



EUROPEAN UNION

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European Endowment for Democracy – additional support for democratic change

The Board of Governors of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) met in Brussels today, co-chaired by Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, together with MEP Elmar Brok, chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, also participated in the meeting. The Board discussed the strategic vision and mandate for the EED and appointed Mr Jerzy Pomianowski, currently State Secretary in the Government of Poland, as the Executive Director of EED.

In her opening statement, the High Representative said: *"The central idea that motivated the creation of the Endowment is Europe's commitment to advancing democracy. Not only does this benefit the people who aspire to freedom and who champion democratic transitions worldwide; it is also in our own European interest. The Endowment comes at a very timely moment, as 2013 will be a crucial year for democratic transitions, in particular in the EU's neighbourhood. The European Endowment for Democracy can play a very important role. By working directly with those in the field, who are striving for democracy; and by offering flexible, non-bureaucratic and dedicated procedures that are tailored to the needs and demands on the ground."*

Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, said: *"I am delighted to see the European Endowment for Democracy becoming a reality. I see the Endowment for Democracy as a strengthened effort, supporting democratisation and peaceful forces that work for democratic changes to happen, supporting the actors of change in our neighbourhood, the emerging players that face obstacles in accessing European Union funding. With this new initiative we are sending a clear message of solidarity to the peoples of the Neighbourhood, assuring them that their democratic aspirations and their fight for human rights will be heard and supported by the European Union. The European Union can also bring its experience and know how to help them address the challenges of transition from authoritarianism to democracy."*

P R E S S

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Background

The EED is a joint political project by the EU and its Members States. It was defined as a **political objective** in the May 2011 Neighbourhood Communication and in Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions in June and December 2011. Following an agreement by all Member States, EP and Commission/EEAS, **the EED was established in October 2012 as a private law Foundation** under Belgian Law, governed by its own Statute and governing bodies.

The Foundation's main purpose is **direct grant-making to pro-democracy activist and/or organisations struggling for democratic transition in the European Neighbourhood and beyond**, through specific flexible procedures. EED can also work through European CSOs (such as Political Foundations).

On November 13th, the EED Board held its first meeting in Brussels. 9 MEP are present in the Board. MEP Brok was elected as Chairman. MEP Lambsdorff will be part of the Executive Committee. Switzerland joined the EED Board. In December, the EED signed a €6.2million grant contract with the European Commission. Several Member States together with Switzerland have pledged up to an additional €8million for EED activities. Thus, the initial budget for EED will be around €14 million.

The EED will have its headquarters in Brussels. The EED is in the process of completing its setting up process and recruitment of staff. The EED should be operational during the first half of 2013.
