



THE EUROPEAN MODEL OF INTEGRATED DEMOCRACY

A Strategic Framework for Democratic Renewal in Europe

Executive Summary

European democracy has entered a period of profound transformation. Representative democracy has delivered peace, stability and constitutional government across much of Europe, yet contemporary societies increasingly face challenges that traditional democratic structures alone are no longer fully equipped to address. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence, geopolitical competition, complex multi-level governance and declining public trust require a renewed democratic architecture capable of strengthening both legitimacy and long-term strategic resilience.

This document proposes **Integrated Democracy** as the next evolutionary stage of democratic governance. Rather than replacing representative democracy, it strengthens existing institutions by integrating representative, direct, deliberative and digital democratic mechanisms into a coherent system operating across the European, national, regional and local levels. Democracy thus evolves from a periodic electoral process into a continuous system of participation, transparency, accountability and institutional learning.

The framework recognises that modern democratic legitimacy depends not only on elections but also on continuous citizen participation, ethical governance, transparent institutions, measurable public performance and informed democratic decision-making. It introduces a multi-level governance model connected through permanent democratic feedback, enabling public policies to be continuously evaluated, improved and adapted to changing societal conditions.

The framework is complemented by the Libertas Europa Democratic Sovereignty Index (LE-DSI), which measures the extent to which existing political systems approach Integrated Democracy. Institutional performance indicators, independent academic and civic review, public transparency and methodological auditing support continuous democratic improvement without creating a new authority empowered to arbitrate political outcomes.

Integrated Democracy is presented as the institutional realization of Democratic Sovereignty and as a central component of Europe's broader strategy for strategic sovereignty. Cognitive sovereignty enables sufficiently independent democratic judgement; Integrated Democracy translates democratic sovereignty into continuous participation, control and revocable delegation; and information, financial and technological sovereignty help ensure that democratically legitimate choices can actually be implemented. These capacities are mutually reinforcing rather than a rigid linear hierarchy.

The transition towards Integrated Democracy should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. By combining constitutional continuity with continuous democratic participation, ethical leadership, digital innovation and measurable institutional accountability, Europe can build a resilient democratic system capable of meeting the political, technological and geopolitical challenges of the twenty-first century while preserving the fundamental principle that sovereignty ultimately belongs to its citizens.



The conceptual architecture is complementary: Democratic Sovereignty defines who ultimately holds political sovereignty; Integrated Democracy defines the institutional system through which that sovereignty can be exercised; the Path to Integrated Democracy defines the transition from present representative systems towards that model; and the LE-DSI measures the distance between existing political systems and its full realization.

Definition

Integrated Democracy

Integrated Democracy is a democratic governance model that combines representative democracy, direct democracy, deliberative democracy, digital democracy and continuous public oversight into a coherent, multi-level system operating across the European, national, regional and local levels.

Rather than replacing representative institutions, Integrated Democracy strengthens them by creating permanent mechanisms for citizen participation, institutional accountability, transparency, ethical governance and continuous democratic feedback. It transforms democracy from a periodic electoral process into a continuous system of participation, evaluation and institutional learning.

Integrated Democracy is therefore the institutional realization of Democratic Sovereignty. Representation remains indispensable, but it is understood as a delegation of authority rather than a transfer of sovereignty from the demos to institutions.

Democracy should no longer be understood as a political event held every four or five years. It should become a continuous system of participation, transparency, accountability and institutional learning operating across all levels of democratic governance.

1. Democracy Has Become Strategic Infrastructure

Democracy is widely recognised as the foundation of European political civilisation. Its legitimacy rests upon a simple principle: political authority belongs to the people (*demos*), while governments exercise power only on behalf of citizens and remain continuously accountable to them.

In the twenty-first century democracy has become far more than a constitutional arrangement or an electoral process. It has become strategic infrastructure that determines the quality of governance, public trust, economic resilience and ultimately the capacity of Europe to act independently in an increasingly complex world.

Artificial intelligence, digital communication, global financial integration and rapidly evolving geopolitical realities have transformed the environment in which democratic institutions operate. Decisions affecting European citizens are increasingly interconnected across the European, national, regional and local levels, while their long-term consequences extend far beyond individual electoral cycles.



Yet the strategic importance of democracy has never been greater. Decisions concerning security, war and peace, economic sanctions, strategic technologies, public debt, migration, energy and digital transformation increasingly shape the future of entire generations. Such decisions require not only legal authority but also democratic legitimacy founded upon informed public participation, transparency and continuous accountability.

A democratic system that gradually loses its capacity to connect citizens with strategic decision-making inevitably weakens its own legitimacy. Democracy therefore cannot be reduced to periodic elections alone. It must evolve into a resilient system of continuous participation, public oversight and institutional learning operating across all levels of governance.

Democracy has become one of Europe's critical strategic infrastructures. Without democratic resilience there can be neither strategic sovereignty nor long-term political stability.

2. Why Contemporary Democracy Requires Renewal

Representative democracy remains one of the greatest political achievements in modern history. It has contributed to peace, prosperity, constitutional government and the protection of fundamental rights across Europe. The challenge today is not whether representative democracy should be preserved, but whether its institutional architecture remains capable of fulfilling its original democratic purpose.

Across Europe, public trust in political institutions has gradually declined, while confidence in political parties consistently ranks among the lowest of all major public institutions according to successive Eurobarometer surveys. At the same time, political decision-making has become increasingly concentrated within complex institutional, administrative, financial and lobbying structures that remain only partially transparent to ordinary citizens.

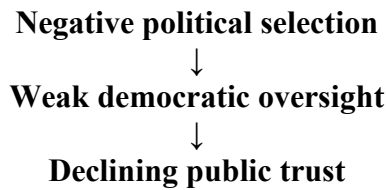
The European Union has developed one of the world's most sophisticated systems of multi-level governance. Yet democratic accountability has not evolved at the same pace. Strategic decisions are distributed across European institutions, national governments, regional authorities and local administrations, making responsibility increasingly difficult for citizens to identify and evaluate. Elections continue to provide democratic legitimacy, but meaningful public influence between elections remains limited.

The democratic challenge extends beyond institutional complexity. Europe's strategic environment is increasingly shaped by global financial markets, international payment infrastructures, dominant digital platforms, artificial intelligence, transnational lobbying and information systems operating beyond direct democratic control. Decisions formally adopted by democratic institutions are therefore often made within an environment characterised by significant external economic, technological and informational influence.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of democratic weakness is the growing gap between citizens and strategic decision-making. Questions involving war and peace, economic sanctions, public debt, migration, technological transformation or long-term industrial policy fundamentally affect the future of European societies. Yet citizens rarely possess effective institutional mechanisms through which these decisions can be continuously scrutinised, influenced or corrected beyond periodic elections.



The consequences are visible across much of Europe.



Political systems increasingly reward short-term electoral success, communication skills and institutional survival rather than competence, integrity and long-term strategic responsibility. Weak democratic oversight reduces accountability during political mandates, while declining public trust further discourages civic participation and reinforces institutional inertia.

The result is a widening gap between the constitutional principle that sovereignty belongs to the people and the practical capacity of citizens to exercise that sovereignty continuously. Democracy increasingly risks becoming procedural rather than substantive, representative rather than participatory, and reactive rather than strategically adaptive.

Europe therefore requires democratic renewal. The objective is not to replace representative democracy, but to restore the continuous relationship between citizens and public decision-making by integrating representative institutions with direct democracy, digital participation, ethical governance, transparent accountability and coordinated democratic governance across the European, national, regional and local levels.

3. The Evolution of Democracy

Democracy has never been a static concept. Throughout history it has continuously evolved in response to changing societies, technologies and systems of governance. Every major stage has sought to solve the limitations of the previous one while preserving its fundamental principle: political authority ultimately derives from the people.

The first democratic systems emerged in the city-states of ancient Greece, where citizens participated directly in public decision-making. Although participation was limited to a relatively small proportion of the population, Athenian democracy established the enduring principle that citizens should not merely obey laws but actively participate in shaping them.

The rise of modern nation-states made direct participation increasingly difficult. Representative democracy therefore became the dominant model of democratic governance. Citizens delegated political authority to elected representatives who exercised legislative and executive responsibilities on their behalf. This model proved remarkably successful in providing political stability, constitutional government and the protection of fundamental rights. Representative democracy remains indispensable for governing complex societies requiring continuity, professional administration and long-term policymaking.

Switzerland demonstrated that representative democracy need not exclude direct citizen participation. Through referendums, popular initiatives and extensive cantonal autonomy, Swiss democracy successfully integrated representative institutions with direct democratic decision-making. Over more than a century, this model has contributed to political stability,



high public trust and strong democratic legitimacy. It remains the world's most developed and successful example of institutionalised direct democracy.

During recent decades, new forms of democratic participation have emerged. Deliberative democracy introduced citizens' assemblies, expert consultations and structured public dialogue as mechanisms for improving the quality of democratic decision-making. Rather than replacing representative institutions, these approaches complement them by incorporating broader societal knowledge into complex policy questions.

The digital revolution has opened a further stage in democratic development. Secure digital identity, electronic participation, online consultation, artificial intelligence and advanced communication technologies now make continuous interaction between citizens and institutions technically feasible on an unprecedented scale. Democracy is no longer constrained by the geographical and administrative limitations that shaped earlier constitutional models.

Europe now faces the challenge of integrating these democratic traditions into a coherent governance system. The objective is neither to replace representative democracy with direct democracy nor to substitute political leadership with digital platforms. Rather, it is to combine the strengths of representative institutions, direct citizen participation, deliberative processes and digital technologies within a common democratic architecture operating across the European, national, regional and local levels.

Integrated Democracy therefore represents an evolutionary rather than revolutionary approach. It preserves representative democracy as the foundation of constitutional government while expanding democratic legitimacy through continuous participation, transparency, ethical governance and measurable public accountability.

Integrated Democracy represents the next evolutionary stage of democratic governance—combining the legitimacy of representation, the accountability of direct democracy, the quality of deliberation and the opportunities created by digital technologies into a coherent system of democratic governance for the twenty-first century.

4. Principles of Integrated Democracy

Integrated Democracy is founded upon the conviction that democratic legitimacy cannot rely solely upon elections. It requires a continuous relationship between citizens and public institutions based on participation, transparency, accountability and shared responsibility. The following principles provide the normative foundation for this model.

1. Sovereignty Belongs to the Demos

Political sovereignty belongs to the demos. Most public authority will normally be exercised through representative and administrative institutions rather than directly by citizens. This is compatible with Democratic Sovereignty only while authority remains genuinely delegated: the demos must retain effective power over who exercises it, the scope and purpose of delegation, continuing control and ultimate reclaim. Formal constitutional attribution of sovereignty is insufficient where these capacities cannot be exercised in practice.



2. Representative Democracy Remains Essential

Representative institutions remain indispensable for ensuring political stability, legislative continuity and effective public administration. Integrated Democracy strengthens rather than replaces representative government.

3. Direct Participation Complements Representation

Referendums, citizens' initiatives, recall mechanisms, participatory budgeting and digital consultation provide citizens with meaningful opportunities to influence public decisions between elections.

4. Subsidiarity and Multi-Level Governance

Public decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level while maintaining coherent coordination between European, national, regional and local institutions. Democracy functions best when responsibilities are clearly defined and citizens understand where decisions are made.

5. Protection of Constituent Demoi and Non-Domination

European democracy must protect both the political equality of individual citizens and the legitimate sovereignty, constitutional identity and reserved competences of constituent demoi. A wider European demos may exist as a composite demos without dissolving national, regional or local demoi. No majority at one level may legitimately extinguish the democratic sovereignty of another political community, while no minority of constituent states should obtain an unlimited power to permanently govern the wider citizenry against its democratic will.

6. Transparency

Democratic legitimacy depends upon open institutions, transparent decision-making, accessible public information and clear disclosure of lobbying, conflicts of interest and institutional responsibilities.

7. Accountability

Political authority must remain subject to continuous public evaluation rather than periodic electoral judgement alone. Institutions should regularly report on their performance, implementation and outcomes.

8. Ethical Governance

Public office constitutes a public trust rather than a private privilege. Integrity, independence, responsibility and service to citizens should guide democratic leadership at every level of governance.

9. Evidence-Based Decision-Making

Public policy should be informed by reliable evidence, scientific knowledge, impact assessments and transparent evaluation while remaining democratically accountable to citizens.



10. Cognitive Sovereignty

Democracy depends upon citizens capable of forming independent judgments. Information integrity, media plurality, critical thinking and protection against psychological manipulation are therefore integral components of democratic resilience.

11. Continuous Democratic Feedback

Democracy should operate as a continuous learning system. Public participation, institutional evaluation, performance measurement and democratic oversight should create permanent feedback loops enabling institutions to adapt, improve and maintain public trust.

Together, these principles define Integrated Democracy as a resilient governance model capable of combining legitimacy, participation, competence and accountability within a coherent democratic architecture adapted to the realities of the twenty-first century.

4.1 The Four Democratic Powers of the Demos

Integrated Democracy can be reduced to four democratic capacities through which sovereignty remains effective rather than merely formal:

INITIATE

Citizens and legitimate civic actors can place public questions, legislative proposals and political priorities on the democratic agenda through transparent procedures.

DECIDE

The demos directly decides matters constitutionally reserved to it and participates directly where the consequence and irreversibility of a decision require a stronger democratic mandate.

CONTROL

Citizens continuously supervise delegated authority through transparency, civic oversight, public evaluation, corrective mechanisms and enforceable standards of public integrity.

RECLAIM

The demos can withdraw a political mandate through recall and can redefine, withdraw or reclaim competences previously delegated to institutions or another political level under constitutionally defined procedures.

Referendums, citizens' initiatives, citizens' vetoes, recall, participatory budgeting, citizens' assemblies and digital participation are instruments implementing these four powers. They are not separate sources of sovereignty.

4.2 The Non-Delegable Sovereign Core



Integrated Democracy does not require the demos to exercise most public authority directly. Extensive and durable delegation is compatible with sovereignty. What cannot be delegated away is the meta-authority over delegation itself.

The non-transferable sovereign core comprises the constituent authority to determine the constitutional order and the political community's own status; the authority to determine which competences are delegated, to whom, for what purpose and within what limits; ultimate democratic control over delegated authority; and the capacity to redefine, withdraw or reclaim delegation.

Competences constitutionally reserved to a constituent demos may be delegated only by that demos through the prescribed constitutional procedure. Once a competence has been validly delegated to a higher political level, ordinary decisions within that competence do not require renewed consent of every constituent demos.

Integrated Democracy therefore distinguishes delegation of authority from alienation of sovereignty. The first is normal democratic government; the second is incompatible with Democratic Sovereignty. The demos does not need to exercise all power, but it must retain power over who exercises power.

5. Integrated Democratic Governance

Integrated Democracy is founded on the principle that democratic legitimacy cannot be generated at a single institutional level. Modern governance operates simultaneously across European, national, regional and local institutions, each exercising distinct responsibilities while remaining accountable to the same democratic community.

The objective is therefore not to centralise democracy, nor to fragment it into isolated jurisdictions, but to integrate all levels of governance into a coherent democratic system based on clearly defined competences, subsidiarity, transparency and continuous public accountability.

Each level performs different functions, yet all are connected through common democratic standards, shared principles and permanent democratic feedback.

5.1 Layered and Composite Democracy

Citizens may simultaneously belong to local, regional, national and wider political communities. Integrated Democracy therefore treats democracy as layered rather than hierarchical. A higher political level receives democratic legitimacy only for the competences legitimately exercised there; it does not acquire inherent sovereignty merely because institutions accumulate authority over time.

At European level, several national demoi may form a composite demos for matters they have chosen to exercise jointly. Within competences legitimately delegated to the European level, the European composite demos and European institutions decide according to the constitutional procedure. Constituent national demoi decide over the delegation of sovereignty itself and retain authority over competences constitutionally reserved to them.



The routing principle is equally simple: decisions should normally remain with the smallest demos capable of resolving them effectively, provided that its decision does not disproportionately determine the rights or fundamental interests of other political communities.

5.2 European Level

The European level should focus on competences that Member State demoi have legitimately chosen to exercise jointly and on issues that cannot be effectively addressed by individual Member States acting alone.

These may include common security, external relations, the internal market, major infrastructure, strategic technologies, financial stability, environmental standards and other genuinely European public goods, but only to the extent that the relevant competence has been legitimately conferred or constitutionally established.

Representative institutions—including the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council—remain responsible for legislative and executive decision-making within these competences. However, democratic legitimacy should be strengthened through additional mechanisms enabling direct citizen participation on matters of exceptional strategic importance.

Integrated Democracy therefore proposes the gradual introduction of European referendums, an enhanced European Citizens' Initiative, structured European civic consultations and permanent democratic monitoring of institutional performance. These instruments would complement representative institutions while strengthening public trust and democratic legitimacy across the Union.

Protection of constituent demoi operates primarily at the constitutional boundary, not as a universal national veto over European policy. Within validly delegated European competence, decisions are made by the European constitutional order. Changes to the common constitutional distribution of sovereignty require dual democratic legitimacy of European citizens and Member States acting for their constituent demoi. A specific constituent demos must additionally consent where its own reserved competence, constitutional status, degree of integration or essential sovereign attribute would be surrendered or altered.

5.3 National Level

National governments and parliaments remain the primary democratic institutions responsible for constitutional order, public administration and the implementation of public policy.

Integrated Democracy strengthens national representative institutions through continuous democratic accountability rather than replacing them. Citizens should possess meaningful opportunities to influence legislation, initiate public debate and evaluate governmental performance throughout the political cycle.

National referendums, citizens' legislative initiatives, recall mechanisms for elected officials, comprehensive transparency requirements and regular public performance evaluations should therefore become integral components of democratic governance.



National democracy should function as the principal link connecting European strategic decisions with regional and local implementation.

5.4 Regional Level

Regional government provides the democratic bridge between national strategy and local implementation. Regions possess the institutional capacity to adapt national policies to territorial realities while remaining sufficiently close to citizens to encourage meaningful participation.

Regional assemblies should therefore exercise greater responsibility for infrastructure, education, healthcare, regional economic development and other competences requiring territorial coordination.

Participatory budgeting, regional initiatives and structured public consultation should become regular elements of regional governance, enabling citizens to participate directly in shaping regional priorities and investment decisions.

5.5 Local Level

Local democracy constitutes the foundation of democratic participation. It is at the municipal and community level that citizens experience public administration most directly and where democratic engagement can become part of everyday civic life.

Municipal institutions should therefore encourage neighbourhood participation, community initiatives, citizen platforms, local referendums and participatory budgeting. Digital technologies create unprecedented opportunities for continuous dialogue between citizens and local authorities, improving both democratic legitimacy and the quality of public services.

Strong local democracy also strengthens democracy at every higher level by cultivating civic responsibility, trust and democratic competence.

5.6 Democratic Feedback System

The defining innovation of Integrated Democracy is the establishment of a continuous Democratic Feedback System connecting public decision-making with systematic citizen participation and institutional learning.

Traditional representative democracy relies primarily upon periodic elections as its principal mechanism of accountability. Integrated Democracy introduces continuous democratic feedback throughout the entire policy cycle.



The Democratic Feedback Cycle



Public participation should therefore not conclude once legislation has been adopted. Citizens, independent experts and democratic institutions should continuously evaluate policy implementation, measure outcomes, identify unintended consequences and recommend improvements.

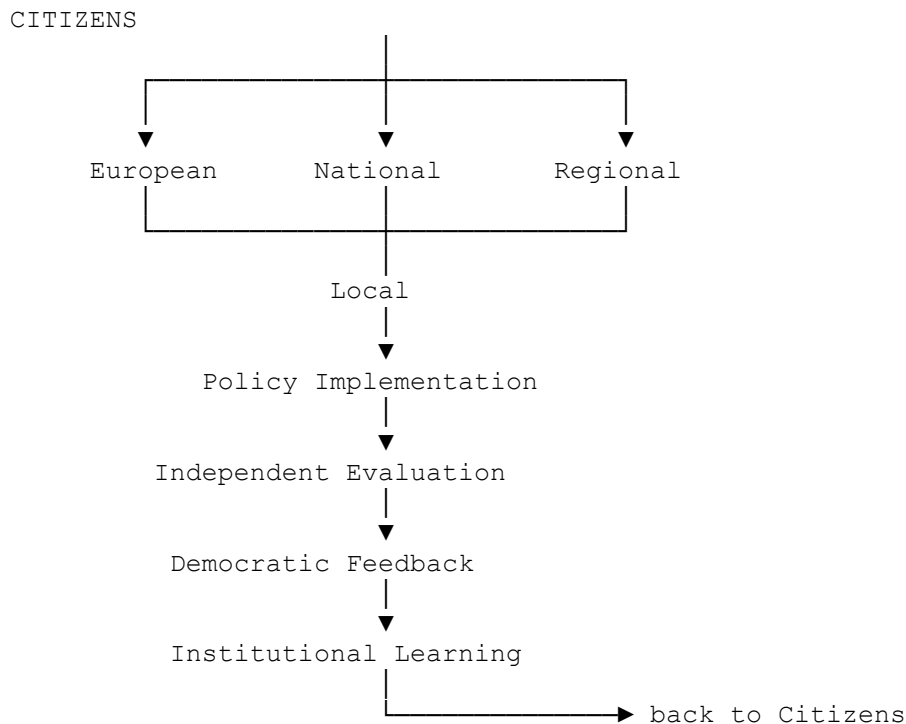
Independent evaluation should rely upon transparent indicators, measurable performance and publicly accessible reporting rather than political rhetoric alone. Democratic institutions become capable of learning from experience, correcting mistakes and adapting public policy to changing societal conditions.

This feedback architecture reduces institutional inertia, strengthens accountability and significantly limits the risks associated with negative political selection by creating continuous rather than episodic democratic control.

Integrated Democracy therefore transforms democracy from a system centred primarily upon electoral competition into a continuous governance process characterised by participation, evaluation, transparency and institutional learning.

Conclusion

Democracy should function as an integrated multi-level governance system in which European, national, regional and local institutions remain permanently connected through continuous democratic feedback, transparent accountability and meaningful citizen participation.



6. Democratic Participation

Integrated Democracy expands democratic participation without weakening representative institutions. Representative democracy continues to provide stability, continuity and professional governance, while additional democratic mechanisms ensure that citizens remain actively connected to public decision-making throughout the entire political cycle.

Rather than concentrating democratic legitimacy exclusively on elections held every four or five years, Integrated Democracy distributes participation across multiple complementary mechanisms. Each serves a distinct democratic function, while together they create a resilient and continuously responsive governance system.

Representative Democracy

Representative institutions remain the cornerstone of constitutional government. Parliaments and elected governments continue to exercise legislative and executive authority, provide political leadership and ensure continuity of public administration. Their legitimacy derives from free and fair elections conducted under the rule of law.

Direct Democracy

Direct democracy enables citizens to participate directly in decisions of exceptional public importance. Constitutional and legislative referendums, citizens' initiatives, recall procedures and citizens' veto mechanisms strengthen democratic legitimacy by allowing citizens to intervene when representative institutions no longer adequately reflect public priorities.



Direct democratic instruments should complement parliamentary decision-making rather than replace it. Their purpose is to strengthen democratic accountability while preserving institutional stability.

Delegated and Sovereign Decisions

Integrated Democracy distinguishes between two basic categories of political decision.

Delegated Decisions

Representative institutions decide ordinary matters within competences legitimately delegated to them. Citizens retain agenda-setting, oversight, correction and reclaim mechanisms, but direct voting is not required for every public decision.

Sovereign Decisions

A decision requires a stronger democratic mandate when exceptional constitutional, existential or societal significance coincides with substantial irreversibility. Examples may include constitutional change, fundamental transfer of political competence, durable entry into or major escalation of war, major restrictions of fundamental rights, changes of political status, or long-term commitments that substantially bind future democratic choice.

The governing principle is: the greater the consequence and irreversibility of a decision, the stronger the democratic mandate required.

The consequence of a decision determines how strong a democratic mandate is required; the allocation of competence determines which demos has authority to provide that mandate. A highly consequential decision within an already delegated European competence does not automatically require separate approval by each national demos.

A Strategic Democratic Filter may be used to determine the appropriate procedure by examining urgency, magnitude of consequences, human and economic impact, irreversibility and appropriate competence. The filter does not determine the political answer; it determines whether ordinary representative procedure, enhanced consultation or higher democratic authorisation is required.

Deliberative Democracy

Not all public decisions are suited to majority voting alone. Complex issues often require informed discussion, expert knowledge and structured public dialogue before decisions are taken.

Citizens' assemblies, deliberative forums and expert consultations provide opportunities for representative samples of citizens to examine evidence, hear diverse perspectives and formulate recommendations. These mechanisms improve the quality of democratic decision-making while reducing political polarisation and increasing public understanding of complex policy choices.



Digital Democracy

Digital technologies make democratic participation possible on an unprecedented scale. Secure digital identity, electronic participation, public consultations and AI-assisted civic platforms allow citizens to contribute continuously to democratic governance while maintaining transparency, accessibility and institutional accountability.

Digital democracy should never replace democratic deliberation or constitutional safeguards. Rather, it should expand participation, improve communication between institutions and citizens, and increase the responsiveness of public administration.

Integrated Participation Instruments

Integrated Democracy combines complementary mechanisms of participation that operationalise the four powers of the demos: INITIATE, DECIDE, CONTROL and RECLAIM.

Referendums

Allow citizens to decide directly on constitutional amendments, Sovereign Decisions and other matters for which the constitutional order requires direct democratic authorisation.

Citizens' Initiatives

Enable citizens to propose legislation or require parliamentary consideration once a defined threshold of public support has been reached.

Recall

Provides democratic procedures through which elected officials may be removed before the end of their mandate under clearly defined constitutional conditions.

Citizens' Veto

Allows citizens to suspend or require reconsideration of legislation before its final implementation where sufficient public support exists.

Participatory Budgeting

Enables citizens to participate directly in allocating portions of public expenditure, particularly at regional and local levels.

Citizens' Assemblies

Bring together randomly selected citizens to deliberate on strategically important public issues and formulate recommendations for representative institutions.



Deliberative Forums

Facilitate structured dialogue among citizens, experts, stakeholders and public authorities before major policy decisions are adopted.

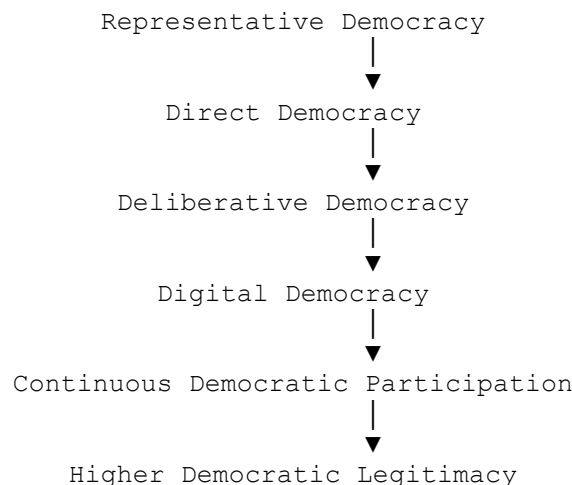
Consultative Digital Platforms

Provide continuous opportunities for public consultation, policy evaluation, feedback and civic participation throughout the policy cycle.

Conclusion

Integrated Democracy does not replace representative democracy with direct democracy. It integrates representative, direct, deliberative and digital democratic mechanisms into a coherent system in which each strengthens the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of the others.

Democratic participation should become continuous rather than episodic, informed rather than reactive, and integrated rather than institutionally fragmented.



7. Digital Democracy

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the relationship between citizens and public institutions. Modern technologies make it possible to strengthen democratic participation far beyond the limitations of traditional electoral systems while simultaneously increasing transparency, accessibility and institutional responsiveness.

Digital Democracy should not be understood as replacing representative institutions with technology. Rather, it provides secure and reliable tools that enable citizens to participate more frequently, more conveniently and more meaningfully in democratic governance while preserving constitutional safeguards and the rule of law.

Several European countries have already demonstrated the potential of digital participation. Estonia has successfully implemented secure digital identity, electronic public administration and internet voting, showing that digital technologies can increase both efficiency and citizen



participation. Switzerland, while relying primarily on traditional democratic mechanisms, has demonstrated how direct democracy can function continuously over generations, providing valuable institutional experience that digital technologies can further strengthen rather than replace.

Integrated Democracy combines these experiences into a broader European framework adapted to multi-level governance.

Digital democratic infrastructure should ensure verified eligibility to participate, privacy and data protection, secret ballots where required, independent auditability, verifiability of process and results, cybersecurity and equal accessibility. Digital participation must always be complemented by a non-digital route so that technology never becomes a condition of citizenship.

The constitutional model should remain technologically neutral. Cryptographic systems, distributed ledgers or other verification technologies may be used where they demonstrably improve security, auditability and trust, but no particular technology should be embedded in the democratic doctrine. Democratic infrastructure is strategic infrastructure and must be resilient against cyber attack, manipulation, capture and external dependency.

Artificial intelligence also offers significant opportunities for democratic innovation. AI-assisted consultation platforms can help analyse public input, identify policy priorities, summarise complex consultations and improve communication between institutions and citizens. These systems should always remain transparent, explainable and subject to human oversight. Artificial intelligence should support democratic participation, never replace democratic decision-making.

Digital Democracy must also remain socially inclusive. Equal access to digital technologies, digital literacy and accessible public services are essential conditions for ensuring that technological progress strengthens rather than widens democratic participation.

Digital technologies therefore represent not merely technical improvements but new democratic infrastructure capable of supporting continuous participation, institutional responsiveness and public accountability across all levels of governance.

Technology should strengthen democracy, not replace it. Digital Democracy expands the capacity of citizens to participate while preserving the legitimacy of representative institutions and constitutional safeguards.

8. Democratic Integrity and Accountability

Democracy ultimately depends not only on elections but on the integrity of those entrusted with public responsibility. Institutions cannot maintain public trust unless political authority remains transparent, accountable and continuously subject to democratic scrutiny.

Integrated Democracy therefore introduces Democratic Integrity as a central pillar of democratic governance. Integrity is understood not as a moral aspiration alone but as a



measurable institutional characteristic supported by transparency, ethical standards and continuous public oversight.

Transparency constitutes the first requirement of democratic legitimacy. Citizens should be able to understand how decisions are made, who participates in decision-making and what interests influence public policy. Legislative procedures, public expenditure, institutional responsibilities and lobbying activities should therefore be accessible, understandable and publicly verifiable.

Detailed integrity standards are defined in the separate European Code of Public Integrity and Responsibility. Integrated Democracy incorporates that Code by reference; it does not reproduce or independently redefine its rules.

Lobbying forms an inevitable component of modern democratic systems by providing expertise and representing legitimate societal interests. Democratic legitimacy, however, requires complete transparency regarding lobbying activities, financial relationships and institutional access. Citizens should be able to identify who seeks to influence public decisions and under what conditions.

Integrated Democracy also strengthens accountability through measurable public performance. Governments and public institutions should publish regular performance indicators evaluating the implementation of policies, achievement of objectives and use of public resources. Democratic success should increasingly be assessed through measurable outcomes rather than political rhetoric alone.

Annual Democratic Reports should provide comprehensive evaluations of institutional performance, transparency, public participation, legislative implementation and democratic quality. Together with publicly accessible Democratic Dashboards, these reports would enable citizens to monitor democratic performance continuously rather than only during election campaigns.

Citizen oversight represents the final component of democratic integrity. Public consultation, civic monitoring, independent evaluation and continuous democratic feedback create permanent mechanisms through which citizens participate not only in electing governments but also in evaluating their performance throughout the entire mandate.

Integrated Democracy therefore transforms accountability from an episodic electoral event into a continuous institutional process. Transparency, ethical governance, measurable performance and active citizen oversight become mutually reinforcing mechanisms that strengthen democratic legitimacy and reduce the risks associated with negative political selection.

Integrated Democracy also seeks to reduce the structural conditions that encourage negative political selection. Greater transparency, continuous public evaluation, ethical governance and measurable institutional performance increase the political value of competence, integrity and long-term responsibility while reducing incentives for purely short-term electoral behaviour.

Democratic integrity is not achieved through regulation alone. It requires transparency, clear ethical and legal standards, independent oversight, proportionate sanctions and continuous



public accountability. Democracy remains legitimate only while those exercising delegated authority remain accountable to the demos from which that authority originates.

9. Democratic Competence

Democratic institutions can never be stronger than the civic competence of the society they serve. Integrated Democracy therefore recognises that democratic participation and democratic responsibility are inseparable. Expanding citizens' influence over public decision-making requires a corresponding commitment to civic education, independent thinking and lifelong democratic learning.

Democratic competence should not be understood as specialised political expertise. Citizens are not expected to become constitutional lawyers, economists or security experts. Rather, democratic competence refers to the ability to understand public issues, evaluate competing arguments, verify information, recognise manipulation and participate responsibly in democratic processes.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence, digital communication and global information networks has fundamentally expanded the knowledge required for effective democratic participation. Civic education must therefore evolve beyond traditional constitutional knowledge and become a continuous process of developing the capabilities necessary for democratic citizenship in the twenty-first century.

Integrated Democracy identifies several complementary dimensions of democratic competence.

Civic Education

Citizens should understand constitutional principles, democratic institutions, the distribution of competences across European, national, regional and local levels, and the mechanisms through which public decisions are made and challenged. Civic education should promote participation rather than passive observation of political life.

Media and Information Literacy

Democratic decision-making depends upon the ability to distinguish verified information from manipulation, propaganda, misinformation and opinion. Citizens should acquire practical skills for evaluating sources, recognising narrative construction and understanding how digital platforms influence public perception.

Financial Literacy

Public budgets, taxation, public debt, inflation, pensions and strategic investment increasingly influence democratic choices. Citizens should possess sufficient financial understanding to evaluate public policies and their long-term economic consequences.

Artificial Intelligence Literacy



Artificial intelligence is becoming a permanent component of democratic life. Citizens should understand both its opportunities and its risks, including algorithmic recommendation systems, generative AI, automated decision-support systems and AI-assisted public administration. Democratic participation requires informed interaction with these technologies rather than passive dependence upon them.

Critical Thinking

Democracy depends upon citizens capable of questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence and considering alternative perspectives. Critical thinking strengthens democratic resilience by reducing susceptibility to manipulation while encouraging constructive public debate based upon facts rather than emotion alone.

Cognitive Sovereignty

Integrated Democracy recognises cognitive sovereignty as an essential democratic capability. Citizens should remain free to form independent judgements based upon transparent information, pluralistic debate and personal responsibility rather than psychological manipulation, information dependency or algorithmic influence.

Responsible Citizenship

Rights and responsibilities remain inseparable. Democratic participation requires respect for constitutional order, tolerance of differing opinions, willingness to seek compromise and acceptance of democratic outcomes. Citizens are not merely voters but permanent participants in the shared responsibility of democratic governance.

Democratic competence should therefore become a strategic public investment. Education systems, public institutions, civil society, universities and independent media all share responsibility for strengthening the knowledge, skills and civic culture upon which democratic legitimacy ultimately depends.

Integrated Democracy requires competent citizens. The quality of democracy will ultimately reflect the competence, responsibility and independence of the citizens from whom democratic legitimacy originates.

10. Measuring Democratic Sovereignty and Institutional Performance

Integrated Democracy requires transparent measurement of whether the demos actually retains effective sovereignty and whether institutions perform the functions delegated to them. Formal declarations that sovereignty belongs to the people are not sufficient if citizens cannot meaningfully determine the scope of delegation, control its exercise or reclaim authority in practice. Democratic sovereignty and institutional performance are related but distinct questions: the first concerns control over political power; the second concerns the quality with which delegated power is exercised.

The Libertas Europa Democratic Sovereignty Index (LE-DSI) provides the benchmark for the first question. Operational performance indicators, transparent public data and independent



review complement it without substituting administrative efficiency for democratic sovereignty.

Measurement should not create a new political authority. Methodology, data and evidence must be transparent and open to independent academic, civic and institutional scrutiny, while no monitoring body should possess power to determine legitimate political outcomes.

10.1 Libertas Europa Democratic Sovereignty Index (LE-DSI)

The LE-DSI measures the extent to which a cognitively sovereign demos remains the original and effective holder of political sovereignty. It is an absolute benchmark-based index: Democratic Sovereignty defines the principle, Integrated Democracy defines the benchmark, and the LE-DSI measures the distance between existing political systems and that realization.

The full methodology evaluates seven dimensions: cognitive sovereignty and informational pluralism; sovereign competence of the demos; revocability of delegated power; continuous democratic influence; political equality and plurality of democratic communities; institutional integrity and effective legal protection; and external and strategic sovereignty.

Three dimensions are foundational and cannot be fully compensated by strengths elsewhere: Cognitive Sovereignty, Sovereign Competence of the Demos and Revocability of Delegated Power. This prevents regular elections, institutional efficiency or geopolitical power from concealing a fundamental loss of effective sovereignty of the demos.

10.2 Institutional Performance Indicators

Integrated Democracy also requires transparent evaluation of whether public institutions implement decisions lawfully, efficiently and in accordance with publicly stated objectives. Such indicators may address implementation, expenditure, responsiveness, transparency, service quality, public trust and other measurable outcomes.

Performance measurement must not be confused with democratic legitimacy. An efficient institution may still exercise power that the demos cannot meaningfully control; conversely, a democratically sovereign system may choose policies that external evaluators consider suboptimal. Performance indicators therefore complement, but do not replace, the LE-DSI.

10.3 Independent Review and Civic Observation

Independent review may be conducted by universities, civic observatories, research institutions, audit bodies, statistical offices and other credible actors operating under transparent methodologies. Their role is to collect evidence, test methods, identify democratic weaknesses and publish recommendations.

No single European Democratic Authority is required as a precondition of Integrated Democracy. Where coordinating institutions are created, their role should remain analytical, methodological and advisory, with no power to regulate political competition, determine political truth or override the sovereignty of the relevant demos.



Conclusion

Integrated Democracy should therefore be continuously measurable without becoming technocratically governed. Measurement serves the demos by making power visible; it does not replace democratic judgement.

Dimension	Core focus
Cognitive Sovereignty & Informational Pluralism	Competing sources, interpretative plurality, reach, censorship, influence transparency and gatekeeper power
Sovereign Competence of the Demos	Citizen agenda-setting, reserved competence, control over delegation and reclaim of competence
Revocability of Delegated Power	Removal of leadership, recall, reversibility of delegation and institutional entrenchment
Continuous Democratic Influence	Binding direct decisions, citizen initiatives, multi-level control and responsiveness to sustained public will
Political Equality & Plurality of Demoi	Political equality, dissent, protection of sub-demoi and peaceful self-determination mechanisms
Institutional Integrity & Effective Legal Protection	Institutional capture, equal application of law, effective remedy, traceability and accountability
External & Strategic Sovereignty	Capacity to make and implement democratic choices without structural external domination

11. Integrated Democracy as the Foundation of Strategic Sovereignty

The strategic challenges facing Europe cannot be addressed through institutional reform in isolation. Cognitive sovereignty, democratic sovereignty, information integrity, institutional accountability, financial and technological capacity and strategic autonomy are mutually reinforcing components of a single system. Weakness in one can progressively undermine the others.

Cognitive sovereignty provides the prior capacity for citizens to form sufficiently independent political judgement. Democratic Sovereignty defines where legitimate political authority resides. Integrated Democracy gives that sovereignty institutional form through representation, direct participation, continuous control and revocable delegation. Information integrity, legal protection, financial resilience and technological capacity then help preserve the ability to implement democratically legitimate choices.

These dimensions should not be treated as a rigid linear hierarchy. They form a mutually reinforcing architecture in which independent judgement enables democratic sovereignty,



democratic institutions protect the conditions of independent judgement, and both are necessary for durable strategic sovereignty.

Democratic and Strategic Sovereignty



The relationship is cumulative and recursive rather than merely linear. Cognitive sovereignty makes meaningful democratic choice possible; Democratic Sovereignty identifies the demos as the holder of legitimacy; Integrated Democracy converts that legitimacy into institutions of participation, control and reclaim; and information, financial and technological sovereignty help ensure that democratic choices can actually be implemented.

Strategic sovereignty therefore cannot be reduced to military capability, economic strength or technological leadership alone. It depends equally upon the democratic capacity of society to make informed, legitimate and accountable long-term decisions in accordance with the interests of its citizens.

Integrated Democracy gives practical effect to the principle that sovereignty remains with the demos by creating continuous democratic connections between citizens, legitimate constituent demoi and institutions at the European, national, regional and local levels. Democracy becomes not merely a mechanism for selecting governments but an architecture through which delegated authority can be initiated, evaluated, corrected and reclaimed.

Integrated Democracy is therefore not a standalone institutional reform. It constitutes the governance framework within which cognitive sovereignty, information integrity, financial sovereignty and Europe's modular constitutional architecture become mutually reinforcing elements of a resilient European system. Democratic renewal is the mechanism that transforms these strategic principles into practical governance.

A democracy that cannot continuously involve, inform, evaluate and correct itself cannot remain strategically sovereign. Strategic sovereignty ultimately begins with democratic sovereignty.

12. Transition to Integrated Democracy



The transition towards Integrated Democracy should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Existing representative institutions should be strengthened while citizens progressively acquire more effective capacities to initiate, control, decide and reclaim political authority.

The transition proceeds through three cumulative stages. Each preserves the democratic capacities established previously and adds stronger institutional consequence. The detailed operational route is defined in the separate document Path to Integrated Democracy.

Stage I – Civic Democracy

The first stage establishes a guaranteed civic-to-political pathway through which legitimate proposals can be submitted, qualified under politically neutral criteria, supported, routed to the competent level, formally considered and publicly tracked. Its primary democratic capacity is INITIATE.

Stage II – Advanced Democracy

Successful civic participation becomes enforceable institutional procedure. Defined levels of verified support trigger progressively stronger obligations, including reasoned response, formal review, hearing, parliamentary consideration, legislative procedure or democratic correction. Citizens gain INITIATE + CONTROL + LIMITED DECIDE.

Stage III – Integrated Democracy

The mature constitutional order recognises the demos as the effective holder of ultimate political sovereignty. Direct democratic rights, Sovereign Decisions, recall, competence reclaim, protection of constituent demoi and cognitive-sovereignty safeguards become constitutionally entrenched. The full democratic chain is INITIATE → DECIDE → CONTROL → RECLAIM.

The transition should be tested before it is constitutionalised: create access, demonstrate fair procedure, establish institutional obligation, expand democratic control and only then entrench ultimate sovereign powers constitutionally.

Stage	Democratic Capacity	Expected Outcome
Stage I – Civic Democracy	INITIATE	Guaranteed route from civic demand to political consideration
Stage II – Advanced Democracy	INITIATE + CONTROL + LIMITED DECIDE	Enforceable influence over delegated authority
Stage III – Integrated Democracy	INITIATE + DECIDE + CONTROL + RECLAIM	Constitutionally protected sovereignty of the demos

13. Conclusion



Democracy Must Become Continuous

Democracy has never been a finished institutional model. Throughout history it has evolved in response to changing societies, technologies and political realities. The challenges of the twenty-first century require the next stage of that evolution.

Representative democracy remains an indispensable foundation of constitutional government. Yet representative institutions alone can no longer provide the level of participation, transparency, accountability and responsiveness required by increasingly complex, interconnected and digital societies. Democratic legitimacy must therefore evolve from a periodic electoral mandate into a continuous relationship between citizens and public institutions.

Integrated Democracy provides a framework for this transformation. It preserves the stability of representative government while strengthening it through direct participation, deliberative processes, digital technologies, ethical leadership, measurable accountability and continuous democratic feedback operating across the European, national, regional and local levels.

The objective is not simply to improve democratic procedures but to restore the original democratic principle that sovereignty remains with the demos and that delegated authority must remain continuously connected to, controlled by and ultimately reclaimable by the political communities from which its legitimacy derives.

- Without cognitive sovereignty there can be no sufficiently independent democratic choice.
- Without meaningful democratic choice there can be no effective Democratic Sovereignty.
- Without effective Democratic Sovereignty representation can gradually become institutional autonomy rather than delegated authority.
- Without cognitive and democratic sovereignty there can be no durable strategic sovereignty.

Europe's democratic future therefore depends not only on electing representatives, but on creating institutions capable of continuously informing, involving, evaluating and responding to the citizens from whom democratic authority ultimately derives.

Integrated Democracy is not merely a democratic reform. It is a strategic governance model for the twenty-first century—one that reconnects citizens with public power, strengthens democratic legitimacy and provides the institutional foundation for a sovereign, resilient and future-oriented Europe.

Europe's long-term sovereignty will ultimately depend not only on the strength of its institutions, but on the strength of the democratic relationship between those institutions and the citizens they exist to serve.

Libertas Europa, revised 11.9.2026

Appendix A



Evolution of Democracy

Democracy has evolved continuously for more than two millennia. Rather than a fixed institutional model, it represents an adaptive system responding to changing social structures, technologies and political realities.

Ancient Athenian democracy established the principle that citizens should participate directly in public affairs. Although participation was limited to a small portion of society, the fundamental idea that political authority derives from the people became one of the defining concepts of Western civilisation.

The emergence of modern nation states made direct participation increasingly impractical. Representative democracy therefore became the dominant constitutional model, allowing citizens to delegate political authority to elected representatives while preserving democratic legitimacy through regular elections and constitutional safeguards.

During the twentieth century, Switzerland demonstrated that representative democracy could successfully coexist with institutionalised direct democracy. Referendums, popular initiatives and extensive cantonal autonomy created one of the world's most stable and trusted democratic systems, proving that continuous citizen participation can strengthen rather than weaken representative government.

Recent decades have introduced new democratic approaches. Deliberative democracy emphasises informed public dialogue through citizens' assemblies and structured consultation. Digital democracy expands participation through secure electronic communication, digital identity and online public engagement. Artificial intelligence now offers additional opportunities for analysing public consultations, improving institutional responsiveness and strengthening evidence-based policymaking.

Integrated Democracy represents the next stage in this historical evolution. Rather than replacing previous democratic models, it integrates representative democracy, direct democracy, deliberative democracy and digital democracy into a coherent multi-level governance system operating continuously across European, national, regional and local institutions.

Appendix B

Swiss Direct Democracy: Lessons for Europe

Switzerland provides the most successful contemporary example of institutionalised direct democracy. For more than a century, representative institutions have been complemented by constitutional referendums, optional referendums, popular initiatives and strong cantonal autonomy. These mechanisms have contributed to exceptional political stability, high levels of public trust and broad democratic legitimacy.

Several characteristics of the Swiss model are particularly relevant for Europe.



First, direct democracy complements rather than replaces representative institutions. Parliament remains responsible for most legislative activity, while citizens retain the constitutional right to intervene on matters of exceptional importance.

Second, democratic participation is continuous rather than episodic. Citizens regularly vote on constitutional amendments, legislation and public initiatives, maintaining an active relationship with political decision-making throughout the electoral cycle.

Third, decentralisation strengthens democratic legitimacy. Cantons and municipalities enjoy substantial autonomy, allowing decisions to be taken as close as possible to citizens while preserving national cohesion.

Finally, direct democracy has contributed to political moderation. Because major decisions may be challenged through referendums, governments are encouraged to seek broader consensus before adopting controversial legislation.

Europe cannot simply replicate the Swiss model. The European Union is larger, more diverse and operates through multi-level governance involving European, national, regional and local institutions. Nevertheless, the underlying principles remain highly relevant. Continuous citizen participation, subsidiarity, institutional accountability and democratic legitimacy should become integral components of future European governance.

Integrated Democracy therefore builds upon the Swiss experience while extending it through digital technologies, deliberative mechanisms, continuous democratic feedback and coordinated governance across multiple institutional levels.

Appendix C

Digital Democracy and Secure Participation

Digital transformation creates opportunities for democratic participation that were impossible under traditional institutional models. Secure identity, privacy-preserving authentication, reliable communication, auditable voting systems and assistive technologies can enable citizens to participate more frequently and effectively while reducing administrative barriers and increasing institutional responsiveness.

Estonia has demonstrated the practical feasibility of digital democracy through nationwide electronic voting, comprehensive digital identity and integrated public administration. Millions of secure electronic transactions are conducted annually, illustrating how technology can simplify democratic participation without compromising constitutional principles.

At the same time, digital democracy requires robust safeguards. Electoral integrity, cybersecurity, privacy protection and public confidence remain essential preconditions for widespread digital participation. Secure authentication, independent auditing, transparent verification mechanisms and resilient digital infrastructure are therefore indispensable components of any democratic digital architecture.



Digital participation must never become the only route to democratic rights. Equivalent non-digital access must remain available so that age, disability, geography, technical failure or digital exclusion cannot become barriers to citizenship.

No particular technology should be constitutionally privileged. Any digital system used for democratic participation must satisfy functional requirements: verified eligibility, secrecy where required, end-to-end auditability, resilience, privacy, accessibility and independent verification. Artificial intelligence may support consultation, summarisation and analysis, but it must remain transparent, contestable and under human oversight. Democratic decisions remain the responsibility of citizens and constitutionally accountable institutions.

Digital Democracy should therefore be understood as democratic infrastructure rather than merely technological innovation. Properly designed, it expands participation, improves accessibility, strengthens transparency and enables continuous interaction between citizens and public institutions.

The objective of Integrated Democracy is not to digitise elections alone, but to create a secure European democratic ecosystem in which technology strengthens participation, accountability and public trust while fully respecting constitutional rights, democratic legitimacy and the rule of law.

Appendix D

Integrated Multi-Level Democratic Governance

(Local ↔ Regional ↔ National ↔ European)

Integrated Democracy is founded upon layered democratic sovereignty. Citizens may belong simultaneously to local, regional, national and wider composite demos, each legitimate in relation to the political matters that properly belong to it. Modern governance therefore requires clearly defined competences, subsidiarity, coordination and continuous democratic accountability without treating higher levels as inherently more sovereign than lower ones.

The European level should exercise only competences legitimately conferred for common action and matters that cannot be effectively resolved by Member States acting separately. Within those competences a European composite demos may decide jointly. Changes in the delegation of sovereignty itself require the participation and consent of the relevant constituent demos.

National governments remain responsible for constitutional order, legislation, taxation, justice, internal security and the implementation of national public policy. Representative democracy continues to provide the foundation of political stability, while direct democratic instruments, recall procedures and continuous public evaluation strengthen accountability throughout the electoral cycle.

Regional governments represent the essential link between national strategies and local implementation. They are particularly suited to managing education, healthcare, transport infrastructure, regional economic development and territorial planning. Regional participation



through initiatives, consultations and participatory budgeting strengthens democratic responsiveness while respecting national constitutional frameworks.

Local government remains the closest democratic institution to citizens. Municipalities provide the most immediate opportunities for civic participation through neighbourhood initiatives, local referendums, participatory budgeting, community consultation and direct interaction with public authorities. Strong local democracy strengthens democratic culture throughout the entire governance system.

Integrated Democracy connects these four levels through common democratic principles, transparent institutional responsibilities and continuous democratic feedback. Rather than functioning as isolated administrative layers, European, national, regional and local institutions become mutually reinforcing components of a single democratic architecture.

The objective is neither centralisation nor fragmentation. It is coordinated subsidiarity. Two questions guide routing: WHO CAN SOLVE THE ISSUE EFFECTIVELY? and WHO IS MATERIALLY AFFECTED? Decisions should normally remain with the smallest capable demos unless their consequences substantially determine the rights or fundamental interests of other political communities.

Integrated Democracy must also prevent domination between demos. Larger populations cannot legitimately extinguish the constitutional identity or reserved competences of smaller nations, while smaller constituent states cannot receive an unlimited power to permanently override the democratic will of the wider citizenry. Dual democratic legitimacy is therefore required for constitutional decisions that alter the common distribution of sovereignty; additional consent of a specific constituent demos is required only where its own reserved competence, constitutional status, degree of integration or essential sovereign attribute is surrendered or altered.

No qualified civic demand should fail merely because it entered through the wrong level of government. Where another level is competent, the democratic procedure should route the proposal rather than discard it.

Ultimately, Integrated Multi-Level Governance transforms democracy from a hierarchy of institutions into an interconnected democratic ecosystem capable of learning, adapting and continuously responding to citizens across all levels of public authority.

Appendix E

LE-DSI — Measuring the Distance to Integrated Democracy

The Libertas Europa Democratic Sovereignty Index (LE-DSI) operationalises the core question of Democratic Sovereignty: to what extent does the demos actually control the political power exercised in its name?

The Index is absolute and benchmark-based rather than a ranking relative to other states. A political system receives a high score only to the extent that it approaches the requirements of Integrated Democracy, regardless of how other systems perform.



The seven dimensions are:

1. Cognitive Sovereignty & Informational Pluralism — access to competing sources and interpretations, effective reach, censorship, transparency of influence and gatekeeper power.
2. Sovereign Competence of the Demos — citizen agenda-setting, reserved democratic competence, control over delegation and capacity to reclaim competence.
3. Revocability of Delegated Power — removal of leadership, recall, reversibility of delegated authority and resistance to institutional entrenchment.
4. Continuous Democratic Influence — binding direct decisions, citizens' initiatives, local and regional control, responsiveness to sustained public will and alignment of priorities.
5. Political Equality & Plurality of Democratic Communities — equal political standing, space for opposition and dissent, protection of sub-demos and peaceful mechanisms for self-determination.
6. Institutional Integrity & Effective Legal Protection — institutional capture, equal application of law, effective remedy, traceability and accountability.
7. External & Strategic Sovereignty — the practical capacity to implement democratically legitimate choices without structural external dependency or domination.

Cognitive Sovereignty, Sovereign Competence of the Demos and Revocability of Delegated Power are foundational conditions. Severe failure in one cannot be fully compensated by strong courts, administrative performance, elections or geopolitical capacity elsewhere.

The LE-DSI therefore does not replace constitutional analysis or public debate. It provides a transparent method for identifying where effective sovereignty of the demos is present, where it is constrained and which reforms would move a system closer to Integrated Democracy.

Appendix F

The Integrated European Democratic Model

A Governance Architecture for the Twenty-First Century

Integrated Democracy is not a single institutional reform but a comprehensive governance architecture designed to reconnect citizens with public decision-making across all levels of government. It represents the institutional framework through which Europe's broader strategy for sovereignty, resilience and democratic legitimacy becomes operational.

The model combines representative democracy, direct democracy, deliberative democracy and digital democracy into a single integrated system supported by continuous democratic feedback. Rather than replacing existing constitutional institutions, it strengthens them by introducing permanent mechanisms for transparency, accountability, participation and institutional learning.



Its democratic core is expressed through four powers of the demos: INITIATE → DECIDE → CONTROL → RECLAIM. Representative, direct, deliberative and digital mechanisms are instruments through which these powers are exercised.

The model is also layered. Local, regional, national and European demoï may coexist, while a European demos can function as a composite demos for competences legitimately exercised in common. Democratic integration therefore requires both citizen equality and protection against domination of smaller constituent demoï.

The architecture operates simultaneously at four interconnected levels.

At the European level, democratic governance focuses on competences legitimately exercised jointly, including common strategic responsibilities and genuinely European public goods. Representative institutions are complemented by citizens' initiatives, direct democratic authorisation for Sovereign Decisions, public consultation and continuous oversight. Constitutional safeguards protect smaller nations and constituent demoï at the boundary of delegation: ordinary decisions within validly delegated competence remain European, while changes to reserved competences, constitutional status or the distribution of sovereignty require the appropriate constituent consent.

At the **national level**, representative institutions remain responsible for constitutional government, legislation and public administration. Integrated Democracy strengthens democratic legitimacy through referendums, citizens' initiatives, recall procedures, transparent governance and continuous performance evaluation.

At the **regional level**, democratic governance adapts national policies to territorial realities. Regional institutions become centres of democratic participation in education, healthcare, infrastructure, regional development and public investment while encouraging participatory budgeting and regional civic initiatives.

At the **local level**, democracy becomes part of everyday civic life through neighbourhood participation, local referendums, community initiatives, participatory budgeting and digital citizen platforms. Municipal democracy provides the practical foundation upon which democratic culture is built.

These four levels remain permanently connected through continuous democratic feedback.

Public policy is adopted through representative institutions, implemented by competent public authorities, evaluated by citizens and independent institutions, improved through transparent assessment and subsequently revised where necessary. Democracy therefore becomes a continuous cycle of participation, evaluation and institutional learning rather than a sequence of isolated electoral events.

Integrated Democracy also serves as the institutional foundation for Europe's broader strategy of strategic sovereignty.

Its relationship with the other strategic frameworks can be understood as a coherent system of mutually reinforcing capacities.



Democratic Sovereignty defines the demos as the original and ultimate holder of political sovereignty. Integrated Democracy is its fullest institutional realization: authority may be delegated broadly, but the non-transferable sovereign core remains with the demos—the power to determine the boundaries and recipient of delegation, control delegated power and reclaim it. The practical democratic capacities remain INITIATE → DECIDE → CONTROL → RECLAIM.



Representative institutions provide political stability.

Direct democracy strengthens democratic legitimacy.

Information integrity protects democratic deliberation.

Cognitive sovereignty enables independent judgement.

Financial sovereignty provides strategic capacity.

Technological sovereignty ensures operational independence.

Together they create the institutional conditions necessary for genuine strategic sovereignty.

The model therefore moves beyond the traditional distinction between representative and direct democracy. It establishes an integrated governance system capable of continuously adapting to technological change, geopolitical competition and evolving societal expectations while preserving constitutional stability and democratic legitimacy.

The European Model of Integrated Democracy does not seek to replace representative democracy. It seeks to complete it. By reconnecting citizens, institutions and public decision-making through continuous participation, transparency, accountability and institutional learning, it provides the democratic architecture required for a sovereign, resilient and future-oriented Europe.