



LIBERTAS EUROPA

Democratic Sovereignty Index

Q1-Q3 2026 Interim Pilot Report

Measuring whether the demos actually remains sovereign

Public Pilot Edition — Methodology v 1.3

Data cut-off: 16 August 2026

Q3 coverage is interim and does not include developments after the cut-off date.

Democratic Sovereignty defines the principle. Integrated Democracy defines the benchmark.



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Interim status

This report is a public pilot example, not a final annual ranking. Q3 2026 is only partially observed. The scoring architecture remains the same 31-indicator, seven-dimension architecture, but Methodology v1.3 clarifies institutional-form neutrality, multi-stage delegation and the zero-score rule. Russia and China are recalibrated accordingly; the data cut-off remains 16 August 2026. [1]



1. Executive Summary

The Democratic Sovereignty Index (LE-DSI) asks a different question from conventional democracy rankings: **who ultimately controls political power - the demos, or institutions, elites, information gatekeepers and external powers acting in its name?** The benchmark is not the best existing democracy, but Integrated Democracy: a political order in which a cognitively sovereign demos can initiate, reserve, delegate, redefine and reclaim political authority. [1]

- Switzerland leads the 12-polity pilot with an Adjusted LE-DSI of 69.4. Its strongest advantage is the combination of citizen initiative, binding referendums and continuous direct participation; the main structural weakness is the absence of a federal recall mechanism. [3]
- Slovenia ranks second at 53.5. Its referendum and agenda-setting mechanisms materially strengthen demos sovereignty, while the absence of national recall and constitutional exclusions from legislative referendums keep it far below the Integrated Democracy benchmark. [4][22][23]
- Denmark and Germany illustrate the central difference between institutional quality and democratic sovereignty. Both perform very strongly on conventional rule-of-law measures, but their national-level direct-democratic competence is limited. Denmark is first and Germany sixth in the WJP 2025 Rule of Law Index, yet their LE-DSI scores are 43.4 and 31.8 respectively. [7][8]
- The European Union scores 25.2. Its relative strengths lie in rights, legal structures and political plurality; its weaknesses lie in the long delegation chain, weak direct agenda-setting, limited reversibility of competences and the difficulty of constituent demos directly controlling higher-level coercive power. [24][25][26]
- The United States scores 23.5, slightly below the EU. Its state-level strategic sovereignty is very high, but federal demos sovereignty is constrained by the absence of national initiative, referendum and recall, very high campaign-finance flows, a weakened public-media pillar and partially opaque security-administrative power. [5][34][35][36][37]
- China (17.9) and Russia (17.2) remain below the provisional LE-DSI Democratic Sovereignty Threshold of 20 after the v1.3 recalibration. The revised scores credit legally real indirect delegation, recall and local participatory mechanisms that v1.2 underweighted, while continuing to penalize weak practical reversibility, restrictions on political choice and cognitive constraints. The United States (23.5) and European Union (25.2) remain above the threshold but only within the Weak Democratic Sovereignty category. The threshold is a public-interpretation rule, not an assertion that systems below it contain no elections or participatory institutions.

Central finding

The pilot does not show a simple West-versus-non-West hierarchy. It shows different combinations of sovereignty. Strong courts do not substitute for demos competence; geopolitical autonomy does not substitute for democratic control; and formal media freedom does not by itself establish cognitive sovereignty.

2. What the LE-DSI Measures

The LE-DSI is an absolute, benchmark-based index. A polity does not receive a high score because it performs better than peers. It receives a high score only to the extent that it satisfies predefined conditions of Democratic Sovereignty. [1]

Independent Human Mind -> Cognitively Sovereign Citizen -> Sovereign Demos -> Delegated Authority -> Continuous Control -> Revocable Power -> Effective Political Sovereignty

Scope and normative neutrality

The LE-DSI measures one specific characteristic only: the degree to which effective political sovereignty remains with the demos. It does not rank political systems as better or worse in general, and it does not evaluate economic



success, social stability, cultural values or the desirability of a particular institutional model. A low score means limited Democratic Sovereignty under the defined criteria; it is not a general judgment on the polity.

The Index is designed primarily for political systems that claim democratic or popular legitimacy, irrespective of institutional form. China therefore remains within scope: its Constitution states that all power belongs to the people, while the LE-DSI tests how far that claimed popular sovereignty is effectively exercisable, controllable and revocable in practice. [38]

Interpretation of scores

80-100: Integrated Democratic Sovereignty | 60-79: Substantial | 40-59: Partial | 20-39: Weak | 0-19: Below the LE-DSI Democratic Sovereignty Threshold. The threshold is a measure of effective demos sovereignty, not a general judgment on political-system quality.

3. Methodology in Brief

The Full LE-DSI uses 31 indicators across seven dimensions. Cognitive Sovereignty is weighted most heavily because political choice is not meaningfully sovereign when citizens cannot encounter and evaluate materially different interpretations of political reality. [1]

Dimension	Weight	What is measured
Cognitive Sovereignty & Informational Pluralism	25%	Access to competing sources; interpretative diversity; effective reach; viewpoint censorship; influence transparency; gatekeeper power; civic-epistemic environment.
Sovereign Competence of the Demos	15%	Citizen agenda-setting; reserved competence; control over delegation; capacity to reclaim competence.
Revocability of Delegated Power	15%	Removal of leadership; recall; reversibility of delegated powers; institutional entrenchment.
Continuous Democratic Influence	15%	Binding direct decisions; citizen initiatives; local/regional control; responsiveness to sustained public will and priority alignment.
Political Equality & Plurality of Democratic Communities (demoi)	10%	Political equality; opposition and dissent; sub-demoi; peaceful self-determination mechanisms.
Institutional Integrity & Effective Legal Protection	10%	Institutional capture; equal application of law; effective remedy; decision traceability and accountability.
External & Strategic Sovereignty	10%	Strategic autonomy; economic/financial/energy resilience; technology/infrastructure autonomy; capacity to refuse or exit external commitments.

Foundational non-compensation: Adjusted LE-DSI = $\sqrt{\text{Raw LE-DSI} \times F_{\min}}$, where $F_{\min}$ is the lowest of Cognitive Sovereignty, Sovereign Competence and Revocability. Both Raw and Adjusted scores are published. [1]

Public interpretation threshold: for this pilot edition an Adjusted LE-DSI below 20 is reported as "Below the Democratic Sovereignty Threshold" rather than as a form of democratic sovereignty. The scoring formula itself is unchanged. Cross-cutting diagnostics remain the Sovereignty Capture and Dependency Test (SCDT), Composite Polity Non-Domination Test (CPNDT), and Public Priority and Resource Alignment Test (PPRAT). [1]



Evidence rule: constitutional and legal texts, official statistics and decisions, court judgments, comparative datasets, academic research, media-pluralism evidence and documented political practice are weighed together. Conventional indices are inputs, not imported verdicts. [1][2][41][42]

Methodology v1.3 correction rule: indirect or multi-stage delegation is not scored as a democratic deficit by itself. Direct national election or recall is not required where an accountable delegation chain performs the same function. A score of zero is reserved for a capacity that is absent, effectively unavailable or inverted, and state or party affiliation is assessed separately from transparency. The recalibration in this report affects Russia and China; other polity scores are unchanged pending the next full evidence audit.



Measurement modes

The 31 indicators combine three evidence modes: Type A — observed quantitative measures; Type B — rule-based coded measures, where verifiable legal or practical facts are translated into the 0–4 scale; and Type C — structured analytical assessments for phenomena such as interpretative plurality, cognitive dependency, institutional capture or effective strategic autonomy. Type C scores in this pilot remain explicitly provisional and are intended for independent academic review under Methodology v1.3. [1]

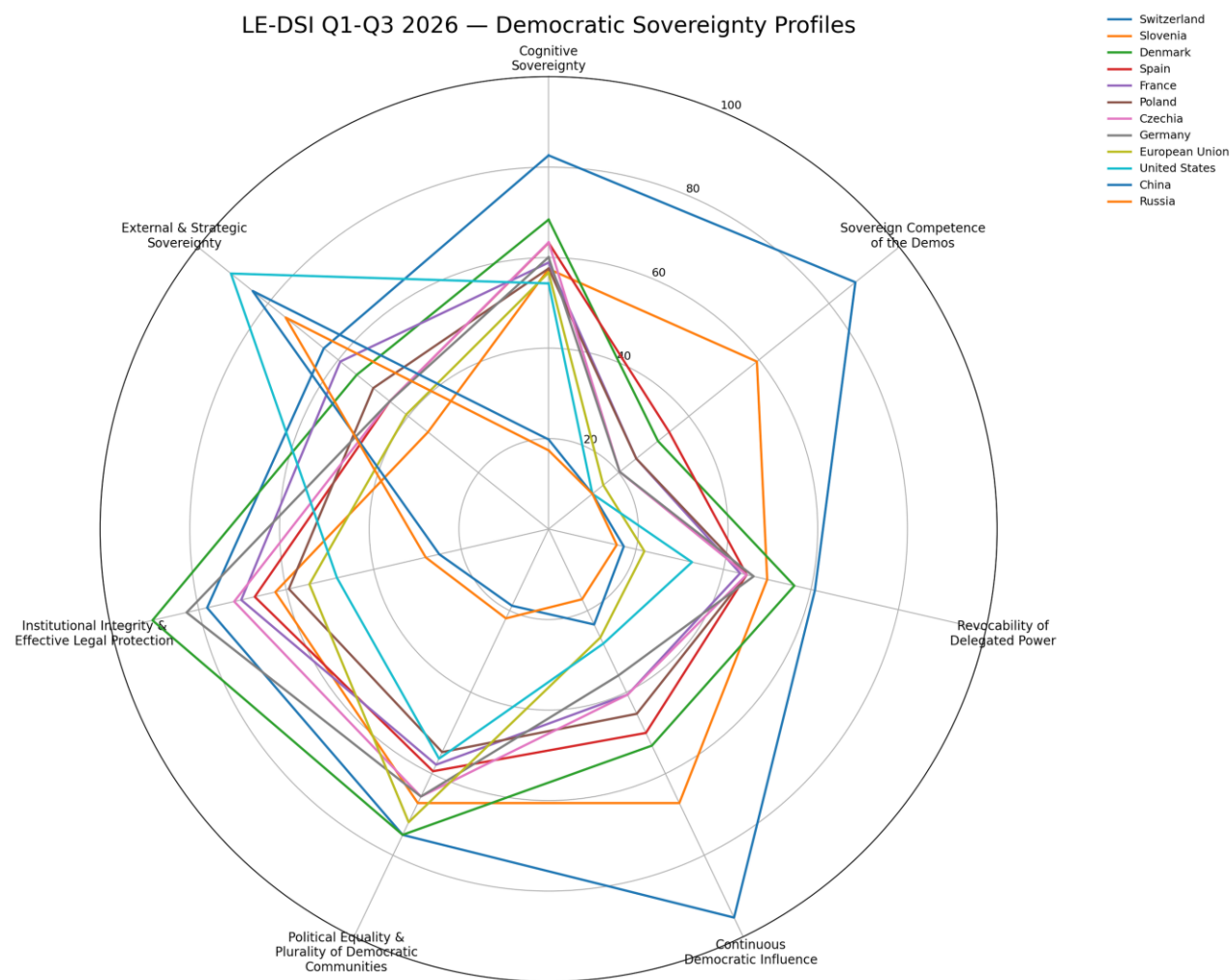
4. Q1-Q3 2026 Results

Adjusted scores are the headline results. Raw scores remain visible to show how much capacity exists before the foundational bottleneck is applied. Q3 observations are current only through 16 August 2026.

Rank	Polity	Cognitive Sovereignty	Sovereign Competence of the Demos	Revocability of Delegated Power	Continuous Democratic Influence	Political Equality & Plurality of Democratic Communities	Institutional Integrity & Effective Legal Protection	External & Strategic Sovereignty	Raw LE-DSI	Foundational Minimum	Adjusted LE-DSI	Classification
1	Switzerland	82.6	87.5	60.9	95.3	75.0	78.1	64.1	78.9	60.9	69.4	Substantial
2	Slovenia	57.5	59.4	50.0	67.2	67.2	62.5	34.4	57.3	50.0	53.5	Partial
3	Denmark	68.4	31.2	56.2	53.1	75.0	90.6	54.7	60.2	31.2	43.4	Partial
4	Spain	63.3	34.4	45.3	50.0	59.4	67.2	45.3	52.5	34.4	42.5	Partial
5	France	58.9	25.0	43.8	40.6	57.8	70.3	59.4	49.9	25.0	35.3	Weak
6	Poland	57.6	25.0	45.3	45.3	54.7	59.4	50.0	48.2	25.0	34.7	Weak
7	Czechia	63.4	20.3	45.3	40.6	65.6	71.9	45.3	50.1	20.3	31.9	Weak
8	Germany	60.1	20.3	46.9	35.9	65.6	82.8	45.3	49.9	20.3	31.8	Weak
9	European Union	56.7	15.6	21.9	26.6	71.9	54.7	40.6	40.5	15.6	25.2	Weak
10	United States	54.3	12.5	32.8	28.1	56.3	48.4	90.6	44.1	12.5	23.5	Weak
11	China	19.8	12.5	17.2	23.4	18.8	25.0	84.4	25.7	12.5	17.9	Below threshold
12	Russia	17.4	12.5	15.6	17.2	21.9	28.1	75.0	23.6	12.5	17.2	Below threshold



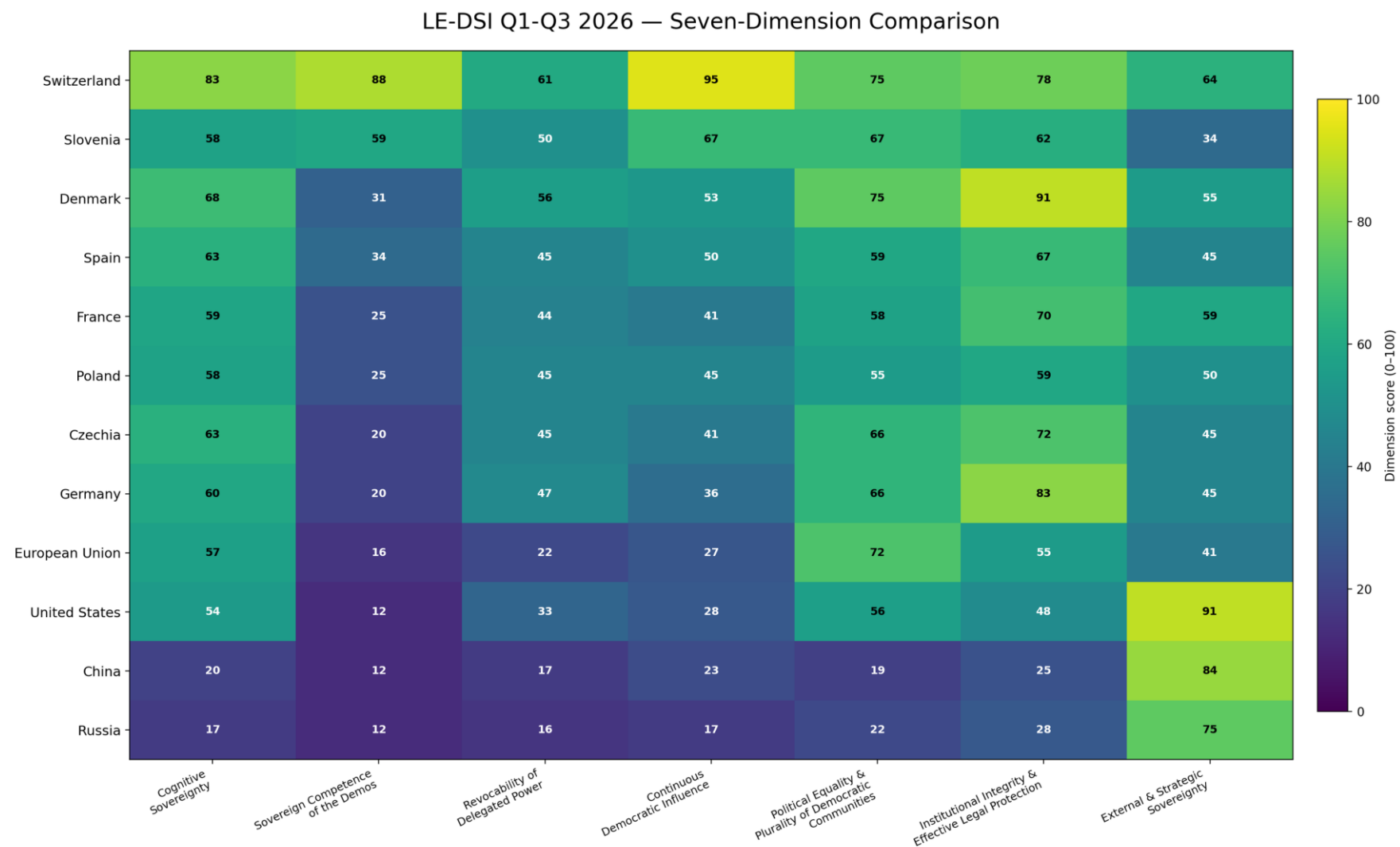
Figure 1. Democratic Sovereignty profile by seven dimensions.



The radar chart is a structural profile, not a ranking chart. It shows which dimensions create each polity's strengths and bottlenecks.



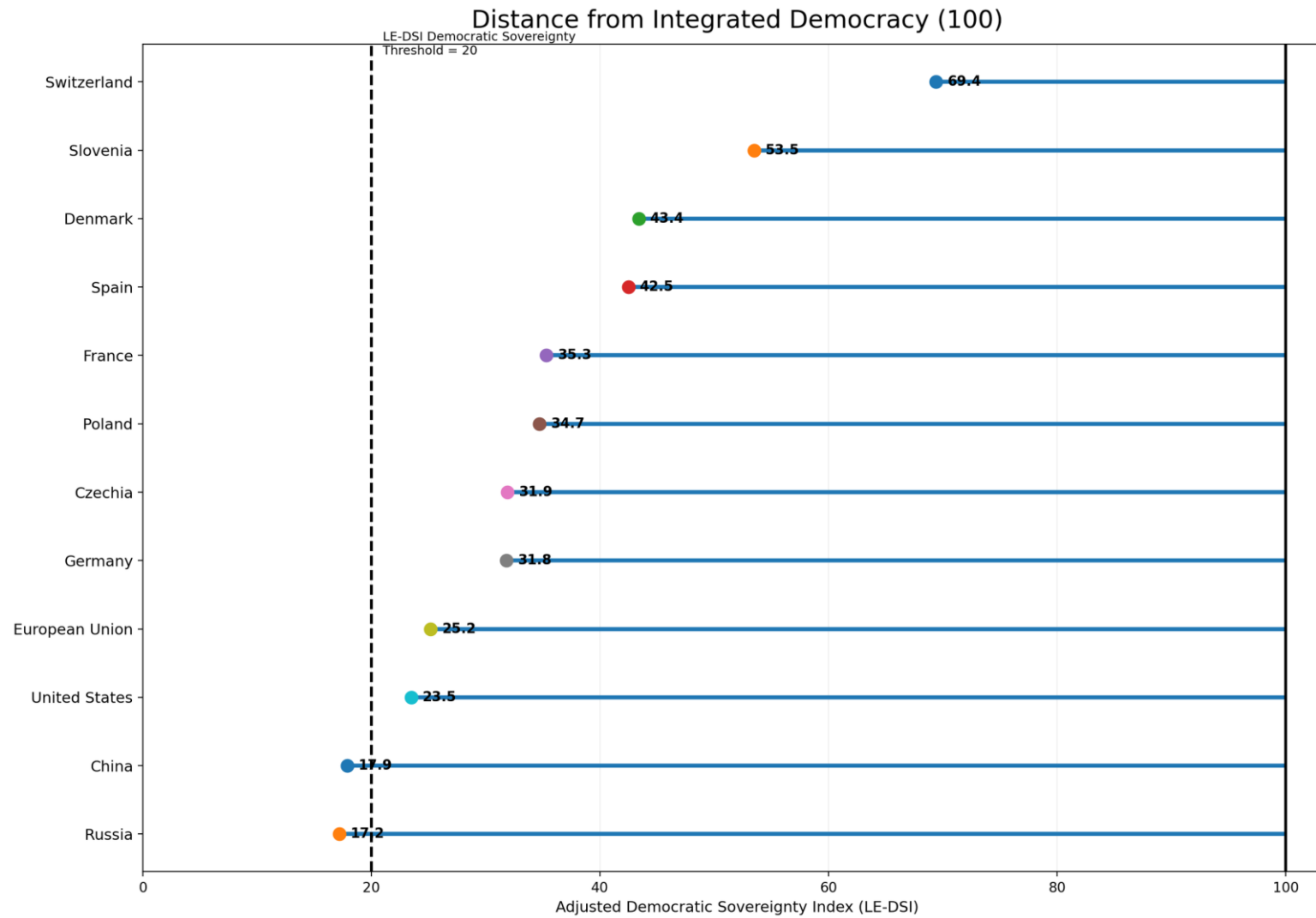
Figure 2. Seven-dimension comparison across all 12 assessed polities.



The heatmap makes cross-country comparison easier: each cell shows the dimension score on the same 0–100 scale.



Figure 3. Distance from Integrated Democracy (100).



The distance chart uses the Adjusted LE-DSI, which incorporates the lowest foundational dimension.



5. What the Results Reveal

No existing system in the sample approaches full Integrated Democracy. Even Switzerland, the clear leader, reaches 69.4. For public interpretation this edition introduces a provisional Democratic Sovereignty Threshold at 20: scores from 20 to 39 still indicate democracy, but with weak effective sovereignty of the demos; scores below 20 are reported as below the LE-DSI democratic threshold. Russia and China fall below that line in this pilot.

Institutional quality and demos sovereignty are different variables. Denmark and Germany combine very strong rule-of-law performance with substantially weaker direct sovereign competence. WJP ranks Denmark first and Germany sixth in 2025, while LE-DSI places them third and eighth in this sample. [7][8]

Direct democracy materially changes the result. Switzerland and Slovenia benefit from real national-level mechanisms that allow citizens to put issues onto the agenda or block legislation. Switzerland has mandatory and optional referendums and constitutional citizens' initiatives; Slovenia has an optional legislative referendum and agenda initiative, but no national recall. [3][4]

Strategic sovereignty can coexist with very weak demos sovereignty. The United States, Russia and China all score comparatively high on STRAT, but their final outcomes differ sharply because LE-DSI does not allow state power to substitute for cognitive sovereignty, demos competence or revocability.

Cognitive sovereignty is not the same as media count or formal press freedom. The LE-DSI asks whether materially different interpretations have effective reach. RSF data are used as evidence on press freedom, but the LE-DSI adds its own structured interpretation and reach analysis. [16][17][18][19][42]

Institutional form must not predetermine the result. Methodology v1.3 therefore credits legally real delegation and revocation mechanisms even when they operate through multi-stage, party-led or otherwise non-Western institutional structures. This materially raises the provisional Russia and China scores without treating constitutional claims of popular sovereignty as proof of effective democratic control.

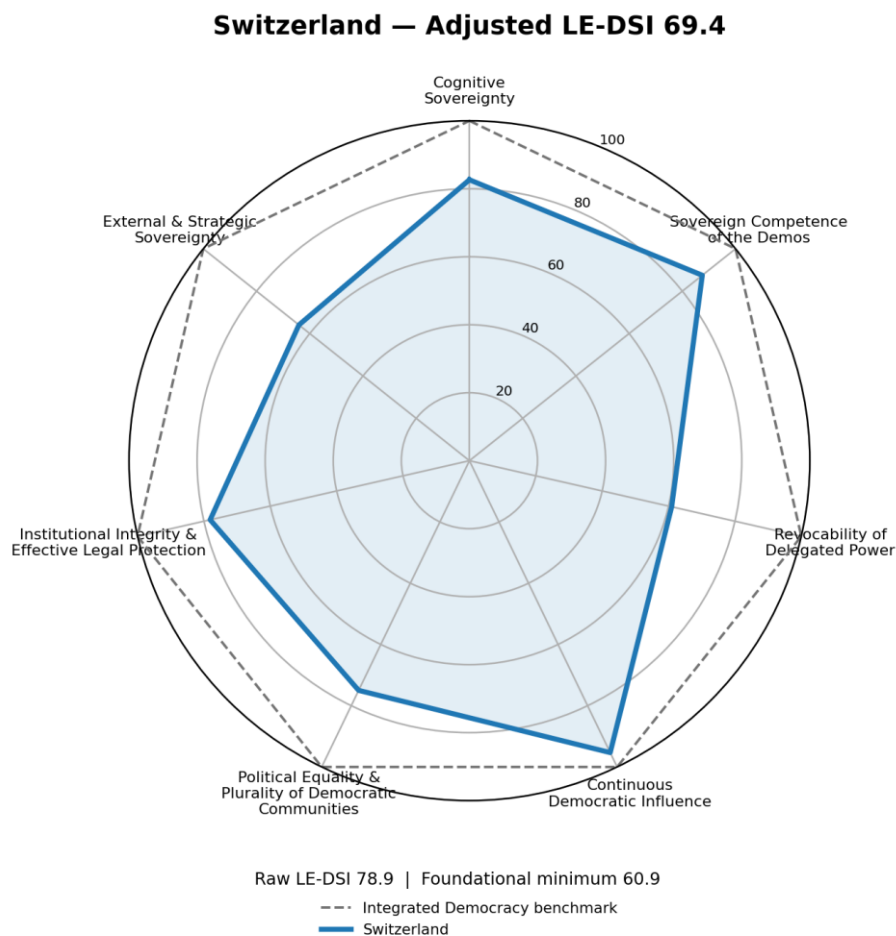
Composite political orders require a non-domination test. For the EU, legality of higher-level action and sovereignty of constituent demoi are separate questions. The CPNDT asks whether legal, financial, regulatory or informational power can be democratically refused, challenged, redefined or reclaimed. [1][26]

6. Country and Polity Profiles

Switzerland - 69.4 | Substantial Democratic Sovereignty

Switzerland is the strongest approximation to Integrated Democracy in this sample because citizen initiative and binding referendums are embedded in ordinary political life. At national level, International IDEA records mandatory and optional referendums and citizens' initiatives, but no recall. [3] Cognitive conditions are comparatively strong: RSF ranks Switzerland 8th of 180 in 2026, while also noting ownership concentration, pressure on public-media funding and some legal constraints on investigative reporting. [16] Strategic autonomy is not treated as complete. Switzerland continued to adopt elements of EU sanctions against Russia in 2026, yet citizens are scheduled to vote on a Neutrality Initiative that would directly constrain future sanctions policy - an unusually clear example of the demos retaining a route to redefine strategic policy. [39][40]

Figure 4. Switzerland — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.





Slovenia - 53.5 | Partial Democratic Sovereignty

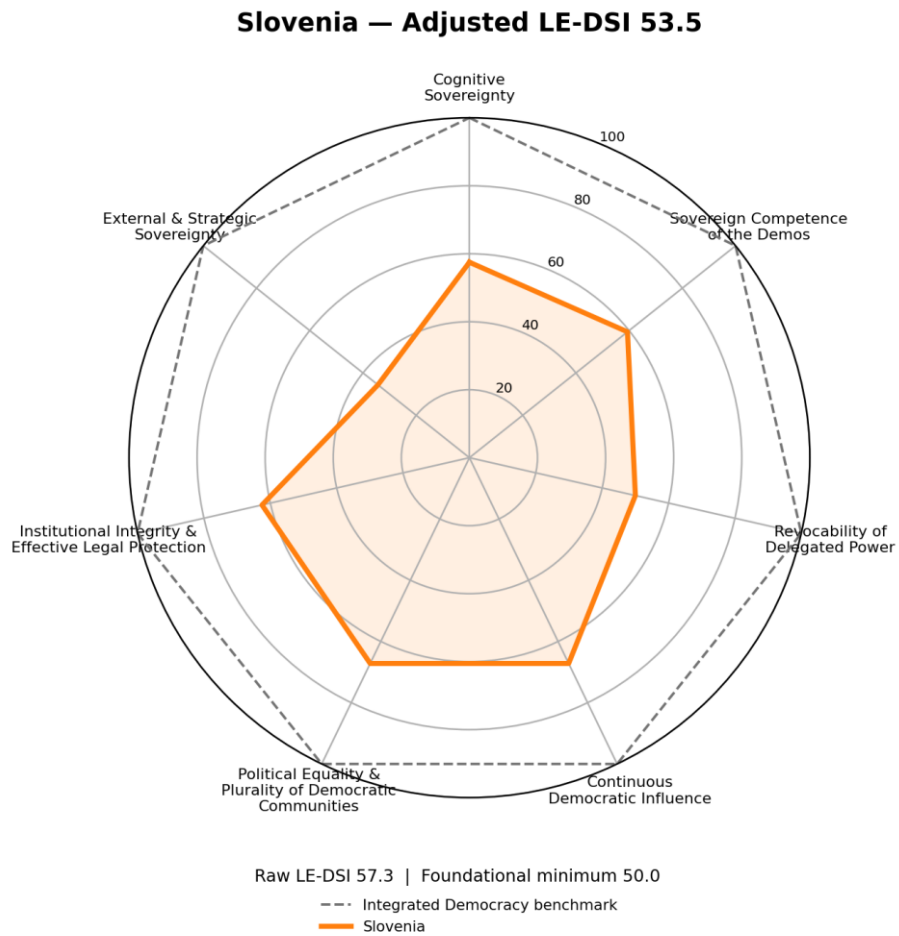
Slovenia scores above most representative democracies in the sample because citizens possess meaningful national-level agenda-setting and referendum instruments. However, the system remains far from Integrated Democracy. International IDEA records no national recall, and Article 90 of the Constitution excludes several categories of legislation from referendum. [4][22] The Constitutional Court nevertheless provides an important safeguard against using referendum-excluded legislation to shield unrelated provisions from referendum scrutiny. [23]

The Slovenian score should not be read as evidence of high cognitive sovereignty. The 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor places Slovenia at 56% overall risk and 77% risk for market plurality, while RSF ranks it 36th of 180 in 2026 and describes the legal framework as generally solid but practical media independence as fragile. [43][44] LE-DSI therefore scores Slovenia only 2.0/4 on Diversity of Interpretative Frames and 1.5/4 on Concentration of Effective Interpretative Reach. The next release should use a preregistered media corpus explicitly testing high-salience strategic topics including Ukraine/Russia, Hungary, AfD/Germany, Iran, Georgia, Israel/Gaza and EU/NATO strategic autonomy rather than inferring plurality from outlet count alone.

Election integrity also requires additional attention. In March 2026 the Slovenian Government reported that SOVA had presented material evidence linking three Black Cube representatives to a visit at the address of SDS headquarters and described Black Cube activities as foreign interference in the Slovenian elections. Reuters separately reported the controversy and denials. [45][46] The LE-DSI records this as a serious foreign-interference risk, but not as proof that SDS commissioned the operation or committed a criminal offence; that would require a competent final finding.



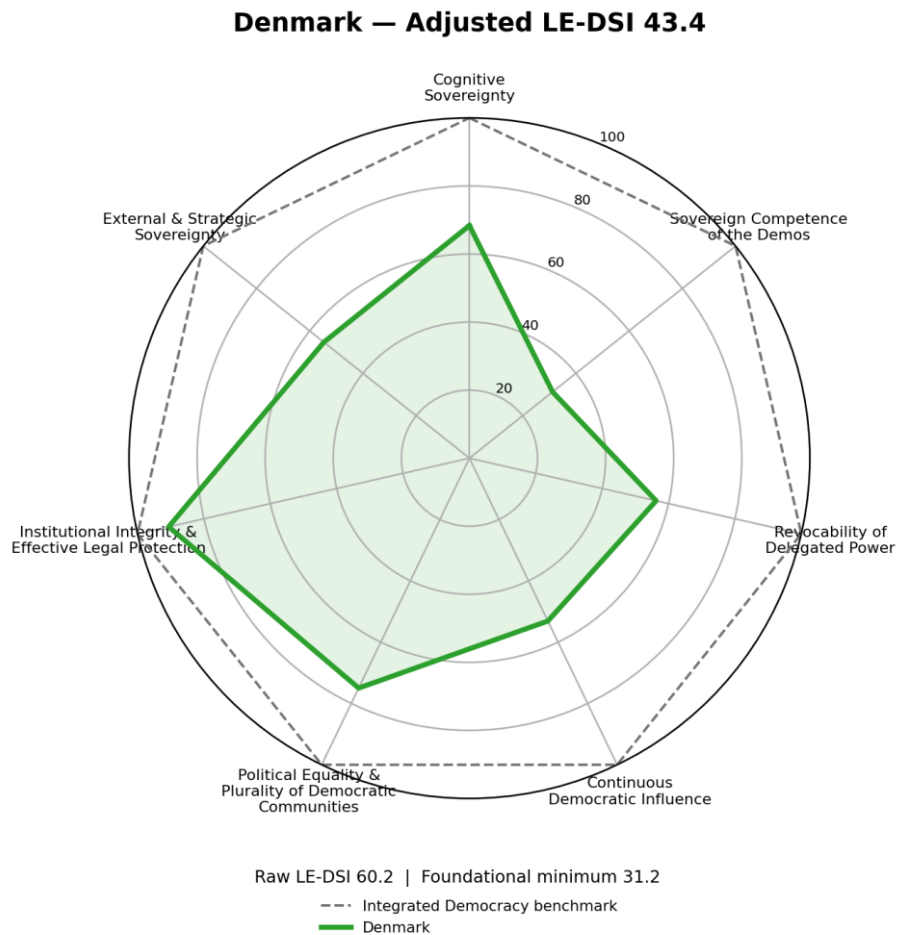
Figure 5. Slovenia — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.



Denmark - 43.4 | Partial Democratic Sovereignty

Denmark demonstrates why LE-DSI is not a conventional governance index. It is first in the WJP Rule of Law Index 2025, with exceptionally strong constraints on government, absence of corruption and legal institutions. [7] Yet institutional quality cannot substitute for direct sovereign competence of the demos. Denmark therefore scores much lower on COMP than on INST. The result should not be read as a claim that Danish institutions are weak; it is a claim that Integrated Democracy demands more than good representative institutions.

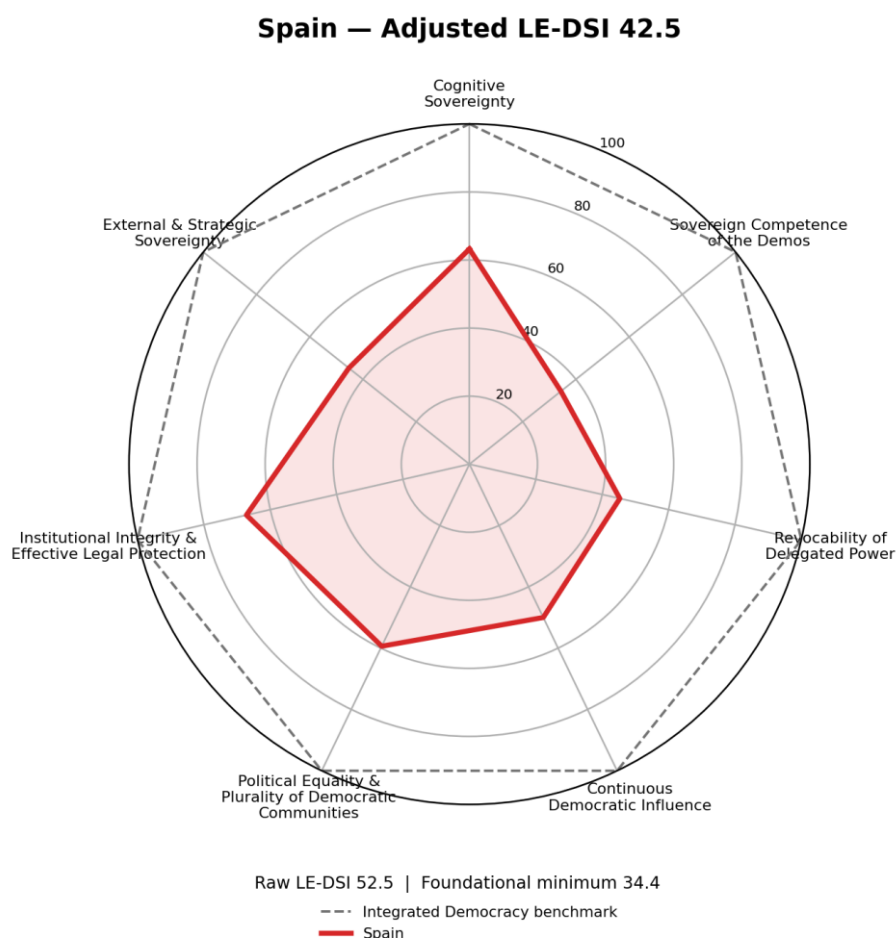
Figure 6. Denmark — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.



Spain - 42.5 | Partial Democratic Sovereignty

Spain combines substantial rights and institutional protections with a more limited capacity for citizens to reserve, reclaim or directly exercise national political competence. WJP places Spain 25th globally in 2025, indicating a functioning but imperfect rule-of-law environment. [12] The LE-DSI additionally gives weight to the status of sub-demosi and peaceful self-determination mechanisms, making the constitutional relationship between the central state and territorially concentrated political communities especially relevant.

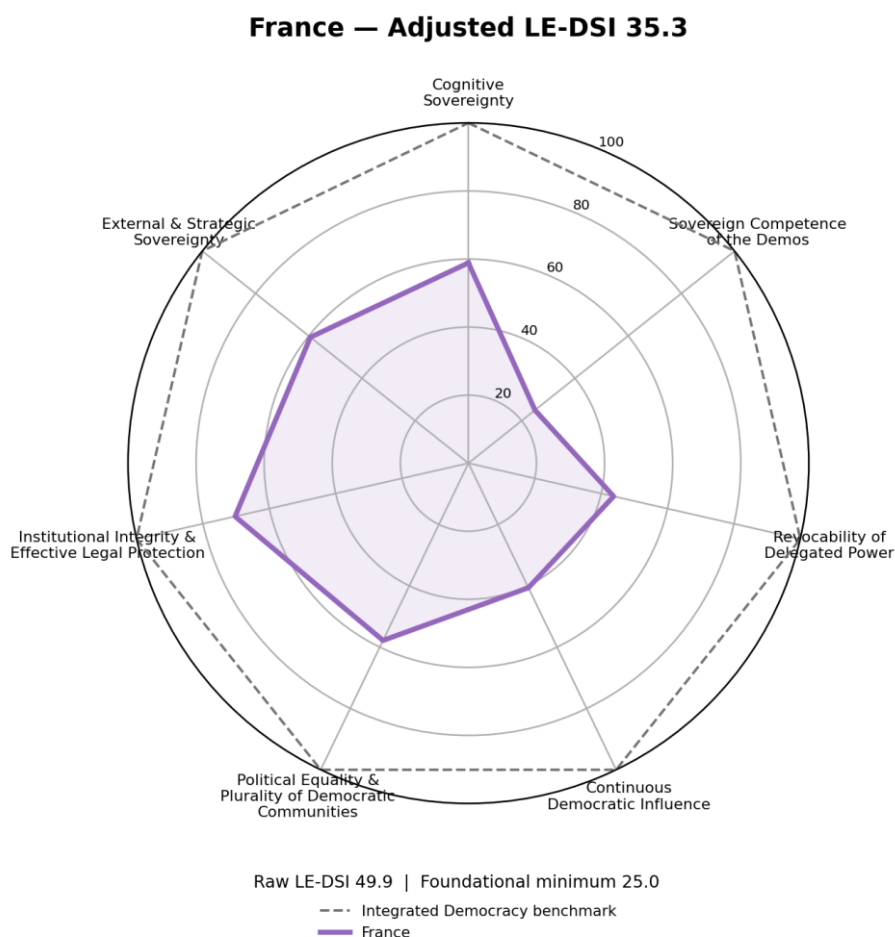
Figure 7. Spain — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.



France - 35.3 | Weak Democratic Sovereignty

France retains competitive elections and substantial legal protections, but its highly centralised political architecture and limited direct citizen control keep Sovereign Competence and Continuous Influence well below institutional scores. WJP ranks France 22nd globally in 2025, with an overall score of 0.72. [11] LE-DSI therefore distinguishes a reasonably capable rule-of-law state from a polity in which the demos can continuously initiate, reserve and reclaim authority.

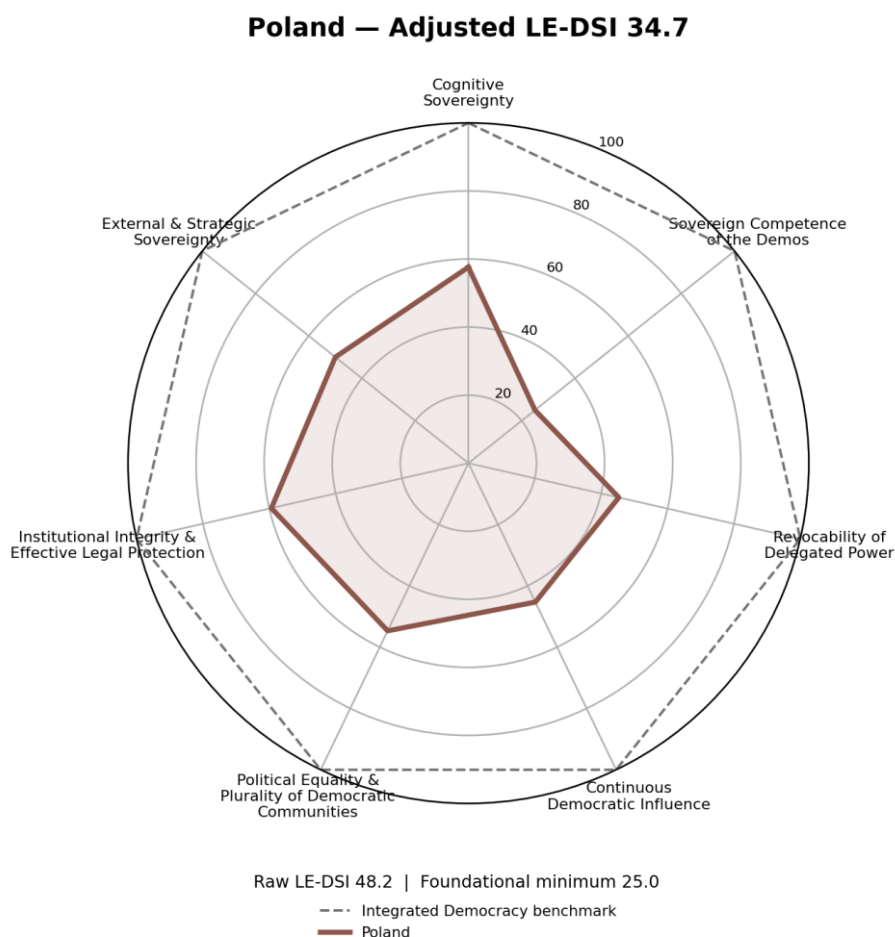
Figure 8. France — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.



Poland - 34.7 | Weak Democratic Sovereignty

Poland scores in the weak range because direct sovereign competence remains limited and institutional stresses reduce the ability of strong formal rights to compensate. WJP places Poland 32nd globally in 2025, while RSF ranks it 27th of 180 in press freedom and describes a diverse private media sector alongside continuing disputes over public media. [13][20] The LE-DSI score reflects both functioning democratic competition and the gap between representative participation and continuous sovereign control.

Figure 9. Poland — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.

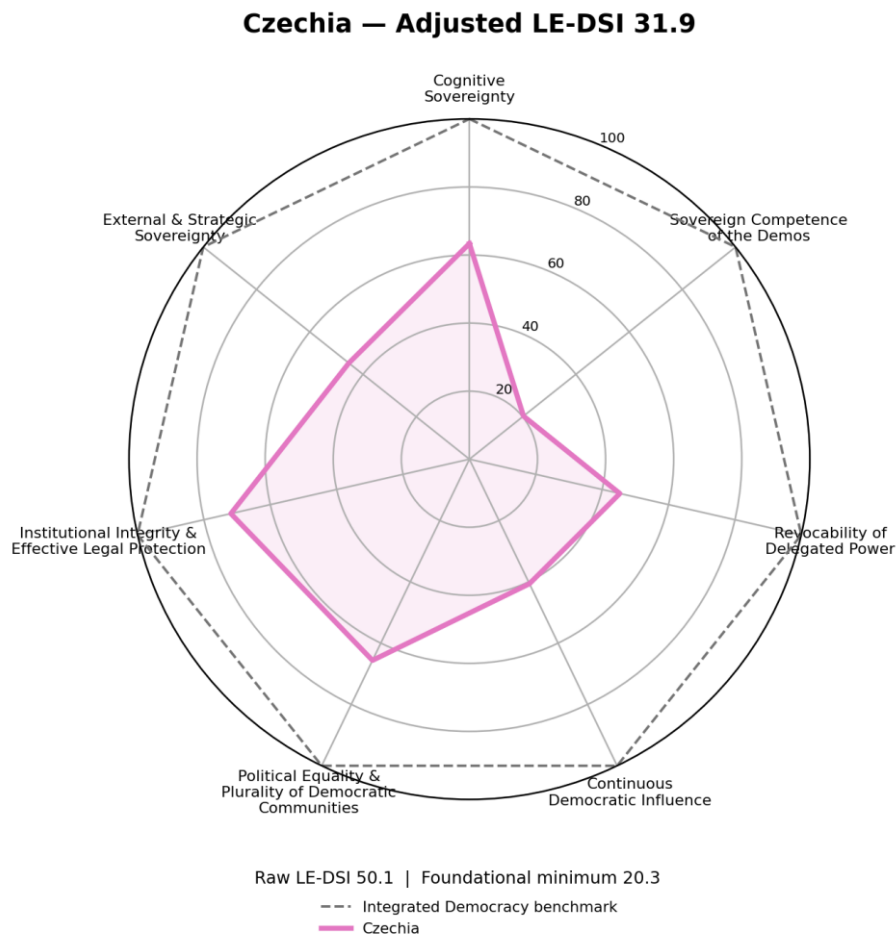




Czechia - 31.9 | Weak Democratic Sovereignty

Czechia combines comparatively strong rule-of-law and press-freedom performance with low direct sovereign competence at the national level. WJP places Czechia 20th globally in 2025; RSF ranks it 11th in 2026 while noting media-market concentration and vulnerability of public media to political cycles. [14][21] The low LE-DSI therefore comes primarily from the Integrated Democracy benchmark rather than from a finding of institutional breakdown.

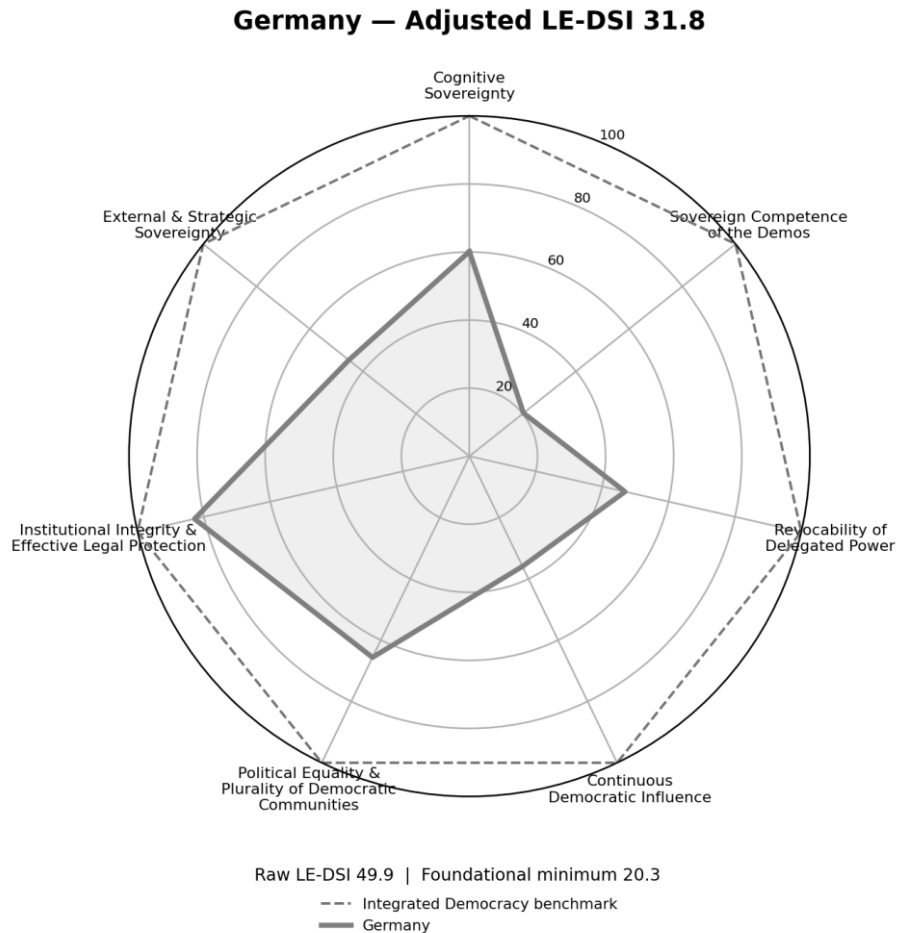
Figure 10. Czechia — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.



Germany - 31.8 | Weak Democratic Sovereignty

Germany is another deliberate stress test of the LE-DSI concept. WJP ranks Germany 6th globally in 2025, yet International IDEA records no national mandatory referendum, optional referendum, citizens' initiative, agenda initiative or recall in its latest available national profile. [6][8] The gap between INST and COMP is therefore large. LE-DSI treats the absence of a democratic capacity as a measurable deficiency rather than as neutral merely because the representative system is stable.

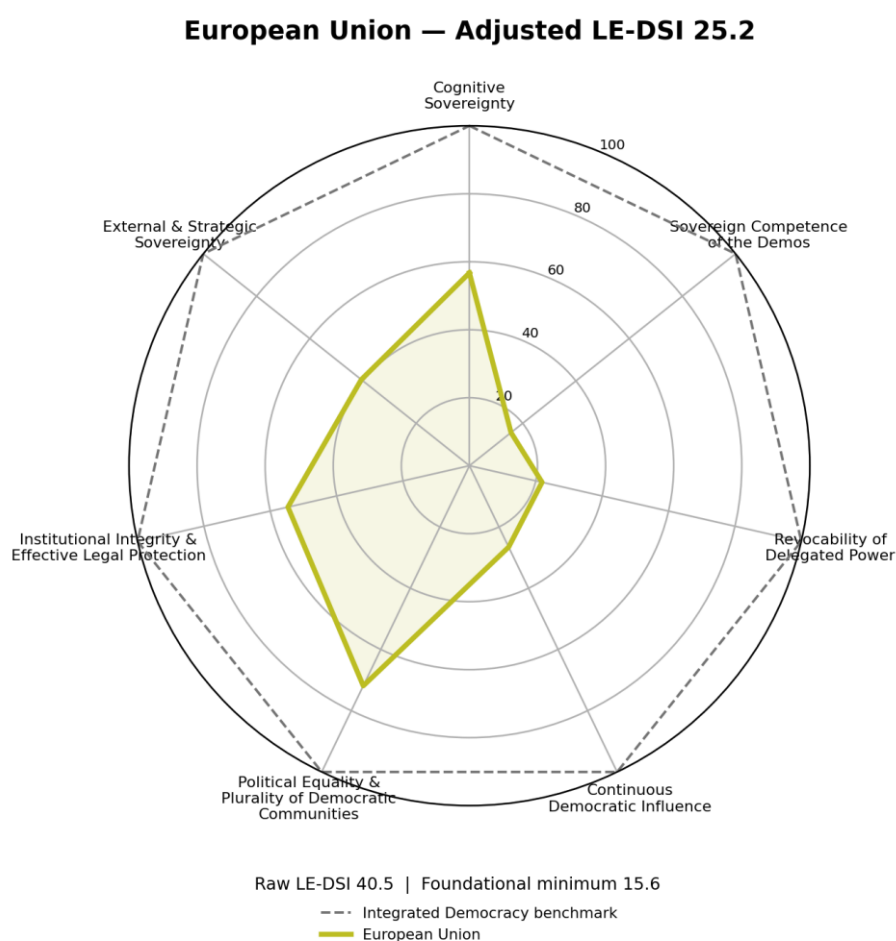
Figure 11. Germany — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.



European Union - 25.2 | Weak Democratic Sovereignty

The EU's weak score is driven less by an absence of rights than by distance between citizens and effective competence. A successful European Citizens' Initiative obliges the Commission to examine and answer a proposal, but does not oblige it to propose legislation; the European Parliament itself has only an indirect general initiative right, while the Commission retains a near monopoly on legislative initiative. [24][25] The CPNDT also examines higher-level legal, financial and regulatory leverage. The EUR 6.3 billion conditionality decision regarding Hungary is one example of substantial supranational leverage; LE-DSI does not assume such leverage is illegitimate, but asks whether the affected demos can meaningfully control, refuse, redefine or reclaim the competence authorising it. [26]

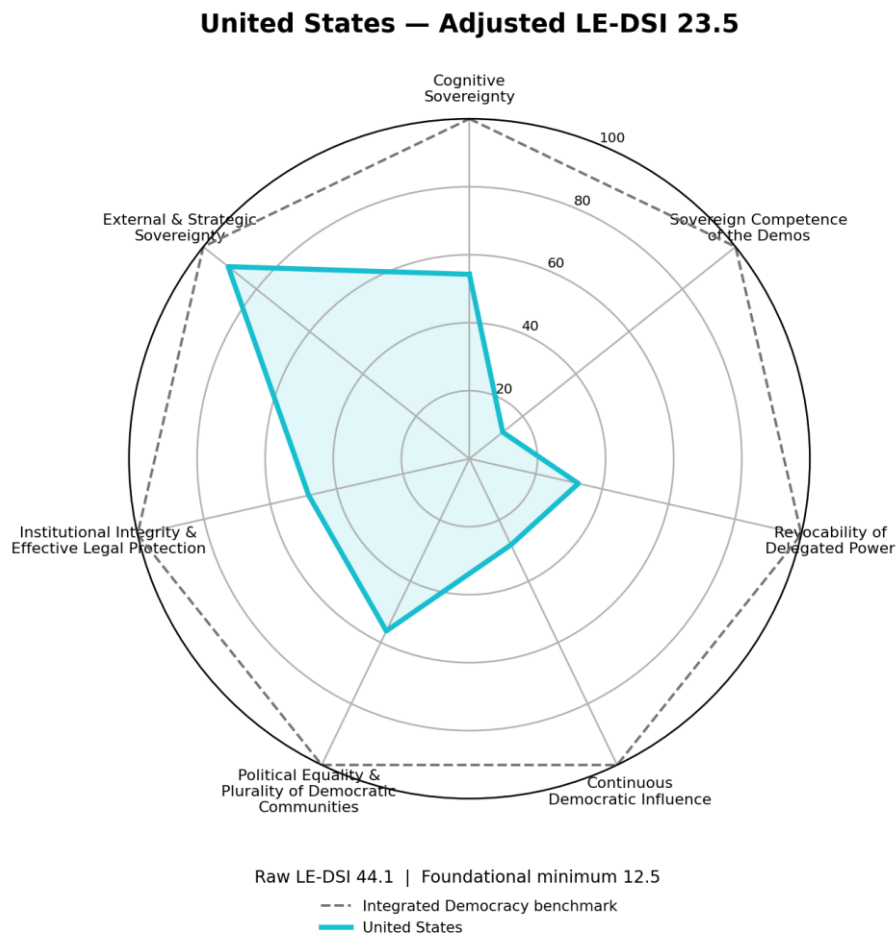
Figure 12. European Union — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.



United States - 23.5 | Weak Democratic Sovereignty

The United States combines very high strategic state autonomy with one of the lowest foundational COMP scores among the Western cases. International IDEA records no national referendum, citizens' initiative, agenda initiative or recall at federal level. [5] Campaign finance is another structural factor: FEC filings for January 2025 through March 2026 show PAC receipts of USD 6.3 billion and USD 252.1 million in independent expenditures. [34] The public-media pillar also weakened materially when the Corporation for Public Broadcasting voted to dissolve after congressional defunding. [35] Intelligence oversight exists - the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has a statutory oversight mandate and reviews covert actions - but much of the system is necessarily classified, and the committee itself has warned that some FY2026 changes represented a step backward for oversight. [36][37]

Figure 13. United States — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.

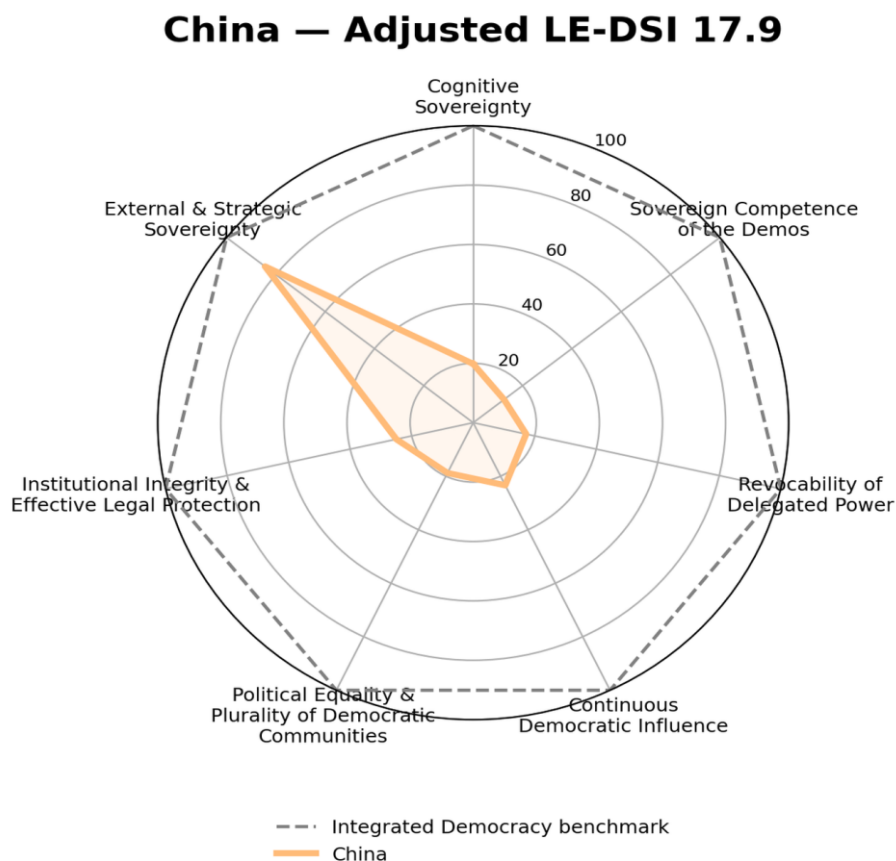


China - 17.9 | Below Democratic Sovereignty Threshold

China is a central stress test of the LE-DSI's institutional-form neutrality. Its Constitution states that all power belongs to the people and that the National People's Congress and local people's congresses are the organs through which the people exercise state power. [38] The Electoral Law provides direct election of county- and township-level deputies, competitive candidate numbers, voter supervision and recall; a recall demand may be initiated by 50 voters at county level or 30 at township level. [54] In the 2021-22 local election cycle, more than 2.6 million deputies were elected; 921 million voters (86.49% of registered voters) participated at county level and 623 million (85.63%) at township level. [55] The Constitution also gives the National People's Congress power to remove the President, Premier and other top state officials. [38]

Methodology v1.3 therefore gives additional credit to SC3, SC4, RV1, RV2, CI3 and PE1 instead of treating indirect delegation as equivalent to absence. The score remains below the threshold because citizen control weakens substantially higher in the delegation chain, national citizen-triggered binding decision mechanisms remain limited, and political and informational constraints reduce effective choice and cognitive sovereignty. Independent technical research also documents extensive internet filtering, while academic research on China's notice-and-comment process finds real but limited government responsiveness, especially at central-ministry level. [56][57] CS2 and CS3 remain provisional pilot estimates pending a preregistered media-corpus audit.

Figure 14. China — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.



Raw LE-DSI 25.7 | Foundational minimum 12.5

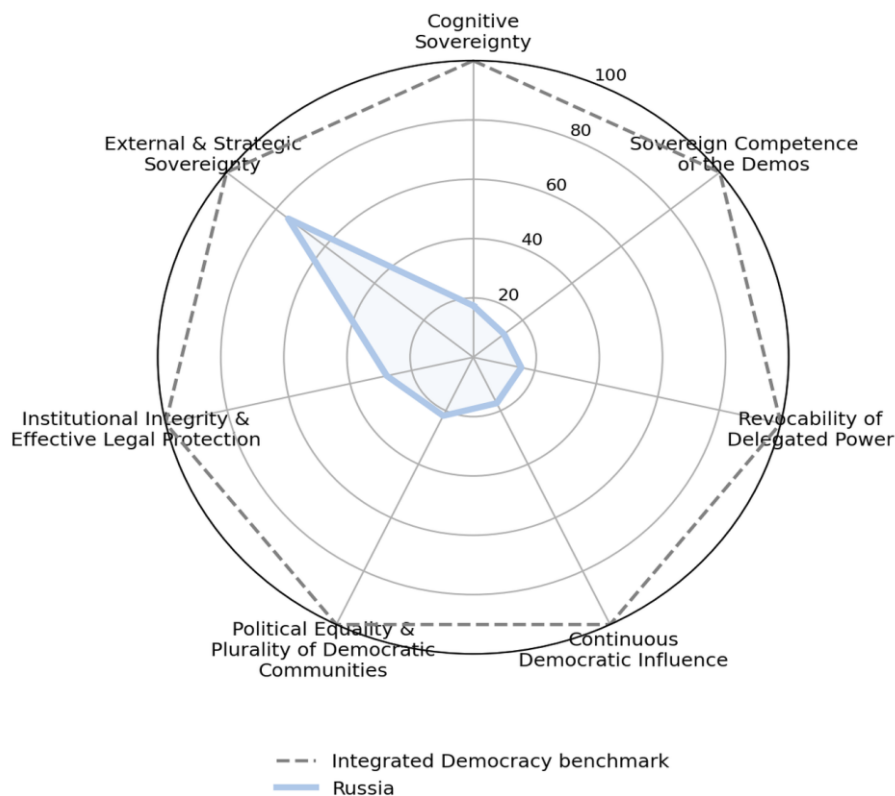
Russia - 17.2 | Below Democratic Sovereignty Threshold

Russia's Constitution expressly defines the multinational people as the bearer of sovereignty and sole source of power, exercised directly and through state and local authorities; it identifies referendum and free elections as the supreme direct expression of popular power. [51] Federal law gives citizens a national referendum initiative, but requires at least two million signatures, no more than 50,000 from any one federal subject, regional subgroups in more than half of the subjects, and collection within 45 days. [52][53] Regional and local referendum rights also exist. These are real democratic capacities and Methodology v1.3 therefore gives additional credit to the delegation, removal, local-control and participation indicators rather than treating them as institutionally absent.

The resulting score nevertheless remains below the threshold. The federal referendum mechanism is difficult to activate, national citizen recall is absent, practical political competition and effective reversibility remain constrained, and independent technical measurement has documented extensive blocking of online sources. [58] The 2022 votes organised in occupied parts of Ukraine remain excluded from PE4 because the LE-DSI requires a free, lawful and non-coercive self-determination process. [48] As with China, CS2 and CS3 remain provisional until a reproducible media-reach audit replaces the present structured pilot coding.

Figure 15. Russia — seven-dimensional Democratic Sovereignty profile against the Integrated Democracy benchmark.

Russia — Adjusted LE-DSI 17.2



Raw LE-DSI 23.6 | Foundational minimum 12.5



7. Cross-Cutting Findings

7.1 European Union: non-domination, capture and priority alignment

The EU is the main case in which the new cross-cutting diagnostics materially affect interpretation. The report distinguishes three questions: whether an action is legally authorised; whether it is substantively justified; and whether the affected demos retains a meaningful route to control or reverse the competence used. These are not the same question. [1]

- Financial and legal leverage: the Council suspended approximately EUR 6.3 billion in commitments for Hungary under the rule-of-law conditionality mechanism. [26]
- Resource allocation and priority alignment: in April 2026 the Council agreed a EUR 90 billion support loan to Ukraine for 2026-27, with an indicative EUR 60 billion for military assistance and EUR 30 billion for economic support. This is not scored negatively because of its purpose; it is relevant to PPRAT because of its scale, mandate, alternatives and reversibility. [27]
- Information governance: the EU currently suspends broadcasting activities and licences of 27 Kremlin-backed outlets. The LE-DSI does not determine whether those outlets are truthful; CS4 asks whether restrictions on political information satisfy legality, evidence, necessity, proportionality and effective review. [28]
- External economic autonomy: the 2025 EU-US framework committed the EU to eliminate tariffs on US industrial goods while the United States committed to a 15% ceiling for most EU-origin goods; in July 2026 the Commission extended the suspension of EU rebalancing measures without an end date. These facts are evidence for ES1/ES4 and SCDT, not proof by themselves of subordination. [29][30]
- Decision traceability: the European Ombudsman found maladministration in the Commission's handling of access to text messages related to COVID-19 vaccine procurement; in 2025 the General Court annulled the Commission decision refusing access because it lacked plausible explanations regarding non-possession of the messages. EPPO has separately confirmed an investigation into acquisition of COVID-19 vaccines. These facts justify scrutiny under II1/II4 but do not establish criminal corruption. [31][32][33]

Publication rule

The public report does not label a polity "captured" merely because several controversial cases exist. A systemic-capture finding requires a persistent pattern across several materially independent policy domains, more than one mechanism of influence, material consequences for the demos, and deficient transparency, accountability or reversibility. "Demos" is singular; "demoi" is the classical plural. In public-facing text the report uses "democratic communities" where this is clearer. [1]

7.2 United States: money, media and insulated power

The U.S. score is low for a different reason. Federal constitutional rights and electoral competition coexist with weak direct sovereign competence, very high private campaign-finance flows and significant decision-making in security institutions that is subject to legislative oversight but only partly visible to the public. [5][34][36] The collapse of CPB as a federally funded public-media institution also matters to the cognitive-sovereignty analysis because it reduces the scale of a non-commercial public information pillar, although the U.S. information environment remains diverse, especially online. [17][35]

7.3 Switzerland and Slovenia: direct-democratic correction mechanisms

Switzerland and Slovenia show why the index gives independent weight to mechanisms that allow the demos to intervene between elections. Switzerland's planned September 2026 vote on the Neutrality Initiative is particularly instructive: Switzerland has largely adopted EU sanctions against Russia, but the electorate can vote on a constitutional rule that would substantially change the future sanctions framework. [39][40] Slovenia provides a narrower version of the same principle: referendum rights are constitutionally limited, but judicial review can prevent the legislature from using an excluded category to shield unrelated provisions from referendum scrutiny. [22][23]



7.4 Slovenia: cognitive plurality and foreign election interference

Slovenia illustrates why formal media freedom, outlet diversity and cognitive sovereignty must be separated. The structural media market is relatively open but highly concentrated for a small polity, and the pilot already gives weak-to-partial scores to CS2 and CS3. [43][44] The Black Cube case adds a distinct problem: covert foreign private-intelligence activity aimed at influencing the electoral environment. Government reporting establishes foreign-interference findings and links to a visit at the SDS headquarters address, while responsibility for commissioning or criminal liability remains unresolved in the public evidence used here. [45][46] The appropriate LE-DSI response is therefore stronger election-integrity, transparency and rapid-remedy requirements, not a partisan presumption about the beneficiary or organiser of the operation.

8. Priority Recommendations and Follow-up

The recommendations below follow an EC/OECD-style publication logic: they are concise, actionable, linked to diagnosed weaknesses and intended to be tracked in subsequent editions. The European Commission's Rule of Law cycle uses country-specific recommendations and assesses progress over time; OECD Public Governance Reviews similarly emphasise sequenced, actionable recommendations. [49][50] For the LE-DSI, future quarterly or annual editions should report progress as: No progress | Limited progress | Some progress | Significant progress | Full implementation.

Switzerland

- Introduce a citizen-triggered federal recall, or a functionally equivalent mid-term revocation mechanism, for elected federal officeholders. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: REV / COMP]*
- Strengthen media-ownership transparency and anti-concentration safeguards while protecting independent public-service media funding. *[Medium | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COG / INST]*
- Require enhanced democratic authorisation and public traceability for major departures from long-standing neutrality or sanctions policy. *[Medium | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: STRAT / CI4 / II4]*

Slovenia

- Create a general national recall mechanism, or a functionally equivalent citizen-triggered revocation procedure, for key elected officeholders. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: REV]*
- Clarify referendum severability when referendum-excluded and referendum-eligible provisions are combined, and strengthen citizen access to constitutional-level direct decision. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*
- Establish an independent Strategic Narrative Plurality Audit covering major domestic and geopolitical questions and the effective reach of materially different interpretations across public and private media. *[High | Annual; linked dimensions: COG]*
- Adopt explicit election-integrity rules for foreign private-intelligence, covert political consultancy and undisclosed influence operations, with rapid disclosure and election-timely judicial review. *[High | 1-2 years; linked dimensions: PE1 / II1 / II4 / CS6]*

Denmark

- Introduce citizen-triggered national agenda-setting and binding referendum mechanisms with realistic thresholds. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*
- Create a national recall or equivalent revocation mechanism for exceptional loss of democratic confidence. *[Medium | Structural; linked dimensions: REV]*
- Add systematic interpretative-plurality monitoring to existing strong media-freedom safeguards. *[Medium | Annual; linked dimensions: COG]*

Spain

- Expand citizen-triggered national direct-democracy mechanisms and reduce dependence on institution-initiated referendums. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*



- Create a stable legal pathway for negotiated territorial-status change, based on qualified democratic consent and protection of affected democratic communities. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: PLUR / PE4]*
- Strengthen safeguards against concentrated media ownership and political-economic capture. *[Medium | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COG / INST]*

France

- Lower barriers to citizen-initiated national decision-making and create a credible recall or revocation mechanism. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / REV / CONT]*
- Strengthen transparency and limits around concentrated media ownership and political-financial influence. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COG / INST]*
- Require public-priority and resource-alignment reporting for major strategic commitments. *[Medium | Annual; linked dimensions: CI4 / II4]*

Poland

- Complete institutional guarantees for judicial independence and politically neutral public-service media. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: INST / COG]*
- Introduce stronger citizen-triggered national referendum and agenda-setting rights. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*
- Strengthen safeguards against political capture of state advertising and media financing. *[Medium | 1-2 years; linked dimensions: II1 / CS5]*

Czechia

- Establish a national citizen-triggered referendum and initiative framework with clear admissibility rules. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*
- Introduce a recall or equivalent mid-term revocation mechanism for key elected positions. *[Medium | Structural; linked dimensions: REV]*
- Strengthen media-ownership and conflict-of-interest safeguards where major economic and media interests overlap. *[Medium | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COG / INST]*

Germany

- Create federal citizen-initiated referendum and agenda-setting mechanisms for matters within federal competence. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*
- Introduce a narrowly designed recall or equivalent revocation mechanism compatible with constitutional stability. *[Medium | Structural; linked dimensions: REV]*
- Ensure rapid, independent and election-timely review of party surveillance, restrictions or prohibition-related measures. *[High | 1-2 years; linked dimensions: PE2 / II2 / II3]*
- Measure interpretative plurality in high-reach public and private media, not only formal press freedom. *[Medium | Annual; linked dimensions: COG]*

European Union

- Create a binding European Citizens' Legislative Initiative: once a qualified threshold is met, a proposal should proceed to legislative vote or EU-wide referendum rather than remain dependent on Commission discretion. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*
- Establish a democratic competence-reclaim mechanism allowing constituent democratic communities, under defined qualified conditions, to review or return transferred competences. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / REV / CPNDT]*
- Apply a formal Non-Domination Review to financial, regulatory, judicial and informational measures affecting national political competition, with rapid independent remedy. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COMP / REV / INST / CPNDT]*
- Introduce mandatory decision-traceability and Public Priority and Resource Alignment reporting for major strategic, procurement, sanctions, trade and external-financing decisions. *[High | Annual; linked dimensions: II1 / II4 / CI4 / STRAT]*



- Commission an independent EU-wide Strategic Narrative Plurality Audit covering geopolitical and constitutional topics and the effective reach of materially different interpretations. *[High | Annual; linked dimensions: COG]*

United States

- Create federal mechanisms for citizen agenda-setting and binding popular decision on defined constitutional or legislative questions. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*
- Adopt stronger campaign-finance transparency and anti-capture rules, including real-time disclosure of large independent political expenditures. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: PE1 / II1]*
- Re-establish stable, institutionally independent non-commercial public-media funding with safeguards against political retaliation. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COG / CS6]*
- Strengthen democratic oversight of intelligence and security institutions through auditable reporting, stronger inspector-general access and time-bounded declassification where security permits. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: RV4 / II4]*

Russia

- Make the legally existing national referendum and citizens' initiative mechanisms realistically usable by reducing disproportionate procedural barriers and ensuring transparent, independent administration. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT]*
- Ensure effective political choice, lawful opposition and dissent, and access to materially different domestic and foreign political interpretations, with equal and transparent rules for political participation. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COG / PE2 / RV1]*
- Create a peaceful, lawful and internally applicable status-review procedure for constituent peoples and regions, subject to qualified democratic consent and protection of affected populations. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: PLUR / PE4]*
- Strengthen judicial independence and effective remedies capable of constraining executive and security power in practice. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: INST / REV]*

China

- Strengthen demonstrable citizen control across the people's-congress delegation chain through transparent nomination, meaningful choice, published accountability and effective recall or removal at each level. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / REV / PE1]*
- Expand practical access to materially competing domestic and foreign interpretations and narrow viewpoint-based blocking to restrictions that meet clear legality, necessity, proportionality and review standards. *[High | 1-3 years; linked dimensions: COG]*
- Strengthen independent legal review and practical remedies capable of correcting unlawful or arbitrary exercises of political and administrative power. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: INST / REV]*
- Expand citizen-initiated agenda-setting and binding decision mechanisms beyond consultative participation, while preserving and strengthening existing local election and recall channels. *[High | Structural; linked dimensions: COMP / CONT / REV]*

9. Limitations and Confidence

- Q3 2026 is incomplete. The cut-off date is 16 August 2026; developments after that date are excluded from this edition.
- The 31-indicator architecture and weights are fixed for this pilot edition, but individual country scores remain calibrational and may move when stronger or more comparable evidence becomes available.
- CS2 and CS3 are original LE-DSI measures. The current pilot uses structured topic coding and available reach evidence rather than a fully automated, preregistered media corpus. Their confidence is therefore generally lower than constitutional or directly observable institutional indicators.



- The Index separates absence of a capacity from absence of evidence. Missing evidence is not automatically scored negatively; demonstrated obstruction of transparency is assessed under the relevant transparency/accountability indicator. [1]
- All political systems are assessed under the same rule: the evaluator should ask whether the identical practice would receive the same score if it occurred in a political system the evaluator personally supported. [1]
- Independent validation status: Methodology v1.3 is prepared for external academic review. Structured analytical Type C indicators should therefore be read as pilot estimates until that review is completed. The v1.3 recalibration is explicitly disclosed because it corrects an institutional-form bias identified during the Russia/China audit; the 31-indicator architecture, weights, non-compensation formula and threshold are unchanged. [1]

10. Publication Standard

The public LE-DSI report is intentionally readable rather than data-heavy. The core methodology remains public, while the public report presents the headline results, graphics, explanations, recommendations, selected evidence and full references needed to understand and challenge the principal conclusions.

- Adjusted LE-DSI, Raw LE-DSI and Foundational Minimum;
- the seven fully named dimension scores, ranking table, comparative radar, heatmap and distance-to-benchmark chart;
- one seven-dimensional profile chart for every assessed polity;
- country/polity narratives explaining the principal strengths and bottlenecks;
- selected supporting evidence and the strongest relevant counter-evidence;
- methodological limitations, confidence and independent-review status;
- country/polity-specific recommendations with progress tracking in subsequent editions;
- and a complete public reference list.

The detailed 31-indicator evidence register, machine-readable data, extended cognitive-topic coding and custom comparative outputs are maintained separately from the public report. Libertas Europa may make these technical materials available through its Contributor or Partner access channels.

Recommended public headline: "The LE-DSI does not ask which country looks most democratic. It asks how much political sovereignty the demos can actually exercise, control and reclaim."

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