
LESS THAN HALF OF EU COUNTRIES ARE 'FULLY DEMOCRATIC': REPORT

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The Economist Intelligence Unit's new report suggests democracy may be in regression.

Less than half of European Union countries are "fully democratic" according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2017 index on the state of democracy worldwide.

The rating is given out of ten with eight and above ranking as "full democracy", six to eight as "flawed democracy", four to six as "hybrid regime" and zero to four as "authoritarian regime".

Each country is classified into one of four types of regimes according to the scores in these categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture.

How did the EU rank in the report?

The report ranked 11 EU countries as "full democracies" and the rest of the member states as "flawed democracies".

All the Scandinavian countries made it into the "full democracies" category with Sweden taking the third spot. The first two places were given to countries in the European Economic Area – Norway took the top spot for the second year in a row and Iceland came in second. The rest of the countries in this category were western European countries. Malta and Spain were the only countries from southern Europe to make it into the top ranking.

Most of the EU countries that were ranked as "flawed democracies" are in eastern Europe. Romania was given the lowest ranking in all of the EU at number 64. The Balkan countries, as well as the rest of southern Europe — Italy, Cyprus, Greece, and Portugal — were also in this category.

Eastern Europe has traditionally scored low in the Democracy Index. This is partly due to the region's "weak political culture, chaotic transition to democracy, and difficulty at safeguarding the law and corruption," according to the report.

None of the countries in the EU were ranked as "hybrid regime" or "authoritarian regime".

European Union rankings by regime type

Full Democracies

1. Sweden
2. Denmark
3. Ireland
4. Finland
5. Netherlands
6. Luxembourg
7. Germany
8. United Kingdom
9. Austria
10. Malta
11. Spain

Flawed Democracies

1. Italy
2. Portugal
3. France
4. Estonia
5. Belgium
6. Czech Republic
7. Cyprus
8. Slovenia
9. Lithuania
10. Greece
11. Latvia
12. Slovakia
13. Bulgaria
14. Poland
15. Hungary
16. Croatia
17. Romania
- 18.

Three EU members – Malta, Spain, and France – had the steepest score declines in 2017

The Spanish government's treatment of Catalonia's independence bid put the country at risk of becoming a "flawed democracy," said the report. Spain as the bottom of the "full democracies" ranking with number 19.

Malta's score slipped following the unresolved murder in October 2017 of Daphne Caruana Galizia, a Maltese journalist, who questioned the rule of law in the country while France became subject to greater social and political polarization in 2017, said the report.

What about the European continent?

Fourteen out of the report's 19 "full democracies" are located in Europe and the top three democracies in the world are European countries.

In the "flawed democracies" ranking, 18 out of the total 57 countries are European. The only non-member of the EU in this list is Serbia.

Outside of the EU, 7 out of the 39 "hybrid regimes" are in Europe, which includes Albania, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There are no "authoritarian regimes" that are located in Europe.

Leading democracy scholar, Larry Diamond, said that there's been a "democracy recession" in the last year. This regression is most apparent in some of the oldest democracies of western Europe □ whose regression since 2006 is almost as bad as that in the eastern half of the continent.

How 2017's index ranks compared to the previous year

Eighty-nine countries experienced a decline in their total score compared with 2016.

Another 76 of the 167 countries or territories surveyed can be considered democracies, with 19 of those 76 countries labelled "full democracies," the same number as 2016.

The report said this was the "worst performance since 2010-2011 in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis."

Larry Diamond, a leading democracy scholar, says the world has been going through a democracy recession. This trend of stagnation and/or regression, according to EIU, has been reflected in the index since its launch in 2006.

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Kaynak/Source: