



Democracy Index

Description

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The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), a sister organization of The Economist, published its 2022 edition of its annual 'Democracy Index' the first week of February. Another respected independent, international, report that makes grim reading for Cyprus.

The Democracy Index, which began in 2006, provides a snapshot of the state of democracy worldwide in 165 independent states and two territories and it is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties.

The Nordic countries, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark are consistently the best performers.

Cyprus is ranked 37th and it is classified as a 'flawed democracy'. Flawed democracies are concentrated in developing regions such as eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa. That's the company we find ourselves in.

More worrying is that Cyprus is near the bottom of EU member state rankings, in 23rd position, marginally better than eastern EU countries Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia and better than Bulgaria that lies at the bottom. In fact, it has been near the bottom of the EU list for over ten years.

Among western European countries, with whom we aspire to be compared and strive to do business with, Cyprus ranks last. The rest of western Europe had a good year in 2022. In particular, Greece demonstrated big improvement in its score, rising nine positions in the rankings, “as the country cemented its protracted recovery from the crisis of the 2010s.” If it wasn’t for the spyware scandal and freedom of the press concerns, Greece could have done even better.

Conversely, Turkey’s democratic values keep eroding. It is classified a ‘hybrid regime’, meaning that “democracy is seriously circumscribed.” EIU comments that “Turkey has suffered a steep decline in its score over the past decade, under the leadership of the president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan...This downwards trajectory reflects the increasingly autocratic rule of its strongman president.” The country faces a crucial presidential election this summer that could decide its democratic status.

Most countries managed to improve their score from 2021 to 2022. Sadly, this does not include Cyprus. Its overall score has been deteriorating consistently during the past six years. In fact, among EU member states Cyprus is the only country whose index deteriorated from 2021 to 2022. All others showed improvements.

Cyprus is doing particularly badly in the ‘functioning of government’, but also in terms of ‘political participation’ and ‘political’ culture’. Among the 72 countries classified as ‘full democracies’ or ‘flawed democracies’, Cyprus ranks 69th in terms of ‘functioning of government’, the last in the European Union at par with Bulgaria, and along with countries such as Dominican Republic, Mongolia, and Namibia – not the company we should aspire to be in. Functioning government has to do with the working of the institutions and the implementation of policies and decisions.

Overall, democratic values in Cyprus are lacking in comparison with the rest of the EU, which may be correlated with the poor performance in corruption indices, such as the one published recently by transparency international. Considerable work needs to be done at the institutional and government levels in order to change this predicament.

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