'

But he also recognises that it isn't right for everyone. 'Some children get "lost" in a school like ours and work much better in a "tables and chairs school",' he says. The same goes for teachers: some have left after only a short time 'because they just didn't get how we work here'. As a parent herself, Mette recognises that when children first go to Hellerup it can be tough on their parents: 'Just to get their child fit for going to this type of school... is demanding on new parents. They think it is going to be just like when they went to school but it really isn't. For some people I think it takes time to get used to the responsibility.'

Looking to the future, Johan says that he would like to become a journalist, and live and work in the Middle East.

It's hard to think of a better preparation for that kind of responsibility than the one he has received at Hellerup. Unlike many his age, what Johan has learnt at school is not just how to survive the system but how to shape it – how to make responsible choices, personally and collectively, and be accountable for them.

In the prospectus announcing the plan to build Hellerup, the local city council of Gentofte wrote: 'Our changeable and unpredictable world calls for a school of a character not yet built.' It seems with Hellerup that they have answered that call. They have done so in part through institutional innovations, like doing away with some of the traditional structures of lessons and classrooms. But the key point is that those institutional innovations were only possible, and only successful, because of the cultures, practices and relationships Hellerup has managed to foster among its students and their parents. That's why it is such an apt metaphor for Everyday Democracy in action: it shows that with the right kinds of support, the most everyday routines have the potential to become something altogether transformational. How well countries are doing in providing that support, and what that means for the health of their democracy, is what we try to measure through the EDI. First, though, let us briefly review how others have approached the task of measuring democracy.

3 Measuring democracy

A brief history

The pioneer of attempts to measure and compare democracy in different countries was the American political scientist Robert Dahl. Beginning in the 1950s, Dahl's goal was to define what democracy meant in an age of large nation states, why it was desirable, and how it could be achieved. His key accomplishment was to specify a set of minimum conditions that needed to be in place for a political system to be considered a democracy – or, since he considered democracy in its true sense to be unattainable at the scale of a modern state, a 'polyarchy'. In his classic 1971 work, *Polyarchy*, Dahl explained that the key characteristics of a democratic regime were contestation and participation – competition for public power, and the right to participate in that competition. These characteristics could be defined in terms of eight key conditions: the control of government bureaucracy by elected officials; regular, free and fair elections; universal suffrage; freedom to run for office; freedom of political leaders to compete for support and votes; freedom of speech; freedom to form and join associations; and access to alternative sources of information. As Dahl saw it, at that point in the early 1970s fewer than 30 countries scored well enough on these criteria to be considered democracies.⁴³

Dahl's interest was perhaps more philosophical than empirical. It fell to Finnish political scientist Tatu Vanhanen fully to operationalise the notion of polyarchy. Vanhanen accepted Dahl's twin characteristics of contestation and participation as the key features of democracy, but sought a simpler way of capturing them empirically. He reduced them to just two measures: the share of the electoral vote achieved by parties other than the winning party (which indicates the degree of competition), and the proportion of people who

actually voted in the election (which indicates the degree of participation). The advantage of this simplicity is that it allowed Vanhanen to track changes in democratisation over a very long period and for a large number of countries: his Index covers 187 countries from 1810 to 2000.⁴⁴

Ted Robert Gurr shared Vanhanen's interest in taking both a historical and a comparative view of democratisation. In the 1970s, Gurr, then a professor at Northwestern University, initiated the Polity project. While it has evolved considerably over the years, the focus of the Polity data is on patterns of authority within political regimes, and how these have changed over time. It uses a longer, more complex, and more subjective list of variables to measure the relative degree of democracy and autocracy within a political system at a given point in time, and also records any significant changes in this (that is, any indications of a transition to a different type of regime).⁴⁵

It would be wrong to say that these scholars took an entirely objective view of their subject matter; all were to some extent interested in promoting democracy, even if only by improving our understanding of how democratisation occurred. But for Raymond Gastil and Freedom House, the non-profit advocacy organisation whose annual survey 'Freedom in the World' he directed from 1972 to 1989, this was a particular priority. Freedom House had begun producing assessments of global trends in political freedom in the 1950s, but it wasn't until 1972 that it launched the index for which it has become famous. Using a methodology initially developed by Gastil and refined several times over the course of the last 35 years, Freedom House has provided annual ratings of political rights and civil liberties for what is now a list of 193 countries and 15 territories, and given an overall label to each of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free.⁴⁶

While they pursued different approaches, Dahl, Vanhanen, Gurr and Gastil shared a common agenda. For each of them, the fundamental question was why and whether some countries make the transition from authoritarianism to democracy, and so the key empirical challenge was to define and measure the point at which they stopped being one and

became the other. For the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart, writing in the early 1980s, looking at all countries and asking which qualified as democracies was less interesting than looking only at those that definitely did qualify and asking what kind of democracy they were. His seminal 1984 work, *Democracies*, explored what he saw as the two key dimensions along which democratic systems varied: on the one hand, how power was attained and dispersed within the executive, which was very different under the consensual style of, say, the Austrian system than under the more majoritarian approach of, say, the French system; and on the other hand, how power was shared between different tiers of government, with much more powerful sub-national and local governments in a decentralised, federal system like Germany's compared with a centralised, unitary state like Britain.⁴⁷ Part of his project was to illustrate the variety within democratic systems, and to show that the Westminster-style model was neither the definitive nor in many cases the most suitable democratic model. More recently, Lijphart has sought to illustrate the relationship between institutional design and economic and political performance. Questioning the conventional wisdom that majoritarian systems are less inclusive but more effective, he argues that more consensual systems actually outperform more majoritarian ones on a range of measures of democratic quality and governing performance.⁴⁸

Measuring culture

At the same time as political scientists have been developing new approaches to the measurement of political systems, they have also sought more precise ways of understanding the political cultures that surround and support them. In their classic 1963 work, *The Civic Culture*, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba kickstarted the trend by using large-scale survey data to compare the political attitudes and behaviour of citizens in the US, UK, West Germany, Italy and Mexico.⁴⁹ Almond and Verba wanted to apply the kinds of quantitative techniques that had become popular in psychology and sociology to the

analysis of an issue that political scientists had to that point treated in purely qualitative terms. Their conclusions about the divergent character of the political culture in different systems opened up whole new avenues of enquiry, and made *The Civic Culture* one of the most influential social science texts of the second half of the twentieth century.

One beneficiary of this lifting of horizons was the American political scientist Ronald Inglehart. Inglehart's initial interest was in using the techniques of cross-national surveying pioneered by Almond and Verba to investigate whether the generation of Europeans who had grown up in the relative peace and prosperity of the post-war period had developed distinctive social values from their parents, whose formative experiences had included the devastation of two world wars and the economic slump of the 1930s. In a widely cited book published in 1977, *The Silent Revolution*,⁵⁰ he concluded that they had: they were less likely to focus on satisfying their immediate material needs for physical and financial security, and more likely to focus on 'post-material' values such as a concern for the environment and for women's rights. Later, Inglehart began to see a connection between his work on values and the idea of a democratic trajectory that Dahl and others had been grappling with. Democratic development did not end with the achievement of 'polyarchy', however it was defined, said Inglehart. Instead, as societies entered a 'post-modern' phase of development, they encountered a new and challenging orientation among their citizens: less deferent to authority, more preoccupied with individual self-expression, and more critical and demanding of government. This gave rise to the paradox in popular support for democracy that we noted earlier: 'Respect for the political leaders is generally declining in advanced industrial societies; but support for democratic principles is rising.'⁵¹

The most direct and certainly the most famous intellectual heir to Almond and Verba is Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam. Putnam shot to fame when the results of a 20-year study of Italian government were published in 1993 in a book called *Making Democracy Work*.⁵² Putnam and

his colleagues wanted to know what explained the difference in the performance of the regional governments in the north of Italy compared with the south. Their answer was based on what was then a rather obscure sociological concept but which has now become one of the most widely popularised in the social sciences: social capital. Putnam defined social capital as 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action'⁷ – in other words the character and vibrancy of associational life in a community. In *Making Democracy Work*, and later in studies of the US, Putnam showed that social capital was strongly linked to the performance of governing institutions as well as to a wide array of social outcomes from public safety to health.⁵³

Beyond the academy

Over the last ten years these comparative approaches to measuring democracy and governance have proliferated. In a recent review of the literature, the team behind the Ibrahim Index of African Governance – itself a new addition to the governance measurement stable – identified around 100 relevant projects.⁵⁴ But as well as growing in number they have also moved rapidly from academia to the media and policy mainstream, where they are now taken very seriously as tools for monitoring governing performance and driving policy decisions.

In the mid-1990s, the World Bank published its first set of Worldwide Governance Indicators. Now updated annually, the Worldwide Governance Indicators draw on the judgements of a wide range of sources – risk-rating agencies, NGOs, country experts in multilateral bodies, surveys of individuals and firms and so on – to deliver a quantitative assessment of countries' performance along six dimensions of good governance.⁵⁵ The Bank emphasises that these scores are not used to allocate resources or for other official purposes, and that the Governance Indicators reflect the views of their authors rather than the Bank itself. However, that does not prevent them being used by others

for these purposes, and this is what has happened with the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Accounts (MCA) programme. Under the MCA, aid is meant to flow to developing countries that are well governed and that can thus be relied on to use it effectively. These countries' scores on the Governance Indicators and other indices thus affect whether they qualify for development assistance.⁵⁶

While formally outside government, Freedom House's annual index Freedom in the World has become particularly influential, especially in the US where, as one commentator wryly observed, 'the bipartisan US establishment and media accord these documents some of the quasi-religious authority given in the Soviet Union to the pronouncements of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism on the progress of socialism in the world'.⁵⁷

Room for one more?

For those interested in comparing democracies, there is now a vast array of different approaches to choose from. So why have we decided to enter such a crowded and competitive field? The answer is largely because we are interested in different things. We want to apply the principles and approaches pioneered by others to accomplish somewhat different aims – to stand on the shoulders of giants, but use the vantage point that it gives us to look in a different direction.

First, we follow Lijphart in wanting to approach the measurement of democracy with a finer-grained scale. An index that is great at pointing out the differences between Burma and Belgium will almost certainly have little to say about the differences between Finland and France. The reverse is also true, up to a point: exploring Everyday Democracy in a country in which the most basic human rights are not respected probably won't get you far. But, as Fareed Zakaria has pointed out in his work on the rise of 'illiberal democracies', there are plenty of places where the existence of formal democratic rights doesn't necessarily translate into much substantive democracy in people's everyday lives.⁵⁸

This underlines the importance of taking what has been called 'an experiential approach' to measuring democracy.⁵⁹

Second, our diagnosis of what has been happening to mature and maturing democracies leads us to an interest in countries' democratic culture, and how it relates to its formal electoral and procedural processes, rather than fixating on those more formal arenas alone. In that sense we want to follow the trail blazed by Almond and Verba and Putnam. But our account of democracy makes us particularly interested in the broader range of everyday spaces in which that culture develops – not just community life but in families, workplaces and public services.

Third, this interest in the relationship between people's everyday lives and the institutions that govern them requires that we draw not just on the history of measuring democracy but on the renewed scholarly interest in finding a different way to think about institutions. This began in the 1980s with the rise of the 'new institutionalism'.⁶⁰ While they are a broad and diverse church, the new institutionalists share an interest in the idea that institutions cannot be understood simply by their formal rules and structures alone. Instead, their approach invites us to explore the ways in which practices, patterns of behaviour and conventions breathe life into these formal frameworks.⁶¹ This approach has gradually revolutionised our understanding of how institutions work, and how they change.

In particular, three of the new institutionalism's 'big ideas' have influenced our thinking on the EDI. The first big idea is the 'stickiness' of institutions. As anyone who has worked in any organisation will attest, institutional life is much more resilient and resistant to change in practice than it appears on paper. New habits are hard to learn; old habits, once acquired, hard to dispense with. Management teams can be reshuffled, organograms rearranged, and job descriptions rewritten, without it affecting the lives of people working in the organisation in the slightest. That's why institutional fixes so often fail to achieve their goals.

The second big idea is that, because they shape and are shaped by the everyday routines of the people working within and around them, institutions are more complex, unpredictable and uncontrollable than they might appear or than those charged with leading them might like. Accident, not just design, provides institutions with a guiding hand.

The third big idea, which builds on the first two, is that evolution frequently provides a more fitting metaphor for institutions than revolution. Because old habits die hard, change is slow and incremental and early choices, even ostensibly trivial or innocuous ones, are more important than later ones. That is because they push future development down particular avenues from which it is then more difficult to retreat – a process known as ‘path dependence’.⁶² As a result, gradual processes of institutional development that are difficult to discern in the short term may, like evolution, result in dramatically different outcomes in the long term. This point will be particularly important when we consider the possible explanations for the patterns we observe for the countries in our study. Let us now explain how we approached the task of identifying those patterns.

4 Designing the Everyday Democracy Index

Overview, choices and methods

Debating the merits and shortfalls of different approaches to measuring democracy has become virtually a sub-field of political science, with countless articles published in the scholarly journals.⁶³ Yet the results of these debates have been inconclusive.⁶⁴ The same applies to the construction of indices more generally, where a wide variety of approaches have been used.⁶⁵

This diversity of opinion underlines the importance of being as transparent as possible about the decisions we have made in the design of the Everyday Democracy Index. Transparency will not only allow those using the Index to understand how we have arrived at our conclusions, but will also invite the kind of criticisms that will help us to refine and improve our methodology in future.

Seven main design issues need to be addressed:

- general principles
- choosing dimensions and variables
- imputation of missing data
- normalisation
- weighting
- aggregation
- interpretation

Although some of these issues are ostensibly rather technical, they also raise important conceptual issues about how we should think about Everyday Democracy.

General principles

First, we recognise that the case for Everyday Democracy we have sketched out is at least partly a normative claim. Those who reject it on principle will find much to object to in the way we have gone about measuring it. The best we can do is to be clear about where we are coming from. What we do not accept, especially when we are looking just within the EU, is the idea that democracy is so culturally relativist that we cannot or ought not to say anything about cross-national differences at all.⁶⁶ If our dimensions or the indicators that comprise them go against the grain of the social norms of some countries more than others, so be it.

Second, rather than focus only on institutions in a formal sense, we make extensive use of survey data to provide a portrait of people's lived experiences of those institutions. As a result, a number of the indicators we use blend citizens' assessments of their institutional environment – how much autonomy they perceive themselves to have in the workplace, for instance – with their sense of their own ability to transcend this environment. We take the view that it does not matter very much that the two cannot be easily separated. For example, if the data show that women are expected to operate within significantly more constrained gender roles in some countries than in others, we don't necessarily need to know whether this is because women can't escape these expectations or because they don't want to; for our purposes, what matters is that the constraint is more binding in one place than another. Another, more philosophical, way to say this is that we believe that in relatively free societies, citizens have to bear some responsibility for the quality of their governance – that 'in the end, we get the politicians we deserve'⁶⁷ and, we might add, the institutions too.

Choosing dimensions and indicators

The EDI is composed of six dimensions, which, drawing on Demos' work over recent years, we believe capture the core elements of what it means to live a democratic life. The dimensions are as follows:

- 1 *Electoral and Procedural democracy*: the basic integrity of the formal political system. To what extent does this country get the basics right? To what extent do people value the right to vote that is the foundation of democracy?
- 2 *Activism and civic Participation*: the associational life that surrounds these formal institutions. How vibrant is it?
- 3 *Aspiration and Deliberation*: the broad cultural orientation to democratic practice. How much do people value democracy as a way of solving problems?
- 4 *Family democracy*: the degree of empowerment in relation to family structures and roles within them. How free are people to choose the kind of family structure they want? What roles are expected of women and children, and how able are they to define these roles for themselves?
- 5 *Workplace democracy*: the degree of empowerment in relation to daily working life. How much autonomy do workers have over their tasks? How much creativity can they show? How much can they influence what happens to them in the workplace?
- 6 *Democratic Public Services*: the degree of empowerment in public services. What channels for formal control or engagement exist? Do citizens see themselves as 'co-producers' of public services?

Trying to find ways of translating these six broad dimensions into a concise set of measures is a real challenge, particularly when there are serious constraints in the type, quality and coverage of the data that are available. Nevertheless, we have identified a small number of indicators – three to five for each dimension – which together seem to capture some essential aspect of Everyday Democracy.⁶⁸ We use 21 indicators in total.

It is worth emphasising that we selected our dimensions first, and then found indicators that were good proxies for them. It would have been possible to do it the other way around: to select a set of indicators that we thought were good proxies for Everyday Democracy, and then use a statistical technique like Principal Components Analysis (discussed below) to identify specific clusters of indicators that seemed to go together.⁶⁹ Our reason for pursuing the

former rather than the latter strategy is simply that we felt that, based on Demos' previous work, we were on firmer theoretical ground specifying the general dimensions of Everyday Democracy than particular measures of it.

Imputation of missing data: filling in the blanks

Unfortunately, there were significant problems with data availability for two of the smallest countries in our sample, Cyprus and Malta. They were missing scores on two whole dimensions and therefore had to be excluded from the overall analysis. Otherwise, the only dimension where we experienced any problems with missing data was the Public Services dimension, where observations for four of the remaining 25 countries were missing and had to be estimated. We decided to base these countries' score on the first two measures alone. To give us some sense of the margin of error of this estimate, we also calculated an alternative measure by using a regression technique to impute scores on the third indicator for those countries with missing observations based on their scores on the first two indicators. This margin of error is reported in the relevant figure.

Normalisation: comparing like with like

The underlying data we are using for our measures are of many different types. Given this variety, it would be tricky to compare them – they are apples and oranges. There are many different ways to get around this problem, but all have drawbacks, and ultimately the decision rests on what we want the data to do.

Our approach has been to re-scale all of our measures into indicators that have a range from 0 to 10, with the country with the highest score on that indicator receiving a 10, that with the lowest score a 0, and the others falling in between with their score reflecting their relative distance from this maximum and minimum.⁷⁰ The great advantage of this approach is that it provides a simple way of making comparisons across countries at a given moment in time, while

retaining more of the information about relative performance than a simple ranking would do.

One disadvantage is that it draws attention to relative performance rather than absolute performance. Because the benchmarks are set by what other countries have achieved, rather than what it is hypothetically possible to achieve, it could imply that we are saying that the top performers are 'perfect' when in reality we recognise that there could still be lots of room for improvement. Another disadvantage is that this relative approach does not provide a stable basis for making comparisons over time. This is because countries' scores are not calculated with reference to a fixed point but rather to the values of the best and worst performing countries in a given year. This means that change in a country's score from one year to the next could reflect an absolute movement in its performance on the underlying measure (which is what we would want to capture), but it could equally reflect a relative movement because the score of the best or worst performing country has changed. To get round this, one would want to make the reference point an absolute value that did not change from year to year or with the performance of other countries, but this is not altogether straightforward.⁷¹

On balance, we think that for the purposes of this version of the EDI, the advantages of our approach outweigh the disadvantages. But it is an issue we will need to revisit, and possibly revise, in future versions if we want to be able to capture changes over time.⁷²

Weighting: deciding what counts most

Deciding how the components of an index are to be weighted is often the most controversial part of designing it, and again there are a number of competing schools of thought on the best approach. The most common approach is to assign equal weights to all variables.⁷³ This is attractive for its simplicity and because it removes any hint of arbitrariness. But it also implies that the marginal contribution of each indicator to a given dimension, or of each dimension to the Index as a whole,

is identical – that is, that they are ‘worth’ the same. This is quite a strong normative as well as empirical claim. While it is reasonable for this to be the default assumption in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary,⁷⁴ it also makes sense to look for an alternative method of assigning weights. Our preferred approach is to use Principal Components Analysis (PCA).⁷⁵ PCA is a technique for understanding the relationships between a number of different variables to see whether they can be reduced to a smaller number of latent ‘components’ which cannot be observed or measured directly. PCA is a useful way of generating weights because it allows you to put more emphasis on those variables that most closely correlate with the underlying construct that you are interested in. We therefore use PCA to construct weights first for the indicators within each dimension, and then for the dimensions that make up the overall EDI score.⁷⁶ To check the sensitivity of our analysis to our choice of weighting scheme, we repeated the construction of the EDI using equal weights within dimensions and between dimensions and found that it made very little difference to the results.

Attempts have been made to use participatory approaches in the design of weights. These have included giving a group of experts a fixed budget to allocate to the indicators they think are most important. That opens up the intriguing possibility of using ‘democratic weights’ – users’ own judgements about what is most important – to refine the EDI, and this is something we hope to explore in the future.⁷⁷

Aggregation: bringing it all together

Along with weighting, the method of aggregating scores on individual indicators into a composite is another crucial and controversial aspect of designing an index.⁷⁸ Again, an ostensibly technical choice actually reflects a key conceptual dilemma. This dilemma boils down to three issues.

The first is whether we think that our variables are ‘substitutes’ or ‘complements’. If they are substitutes, then

we should make it easy to compensate for a low score on one indicator or one dimension with a higher score on another. In this view, what matters is simply how much you have, rather than the mix,⁷⁹ and so linear aggregation rules (ie adding up indicators) are appropriate. However, if they are complements, it implies that there are certain synergies between them, and that how much you have of one should matter to how much you have of another. In this case, geometric aggregation rules (ie multiplying indicators) would be more appropriate. In practical terms, the first approach is much more forgiving of poor performance, the second much less forgiving.

The second issue, related to the first, but subtly different, is whether variables display diminishing returns. For example, is a one-point improvement on a particular dimension worth the same if it moves a country from a score of 9 to a score of 10 as if it moves it from a score of 0 to a score of 1? Or is the marginal value greater when the country has less of it to begin with? Whether it is made explicit or not, the form which the aggregation rule takes implies a judgement about whether variables display diminishing returns. If it implies that they do, that will tend to reward consistent, moderate performance across measures more than high performance on some measures and low performance on others.

In our view, these conceptual issues are much more pressing in relation to the aggregation of the six dimensions into an overall EDI score than in relation to aggregation of indicators into dimensions. We think it is likely that our dimensions are complementary; indeed, as we argued in chapter 1, part of our claim is that different aspects of Everyday Democracy are mutually supportive precisely because what happens in one domain can reinforce what happens in another. It also seems reasonable to think that they display diminishing returns – for example, it is hard to believe that a country with great Electoral and Procedural democracy but terrible Workplace democracy would be as happy to have a little more turnout as it would to have a little

more influence in the workplace. Conceptually, therefore, some kind of geometric aggregation rule seems attractive.

However, this raises a third, more practical issue, which is the importance of balancing these conceptual attractions against the value of an approach that is straightforward for users to interpret. The danger is that more complex aggregation rules also make the Index itself more opaque and less user-friendly. For that reason, we still prefer to use a linear aggregation procedure, with two caveats. First, as a robustness check, we recalculated the combined EDI scores using two different geometric aggregation rules and found that countries' relative positions were not particularly sensitive to the approach we used, with most countries remaining within one place of their current position (see the online appendix to this report), and most of the rest moving up or down one place. Only one country (Hungary) appears to be significantly affected by our choice of weighting scheme (see the online appendix to this report).⁸⁰ Second, we will continue to explore other ways to balance conceptual rigour with user-friendliness, and will revisit this issue in future versions of the EDI.

To summarise, our six dimensions are weighted sums of the indicators that compose them, multiplied by 10 to give a score out of 10. The overall EDI score is the weighted sum of the scores for the six dimensions to give a total possible score of 60.

Interpretation: exploring patterns and relationships

Our goal in developing the EDI is explanatory not simply evaluative. That means that while we present rankings both for the individual dimensions and for the Index as a whole, we think these are more useful as a way of seeing the patterns or clusters around which countries coalesce, rather than of saying that country X is conclusively better than country Y. It also means that at various points we try to illustrate possible relationships between countries' performance on one or all of the EDI dimensions and other indicators of social

or political development. In some cases we think these relationships might be causal, in other cases consequential, and in still others a combination of the two. These results should of course be interpreted with the usual caution that correlation does not prove causality, and that we have only a relatively limited number of data points. But where plausible relationships do seem to exist we try to highlight them, in part as a way of generating avenues for future research.

With the methods we have used to create the Index hopefully now clear, let us begin to explore what it tells us about patterns of Everyday Democracy in Europe.

5 The first dimension

Electoral and Procedural democracy

Our first dimension is about getting the basics right. If they are asked to call to mind a single image that captures the promise of democracy, many people would think of the iconic television pictures of men and women queuing at polling stations to cast their vote in South Africa's first post-Apartheid elections in 1994. The ballot box remains perhaps the most potent symbol of democracy and the fundamental right to participation in choosing a government that it embodies. Yet the often painful experience of the last 20 years has been that what happens before and after polling day, and how political institutions function when the TV cameras are not rolling, matter hugely to how meaningful that right really is. Too many places around the world – especially the growing number of 'illiberal democracies' – lack the political commitment or institutional capacity to protect the broader range of rights on which genuine democratic participation depends.⁸¹

Europeans do not have to confront the most serious of these problems, in part because many European countries have evolved institutional norms and procedures for dealing with them over several decades. Many of these we take for granted precisely because they have been around for so long. Electoral practices that in the developing world would be condemned by international observers as open to all kinds of fraud and manipulation are commonplace and accepted in many parts of Europe because they continue to enjoy widespread public trust. But as the accusations of large-scale electoral fraud in Birmingham in 2004 demonstrated, there is little room for complacency.⁸² 'Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom', said Thomas Paine, 'must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it.'⁸³ The Electoral and Procedural dimension is about measuring Europeans' willingness to do that.

Demos publications on electoral and procedural democracy⁸⁴

In Lean Democracy (1994), Demos argued for the need to change access to power from an 'occasional narrow opening in the wall of politics' to a political system with multiple points of access. More direct control for the governed over the governors would be achieved by 'push button democracy and the electronic town hall' as well as citizens' juries and advisory referendums. Today, citizens' juries are widely used by the British government and across Europe.⁸⁵ The Athenian Option (1998) built on these principles, advocating practical democracy experiments and the creation of a new, more popular second chamber for the Houses of Parliament. Here the scrutinisers of legislation would include not Peers of the Realm, but People's Peers, chosen by lot in the same way as jurors through the electoral roll.

In It's Democracy, Stupid (2001) Demos proposed that it was time for government to 'grow up' and start treating its citizens as adults. Votes should be issued at birth, and held in trust by parents until children reach voting age, with a bill of rights and responsibilities forming the foundations of a new, active role for citizens. Compulsory voting should form part of the prescription for a healthy politics.

In Other People's Children (2003) we called for the voting age to be lowered to empower children to win back their public voice. This recommendation helped galvanise the debate that led to the UK Electoral Commission reviewing the appropriate age for young people to participate in elections - whether as voters or candidates.

By 2005, when Demos published Start with People, there was a growing consciousness that techno-fixes like all-postal ballots and e-voting would not be enough to renew democracy; whether and how citizens are mobilised to participate is equally crucial. Demos pushed for a right of initiative for community organisations.

The indicators

Since this dimension is the one that has been most thoroughly explored in previous work, we have tried to avoid reinventing the wheel. We use five indicators that have been used or developed by others.

The first indicator is *average electoral turnout in the last three national elections*.⁸⁶ As other commentators have pointed out, turnout is not a bad proxy for how important citizens believe it is to exercise their political rights.⁸⁷ We use the average of the last three elections because we want a portrait of recent experience, but not one that is unduly sensitive to a single outlier. In the case of systems with both presidential and parliamentary elections, we have chosen the higher of the two.

The remaining indicators come from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, which were described briefly in chapter 3. There are six of these in total, but only four are directly relevant for our purposes.⁸⁸ These are:⁸⁹

- *Voice and accountability*: This indicator tries to capture many of the features Dahl saw as preconditions for democracy, such as the degree to which people can select and remove governments, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media. This is important because we do not address the media elsewhere in the EDI.
- *Political stability and absence of violence*: This indicator taps perceptions of the stability of a political regime, and its vulnerability to unconstitutional or violent attempts to change it.
- *Rule of law*: This indicator gauges the extent to which people 'have confidence in and abide by the rules of society' and can go about their business free from the threat of crime or violence.
- *Control of corruption*: This indicator taps the commitment of political elites to the exercise of public power for public rather than private gain.

The authors of the Worldwide Governance Indicators offer the same health warning about making comparisons between countries that we made in the previous chapter, but it is worth repeating here. Trying to quantify qualitative judgements inevitably creates a margin of error. Especially in

the case of the well-established European democracies, these margins of error may overlap, such that saying conclusively that one country has done better than the next is impossible. That's why trying to get a balanced picture from several different indicators, and looking at overall differences between groups rather than individual countries, is important.

Box 2 A century of electoral innovation in Europe

1899 1906 1919 2004 2007

Austria is the first European country to lower the voting age in national elections to 16⁹³

Estonia becomes the first country to use internet voting in parliamentary elections; one in 30 registered voters took advantage of the opportunity⁹²

Finland is the first country to grant voting rights for immigrants (resident aliens) in national elections; UK followed in 1948 with other countries lagging until the late 1970s⁹¹

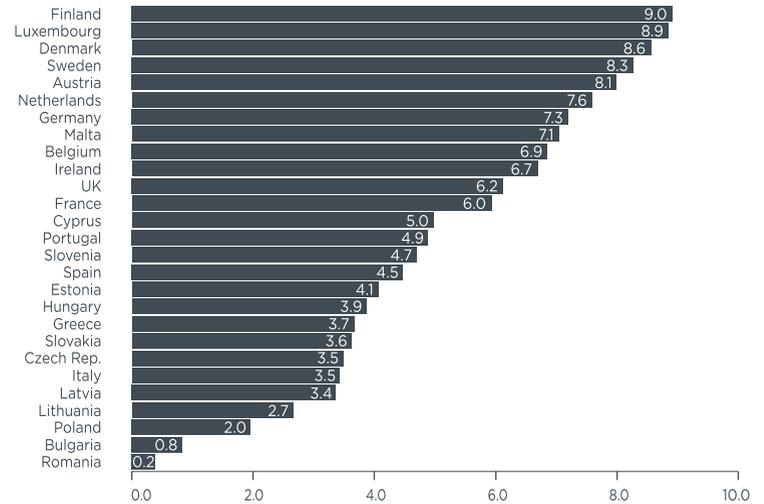
Finland (then the Autonomous Duchy of Finland) is the first country to introduce women's suffrage and to allow women to stand for election

Belgium is the first country to introduce proportional representation in voting⁹⁰

Results

What do the results tell us?

Figure 2 EDI Electoral and Procedural dimension



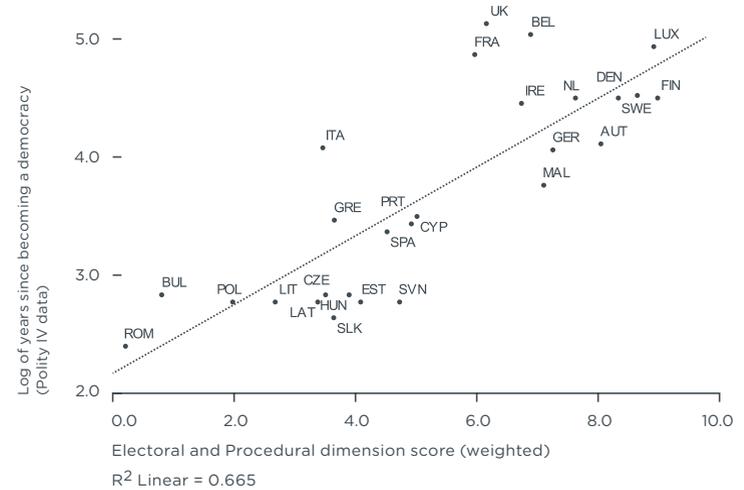
The first point to note is the striking geographical divide in countries' performance on this dimension. The top half of figure 2 is almost totally dominated by countries from northern Europe, the bottom half by eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. The only country that breaks the pattern is Malta, thanks to its very high electoral turnout – the highest non-compulsory voting in the world – which averaged 96.1 per cent in the last three elections. The UK is one of the worst performers of the northern European countries, with its result dragged down by the comparatively low electoral turnouts of the last three elections, though France also scores relatively poorly.

Looking within these categories, the top five includes all three of the Scandinavian countries. The bottom five are all transition countries, pointing to the years of hard work that lie ahead to consolidate representative institutions in these countries. The news is not entirely gloomy for the accession states, with Slovenia outperforming Spain, Greece and Italy. Estonia and Hungary also do comparatively well.

Two further observations about these results are worth making. The first is that even when the focus is on the more formal end of the spectrum, the more fine-grained approach we use here is helpful in distinguishing between nominal and effective democracy. For instance, every EU country receives the highest score (1) on Freedom House's measure of political rights, and all but Greece, Bulgaria and Romania receive the highest score on its civil liberties scale (the latter score a 2).⁹⁴ Yet as these results indicate, there is some significant variation in how rigorously many perceive these rights to be observed and exercised in different EU countries.

The second key observation is the importance of longevity. As Figure 3 indicates, there is a close relationship between how long a country has had formally democratic institutions (as measured by the Polity IV measures introduced in chapter 3)⁹⁵ and how well that country performs on the Electoral and Procedural dimension of the EDI. This helps to reinforce the point that it takes longer to build a democratic culture than it does to legislate for the establishment or reform of democratic institutions.

Figure 3 **Electoral and Procedural dimension and democratic longevity**



AUT, Austria; BEL, Belgium; BGR, Bulgaria; CZE, Czech Republic; DNK, Denmark; EST, Estonia; FIN, Finland; FRA, France; GER, Germany; GRE, Greece; HUN, Hungary; IRL, Ireland; ITA, Italy; LVA, Latvia; LTU, Lithuania; LUX, Luxembourg; NLD, Netherlands; POL, Poland; PRT, Portugal; ROM, Romania; SVK, Slovakia; SVN, Slovenia; SPA, Spain; SWE, Sweden; UK, United Kingdom

6 The second dimension

Activism and civic Participation

Ever since Plato, scholars have argued that the health of a democracy depends on the energy of its citizens. An active citizenry helps to keep voters informed and engaged, and governments on their toes. Today, new technologies are making it even easier for citizens to fit participation into their everyday lives and make their voice heard, as box 3 shows. But making it *easy* to participate is only part of the story: the real challenge is to create the kind of civic culture which makes it *inviting* to participate.⁹⁶ How effectively European countries have managed to do that is what we try to tap in this dimension.

Box 3 **Online petitions – a new lease of life for an old form of activism**

When Peter Roberts from Telford, UK, took advantage of a new online petition system hosted on the Prime Minister's official website to complain about the government's proposed 'road pricing' scheme, he had no idea of the impact it was to have. He started the petition because he felt the proposed new policy was unfair to drivers – for him driving his car was essential to making a living. It turned out he wasn't alone: his petition attracted over 1.8 million e-signatures – close to one in 20 UK adults – and created a media circus that forced a very public debate on the issue. The online petition initiative had been an experiment, but with this kind of impact there was no going back. A year after its creation, 29,000 petitions had been submitted to the site and over 5.8 million signatures had been collected.⁹⁷

It's not the first time a new communications technology has transformed petitioning – but the flurry of petitions that followed the invention of the printing press pales

in comparison to the possibilities offered by the internet. Petitions are sometimes criticised as a shallow form of political engagement. But precisely because the barriers to taking part are so low, especially online, they can be a powerful way of drawing people into other forms of engagement. One organisation that understands this is Avaaz. This online campaigning organisation was founded in early 2007 by a group of social entrepreneurs closely linked to the influential campaign community MoveOn.org. By September 2007, it had grown to some 1.25 million members spread across more than 190 countries. Avaaz draws heavily on e-petitions and other online tools as a way of attracting and involving new members, and being more responsive to emerging issues than traditional forms of co-ordination allow. In March 2007 Avaaz presented their climate change petition, with 100,000 signatures, to a meeting of the G8 environment ministers. ‘Thanks to increased pressure from people around the world the tide is turning,’ said Bundesumweltminister Sigmar Gabriel, representing the German G8 presidency, at the end of the meeting.⁹⁸ ‘When an international NGO can gather this many signatures,’ he said, holding up the petition, ‘we cannot ignore this problem anymore.’

Petition facts:

- *The word petition is derived from the Latin word ‘petitio’ which means ‘attack before court’ or ‘plea’.*
- *Petitions date from the thirteenth century and the Court of King Edward.*
- *Perhaps the most famous petition is also one of the longest – literally. Launched in 1842, the Chartists’ petition for social and political reform to the British House of Commons (including universal suffrage and voting by secret ballot) grew to over 6 miles in length.⁹⁹*
- *2006 witnessed the biggest ever petition as part of the Live8 campaign.*
- *The same year also saw the world’s biggest ever ‘photo petition’ – the Million Faces Petition. Instead of signing their names, participants lent their faces in support of a campaign against the global arms trade.*

The indicators

We use four indicators, all of which draw on data from the 1999–2000 wave of the World Values Survey (WVS).¹⁰⁰ The first three indicators measure three classic forms of *political activism*. The WVS asked respondents to say whether in the last 12 months they had: signed a petition, joined a boycott, or taken part in a legal demonstration. A national average for each form of activism was computed based on the number of respondents from that country saying they had undertaken such action. The fourth indicator is *the average number of civic groups people are members of or volunteer for*. Respondents were asked separately to say the number of groups of which they were a *member*, and then to identify the number of groups for which they did *unpaid work*, in a variety of categories.¹⁰¹ We added up the total number of groups respondents were either members of or volunteered for, and a national average was then computed based on all the respondents from that country.

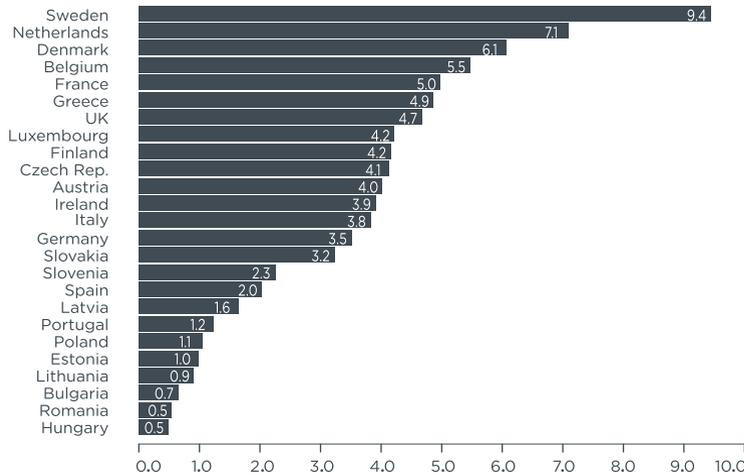
Demos publications on activism and participation¹⁰²

People Before Structures (2000) addressed some of the failure of existing community engagement efforts in the UK and suggested that the benefits of citizen empowerment would be better felt by giving communities direct control over assets like parks and community centres. In 2005’s *Start With People*, Demos argued that the public sector needed to learn lessons from community organisations about how to ‘put citizens in the driving seat’. The same year in *Manufacturing Dissent (2005)*, Demos was at the leading edge of the debate about single-issue protest and the press, asking if media activism is offering new terms of engagement and participation in politics or short-circuiting deeper involvement in democracy. In *Community Participation (2006)* Demos explored the real value of participation in local governance, using as case studies two low-income housing estates in England and Wales. It found that simply proliferating formal structures of participation does not necessarily increase social capital in deprived communities. In 2007 Demos put all of this learning into practice, creating a successful ‘urban beach’ on a disused car park to encourage ownership and engagement in the regeneration process of Bristol.

Results

Figure 4 shows the results for this dimension.

Figure 4 EDI Activism and Participation dimension

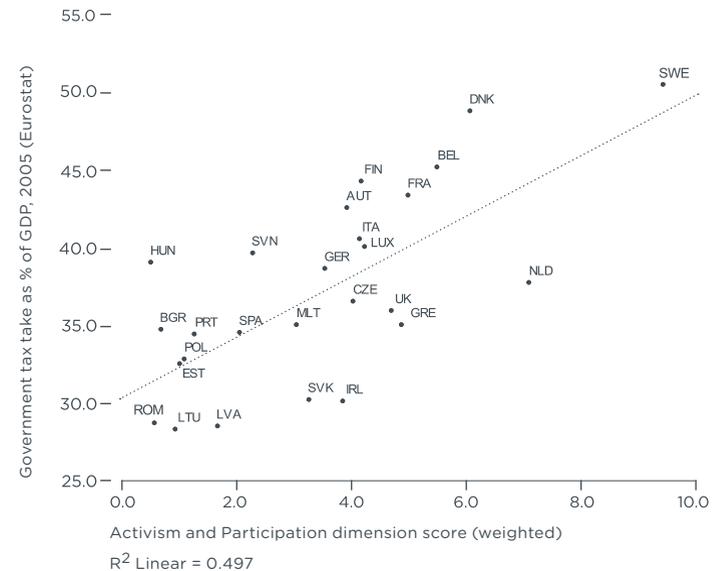


What is most striking about these results is how much variance there is at both the top and the bottom. At the top Sweden far outscores any of the other countries. This is broadly consistent with other comparative research,¹⁰³ which suggests that Sweden is unusually rich in social capital. By the same token, the bottom seven countries are quite a long way back from the rest of the field. Clearly this is partly a function of the data we have used, but it may also speak to fundamental differences in patterns of civic culture in these countries.

One interesting question for our purposes is about the controversial relationship between the size of government and the vibrancy of the civic sphere. Some on the right, particularly in the US, have blamed the expansion of government for the oft-noted decline in associational life and other forms of social capital.¹⁰⁴ The theory is that as government gets bigger it ‘crowds out’ active citizenship, community spirit

and voluntary initiative. What do the results for the Activism and Participation dimension add to the evidence about these claims? Broadly they are in line with American and European research that suggests this relationship is nowhere near so clear cut, and that in fact bigger government is associated – although probably not causally – with a *higher* degree of active citizenship.¹⁰⁵ Figure 5 plots countries’ score on the EDI Activism and Participation dimension against their government’s tax take as a share of GDP. The relationship is positive, if only moderately consistent: bigger governments have more, not less, active citizens. To reiterate, this does not mean that legislating for bigger government *will* lead to a more vibrant civil society. But it does suggest that simply legislating for smaller government probably will *not*.

Figure 5 Activism and Participation dimension and size of government



7 The third dimension

Deliberation and Aspiration

One outcome of the trends we described in chapter 1 is that citizens are much less accepting of claims to authority, including those rooted in expertise, and much more inclined to assert their right to be involved in decisions. If you're looking for a place where that imperative has collided with old ways of doing things, you needn't look much further than science. At a time when the nature and speed of scientific progress is giving science fiction writers a job keeping up, the idea of deeper public involvement in decisions about bio-, nano- and other new technologies sounds as far-fetched as some of the discoveries this new science is uncovering. The conventional wisdom used to be that at best citizens should be educated to understand the benefits new discoveries will bring. But as governments have learned to their cost,¹⁰⁶ citizens in many countries are increasingly unwilling to accept that conventional wisdom, and are seeking alternative channels of influence (see box 4).

And it's not just science. From the street level up, new designs for allowing citizens to deliberate and make choices on issues of pressing concern have begun to spring up all over Europe and around the world.¹⁰⁷ In the end, the cumulative impact of such innovations – whether citizens ultimately get their own seat at the table – depends both on how much they want it and how ready they are to take it. That is what we try to gauge in the Deliberation and Aspiration dimension of the EDI.

Box 4 **Public engagement in science: it doesn't take a brain surgeon...**

Neuroscience may seem about as removed from everyday life as you can get. But when mental health problems already account for up to a third of all GP consultations in Europe,¹⁰⁸ and an ageing population is set to increase the prevalence of conditions like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's still further, the number of people directly affected by brain science research is large and growing. Dramatic increases in computing power and cognitive imaging mean we know more about how our most mystifying organ works than ever before, and how we might seek to control and change it. The governance implications are enormous. That is what Meeting of Minds, a European Citizens' Deliberation on Brain Science, was set up to address.¹⁰⁹ The project is probably one of the largest deliberative exercises on science ever undertaken. While there was nothing particularly novel about the techniques it used, it was an ambitious attempt to bring public engagement in science 'upstream' into the mainstream policy debate.

One hundred and twenty-six lay citizens from nine European countries were identified to take part in three national and two European meetings held in 2005 and 2006. A network of European organisations specialising in public engagement in science were brought together. National deliberations were combined and discussed in a joint session. In January 2006 the citizens presented their 'European Citizens' Assessment Report', containing 37 recommendations, directly to the relevant decision-makers in the European Union.

The indicators

We use three indicators to tap this commitment.

The first indicator is a 0–4 point scale tapping commitment to public engagement in science. Our reason for focusing on science is both general and particular. The general interest is that we believe science to be a good proxy for a range

of issues that involve complex decisions about the public interest, to which both technical expertise and lay opinion are relevant. Other issues in this category might include environmental protection, some energy policy questions, and some health policy questions. The particular interest is that across Europe there has recently been a wave of public anxiety about the emergence of new technologies, such as genetically modified organisms (GMOs). This has been triggered by the sense that public engagement in the processes of scientific discovery is happening too far 'downstream'. Over the last four years Demos has been heavily involved in debates about how public engagement in science can be moved further 'upstream', so that when it comes to future waves of technological innovation, such as nanotechnology, controversies like the one which engulfed GMOs can be resolved earlier and more constructively.¹¹⁰

Demos publications on deliberation and aspiration¹¹¹

Ranging from research to practical experiments and the creation of tools and processes, Demos' work in this area takes many forms and cross-sects our policy themes. Spurred on by high-profile controversies over BSE, genetically modified crops and, more recently, nanotechnology, See-through Science (2004) explored how engagement in scientific decision-making can move 'upstream' from consultation on risk to involvement in the fundamental purposes of science and technology. It offered practical advice for stakeholders from NGOs to scientists and policy-makers about effective engagement. Nanodialogues (2007) took this to the next step, showcasing the results of a series of deliberative exercises in different contexts and countries. Demos has also built tools for deliberation; the Picture This! process we created with the Department for Education and Skills Innovation Unit has been used by teachers across England to engage pupils in improving learning processes and environments. Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy (2006) took a more theoretical approach, setting out how the cultural sphere can be transformed from a closed conversation between experts to an

open conversation with a democratic mandate. **The Dreaming City** (2007), at the other end of the spectrum, maps the journey of a year-long series of experiments in opening up a city's future in Glasgow, showing how mass imagination can be tapped to empower people to shape their personal future and that of their city. **Future Planners** (2007) pursues this theme at a structural level, taking on the inadequate culture of engagement in urban planning and suggesting ways in which the process can be legitimised for a new era.

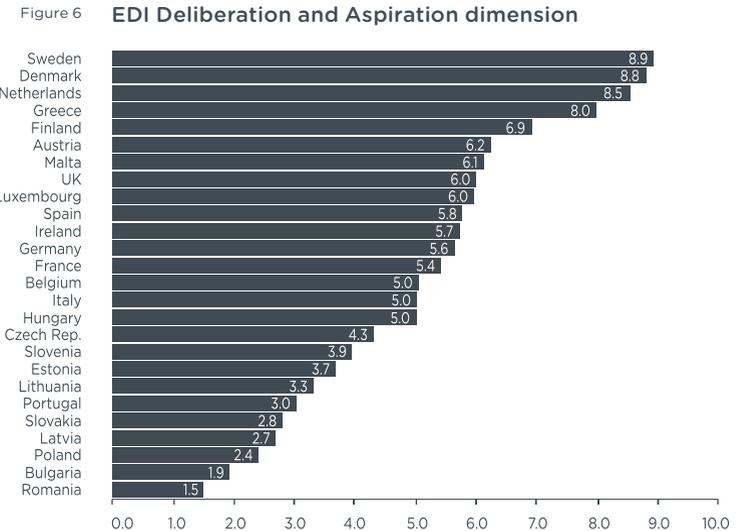
To construct the measure, we use data from a recent Eurobarometer survey which included two items asking whether people agreed that (1) 'For people like me it is not important to be involved in decisions about science and technology'; and (2) 'Scientists put too little effort into informing the public about their work'; and two items asking people how often they (3) talked to friends about science and technology and (4) went to meetings and protests about science and technology.¹¹² We gave respondents 1 point for agreeing with each of the first two statements, and 1 point for doing the activities in the second two statements 'regularly or occasionally', to give a total score out of 4. A national average was then computed for all the respondents from the country.

The second indicator is a 0–3 point efficacy scale that taps the extent to which people feel able and equipped to participate and engage in democratic deliberation. It uses three items from the same Eurobarometer survey which explore respondents' sense of their own political efficacy: 'I think I have something to offer in decisions about politics and current affairs'; 'I know how to get my voice heard when it comes to politics and public affairs issues'; 'People like me have too little influence in what the government does'. Respondents were given a point each for agreeing with the first two statements, and a point for disagreeing with the third, to give a possible total of 3. A national average was then computed based on all the respondents from that country.

The third indicator is a 0–4 point scale of intolerance of authoritarianism. We use data from the 1999–2000 wave of the World Values Survey that asked people about their support for a range of different ways of organising political decision-making: (1) having the army rule; (2) having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country; (3) having a strong leader who does not need to bother with parliament and elections; (4) having a democratic political system. Respondents scored 1 point for each of the first three that they said were 'bad' or 'very bad' and 1 point for saying that the last was 'good' or 'very good', to give a possible total of 4. A national average was then computed based on all respondents from that country.

Results

Figure 6 shows the results for this dimension.



This dimension seems to reveal the same broad geographical pattern as we saw on earlier dimensions, with the central and eastern European countries doing worse on average than the rest of Europe. It is also a notably more balanced distribution, with not much to choose between many countries: little more than a single point separates sixth-placed Austria from sixteenth-placed Hungary.

8 The fourth dimension

Family democracy

It might seem strange to talk about democracy in the context of family life. Yet as a description of what has been happening to the way families operate, democracy is actually pretty accurate. Traditional expectations of different family members have been relaxed, allowing them to negotiate new roles for themselves in the way that families are organised and run. The main beneficiaries of this have been women, who in most countries in Europe have been able to renegotiate at least some of their domestic responsibilities, and now enjoy widespread access to educational and employment opportunities denied to all but a few of their grandmothers. But children have become more influential actors in their own right too (see box 5).

Box 5

Children as decision-makers

It is Friday morning in late August, and Heathrow's Terminal 4 is packed with families trying to squeeze in a holiday before the new school year begins in just over a week's time. The Abraham family, from Basildon in Essex, are about to catch a plane to the United States. Adrian, aged 9, his brother Aidan and his sister Adele (6-year-old twins) are excited to be visiting their relatives in Maryland. According to their mum, this excitement is an important reason why they decided to take this trip, as she herself was less wedded to the idea. 'Usually I go where the children want to go,' she says, quickly adding, 'if I can afford it.' Malene Gram, a Danish academic from the University of Aalborg, has studied the role that children play in decisions about where families go on holiday. She says that the Abrahams are not unusual: more and more families in Europe are becoming 'negotiation families'. This is

especially true when it comes to holidays, because the everyday structures and routines that govern normal family life aren't in place and have to be renegotiated.¹¹³

The growing decision-making power of children within families has long been recognised by marketers and retailers, who have devised clever ways to understand and target children's tastes. As Gram puts it: 'In decisions about what to buy, children can be hugely influential because they are the ones that watch all the adverts on TV!'

But the evidence suggests that it is not simply a commercial phenomenon, and that children have a sophisticated understanding of what the 'democratic' process means within a family. A 9-year-old British girl interviewed during research for a Joseph Rowntree Foundation study on children's decision-making explained that a decision was fair when: 'Everybody has a say about what they want to do even if we don't get to do it.'¹¹⁴

And it is not just roles *within* families that are now more negotiable. The ability to choose family structure is also much greater today in many European countries, a result both of cultural and of legal and institutional changes over the last 30–40 years. The extension of reproductive rights has made it easier for women to control how many children they have. The institution of marriage has weakened, with divorces and cohabitation between unmarried couples more frequent. And greater tolerance of homosexuality has made it possible for people in same-sex relationships to enjoy more of the benefits afforded to heterosexual couples.

Our argument in this chapter is that Everyday Democracies should welcome and support this democratisation of family life. We show which European countries have done most to enlarge people's freedom to choose the family structures and roles within those structures that they wish. And we present evidence suggesting that, if managed correctly, this democratisation of family life strengthens the quality of formal democracy, without weakening its capacity to solve collective problems.

Key Demos publications on families¹¹⁵

*In the early 1990s with work such as **The Parenting Deficit** (1993), Demos led the debate in making the case for paternity leave, which is now a legal entitlement. By 1995, in **Freedom's Children**, Demos was offering policy recommendations about how to achieve the 'flexible family'. In 1997 we recommended legislation to extend the rights and responsibilities of marital status to all same-sex couples, which was granted through the Civil Partnership Act in 2004. More recently we worked in partnership with Scope to mainstream the debate around **Independent Living** (2005) as a right for disabled people, and advised the appointment of a national, user-led organisation to develop the framework for measuring progress towards independent living. This recommendation is in the Independent Living Bill, which is currently making its way through Parliament. In **The New Old** (2003) and **Eternal Youths** (2004) Demos predicted how the notion of retirement will be transformed for the baby boomer generation and suggested ways that public policy and private life must respond. In **The Other Glass Ceiling** (2006) we delved into the domestic politics of parenting and called on government to uncover the hidden value of the care that goes into raising further generations.*

The indicators

How can we measure the degree of democratisation in family life? We recognise that even to ask the question is provocative, and that some of our measures touch on deeply sensitive cultural and religious issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage. In so far as it is possible, we try to leave these debates to one side, and approach these sensitive issues strictly through the prism of empowerment: do they increase people's freedom of choice? Whether or not this is the only appropriate prism through which to explore these issues is an important question, but not one we try to resolve here.

The Families dimension of the EDI therefore explores both the internal aspects of family life – the ability of fathers, mothers and children to define their role within the family

– and the external aspects – the ability of individuals to choose the type of family that they want. To tap these two aspects of family life, we use three indicators.

The first indicator is a *0–3 point scale designed to tap how permissive the legal environment is of different personal choices about family structure*, with countries scoring a point for the existence of a right to gay marriage or civil partnership, a point for the availability to women of abortion on demand (ie without conditions), and a point for the entitlement of widowed cohabitantes (and not just spouses) to inherit their partner’s pension. Each of these legal rights has an important effect on the kind of family structures people can choose for themselves.

The second indicator is a *0–3 point scale measuring cultural attitudes to gender roles*. The scale is based on three items from the 1999–2000 wave of the World Values Survey that tap these attitudes. The items asked respondents for their views on the following statements: (1) ‘A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work’; (2) ‘In general, fathers are as well suited to look after their children as mothers’; and (3) ‘A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children’. Respondents scored a point for each emancipatory position (ie agreeing with (1) and (2), disagreeing with (3)) that they took on these questions, and 0 for each traditionalist position. A national average was then computed based on all the respondents from that country.

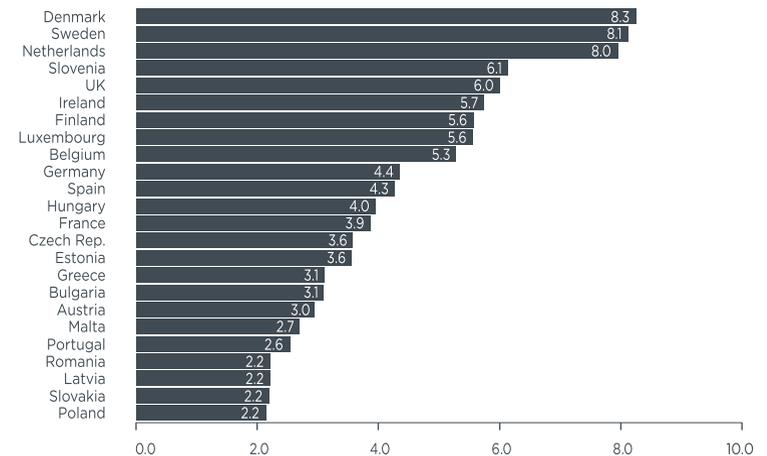
The third indicator is a *0–3 point scale measuring cultural attitudes to children’s roles*. Ideally we would measure children’s empowerment directly, but getting inside the black box of families is difficult. Instead we use a proxy based on cultural support for teaching children democratic values, by which we mean values associated with promoting children’s participation as responsible members of their families and wider society, in contrast to values like ‘obedience’, which reflect a more traditionalist view of children’s roles. We use data from a Eurobarometer survey that asked respondents what they consider important values to teach children. Respondents scored a point for saying that ‘independence’, ‘responsibility’

and ‘tolerance and respect’ were ‘very important’ values. Again, a national average was then computed based on all the respondents from that country.

Results

Figure 7 shows the results.

Figure 7 EDI Families dimension



Two clear geographical patterns emerge in the results. The first is that Protestant, northern Europe tends to do better than Catholic southern and eastern Europe, perhaps reflecting the continuing hold that more conservative family values still have in those societies. The second is that the accession countries tend to do less well than the established democracies, reflecting broader differences in their trajectories of socio-economic development.

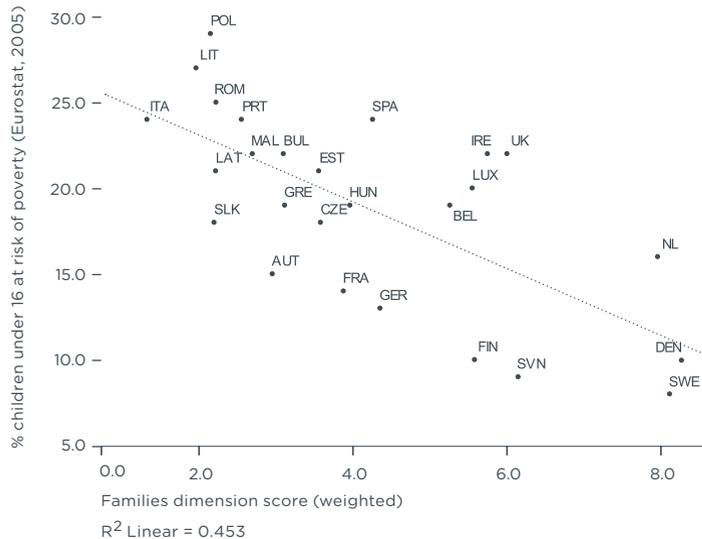
One criticism, particularly from the right, would be that this account of everyday family democracy is simply a recipe for social dysfunction. A widely publicised report

commissioned by Britain's Conservative Party recently lamented the rising number of cohabiting couples, single parent families, and other sources of family breakdown. 'One cannot but conclude', it stated, 'that family breakdown *in all its forms* is of serious concern to society, as well as to the individuals intimately impacted' (emphasis added).¹¹⁶

But is this true? Does the breakdown of traditional family structures and roles, and their replacement with alternatives that allow greater scope for people to make democratic choices, necessarily spell social breakdown? Our initial evidence shows that, on the contrary, it is possible to democratise family life without undermining society's ability to solve collective problems. Figure 8 maps countries' scores on the Families dimension of the EDI against the risks of child poverty in those countries, defined as the percentage of under-16s at or below 60 per cent of median incomes.

It shows that more democratic family structures are *not* necessarily a recipe for child poverty. In fact the correlation seems to point in the other direction: the countries with the highest scores on the Families dimension of the EDI also tend to do the best job of lowering child poverty risk. This correlation does not necessarily imply causality, and it is right to say that in many countries the children of single parents are more at risk of poverty.¹¹⁷ But it does not necessarily flow from this that the best solution is to reduce the prevalence of single parenthood (for example, by increasing incentives to marry). It may be that it is better to focus on welfare and labour market policies that reduce the association between particular family structures and child poverty risks. The essential point is that giving people more freedom to choose family structures and roles does not *necessarily* lead to social breakdown, provided we support people's choices in the right way.

Figure 8 Families dimension and child poverty



9 The fifth dimension

Democratic Public Services

When UK Health Secretary Alan Johnson announced in December 2007 that elderly people were to be given the freedom to decide how money was spent on their personal care through individualised budgets, it was the latest example of a general trend visible across Europe to transfer power from the providers of public services to the citizens who use them.¹¹⁸ After a period in which reforms to public services focused on borrowing private sector management techniques to squeeze out costs and improve efficiency, the next wave of innovations is focusing on how to make public services more legitimate and effective through a more active role for citizens themselves.¹¹⁹ While this trend is derided by some as a conspiracy to privatise public services through user choice and competition, some of the most radical proposals, like the ‘self-directed support’ model of social care proposed by in Control (see box 6), have come from historically marginalised groups tired of being let down or ignored by unresponsive, impersonal bureaucracies. Others have come from new organisations intent on establishing a different kind of voice for the people they serve, like the Office of the Children’s Ombudsman in Ireland (see box 7). This commitment to putting power over public services into the hands of those who use them is what we try to measure in this dimension of the EDI.

Box 6 in Control and self-directed support

The in Control model begins by telling people exactly what their budget is, regardless of any other factors such as access to support from friends and family and so on... This apparently small shift has seismic implications... The relationship between the care manager, the individual and their family can rest on honesty, on a shared goal of finding the best way of spending that budget, rather than on a power relationship where the care manager has more weight than the individual in determining service and resource allocation.

The impact of this new approach in practice has been very positive. The early evaluations suggest that:

- *people are more satisfied with their lives and with the services w receive...*
- *people feel more in control of their life and achieve more of their own goals...*
- *people tend to choose less institutional forms of services...*
- *it is less wasteful.*

.....
Extract from Simon Duffy, 'Participative public services'¹²⁰

Box 7 Putting young people in the driving seat

As you walk into Ireland's Office of the Children's Ombudsman (OCO) on Great Strand Street in central Dublin, just north of the Liffey, it's immediately clear it's not just another office. The vast space that greets you is a blinding sea of colour: paintings cover the walls, windows and ceiling; enormous beanbags are littered across the floor; and photographs of young Irish people provide a very visible reminder of who this organisation is here to serve. But what makes the OCO distinctive is the power that young people have been given over how the organisation is run. And that starts at the very top, with the process of recruiting for the Children's Ombudsman role itself. While current Ombudsman, Emily Logan, was formally appointed by the President on a recommendation from the Minister for

Children and the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament), she first had to get past three gruelling panel interviews where 15 young people had the chance to grill her on her views.

That group of young people formed the first cohort of a Youth Advisory Panel that has subsequently helped to advise Logan and her team on everything from what the key issues facing young people in Ireland today are, to how their office and its meeting space or 'Participation room' should be designed, to how the content of their website could be made more effective.

In November 2007, the OCO attempted its most ambitious deliberative experiment so far. The Big Ballot – a referendum on key issues for young people – involved young people between the ages of 4 and 18 from more than 1000 schools in prioritising the work of the OCO for next year. It was the first time young people in Ireland had been given the chance to have their say in this way, and it helped create an important mandate for the office's work from the people it seeks to serve.

The indicators

Unfortunately, good quality indicators for measuring this ethos are few and far between. While international benchmarking of public service *performance* is increasingly common, understanding how patterns of citizen and user empowerment vary is much more difficult. Far more than on the other dimensions, the indicators we use are a product of necessity rather than choice. Nevertheless, we felt it was still worth including at least an impression of this important dimension of Everyday Democracy. For that purpose, we identified three indicators.

The first indicator is *local taxation as a proportion of total taxation*, using data from the International Monetary Fund. The rationale for choosing it is that 'no taxation without representation', the principle that led American colonists to rebel against British rule in the eighteenth century, has an inverse: no representation without taxation. Put differently,

local government – the tier of democratic government that by definition is closest to people’s lives – cannot have any meaningful autonomy if it does not have an independent tax base. The more power local government has to raise its own money, the more power local people have over how it is spent.

The second indicator is a *0–4 point scale tapping user and community empowerment in education*. We use data from Eurydice,¹²¹ the Information Network on Education in Europe, to score countries on four criteria: (1) whether parent governor bodies have decision-making power or a consultative function in at least three of six important areas of school life;¹²² (2) whether parents have legal powers to demand that new schools be created; (3) whether pupils are involved in school governing bodies at primary and secondary level; and (4) whether parents are free to choose a school for their child or whether it is chosen for them by the authorities.¹²³

The third indicator is a *0–4 point scale of co-production in health*. By this we simply mean: do citizens believe that they are equal partners in the creation of their own health, rather than passive recipients of treatment, and do they perceive that they are treated by the health system as such? To measure these perceptions, we use four items from the second round (2004) of the European Social Survey,¹²⁴ with respondents scoring 1 point for agreeing with the equal partner rather than passive recipient interpretation of each: (1) ‘I generally feel a bit disappointed when I leave a doctor’s surgery without a prescription’; (2) ‘When suffering from illnesses like the common cold, people can cure themselves’; (3) ‘GPs/regular doctors treat their patients as their equals’; and (4) ‘Before doctors decide on a treatment, they discuss it with their patient’. A national average was computed based on the scores of all respondents from that country.

Before we present the results for this dimension, a further caveat about data quality is necessary. First, the European Social Survey data we use includes only some 21 of the EU countries,¹²⁵ meaning that we have complete data for only a sub-set of the countries we are interested in. Rather than lose these countries completely, we decided to base their score on the first two measures alone. These results for these countries must therefore be understood as speculative and extra caution is required in interpreting them.

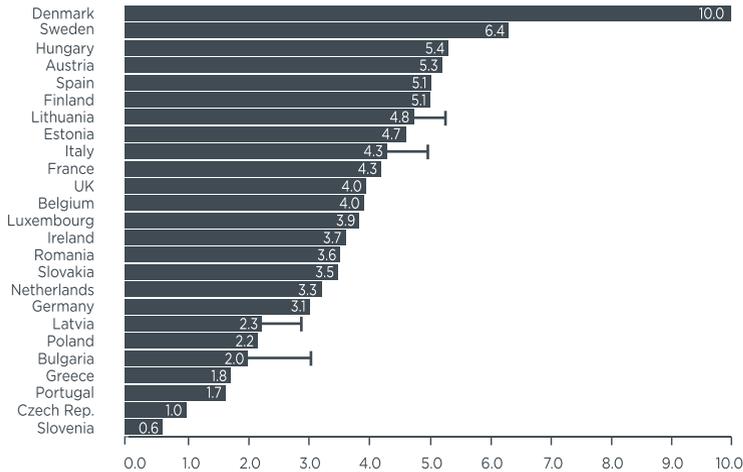
Key Demos publications on democratic public services¹²⁶

*In 2004 Personalisation through Participation made a powerful contribution to the public service reform agenda. It argued that government needed to go beyond a consumer model of public sector reform to actually involve users in design and delivery of services. Taking as its starting point the frustration and disappointment felt by most people in their interactions with public services, **Journey to the Interface** (2006) deals with the practical challenge of making services more responsive to individual needs and preferences. **Making it Personal** (2008) is the latest addition to a Demos programme that is now as concerned with the international as the domestic agenda for public services – a manifesto for public sector reform. It aims to spread a new ‘operating system’ for social care in which people become participants in shaping, commissioning and delivering their care, rather than passive, dependent and confused recipients of whatever the system deems them to be eligible for.*

Results

With these caveats in mind, Figure 9 illustrates the results for this dimension.

Figure 9 EDI Public Services dimension



Note: Lithuania, Italy, Latvia and Bulgaria based on two indicators only. Thin horizontal lines indicate potential error, estimated by using regression techniques to impute the value of the third indicator based on values of the first two.

Several issues are immediately apparent, and unfortunately several of them perhaps reflect problems in the data. The first is that Denmark is a massive outlier. While this is consistent with its performance on the other dimensions, it is surprising to see it so far in front and this may reflect problems with our specific measures more than actual differences in outcomes. Second, the geographical pattern in the data is much less pronounced than on other dimensions, with three eastern European countries appearing in the top ten. As we will see later, this dimension still seems to be inter-related to the other five dimensions, but significantly more weakly than others. This may again suggest problems with the proxies we are

using. The third is that, while there are legitimate grounds for scepticism about this result, it's important to remember that this dimension is trying to get at the democratic *control* of public services, not their quality *per se*. For example, one of the reasons the UK does not do better, despite the proliferation of institutions and approaches designed to give citizens more say in how public services are run, is that successive national governments have decimated local government's tax-raising power, and in the process took power much further away from citizens than in some other countries.

10 The sixth dimension

Democratic Workplaces

Democracy in the workplace has a long and distinguished history in Europe. While traditional accounts of industrial democracy emphasise trade union powers, corporatist structures and workers' legal rights, that is not the approach we adopt here, for two reasons. First, most European countries are post-industrial, not industrial, economies. The manufacturing sector in which these traditional models were once most prevalent represents a declining fraction of economic output and employment in most EU countries. Trade union density varies greatly between countries and between sectors within countries, so that trade union powers do not necessarily offer a very representative picture of most workers' experience. It may be that the countries in which trade union density has held up are the ones in which workplace democracy is greatest, but that is an empirical hypothesis that we should (and do) seek to test rather than something that we should build into our model. Second, we have argued throughout this pamphlet that formal rights and powers do not always map neatly onto people's actual, day-to-day experience and perception of empowerment. Just as gaps can emerge between people's formal political rights and the culture that surrounds them, so they can emerge between formal workplace rights and structures and workers' actual experience of them.

Key Demos publications on the future of work¹²⁷

Disorganisation (2004) argued that expectations of working life have been transformed. Employees want more ‘human’ organisations, with greater autonomy and flexibility. This pamphlet suggests how organisations can successfully ‘disorganise’ in an ever more complex environment.

The boundaries of what people want from work and what they want from the rest of life are increasingly fuzzy.

The Pro-Am Revolution (2004) investigated how enthusiasts are re-shaping the economy and workplace.

At a time when employers place increasing value on intangibles like creativity, Working Progress (2006) explores the disconnect between young people, education and organisations, proposing a series of recommendations for schools, universities, government and other organisations to reconnect employers and young people in the name of productive and fulfilling work in the future.

The indicators

For these reasons, we rely instead on three indicators of workplace culture and of workers’ control over their own labour input. We draw on data from the 2005 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS).¹²⁸

The first is a 0–3 scale measuring ability to influence the working environment. It is based on three items in the EWCS: (1) ‘You have influence over the choice of your working partners’ (coded 1 for always or often, and 0 for sometimes, rarely or almost never); (2) ‘How are your working time arrangements set?’ (coded 0 for ‘They are set by the company with no possibility for changes’, 1 otherwise);¹²⁹ and (3) ‘Over the past 12 months have you been consulted about changes in the organisation of work and/or your working conditions?’ (coded 1 for yes and 0 for no). A national average was computed based on the average score for all respondents from that country.

The second is a 0–3 point scale measuring worker autonomy, again based on three items from the EWCS: (1) ‘Does your main

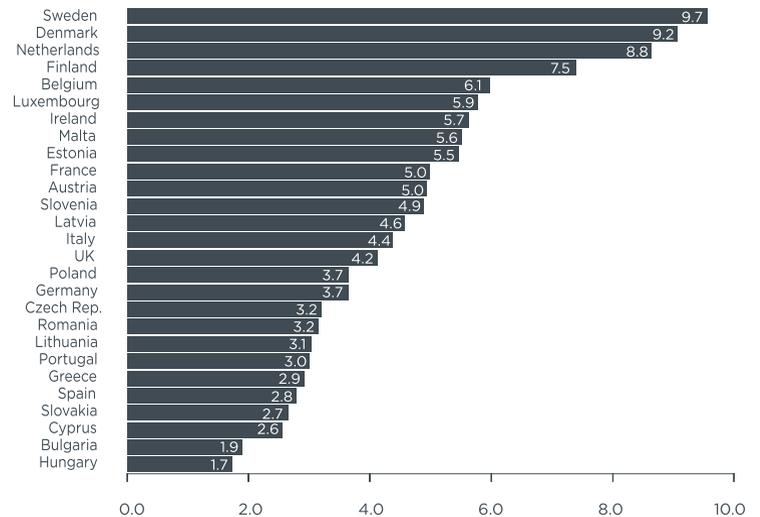
paid job involve: assessing yourself the quality of your own work?’; (2) ‘Is your pace of work dependent on the direct control of your boss?’; and (3) ‘Are you able to choose or change your methods of work?’ In each case respondents score 1 point for answering yes and 0 for no. Again, a national average was computed based on the average score for all respondents from that country.

The third is a 0–3 point scale measuring workplace creativity, again based on three items from the EWCS: (1) ‘You are able to apply your own ideas in your work’ (coded 1 for always or often, and 0 for sometimes, rarely or almost never); (2) ‘Does your main paid job involve solving unforeseen problems on your own?’ (coded 1 for yes and 0 for no); and (3) ‘Does your main paid job involve learning new things?’ (coded 1 for yes and 0 for no). Again, a national average was computed based on the average score for all respondents from that country.

Results

Figure 10 shows the results for this dimension.

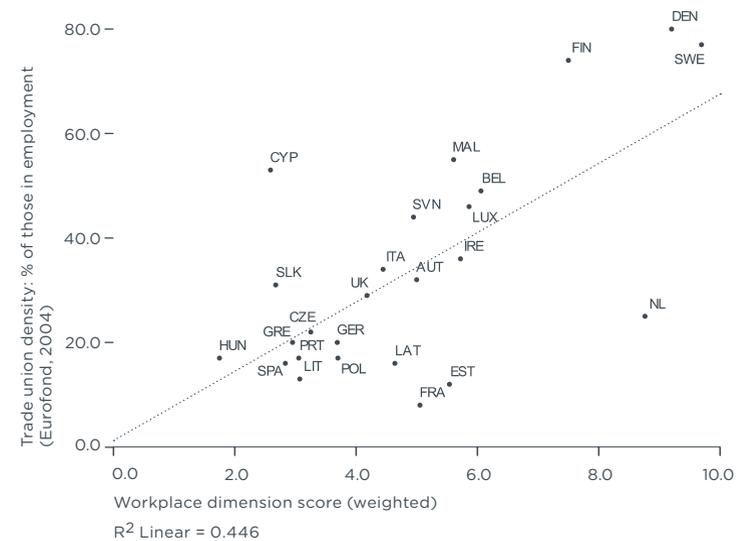
Figure 10 EDI Workplace dimension



The Scandinavian countries again dominate the top of this dimension, taking three of the top four spots. The Netherlands also performs very strongly. Central and eastern and Mediterranean European countries tend to perform worse. Germany's relatively poor performance is striking given how comparatively well developed its structures for formal worker participation are. This might be interpreted as a weakness in our data, but it is equally possible that these extensive formal rights do not have the impact on ordinary workers' experience of the workplace that we might expect.

We suggested earlier that it would be more interesting to look at the relationship *between* trade union density and workplace democracy than to stipulate that trade union density was a condition for workplace democracy. This relationship is explored in Figure 11. While there are a number of outliers, it shows that the countries with higher trade union density tend to score higher on the Workplace dimension of the EDI.¹³⁰

Figure 11 Workplace dimension and trade union density



11 Overview and analysis

Bringing it together

In previous chapters we have laid out our approach to measuring Everyday Democracy, and looked in detail at how countries perform on each of our six dimensions. Our purpose in this chapter is to take a step back in order to appreciate the bigger picture. We begin by looking at combined scores for the Everyday Democracy Index as a whole, the underlying story the Index tells, and the relationship between the different dimensions that emerges. Next we explore some potential causal relationships that might underpin the patterns we see in these totals. Finally, we highlight some tentative, but intriguing, relationships between the EDI and a number of other aspects of socio-economic development and national success.

Patterns across the dimensions

The first point to note is the striking consistency in countries' performance across the dimensions. For example, Sweden and Denmark feature in the top five on every one of our dimensions, and the Netherlands is in the top five on all but two. This consistency seems to offer some *prima facie* evidence that the EDI is tapping some underlying reality.

A more technical way to explore this is to use Principal Components Analysis. This was introduced in chapter 4 as a way of assigning weights to different dimensions based on how closely they correlate with some underlying construct. But it is only really useful for this purpose if the data have that structure; in this case, that is, if all six dimensions of the EDI are genuinely tapping different aspects of the same underlying phenomenon of Everyday Democracy. Hypothetically, it's perfectly possible that this might not be the case. For example, it could be that the

Table 4 Analysis of the relationship between the EDI dimensions

(a) Correlation matrix

	Electoral & Procedural	Activism & Participation	Deliberation & Aspiration	Families	Workplaces
Electoral & Procedural	1.000				
Activism & Participation	0.720	1.000			
Deliberation & Aspiration	0.790	0.834	1.000		
Families	0.737	0.702	0.748	1.000	
Workplaces	0.747	0.768	0.694	0.785	1.000
Public Services	0.479	0.360	0.525	0.418	0.524

(b) Principal components analysis

	Factor loading
Electoral & Procedural	0.888
Activism & Participation	0.877
Deliberation & Aspiration	0.910
Families	0.874
Workplaces	0.894
Public Services	0.616
Percentage of variance explained by component	72.2%

correlation between different dimensions of the EDI is very weak, so that how a country performs on one dimension bears no relation to how it performs on another. Alternatively, it could be that three of the dimensions are closely correlated with each other but only very weakly correlated with the other three, and vice versa. In this case it would seem that the Index was not really measuring a single underlying construct of Everyday Democracy but rather two distinct phenomena. So what do the data show?

Table 4 presents our preliminary answer to this question. Part (a) shows that the dimensions are indeed quite strongly correlated with each other. The dimension most weakly correlated with the others is Public Services, as we noted in our initial discussion of that dimension. The results of the PCA in part (b) show that most of the variation in our six dimensions – about 72 per cent – can be explained by one underlying factor. In other words, this suggests that all six dimensions of the EDI are indeed tapping different aspects of the same latent construct (which we might think of as ‘true’ Everyday Democracy). The term ‘factor loading’ simply refers to the correlation between each individual dimension and this latent construct.

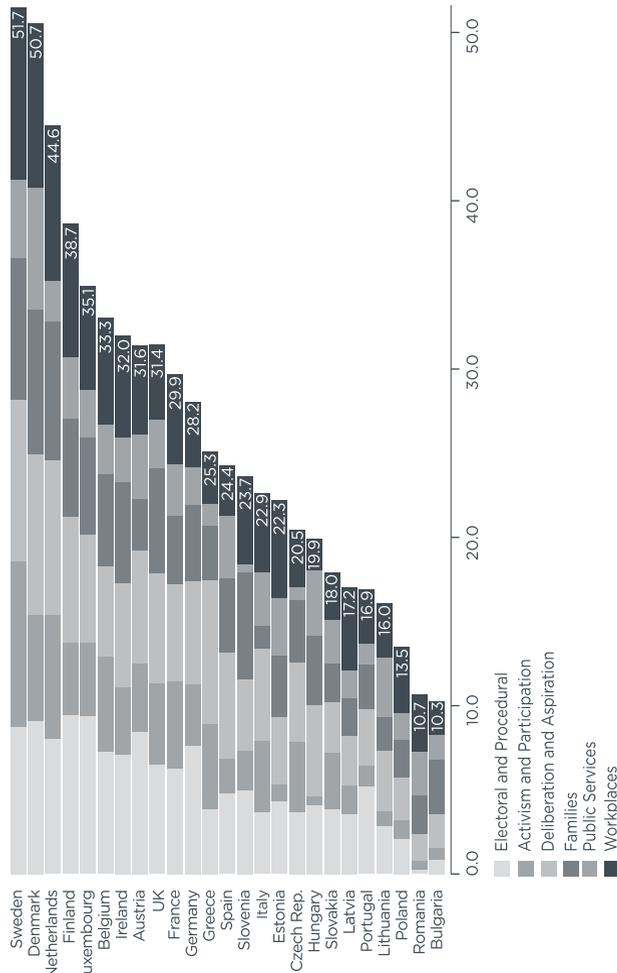
Although further exploration is required, this is an important result for it provides some confirmation of one of our essential claims: that the richness of the democratic culture in the domains of everyday life is associated with the strength of democracy in more formal domains.

EDI: Combined scores

Having confirmed that the six dimensions of the EDI seem to be logically consistent, we can now aggregate countries’ scores on these dimensions into a single combined EDI score, using the same weighting procedure as before (ie putting proportionately more weight on the dimensions that appear most closely to correlate with ‘true’ Everyday Democracy).

Figure 12 shows the combined EDI score for the 25 countries for which sufficient data are available. As noted earlier, Cyprus and Malta unfortunately have to be omitted as they are missing data on more than one dimension.

Figure 12 EDI Combined score



Note: Electoral and Procedural dimension score recalculated without Malta and Cyprus

Given the uncertainty in making a calculation of this kind, it is less helpful to focus on absolute rankings than on overall patterns and clusters. What is immediately striking is the geographical pattern in these results. The Scandinavian countries dominate, with Sweden and Denmark virtually tying for first place, and only the Netherlands keeping the other Scandinavian country, Finland, out of the top three. Broadly speaking the northern European countries come next, with Luxembourg, Belgium, Ireland, Austria, the UK and France closely bunched together, and Germany slightly behind them. By contrast, all of the 14 Mediterranean and central and eastern European countries are clustered in the bottom half of the distribution. Of the central and eastern European countries, Slovenia is the stand-out performer, scoring above Italy and Portugal and only slightly behind Spain and Greece.

Identifying potential causal factors

Like much comparative work, this study suffers from a ‘small-N’ problem: having only 25 cases makes drawing firm conclusions very difficult. But we can at least begin to test out the plausibility of different accounts. Broadly speaking, these accounts can be grouped into four main categories, although clearly they are linked:

- economic development
- social trust
- politics
- diversity

Economic development

Drawing on Ronald Inglehart’s recent work on the ‘human development sequence’¹³¹ as well as Abraham Maslow’s famed ‘hierarchy of needs’,¹³² we might hypothesise that Everyday Democracy is related to affluence: as people get richer, their material anxieties decline, and their commitment to self-expression in every aspect of their lives grows. Figures 13–15 suggest that this account may well be a crucial part of the explanation, but one that leaves important questions still to be answered.

Figure 13 EDI and GDP per capita (Luxembourg included)

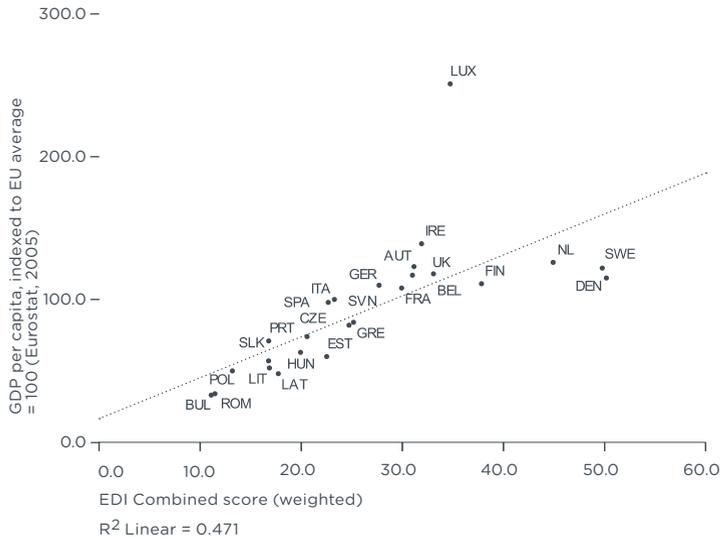


Figure 13 plots EDI Combined scores against per capita GDP. There seems to be a consistent positive relationship between the two. But the relationship also appears to break down at higher levels of income. Interpretation is made more difficult by the presence of Luxembourg, whose unique size and wealth makes it a major outlier.

Figure 14 EDI and GDP per capita (Luxembourg excluded)

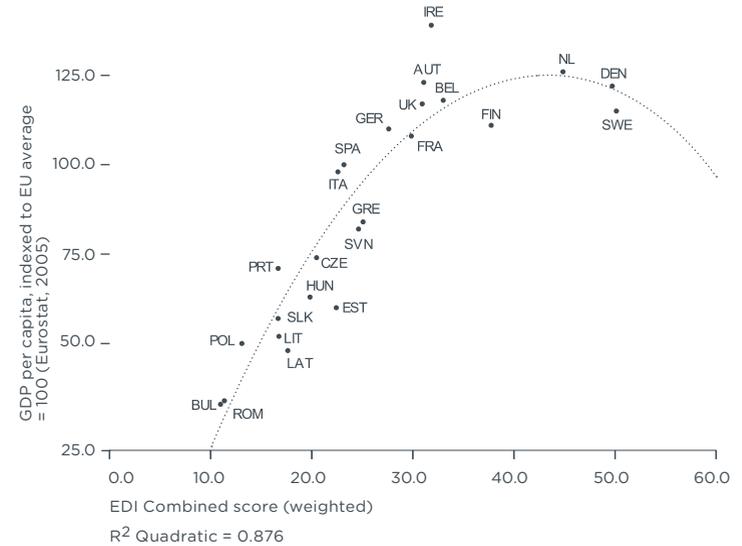


Figure 14 repeats the analysis with Luxembourg omitted. This helps to bring the relationship more clearly into focus: while there is a strong relationship between GDP per capita and EDI scores, it is not linear:¹³³ beyond a certain point greater affluence does not automatically translate into a higher level of empowerment.

Figure 15 EDI and UN Human Development Index Scores

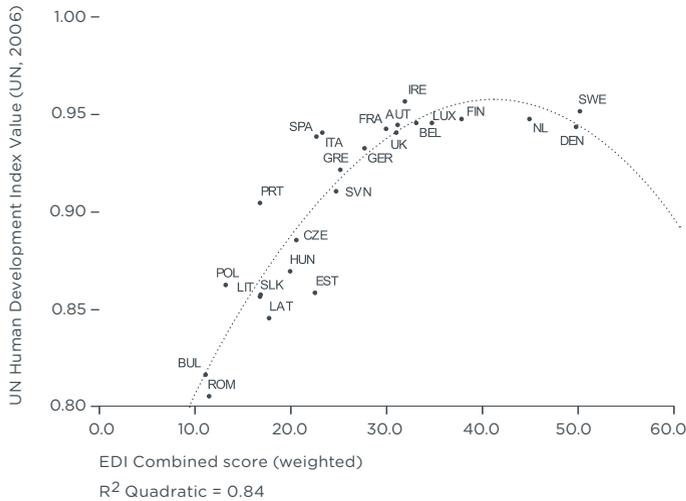
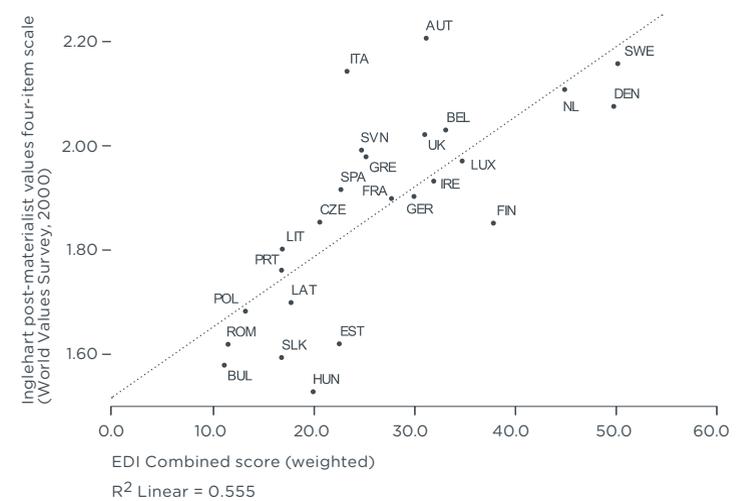


Figure 15 presents a strikingly similar picture. It plots EDI Combined scores against scores on the United Nations Human Development Index. Again, there is a strong positive relationship that breaks down at a certain level of development.

Confirmatory evidence for this might come from looking less at socio-economic development *per se* than at its effect on social values. Ronald Inglehart's work on the link between rising affluence and post-materialist values is particularly important.¹³⁴ It offers a clear account of rising demands for personal freedom and self-expression that dovetails neatly with our account of Everyday Democracy. So is it the case that Everyday Democracy is most likely to take root in more post-materialist societies? The evidence suggests that it is. Figure 16 plots EDI Combined scores against a 0–4 point post-materialism scale, constructed by Inglehart based on items in the World Values Survey (WVS).¹³⁵

Figure 16 EDI and post-materialist values



An obvious objection to using this scale is that the items Inglehart uses are too close to those we are using in the EDI. Figure 17 gets round this by replacing the post-materialism scale with a 0–4 point ‘duty to work’ scale, also drawn from the WVS, that explores a different sub-set of postmaterialist values.¹³⁶ In both cases there is a strong and positive relationship between post-materialism and Everyday Democracy.

The implication of these results is that a certain degree of affluence and economic development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for Everyday Democracy. On this view, a certain minimum level of material need may have to be satisfied before the self-expression values critical to Everyday Democracy emerge. But beyond a certain level, these gains stop being automatically translated into higher levels of empowerment. At that point, differences in the ability of a country's institutional and cultural environment to translate widespread commitment to self-expression into a shared sense of collective possibility becomes the key determinant of a country's relative performance on the EDI.

Figure 17 EDI and duty to work

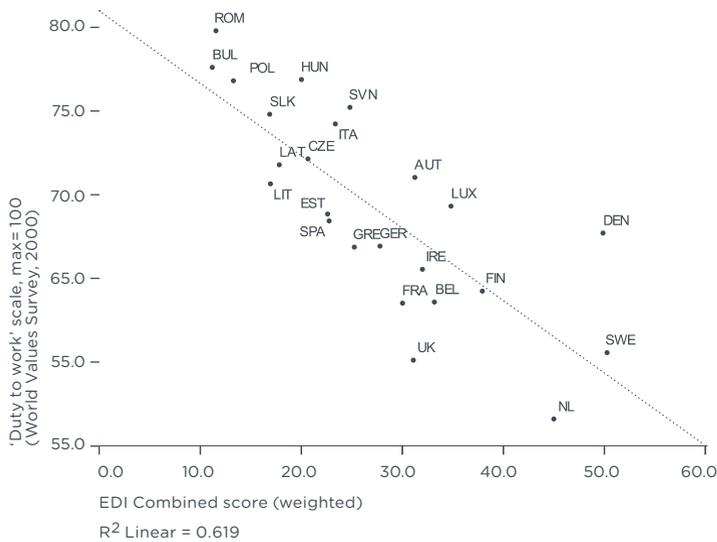
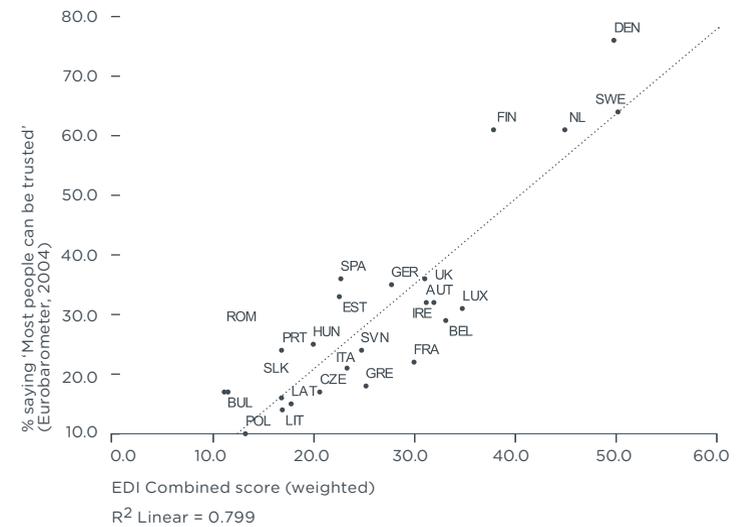


Figure 18 EDI and social trust



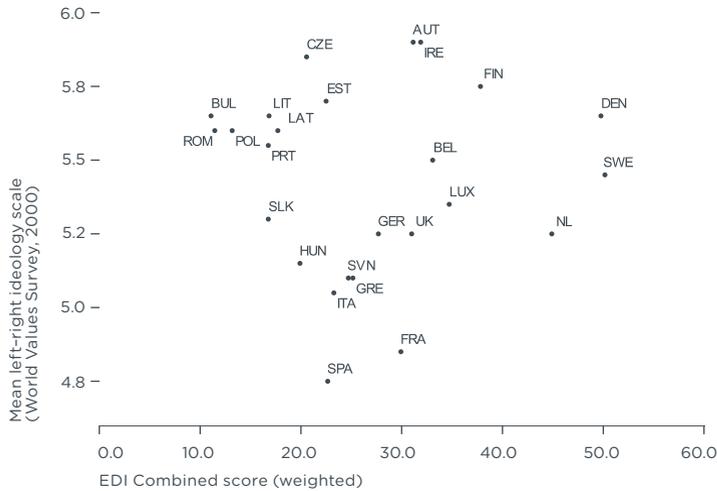
Social trust

An alternative way in which social values could be linked to Everyday Democracy is through social trust. Everyday Democracy could be dependent on, or a spill-over from, high levels of social trust, which themselves facilitate collective action.¹³⁷ In other words, the forms of day-to-day engagement, interaction and co-operation captured in the EDI are only made possible by living in a high-trust environment. Once again, there is some powerful evidence to support this claim. Figure 18 plots EDI scores against the standard survey measure of social trust ('Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?') from a 2004 Eurobarometer poll.¹³⁸ It is striking that the four countries that are outliers in terms of social trust are also the four countries with the highest scores on the EDI.

Politics

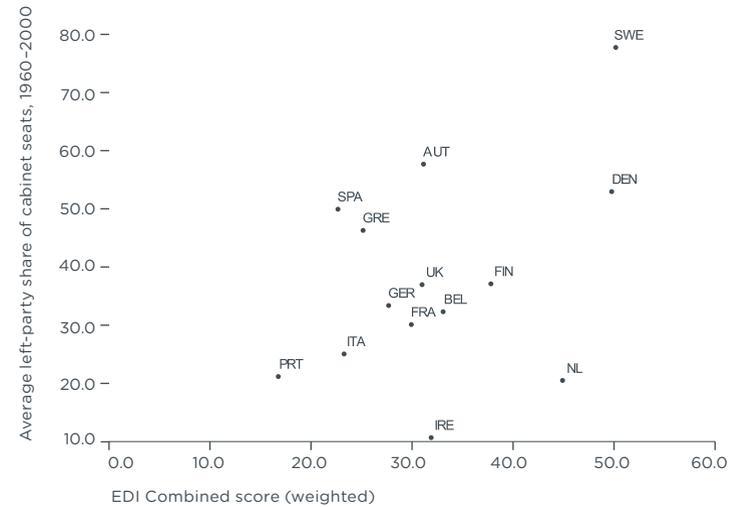
A third category of possible causal factors is politics. Historically, the design of democratic systems has been shaped in part by the relative political strength of left and right parties – for example, the political power of socialist and labour movements in the early part of the twentieth century was a major factor in the adoption of proportional representation systems in many European countries.¹³⁹ The power of the left is also associated with higher levels of social spending and redistribution. We explore the direct links between EDI and these policy outputs below. But if either of these factors were important *causally* – for example, by promoting higher levels of social inclusion and citizen participation – then we would expect it to show up in part through a relationship between political partisanship and EDI scores.

Figure 19 EDI and political values



There are two ways in which we can try to gauge political partisanship. One is to look at the ideological position of citizens. Figure 19 plots countries' EDI scores against the average self-placement of their citizens on a left-right ideological scale.¹⁴⁰ The other is to look at the historical partisan composition of governments, although here data are available for only a sub-set of our countries, and all are from western Europe. Figure 20 plots these countries' EDI scores against the average share of cabinet seats held by left parties in those countries from 1960 to 2000.¹⁴¹ Neither of these measures points to a very strong relationship between partisan politics and EDI scores: if politics matters, it is not through which party is in power.

Figure 20 EDI and left-party share of cabinet seats



A final category of explanations might centre on relative ethnic homogeneity. Given the apparent relationship with social trust, is it possible that societies that are more ethnically homogenous find it easier to generate the routine actions and interactions that constitute Everyday Democracy?

Figure 21 uses Alesina's index of 'ethno-linguistic fractionalization'¹⁴² – essentially a measure of ethnic diversity – to assess this claim. It shows no relationship between this measure and EDI scores, so by itself ethnic homogeneity is not a very convincing explanation for why some countries score higher on the EDI.

Figure 21 EDI and ethnic Diversity

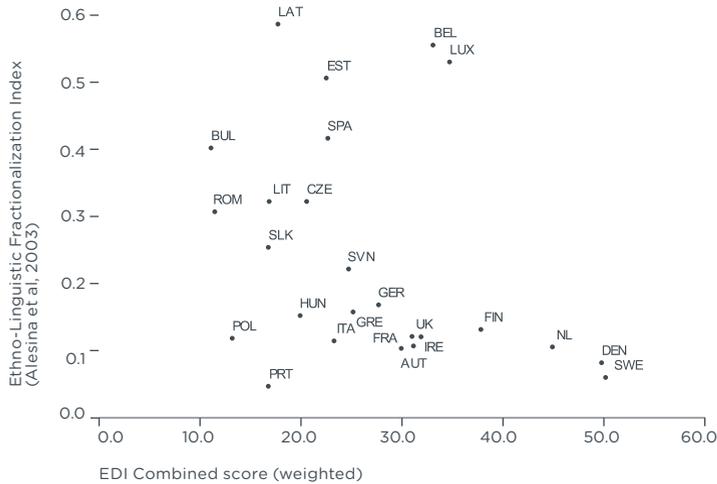
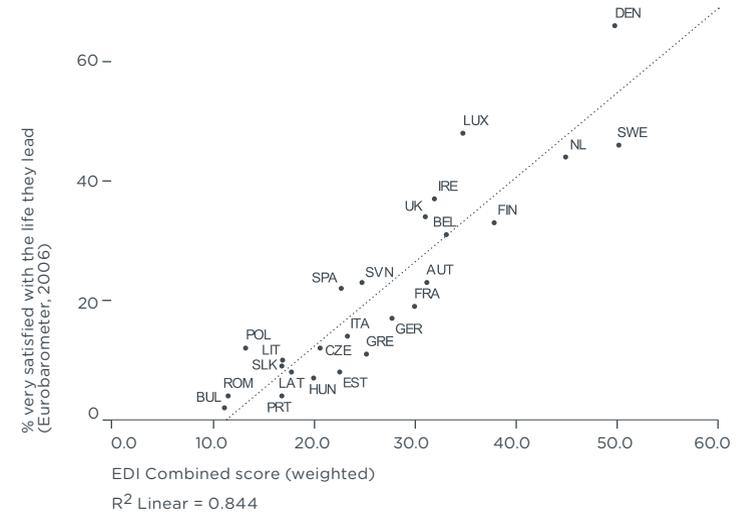


Figure 22 EDI and life satisfaction



To sum up this section, there are grounds for thinking that both socio-economic and values-based explanations of what shapes a country's performance on EDI have much to commend them, while explanations rooted in partisanship and ethnic diversity do not seem to be part of the story.

The relationship of EDI to other aspects of national success

We conclude this chapter by looking at some potentially intriguing relationships between the EDI and other aspects of national success. As we noted above, distinguishing between cause and effect is not easy. It is perfectly possible that some of the relationships we identify in this section could be a cause of Everyday Democracy; our working hypothesis, however, is that they are more likely to be a consequence.

Life satisfaction

At an individual level, there is a well-observed relationship between life satisfaction and what psychologists call 'locus of control' – whether individuals believe events are within their control or determined by external forces. It is plausible to think that something similar might occur at the national level, leading us to expect a relationship between aggregate levels of life satisfaction and Everyday Democracy. By enlarging people's freedom to participate in shaping the decisions that affect their lives, do Everyday Democracies make their citizens happier? As figure 22 shows, the answer appears to be a resounding yes. The correlation between countries' scores on the EDI and the proportion of their population who claim to be very satisfied is extraordinarily high ($r = 0.92$).

Equality

The relationship between democracy and social equality is complex. The Nobel Prize-winning economist Simon Kuznets theorised that the relationship between income inequality and economic development looked like an inverted U. He argued that inequality accelerated in the transition to industrial society, and then started to fall as the granting of universal suffrage brought with it a growing demand to civilise capitalism and share its dividends more equally.¹⁴³ In recent decades, however, inequality in some mature democracies has been rising again, despite the fact that theoretically those most affected by it ought to be able to exercise their political rights to demand government redress. One possibility, though, is that democratic disengagement is associated with rising *political* inequality – the least well-off are the most likely to switch off from formal politics – and that by weakening the potential coalition for redistributive policies this has contributed to rising *social* inequality.

We can test this hypothesis by exploring whether the countries scoring highly on EDI are also those that have done well in tackling inequality. Figures 23 and 24 use data from Eurostat to help answer this question.¹⁴⁴ Figure 23 maps EDI scores against risk of poverty in pre-fisc, market income¹⁴⁵ – that is, income before taxes and transfers. There is virtually no relationship. Denmark and Sweden, which have the highest EDI scores, also have some of the highest rates of market poverty risk, while Poland has similar market poverty risk despite scoring much lower on the EDI. This is not surprising, since market income will be affected by a range of factors that have nothing to do with the democratic system. Contrast this then with figure 24, which shows the amount of market income poverty risk which is alleviated through government taxes and transfers – a measure of redistributive or welfare effort by government. Figure 24 shows a much stronger relationship than figure 23: the healthiest democracies as measured by the EDI don't have

Figure 23 **EDI and market income poverty**

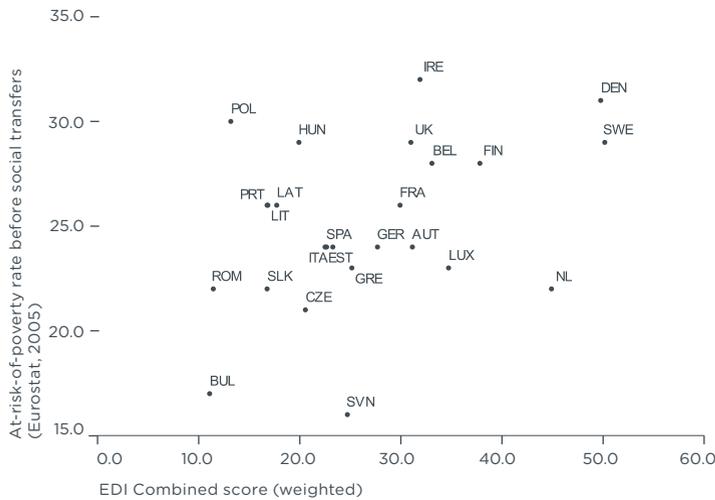


Figure 24 **EDI and redistributive effort**

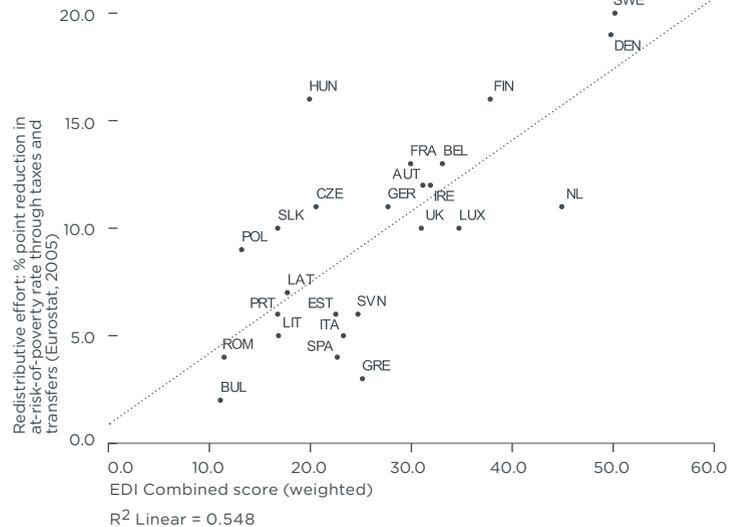
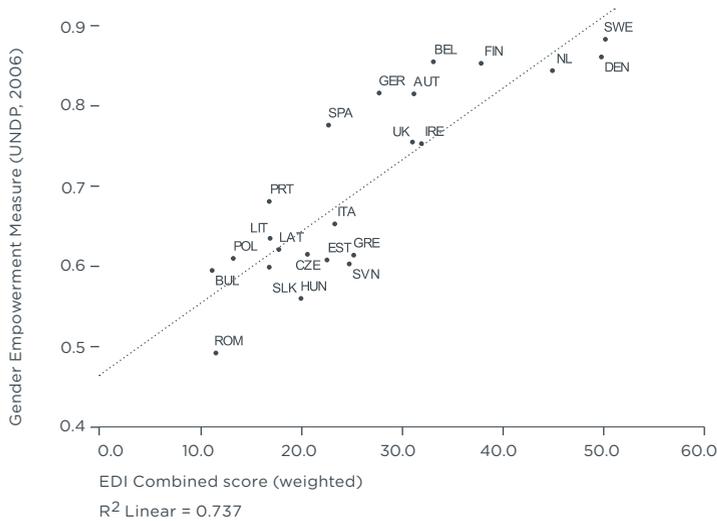


Figure 25 EDI and Gender empowerment



the lowest poverty to begin with but they tend to do the best job of alleviating it through redistribution.

Another important aspect of equality is gender equality. We might expect the broader story about personal and collective emancipation that the EDI is trying to capture to be reflected in the social and political prospects of women, and that indeed seems to be what we find. Figure 25 plots combined EDI scores against the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Empowerment Measure for 2006, and finds a strong association.

Everyday Democracy as an 'emergent property'?

Let us conclude this chapter by summarising what we have learned about Everyday Democracy, and what we still need to find out.

First, we have argued that the six dimensions of the EDI constitute a coherent way of measuring the underlying construct of Everyday Democracy. In defence of this position, we have highlighted the striking consistency in countries' scores on the different dimensions.

Second, this consistency helps to support our central claim: that the cultures and orientations of different, ostensibly disconnected spheres of public and private life can actually be mutually supportive. It is the *interaction* between these different domains that seems to have some kind of a compound effect on our sense of personal and collective agency – and with it, as we have shown, our sense of life satisfaction and commitment to equality. In that sense, Everyday Democracy is less an institutional prescription for any one domain and more an 'emergent property' of all of them.

Third, while it may be an emergent property it is not an inevitable one. Economic development seems to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for Everyday Democracy: the self-expression values that are an essential part of Everyday Democracy do not come to predominate until a certain material standard has been reached. But once it is reached, whether these values are translated into a shared sense of collective possibility depends on other factors – institutional and cultural – that are independent of economic development. In particular it depends on having institutions capable of turning small-scale practices and conventions at the level of individuals, families, communities and workplaces into societal commitments to collective problem-solving. This explains why societies at the same level of development can display such widely divergent outcomes when it comes to Everyday Democracy.

Fourth, the role that social trust plays in this is not clear, but it is clearly associated in some way. One possibility is that social trust acts as a kind of lubricant, making these small-scale interactions within and between groups possible. But it is also conceivable that the causality flows in the other direction, and that Everyday Democracy exerts some kind of mitigating force that limits social capital from falling too quickly.

What we don't yet know enough about is what these institutions really look like in different places, how they work, or how you can create them where they don't exist. Such questions are difficult to address in a comparative piece of work such as this. But they are at the core of what Demos tries to do in all its work, and will continue to do in the future.

12 Conclusion

One night in Leipzig

Shortly before 5pm on Monday 9 October 1989, churchgoers in Leipzig began to gather at the St Nikolaikirche for regular Monday prayers. When the service finished at 6pm, they filed out, and many made their way to Karl Marx Platz, where their ranks were swelled by thousands of other Leipzigers. Within hours, tens of thousands of people had gathered in the square and in nearby Grimmaische Strasse to protest against the East German government and demand reforms.¹⁴⁶ Even though the security authorities were a visible presence, and were widely expected to intervene violently, the demonstrations passed off peacefully. In doing so, they helped trigger a chain reaction of other protests that would lead to the collapse of the East German regime, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and, ultimately, the end of the Cold War.

In the aftermath of the event, researchers struggled to understand the spontaneous nature of the protests. Traditional accounts of social movements emphasised the ‘political opportunity structure’, and assumed a level of organisation and social freedom that did not seem to reflect the conditions in Leipzig that October. So what had prompted Leipzigers to take to the streets that night?

That was the question Karl-Dieter Opp and Christiane Gern, two academics from the University of Hamburg, sought to answer through a detailed survey of Leipzig residents conducted a year after the protests. Their results make for striking reading.¹⁴⁷ Most of the factors that you might expect to matter turned out not to have been all that important. People’s sense of their moral duty to act, their membership of groups encouraging participation, their expectation of the likelihood and severity of state repression if they took part, and their experience of repression in the past all made virtually no

difference to the extent of their participation in the October 9th protest and those that immediately preceded and followed it.

But two factors did matter. The first was people's sense of agency: their belief that if they got involved they could personally change something. And the second was their friends. The more friends people had who they knew to be critical of Erich Honecker's regime, the more likely they were to join in themselves.

This story reminds us that even the most profound political events can have everyday causes. The Leipzig protests helped bring about the defining political moment of the last 50 years of European history. The protestors themselves have been hailed as heroes. But theirs was an everyday heroism: they were simply people who believed that their participation could make a difference, and who took strength from the convictions of their friends. And therein lies a lesson for the rest of us.

We Europeans are lucky. Most of us will never again face the risk of repression that confronted protestors in Leipzig that day, or that has confronted pro-democracy forces in villages, towns and cities across the world in the years since then. But that doesn't mean we can take our democracy for granted, any more than it means we can expect it to be an all-consuming passion. We need to aim for something at once more modest and more ambitious: to apply the democratic values that we expect to govern the formal institutions of politics to our workplaces, schools, homes and public services. We have tried to show that this can be done, and that where it has been done it has been successful.

'Democracy does not confer the most skilful kind of government upon the people', wrote Alexis de Tocqueville, 'but it produces that which the most skilful governments are frequently unable to waken, namely, an all-pervading and restless activity, a super-abundant force, and an energy which is inseparable from it and which may, under favourable circumstances, beget the most amazing benefits.'¹⁴⁸ In this pamphlet, and in Demos' wider work, we have tried to identify the most potent sources of that energy, the better to understand how it can be harnessed.

The answer, we have argued, is by striving for an Everyday Democracy: one that nurtures the democratic spirit in the spaces in which we actually live our lives, and uses it to nourish and refresh the formal representative institutions through which we ultimately govern ourselves.

Notes

- 1 W Szyborska, *Poems: New and collected 1957–1997* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).
- 2 The Official Report, House of Commons (5th series), 11 Nov 1947, vol 444.
- 3 T Bentley, ‘The self-creating society’, *Renewal* 12, no 1 (2004), available at www.renewal.org.uk/issues/2004%20Voulme%2012/Bentley.htm (accessed 13 Dec 2007).
- 4 D Whitman, *The Optimism Gap: The I’m ok – they’re not syndrome and the myth of American decline* (New York: Walker and Company, 1998).
- 5 G Mulgan, ‘Connexity revisited’ in H McCarthy, P Miller and P Skidmore (eds), *Network Logic: Who governs in an interconnected world?* (London: Demos, 2003).
- 6 D ElBoghdady, ‘Now playing in aisle 7... grocers cater to the kiddie crowd’, *Washington Post*, 29 Jan 2003, available at www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A57254-2003Jan28¬Found=true (accessed 13 Dec 2007).
- 7 A 2006 study revealed that Mississippi had the highest incidence of sub-prime refinancing, see www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/SubprimeLocationsStudy090506.pdf (accessed 13 Dec 2007); for details on the run on Northern Rock see www.ft.com/indepth/northernrock (accessed 13 Dec 2007).

- 8 The United States spends more than twice as much per capita on healthcare as England, but on most measures Americans are less healthy than people in England. See J Banks et al, 'Disease and disadvantage in the United States and in England', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 295, no 17 (3 May 2006). Michael Marmot has documented the existence of a striking social gradient in health, with social status powerfully predicting health outcomes. This social gradient persists even after controlling for risk factors like diet and lifestyle, and has been detected across different countries and health systems. See M Marmot, *Status Syndrome: How your social standing directly affects your health and life expectancy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).
- 9 G Majone, 'The rise of the regulatory state in Europe', *West European Politics* 17, no 3 (1994).
- 10 R Inglehart and C Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The human development sequence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 11 R Dalton, *Democratic Challenges – Democratic Choices: The erosion of political support in advanced industrial democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy*.
- 14 Cited in B Page, presentation for Cabinet Office, 'Updating the state/citizen contract', policy review (2006), available at http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/policy_review/pr_presentation.pdf (accessed 13 Dec 2007).
- 15 Gerry Stoker has referred to this as the rise of 'immature democrats'. G Stoker, 'Immature democrats', *Prospect* 118 (Jan 2006), available at www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article_details.php?search_term=gerry+stoker&id=7176 (accessed 13 Dec 2007).
- 16 R Inglehart and C Welzel, 'Liberalism, postmaterialism, and the growth of freedom', *International Review of Sociology* 15, no 1 (Mar 2005).
- 17 We are grateful to Tom Bentley for this point.
- 18 T Bentley, *Everyday Democracy: Why we get the politicians we deserve* (London: Demos, 2005).
- 19 S Parker and J Heapy, *The Journey to the Interface: How public service design can connect users to reform* (London: Demos, 2006).
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- 22 Data are drawn from: Dalton, *Democratic Challenges – Democratic Choices* and P Mair, 'Political parties and democracy: what sort of future?', *Central European Political Science Review* 4, no 13 (2003).
- 23 M Crozier, S Huntington and J Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy* (New York: New York University Press, 1974).
- 24 As we demonstrate in chapter 6, the reverse is true: democratic engagement as measured by the EDI is positively, not negatively, correlated with satisfaction and contentment.
- 25 Dalton, *Democratic Challenges – Democratic Choices*.
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