

# Government Maturity Model

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# 1 Introduction

This is a maturity model designed to evaluate the various activities essential for establishing a governmental framework or democracy. Its objective is to guide emerging democracies in progressing towards full democratization. Additionally, it can be used to counteract democratic erosion or repair flaws in existing democratic systems.

## 2 Approach

### 2.1 Components

Chapter 3 contains the different components of a government: Education, Politics, Justice, Press, Army, Operations. For each component the activities are listed to build the corresponding component.

### 2.2 Maturity levels

Behind the title of every activity a maturity level is indicated as '*underscore* level'.

This model has 4 levels ranging from basic level 1 (e.g., "Governmental framework \_ level 1") to advanced (e.g., "Operational Improvement by monitoring and international cooperation \_ level 4").

The Levels are conceived as if level 1 is achievable without infrastructure. There is no taxation of civilians. There is only a base text which is agreed by a community, but this could be held by the only political party. There is a judge – who can adjudicate impartially -. And there law enforcement to protect.

Level 2 is about creating infrastructure. There is taxation, school, parliament, and court rooms.

Level 3 is about feedback loops. It's about learning from mistakes or by investigation, and subsequently improving.

### 2.3 Domains

For each activity, sub activities are described. These sub activities are classified by domain. Just as the maturity levels the domains are noted '*underscore* domain' (e.g.: "Judges are chosen to adjudicate impartially based on law and evidence. They can have no other function within the democratic system. \_ personnel")

There are 4 domains:

- human element: invention, leadership
- personnel: employees
- Infrastructure: buildings and material

- legal: laws, directives and guiding processes

## 2.4 Approach

A governmental framework typically begins with its creation and distribution. As such it is an act of research and education. The model needs to be discussed and refined until it is accepted by a group or political party.

Upon reaching an agreement, the group of politicians establishes a collaborative framework or legal system. An independent justice department, supported by armed forces, ensures that justice is served, and peace is upheld.

Taxes are collected to maintain armed forces and governmental operations.

Media informs civilians. Governmental functionaries maintain common space. They receive due infrastructure to execute their tasks.

The governmental system is subject to continuous monitoring. Its effectiveness is improved through a hermeneutical process of knowledge management and international cooperation.

## 3 Components

### 3.1 Education

#### 3.1.1 Rules framework \_ level 1

A community intends to care for each other. It agrees, registers and supports a framework of rules. \_ human\_element

#### 3.1.2 Schools and universities \_ level 2

Teachers teach and conduct research about governmental frameworks (including press, justice and defense and security studies). \_ personnel

Knowledge is registered in books, maintained and organized in libraries. Schools and universities exist to spread knowledge and conduct research. \_ infrastructure

#### 3.1.3 Hermeneutical Research \_ level 3

The governmental framework is assessed through transparent research and knowledge management to enhance its effectiveness. \_ personnel

Schools and universities collaborate nationally and internationally. This communication enables the exchange of knowledge on governmental frameworks, sciences, education techniques, and cultural exchange between communities. \_ personnel

Improvements to the educational system and knowledge management are voted and implemented. Projects are duly managed. Project progress is transparently reported on a regular basis. \_ personnel

## 3.2 Political system

### 3.2.1 Political Culture \_ level 1

A culture of public discourse characterized by transparency, mutual agreement and care is present. Individuals are encouraged to contribute and develop the ability to articulate clear and constructive initiatives. \_ human\_element

### 3.2.2 Legal framework for political parties \_ level 1

Legislation exists making it easy to form political parties, such as a clearly defined party registration processes. \_ legal

Legislation exists that protects freedom of association, assembly and speech to all citizens. \_ legal

### 3.2.3 Governmental bodies \_ level 2

Governmental functionaries are chosen to support the political system and communicate about political decision making and operations. The selection process is transparent. They receive benefits in compensation for the prohibition to receive benefits from other sources. \_ personnel

There is due infrastructure to enable political discussion and decision making. Parliaments and town halls enable people to assemble. Systems exist to support transparent communication regarding governmental discussions and decision making. \_ infrastructure

### 3.2.4 Regulation of common space \_ level 2

Laws are voted following thorough debate and consultation with experts and community members. Accepted laws are publicly communicated in a manner that ensures clarity of their purpose for everybody. \_ personnel

### 3.2.5 Optimizing political system \_ level 3

Law making is assessed through transparent registration and knowledge management to enhance the life quality of civilians now and in the future. \_ personnel

Governments collaborate nationally and internationally. This communication mutually improves the quality of life of civilians now and in the future. \_ personnel

A culture of public discourse characterized by transparency, mutual agreement and care, and the effectiveness in turning initiatives to laws, are assessed. Projects are duly managed. Project progress is transparently reported on a regular basis. \_ personnel

## 3.3 Justice

### 3.3.1 Independent judiciary \_ level 1

Judges are chosen to adjudicate impartially based on law and evidence. They can have no other function within the democratic system. \_ personnel

Education and research aim to improve all aspects of justice. \_ education

### 3.3.2 Control over press, armed forces, and the common space \_ level 2

A transparent process exists to guard the press, armed forces and the organization of the common space (e.g., elections, taxation and governmental services). \_ legal

There is infrastructure to support lawyers and judges, and ensure transparent communication regarding judgments in governmental operations. \_ infrastructure

### 3.3.3 Accessibility \_ level 2

Governmental functionaries make justice accessible to everybody. Judgements are transparent and publicly communicated. Everybody can easily consult judgements to understand the course of justice. \_ personnel

Civilians are educated to understand their rights and the legal framework. \_ education

There is established infrastructure to support legal communication and help civilians. \_ infrastructure

### 3.3.4 Optimising juristic functioning \_ level 3

Justice is assessed through transparent registration and knowledge management to enhance accessibility and fairness. \_ personnel

There is ongoing cooperation at both national and international levels aimed at enhancing accessibility and justice. Efforts are being made to exchange legal cultures, and harmonize laws and structures to further improve the quality of life for civilians. \_ personnel

Improvements to the juristic functioning are voted and implemented. Projects are duly managed. Project progress is transparently reported on a regular basis. \_ personnel

## 3.4 Press

### 3.4.1 Enable fair media \_ level 1

Journalists are reporting free from political interference. \_ personnel

Education and research seek to improve all aspects of the press. \_ education

### 3.4.2 Regulate fair media \_ level 2

Laws prohibit the press from spreading false information, or polarizing content lacking comprehensive perspective on the subject. \_ legal

### 3.4.3 Optimizing press \_ level 3

Press activity and media landscape are assessed through transparent registration and knowledge management to enhance fairness, accuracy, and diversity. \_ personnel

Media bodies and regulators collaborate nationally and internationally. This communication enables the exchange of knowledge on journalistic standards, media regulation, and cultural exchange. \_ personnel

Improvements to inform civilians are voted and implemented. Projects are duly managed. Project progress is transparently reported on a regular basis. \_ personnel

## 3.5 Armed forces

### 3.5.1 Maintain an Ethical Law Enforcement System \_ level 1

Armed forces personnel are chosen and educated to protect caring civilians. \_ personnel

Education and research improve all aspects of law enforcement and defense. \_ education

### 3.5.2 Optimizing armed forces\_ level 3

Armed forces are assessed through transparent registration of their activities and knowledge management to enhance their effectiveness in helping to maintain peace and justice. \_ personnel

There is ongoing cooperation at both national and international levels aimed at enhancing effectiveness in helping to maintain peace and justice. \_ personnel

Improvements to the armed forces are voted and implemented. Projects are duly managed. Project progress is transparently reported on a regular basis. \_ personnel

## 3.6 Governmental operations

### 3.6.1 Electoral Body and taxation \_ level 2

A robust legal framework defines election rules and regulations. \_ legal

A fair system of taxation exists to maintain the governmental organization. \_ legal

### 3.6.2 Civilian registration \_ level 2

Transparent directives exist to create and maintain a register of civilians, ensuring accessibility for all. Civilians have the power to vote and pay a fair amount of taxes. \_

legal Governmental functionaries are chosen and educated to execute and maintain civic registration projects. \_ personnel

Due infrastructure supports functionaries to maintain a register of civilians. \_ infrastructure

Education and research are improving all aspects of governmental administration including polling, taxation and governmental services. \_ education

### 3.6.3 Election organization \_ level 2

Fair and transparent procedures regulate election candidate registration, election operations, and campaign financing. \_ legal

Due infrastructure enables polling. \_ infrastructure

Governmental functionaries are chosen and educated to execute and maintain polling projects. \_ personnel

### 3.6.4 Civic participation \_ level 3

A legal framework and infrastructure are in place for civic participation to ensure mutual involvement, understanding, and oversight. Effective communication enhances laws and governmental processes and prepares individuals for political engagement. \_education \_legal \_infrastructure \_personnel

The mediator serves as a point of contact for all inquiries and comments. The mediator is accessible to everyone and can efficiently address and redirect any questions or concerns. \_ personnel

### 3.6.5 Election monitoring \_ level 3

The election process is monitored and evaluated. There is transparent registration and knowledge management to improve fairness, acceptance and transparency of future elections. \_ personnel

International observation and cooperation enhance cooperation and acceptance of the election results. \_ personnel

### 3.6.6 Initiate fact checking \_ level 3

Governmental functionaries initiate fact checking by universities or independent researchers. The results of this fact-checking is registered together with other research results in a public knowledge management system.

### 3.6.7 Optimizing Governmental organization \_ level 4

Governmental execution is assessed through transparent registration and knowledge management to enhance the effectiveness of governmental organization in registering civilians, organizing elections and other governmental tasks. \_ personnel



There is ongoing cooperation at both national and international levels aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of governmental organization. Efforts are being made to enhance and harmonize governmental organizations to increase effectiveness. \_  
personnel

Improvements to the governmental organization are voted and implemented. Projects are duly managed. Project progress is transparently reported on a regular basis. \_  
personnel

## 4 Activities Table

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Level</b>
3.1.1	Governmental framework	1
3.2.1	Political Culture	1
3.2.2	Legal framework for political parties	1
3.3.1	Independent judiciary	1
3.4.1	Enable fair media	1
3.5.1	Maintain an Ethical Law Enforcement System	1
3.1.2	Schools and universities	2
3.2.3	Governmental bodies	2
3.2.4	Regulation of common space	2
3.3.2	Control over press, armed forces, and the common space	2
3.3.3	Accessibility	2
3.4.2	Regulate fair media	2
3.6.1	Electoral Body and taxation	2
3.6.2	Civilian registration	2
3.6.3	Election organisation	2
3.1.3	Hermeneutical Research	3
3.2.5	Optimizing political system	3
3.3.4	Optimising juristic functioning	3
3.4.3	Optimizing press	3
3.5.2	Optimizing armed forces	3
3.6.4	Civic participation	3
3.6.5	Election monitoring	3
3.6.6	Initiate fact checking	3
3.6.7	Optimizing Governmental organization	4

## 5 Gemini AI output

### 5.1 Assessment of the European sphere

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*Okay, let's assess the governmental structures in the European sphere based on the provided maturity model.*

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It's important to note that "European sphere" is broad. This assessment will primarily focus on the member states of the European Union (EU) and related European institutions (like the Council of Europe), acknowledging that significant diversity exists between countries. The assessment reflects general trends and commonalities, but specific countries might rate higher or lower on individual points.

**Overall Assessment:** European governmental structures generally demonstrate high maturity at Levels 1 and 2 of this model. Foundational frameworks, basic institutions, and legal protections are well-established. Significant activity occurs at Level 3, particularly regarding international cooperation and research, but the systematic assessment, transparency, and implementation of improvements described in Level 3 criteria are often variable or face challenges. Level 4 remains largely aspirational.

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#### Detailed Assessment by Category:

##### 1.1 Education

- **1.1.1 Governmental framework (Level 1): Met.** European nations universally have agreed-upon, registered (constitutions, basic laws), and supported governmental frameworks.
- **1.1.2 Schools and universities (Level 2): Met.** Extensive networks of schools and universities exist. Governmental frameworks, justice, defense, etc., are standard subjects of teaching and research (political science, law, sociology, security studies). Knowledge is registered and maintained in libraries and digital repositories.
- **1.1.3 Hermeneutical Research (Level 3): Partially Met.**
  - *Assessment for effectiveness:* Research assessing governmental frameworks exists (academic institutions, think tanks, governmental reviews), but the transparency and direct link to *enhancing effectiveness* can vary.

- *Collaboration*: Extensive national and international collaboration exists (e.g., Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, Bologna Process, research networks) facilitating knowledge exchange.
- *Improvements voted/implemented*: Educational system improvements are debated and implemented, but the transparency of project management and the systematic assessment/improvement of *knowledge management* itself varies significantly across countries and institutions.

## 1.2 Political System

- **1.2.1 Political Culture (Level 1): Partially Met.** While public discourse exists and is often encouraged, achieving a consistent culture characterized by "transparency, mutual agreement and care" is challenging. Polarization, misinformation, and varying levels of transparency are common across Europe. Constructive initiatives are encouraged in principle, but the effectiveness varies.
- **1.2.2 Legal framework for political parties (Level 1): Met.** Legislation generally allows for the formation of political parties with clear registration processes. Freedom of association, assembly, and speech are fundamental rights, often protected by national constitutions and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), though practical application and limitations are sometimes debated.
- **1.2.3 Governmental bodies (Level 2): Met.** Functionaries (politicians elected, civil servants appointed) exist. Selection processes aim for transparency (elections, competitive exams), but can face scrutiny. Compensation and conflict-of-interest rules are standard. Infrastructure (parliaments, meeting halls, digital communication platforms) supports discussion and decision-making.
- **1.2.4 Regulation of common space (Level 2): Met.** Laws are generally debated (parliamentary processes) and expert consultation occurs, though the depth and influence vary. Laws are formally published (official journals, online portals), but ensuring clarity and accessibility for *everybody* remains a challenge.
- **1.5. Optimizing political system (Level 3): Partially Met.**
  - *Assessment for life quality*: Formal assessments (e.g., impact assessments) exist for some legislation, but systematic, transparent registration and knowledge management focused explicitly on optimizing the *entire system* for life quality is not consistently implemented.
  - *Collaboration*: Strong national and international collaboration exists (especially within the EU) aiming to improve quality of life through shared policies and standards.

- *Improvements assessed/managed*: While political reforms occur, the systematic assessment of *political culture* improvements or the *effectiveness* of turning initiatives into laws, coupled with transparent project management, is often lacking or inconsistent.

### 1.3 Justice

- **1.3.1 Independent judiciary (Level 1): Generally Met.** The principle of an independent judiciary, impartial and based on law/evidence, is a cornerstone of European democracies. Restrictions on judges holding other functions are common. Education and research in law are well-established. However, challenges to judicial independence have arisen in some member states, making this a point of ongoing concern in specific contexts.
- **1.3.2 Control over press, armed forces, common space (Level 2): Met.** Judicial and administrative systems provide oversight over media regulation, military actions (within legal bounds), and governmental operations (elections, services). Transparency of these control processes varies. Infrastructure (courts, legal databases) exists.
- **1.3.3 Accessibility (Level 2): Partially Met.** Efforts are made to ensure accessibility (legal aid, online information), but cost, complexity, and language barriers mean justice is not always easily accessible to *everybody*. Judgments are often publicly available, but understanding legal language can be difficult. Civic education on rights exists but varies in depth. Infrastructure (courts, legal aid) is established.
- **1.3.4 Optimising juristic functioning (Level 3): Partially Met.**
  - *Assessment for accessibility/fairness*: Data is collected (case statistics, delays), and reforms are undertaken, but systematic, transparent knowledge management specifically for enhancing accessibility and fairness is not uniformly applied.
  - *Cooperation*: Strong national and international cooperation exists, especially within the EU (CJEU, harmonization directives) and via the Council of Europe (ECtHR), aiming to improve justice and harmonize standards.
  - *Improvements voted/implemented*: Justice system reforms are common, but the transparency of project management and evaluation varies.

### 1.4 Press

- **1.4.1 Enable fair media (Level 1): Generally Met (in principle).** Press freedom is legally protected. Journalists are *supposed* to report freely. Education and

research in journalism/media studies are common. However, significant challenges exist: political pressure, economic pressures, ownership concentration, threats/harassment of journalists, and strategic lawsuits (SLAPPs) impact actual freedom in many places.

- **1.4.2 Regulate fair media (Level 2): Partially Met.** Laws exist against defamation, hate speech, and incitement. Regulation concerning "false information" (disinformation) is developing but complex due to free speech concerns. Direct laws prohibiting "polarizing content lacking comprehensive perspective" are generally absent as this is subjective and hard to regulate without censorship. Regulation often focuses on broadcasting standards, ownership transparency, and protecting minors rather than content neutrality in this specific way.
- **1.4.3 Optimizing press (Level 3): Partially Met.**
  - *Assessment for fairness/accuracy/diversity:* Some assessment occurs (e.g., EU's Media Pluralism Monitor, national regulators' reports), but systematic, transparent knowledge management across the board is limited.
  - *Collaboration:* National and international collaboration exists among media bodies, regulators (e.g., ERGA), and journalism associations.
  - *Improvements voted/implemented:* Media policy changes occur (e.g., EU Media Freedom Act), but transparent project management for broad improvements to *inform civilians* is variable.

## **1.5 Armed Forces** (Interpreted to include Police/Law Enforcement as per description)

- **1.5.1 Maintain an Ethical Law Enforcement System (Level 1): Met.** Personnel selection and training generally include ethical considerations, human rights, and democratic accountability. Education and research institutions (police academies, military academies, universities) focus on improving law enforcement and defense practices.
- **1.5.2 Optimizing armed forces (Level 3): Partially Met.**
  - *Assessment for peace/justice:* Armed forces and police undergo internal reviews, audits, and parliamentary oversight. Transparency can be limited by national security concerns. Systematic knowledge management focused on enhancing effectiveness *in maintaining peace and justice* varies.
  - *Cooperation:* Extensive national and international cooperation exists (NATO, EU CSDP, Frontex, Europol, Interpol, bilateral agreements).

- *Improvements voted/implemented:* Defense/security budgets and reforms are politically decided, but transparency regarding project management and effectiveness evaluation can be limited.

## 1.6 Governmental Operations

- **1.6.1 Electoral Body and taxation (Level 2): Met.** Robust legal frameworks for elections and taxation exist. Fairness of taxation is a constant political debate, but systems are in place.
- **1.6.2 Civilian registration (Level 2): Met.** Comprehensive and increasingly digitized civil registration systems are standard, governed by transparent directives and data protection laws (like GDPR). These registers link to voting rights and taxation. Dedicated personnel and infrastructure exist. Public administration is a field of study.
- **1.6.3 Election organisation (Level 2): Met.** Procedures for candidate registration, voting operations, and (to varying degrees of effectiveness) campaign finance are legally defined and generally aim for fairness and transparency. Infrastructure and personnel for conducting elections are in place.
- **1.6.4 Mediator (Level 3): Not Met (as described).** While Ombudsman offices exist to handle complaints against public administration, there is no single mediator serving as the *sole point of contact for all inquiries* in the way described. Governmental communication is typically fragmented across different agencies and levels.
- **1.6.5 Election monitoring (Level 3): Met.** Elections are typically monitored by domestic and international observers (e.g., OSCE/ODIHR). Reports are produced, and recommendations aim to improve future elections. International observation enhances acceptance. Transparency and systematic KM exist, though could sometimes be improved.
- **1.6.6 Initiate fact checking (Level 3): Not Met (as described).** Governments have communication departments that correct misinformation about their own policies, but they do not typically *initiate fact-checking by independent researchers* in a systematic, registered way for public/press consumption as a core function. Independent fact-checking organizations exist but are usually separate from direct government initiation and control.
- **1.6.7 Optimizing Governmental organization (Level 4): Partially Met / Approaching.**
  - *Assessment for effectiveness:* Public administration performance is assessed through audits (e.g., Courts of Auditors), efficiency reviews, and reforms. Transparency and systematic KM vary greatly.

- *Cooperation:* Significant national and international cooperation occurs (e.g., sharing best practices via OECD, EU programmes) aiming to enhance effectiveness and harmonize where appropriate.
- *Improvements voted/implemented:* Major administrative reforms are debated and implemented, often with project management structures, but consistent transparency and focus on optimization across all governmental operations reach high levels only in some areas or countries. Reaching Level 4 implies a very high degree of systematic, transparent optimization that is likely not universally achieved.

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In conclusion, European governmental structures are generally mature according to the foundational levels of this model. Strengths lie in established legal frameworks, democratic institutions, education systems, and significant international cooperation. Key areas for development align with the higher maturity levels (3 and 4), particularly concerning enhancing the quality of political discourse, ensuring practical accessibility of justice, navigating press freedom challenges, and implementing consistently transparent, systematic processes for assessing and optimizing the performance and effectiveness of political, judicial, and administrative systems. Certain specific elements described at Level 3 (Mediator, Government-initiated fact-checking) do not generally correspond to current European practices.

## 5.2 Action plan

Could you propose an action plan for the 'Council of Europe' in Strasbourg to improve democracy based on this assessment and its conclusions?

Show thinking

---

*Okay, here is a proposed action plan for the Council of Europe (CoE) in Strasbourg, based on the maturity assessment and its conclusions, aimed at strengthening democracy across its member states.*

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### **Action Plan: Strengthening European Democracy – Leveraging the Council of Europe**

**Date:** May 1, 2025

**Objective:** To address identified gaps and enhance democratic maturity across Council of Europe member states, focusing on areas highlighted by the recent assessment using

the provided governmental maturity model, particularly concerning Level 3 and 4 criteria (optimization, systematic assessment, transparency, and specific functional areas).

### **Guiding Principles:**

- **Leverage CoE Strengths:** Utilize existing CoE instruments, monitoring bodies, conventions, and platforms for maximum impact.
- **Targeted Approach:** Focus actions on areas where the assessment revealed common challenges or stagnation, particularly in moving beyond established frameworks (Levels 1-2) towards systematic improvement (Levels 3-4).
- **Promote Transparency & Participation:** Emphasize transparency in governmental processes and foster meaningful civic engagement.
- **Facilitate Cooperation & Peer Learning:** Enhance mechanisms for member states to share best practices and learn from each other.
- **Uphold Core Values:** Ensure all actions reinforce the CoE's fundamental commitment to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

### **Thematic Action Areas & Specific Actions:**

#### **1. Enhancing Political Culture & Discourse (Addressing 1.2.1, 1.2.5)**

- **Action 1.1: Develop Guidelines on Constructive Political Discourse:** Mandate an expert committee (potentially linked to the Venice Commission or a dedicated ad-hoc committee - CAH\*) to develop non-binding guidelines for member states on fostering a political culture characterized by respectful debate, evidence-based arguments, transparency, and inclusivity, aiming to counteract polarization.
- **Action 1.2: Promote Deliberative Democracy Initiatives:** Through the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and cooperation programmes, support pilot projects and share best practices on citizen assemblies and other deliberative mechanisms at local and national levels to improve the quality of public input into policy-making.
- **Action 1.3: Strengthen Civic Education Curricula:** Update Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, emphasizing media literacy, critical thinking, and understanding democratic processes, including the importance of constructive dialogue and mutual respect.

#### **2. Bolstering the Rule of Law: Justice Accessibility & Independence (Addressing 1.3.1, 1.3.3, 1.3.4)**



- **Action 2.1: Enhance Monitoring of Judicial Independence:** Task the Venice Commission and GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) to intensify monitoring and reporting on threats to judicial independence, including political interference and resource allocation, providing targeted recommendations.
- **Action 2.2: Promote Standards for Justice Accessibility (CEPEJ):** Direct the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) to develop concrete standards and indicators focusing on practical accessibility (beyond formal legal aid), including user-friendly procedures, plain language communication, digital access, and support for vulnerable groups. Facilitate peer reviews based on these standards.
- **Action 2.3: Foster Systematic Assessment of Justice Systems:** Encourage member states, through CEPEJ guidelines and workshops, to implement transparent knowledge management systems to regularly assess judicial performance not just on efficiency, but specifically on fairness, accessibility, and public trust, feeding into continuous improvement cycles.

### **3. Protecting Media Freedom & Supporting an Informed Public Sphere (Addressing 1.4.1, 1.4.2 limitations, 1.4.3)**

- **Action 3.1: Strengthen the Platform for the Safety of Journalists:** Enhance the Platform's resources and mandate for follow-up actions with member states regarding alerts, and develop specific recommendations to combat Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), drawing on ECtHR case law.
- **Action 3.2: Promote Media Pluralism & Sustainability:** Through the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI), develop policy recommendations on sustainable economic models for independent journalism and measures to increase transparency of media ownership and funding.
- **Action 3.3: Foster Dialogue on Ethical Journalism vs. Disinformation:** Facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues (media, regulators, platforms, civil society) on maintaining ethical standards, combating disinformation, and enhancing media literacy without unduly restricting freedom of expression, possibly leading to updated recommendations. (Note: Avoid direct regulation of "polarizing content" as per assessment findings).

### **4. Driving Systematic Optimization & Transparency in Governance (Addressing cross-cutting Level 3/4 gaps, including 1.1.3, 1.5.2, 1.6.5, 1.6.7)**

- **Action 4.1: Develop a Framework for Governmental Performance Assessment:** Create voluntary guidelines/methodologies for member states on how to systematically and transparently assess the effectiveness of governmental functions (including education, armed forces/police oversight,

election management, public administration) using knowledge management principles, focusing on achieving stated objectives and improving quality of life/public services.

- **Action 4.2: Enhance Transparency in Public Project Management:** Promote standards (possibly via GRECO or a dedicated expert group) for transparent reporting on the planning, progress, and outcomes of significant governmental projects and reforms mentioned in the maturity model (e.g., educational improvements, justice reforms, defence modernization, administrative optimization).
- **Action 4.3: Facilitate Peer Learning on Optimization:** Organize targeted workshops and study visits for policymakers and senior civil servants focused on sharing successful approaches to systematic assessment and optimization in specific governmental domains (e.g., election result transparency, public service efficiency, armed forces oversight mechanisms).

## **5. Refining Public Interaction & Information Mechanisms (Addressing 1.6.4, 1.6.6)**

- **Action 5.1: Strengthen Ombudsman Institutions & Public Service Contact:** While a single "Mediator" is unrealistic, promote the strengthening of independent Ombudsman institutions and encourage member states to develop accessible, well-signposted 'single points of contact' or citizen service centres for specific domains, sharing best practices on responsiveness and effectiveness.
- **Action 5.2: Promote Government Transparency & Independent Fact-Checking Ecosystems:** Instead of government-initiated fact-checking, focus CoE efforts on promoting standards for transparent government communication (proactive release of data, clear correction of errors) and supporting the enabling environment for independent media and fact-checking organisations (access to information, non-interference).

### **Implementation & Monitoring:**

- Relevant CoE bodies (PACE, Committee of Ministers, ECtHR, Venice Commission, Commissioner for Human Rights, CEPEJ, GRECO, CDMSI, Congress, Steering Committees) will be tasked with implementing specific actions within their mandates.
- Progress will be monitored through existing CoE reporting cycles, specific monitoring mechanisms (e.g., Platform for Safety of Journalists, CEPEJ evaluations), and potentially a dedicated biennial report from the Secretary General on the state of democracy drawing on these actions.

- Cooperation with the EU, OSCE/ODIHR, and UN will be sought where relevant to avoid duplication and maximize impact.

### Conclusion:

This action plan provides a roadmap for the Council of Europe to proactively address the identified challenges and support its member states in advancing towards higher levels of democratic maturity. Success will depend on the political will of member states, adequate resources, and effective coordination across CoE bodies. By focusing on systematic improvement, transparency, and core values, the CoE can continue to play a vital role in strengthening democracy across the continent.

## 5.3 Actions Ranking

Could you rank these actions based on their effectivity in striving to strengthen democracy, and their feasibility?

Show thinking

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*Okay, here's a ranking of the proposed actions for the Council of Europe, based on their potential **Effectiveness** in strengthening democracy (addressing core issues identified) and their **Feasibility** for the CoE to implement successfully (considering mandate, tools, resources, political realities).*

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### Methodology:

- **Effectiveness:** High rating implies direct impact on core democratic principles (rule of law, fundamental rights, checks & balances) or addressing significant systemic weaknesses identified in the assessment (Level 3/4 gaps). Medium/Low implies more indirect impact, focusing on supportive processes, or addressing issues where CoE leverage is less direct.
- **Feasibility:** High rating implies the action aligns well with existing CoE mechanisms (monitoring bodies, standard-setting processes), requires primarily expertise/coordination, and is likely to achieve sufficient member state consensus for CoE *action* (even if national *implementation* varies). Medium/Low implies significant political sensitivity, resource requirements, dependence on national uptake of complex frameworks, or venturing into areas with less established CoE precedent.

### Ranking Tiers:

**Tier 1: High Priority (High Effectiveness & High/Medium Feasibility)** *These actions target core democratic deficits identified in the assessment, align well with the CoE's mandate and strengths, and are relatively feasible to initiate and pursue through established channels, despite potential political sensitivities in some cases.*

**1. Action 2.1: Enhance Monitoring of Judicial Independence (Venice Commission, GRECO)**

- **Effectiveness: High** (Directly tackles a fundamental pillar of the rule of law, addresses active threats in some member states).
- **Feasibility: Medium** (Monitoring exists, but enhancement needs resources and political will to address findings; can be sensitive).

**2. Action 3.1: Strengthen Platform for Safety of Journalists & Combat SLAPPs**

- **Effectiveness: High** (Directly addresses press freedom, a critical component of democracy and accountability; combats a growing threat).
- **Feasibility: Medium** (Platform exists, but effective anti-SLAPP measures require strong recommendations/standards that may face pushback).

**3. Action 2.2: Promote Standards for Justice Accessibility (CEPEJ)**

- **Effectiveness: High** (Addresses equality before the law and public trust in justice; practical improvements are possible).
- **Feasibility: High** (Core work for CEPEJ, data-driven, technically focused, generally less politically charged than independence).

**4. Action 5.2: Promote Government Transparency & Independent Fact-Checking Ecosystems**

- **Effectiveness: High** (Transparency is fundamental; supporting independent checks addresses accountability and disinformation).
- **Feasibility: Medium** (Promoting standards is feasible, but ensuring deep government transparency and supporting ecosystems faces political hurdles).

**Tier 2: Medium Priority (High/Medium Effectiveness & High/Medium Feasibility)**

*These actions are important for supporting democratic structures and processes, address identified gaps, and are generally feasible, though their impact might be less direct or depend more heavily on national implementation.*

**5. Action 4.1: Develop Framework for Governmental Performance Assessment**

- **Effectiveness: High** (Potentially transformative for addressing systemic Level 3/4 gaps in optimization and assessment).

- *Feasibility: **Medium*** (Developing framework is feasible expert work, but achieving widespread member state *adoption* and *use* is the main challenge).

#### 6. **Action 2.3: Foster Systematic Assessment of Justice Systems (CEPEJ)**

- *Effectiveness: **Medium*** (Supports Action 2.2; focuses on process improvement which is key for Level 3, but impact depends on use).
- *Feasibility: **High*** (Fits well within CEPEJ's remit, technical focus).

#### 7. **Action 1.3: Strengthen Civic Education Curricula (Recommendation Update)**

- *Effectiveness: **Medium*** (Important long-term investment in democratic culture, but impact is indirect and generational).
- *Feasibility: **High*** (Updating recommendations is standard CoE procedure).

#### 8. **Action 4.2: Enhance Transparency in Public Project Management**

- *Effectiveness: **Medium*** (Good governance principle, enhances accountability, addresses Level 3 criteria).
- *Feasibility: **Medium*** (Promoting standards is feasible, but implementation requires national commitment against potential inertia).

#### 9. **Action 3.2: Promote Media Pluralism & Sustainability**

- *Effectiveness: **Medium*** (Addresses structural issues underpinning press freedom, important context).
- *Feasibility: **Medium*** (Developing recommendations is feasible, but tackling powerful economic/political interests is challenging).

#### 10. **Action 5.1: Strengthen Ombudsman Institutions & Public Service Contact**

- *Effectiveness: **Medium*** (Improves citizen-state relationship and accountability, practical value).
- *Feasibility: **High*** (Focuses on promoting existing structures and best practices).

#### 11. **Action 4.3: Facilitate Peer Learning on Optimization**

- *Effectiveness: **Medium*** (Useful mechanism to support other actions, especially 4.1, 4.2, but impact depends on engagement).
- *Feasibility: **High*** (Standard CoE activity).

**Tier 3: Lower Priority (Medium/Lower Effectiveness or Lower Feasibility)** *These actions are potentially valuable but may have less direct systemic impact on democratic*

*structures as defined by the assessment, face significant feasibility challenges for widespread meaningful implementation, or the CoE's role is primarily facilitative with uncertain outcomes.*

#### **12. Action 1.1: Develop Guidelines on Constructive Political Discourse**

- *Effectiveness: **Medium*** (Addresses polarization, but impact of non-binding guidelines on deep-seated political culture is uncertain).
- *Feasibility: **Medium*** (Developing guidelines feasible, but achieving consensus and meaningful national buy-in on sensitive cultural norms is difficult).

#### **13. Action 3.3: Foster Dialogue on Ethical Journalism vs. Disinformation**

- *Effectiveness: **Medium*** (Dialogue is valuable, but concrete outcomes strengthening democracy might be slow or limited).
- *Feasibility: **High*** (Facilitating dialogue is a core CoE strength).

#### **14. Action 1.2: Promote Deliberative Democracy Initiatives**

- *Effectiveness: **Low-Medium*** (Systemic impact across 46 states from CoE *promotion* is uncertain; effectiveness highly context-dependent).
- *Feasibility: **Low-Medium*** (Promotion is easy, but securing widespread, meaningful *adoption and integration* relies heavily on national/local actors beyond CoE direct influence).

#### **Conclusion:**

This ranking suggests prioritizing actions that reinforce the core pillars of the rule of law (judicial independence, access to justice) and fundamental freedoms (press freedom, safety of journalists), while also promoting essential transparency. These leverage the CoE's strongest monitoring and standard-setting functions. Actions related to developing frameworks for systemic assessment and promoting good governance principles form a strong second tier. While initiatives targeting political culture and dialogue are important, their direct impact and feasibility through CoE mechanisms might be relatively lower compared to actions focusing on legal and institutional frameworks.

## **5.4 Gemini AI Maturity Model**

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*Okay, here is a conceptual Maturity Model for Democratic Government, outlining levels of development across key organizational components.*

*This model provides a framework for assessing the depth and resilience of democratic practices within a state.*

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#### Maturity Levels Defined:

- Level 1: Foundational (Ad Hoc & Fragile) - Basic democratic structures may exist formally but are inconsistently applied, poorly understood, or easily undermined. Processes are often arbitrary or personality-driven.
- Level 2: Developing (Repeatable & Limited) - Core democratic processes become more regular and predictable, but often lack depth, transparency, or broad participation. Basic rules are followed, but capacity and reach are limited.
- Level 3: Defined (Standardized & Functional) - Key democratic institutions and processes are well-established, standardized, and generally function according to law and procedure. There's a baseline of competence and public understanding.
- Level 4: Managed (Measured & Engaged) - Democratic processes are actively managed using data and feedback. There's a focus on effectiveness, accessibility, participation, and proactive measures to uphold democratic norms. Transparency and accountability mechanisms are robust.
- Level 5: Optimizing (Adaptive & Resilient) - The democratic system demonstrates continuous improvement, adaptability to new challenges, and deep resilience. Citizen engagement is high, institutions learn and evolve, and democratic values are deeply embedded in the political culture.

#### Maturity Model Across Key Components:

Component	Level 1: Foundational	Level 2: Developing	Level 3: Defined	Level 4: Managed	Level 5: Optimizing
1. Electoral System & Representation	Elections held irregularly or heavily flawed; limited/unequal suffrage;	Regular elections; broader suffrage; basic rules exist but weakly enforced;	Defined, transparent election laws; universal suffrage practiced ;	Processes measured for fairness/access; active voter registration;	Continuous improvement based on data; high public trust;

	unclear rules.	results often disputed.	independent oversight body; results generally accepted.	campaign finance monitored; diverse/accessible voting methods.	proactive defense against interference; exploration of electoral innovations.
2. Legislative Function (Lawmaking)	Laws made erratically, often by executive; limited public input; weak legislature.	Legislature follows basic procedures; debate occurs but often superficial or dominated; laws accessible post-facto.	Standardized legislative process; functional committees; laws publicly accessible before/after passage; basic oversight of executive.	Structured expert consultation; impact assessments common; active legislative oversight; lobbying transparency measures.	Proactive policy analysis; post-implementation reviews standard; adaptable procedures; encourages cross-party collaboration; high transparency.
3. Executive Function (Implementation)	Power often personalized; arbitrary administration; low	Basic ministries exist; functions somewhat defined; patronage	Clear ministerial roles; professional civil service basics;	Performance management systems; evidence-informed	Agile governance; citizen-centric service design;



	capacity; high corruption risk.	influences appointments; inconsistent implementation.	standard administrative procedures; focus on output.	policy emerging; coordinated implementation; active anti-corruption enforcement.	strong inter-agency work; continuous improvement culture; strong ethical framework.
4. Judicial Function & Rule of Law	Judiciary weak/dependent; inconsistent law application; poor access to justice.	Basic court structure; attempts at independence; legal codes exist but hard to access/navigate; limited legal aid.	Formal judicial independence protected; professional judiciary; clear procedures; judgments generally enforced; basic legal aid available.	Performance monitoring (backlogs); specialized courts; active management of accessibility (cost, language); robust judicial review.	Focus on equitable outcomes (e.g., restorative justice); continuous legal code review; proactive access initiatives; high public confidence; int'l legal cooperation.
5. Fundamental Rights &	Rights on paper, frequently ignored;	Basic rights usually respected but	Rights constitutionally protected	Proactive protection for vulnerable	Rights culture deeply embedded

Freedom s	press controlle d; assembly restricted ; fear prevails.	enforcemen t weak; press faces pressure; limited civic space; some tolerance.	d; independ ent monitori ng bodies (ombuds man); press freedom largely upheld; freedom of associati on respecte d.	groups; data privacy framework s; effective redress mechanis ms; media diversity supported.	d; ongoing public educatio n; transpare nt balancing of rights; adaptatio n to new challenge s (digital rights).
6. Political Culture & Citizen Engagem ent	Apathy, fear, or cynicism dominate s; participat ion limited/c oerced.	Basic participation (voting); some public discourse, often polarized/un informed; low trust.	Active civil society; regular consultat ions; basic civic educatio n; mechani sms for feedback exist.	Deliberativ e democracy initiatives; gov't seeks diverse input; higher trust levels; active citizen monitoring .	Co- creation of policy/ser vices; strong civic responsi bility culture; construct ive debate valued; high political efficacy; resilience to

					polarization.
7. Transparency & Accountability	Secrecy standard; no real accountability; corruption endemic.	Basic info released (budgets); some audits, limited independence/impact.	Freedom of Information laws; independent audit office; parliamentary oversight ; asset declarations required.	Proactive data disclosure (Open Data); strong whistleblower protection; effective accountability mechanisms; lobbying registry enforced.	Transparency by design; real-time accountability explored; strong ethical culture; public actively uses data for accountability.
8. Public Administration & Service Delivery	Services minimal, inconsistent, based on patronage or bribes.	Basic essential services provided; bureaucracy developing but inefficient/impersonal.	Standardized service delivery; professional civil service manages ; focus on efficiency and rules.	Citizen-centric approach; performance metrics used; digital services accessible ; feedback loops for improvement.	Services co-designed; personalized options; seamless cross-agency delivery; focus on equity/outcomes; innovation encouraged.

9. Civilian Control of Armed Forces/Security	Military frequently interferes in politics; lines of authority blurred.	Formal civilian control asserted but military retains informal power/influence.	Clear legal framework for civilian oversight ; military professionalism emphasizes subordination.	Robust legislative/ executive oversight of budget/operations; transparent (where feasible) defense policy.	Security strategy integrated with overall policy; public debate on security encouraged; strong ethical oversight.
10. Education & Knowledge Base (Governance)	Limited public education; governance knowledge restricted ; poor information access.	Basic education includes some civics; independent information sources limited.	Widespread quality education includes civics; independent research institutions; public libraries/ archives functional.	Higher education researches governance; gov't utilizes expertise; good public access to gov't info/research.	Strong evidence- based policy culture; informed public sphere; high media/civic literacy; continuous learning in government.

#### How to Use This Model:

- **Assessment:** Evaluate a specific country's democratic system component by component against the level descriptions. A country might be at different maturity levels for different components (e.g., Level 4 Electoral System but Level 2 Transparency).<sup>1</sup>

- Gap Analysis: Identify areas where democratic practices are less mature and require strengthening.<sup>2</sup>
- Roadmap Development: Use the descriptions of higher levels to outline potential goals and steps for democratic reform and development.
- Benchmarking: Compare the maturity profiles of different democratic systems (cautiously, considering context).

#### Important Considerations:

- This is a conceptual model; real-world situations are complex and nuanced.
- Progress is not always linear; democratic maturity can regress.
- Context matters; the specific forms institutions take can vary while still achieving high maturity.
- The model focuses on the *system and its organization*, recognizing that outcomes also depend heavily on the actions and choices of individuals within that system.

## 5.5 Assessment of US system

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*Okay, let's assess the current state of American democracy (as of late April 2025) using the maturity model developed previously. This assessment provides a snapshot and interpretation; different observers might place specific components slightly differently.*

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**Overall Impression:** The US system generally exhibits strong **Level 3 (Defined)** characteristics across most components, meaning formal structures, laws, and standardized processes are well-established. It shows aspirations and partial implementation of **Level 4 (Managed)** practices in many areas. However, significant challenges, particularly related to political polarization, inconsistent application/enforcement, transparency gaps, and declining public trust, often hinder its ability to consistently operate at a Level 4 or achieve Level 5 optimization.

#### Assessment by Component:

1. **Electoral System & Representation:**
  - **Assessment: Level 3 / Approaching Level 4 (under stress)**

- *Strengths*: Regular elections, universal suffrage legally codified, defined (though complex and state-variable) laws, largely independent administration, results historically accepted.
- *Weaknesses/Challenges*: Intense partisan disputes over voting access and procedures, gerrymandering undermining representation, significant role of money with transparency issues (Citizens United impact), aging infrastructure, increasing contestation of legitimate results, vulnerability to disinformation/interference. Hinders consistent achievement of L4's measured fairness and access goals.

## 2. Legislative Function (Lawmaking):

- **Assessment: Strong Level 3 (performance often impaired)**
- *Strengths*: Highly defined processes, functional committee structure, public access to laws/debates (C-SPAN, online), non-partisan analysis available (CBO).
- *Weaknesses/Challenges*: Extreme polarization leading to gridlock and inability to address major issues, significant lobbyist influence (transparency exists, but impact debated), decline in deliberative processes, difficulty performing effective oversight due to partisanship. Impairs L4 characteristics like structured consultation effectiveness and proactive analysis.

## 3. Executive Function (Implementation):

- **Assessment: Level 3 / Level 4 Cusp**
- *Strengths*: Defined cabinet structure, large professional civil service core, Administrative Procedure Act provides framework, performance management efforts exist.
- *Weaknesses/Challenges*: Increasing politicization at agency leadership levels impacting morale/effectiveness, bureaucratic inertia, coordination challenges between agencies, consistency varies between administrations. Limits achievement of L4's data-driven decision-making and coordinated implementation.

## 4. Judicial Function & Rule of Law:

- **Assessment: Strong Level 3 / Approaching Level 4**
- *Strengths*: Strong tradition and formal protections for judicial independence, professional judiciary, developed legal system, judicial review firmly established.

- *Weaknesses/Challenges:* Intense politicization of judicial appointments (especially federal) impacting public perception of impartiality, significant access to justice issues (cost), potential for bias, eroding public confidence in institutions like the Supreme Court. Challenges L4 ideals of managed accessibility and high public confidence.

## 5. Fundamental Rights & Freedoms:

- **Assessment: Strong Level 3 / Reaching into Level 4**
- *Strengths:* Robust constitutional protections (Bill of Rights), active legal defense of rights by civil society, strong tradition of free speech/press/assembly.
- *Weaknesses/Challenges:* Ongoing struggles over application and interpretation (voting rights, privacy vs. security, racial justice), economic pressures on press viability, political attacks undermining press credibility, challenges adapting rights frameworks to digital age. L4's proactive protection and balancing are areas of active contestation.

## 6. Political Culture & Citizen Engagement:

- **Assessment: Level 2 / Level 3 (highly stressed)**
- *Strengths:* High levels of freedom for participation, active civil society, regular elections provide engagement opportunities.
- *Weaknesses/Challenges:* Extreme polarization, declining social and political trust, widespread misinformation/disinformation, prevalence of antagonistic and uncivil discourse, significant inequalities in political voice and efficacy. Strongly contradicts L4/L5 ideals of constructive debate, high trust, and co-creation. *This component appears significantly less mature than the formal structures.*

## 7. Transparency & Accountability:

- **Assessment: Level 3 / Level 4 Cusp**
- *Strengths:* FOIA exists, independent auditors (GAO, IGs), financial disclosures required, active investigative journalism, whistleblower laws.
- *Weaknesses/Challenges:* FOIA implementation often slow/obstructed, broad use of classification, "dark money" obscures political influence, accountability often blocked by partisanship (e.g., oversight, impeachment), inconsistent enforcement of ethics rules. Prevents consistent achievement of L4's effective accountability and proactive disclosure.

## 8. Public Administration & Service Delivery:

- **Assessment: Level 3 / Level 4 Cusp**
- *Strengths:* Generally professional civil service, reliable delivery of many core services, increasing use of digital platforms, performance measurement initiatives.
- *Weaknesses/Challenges:* Bureaucratic complexity ("red tape"), uneven quality/access to services (esp. state/local variations), challenges in achieving truly citizen-centric design and seamless digital integration. Limits consistent L4 performance.

## 9. Civilian Control of Armed Forces/Security:

- **Assessment: Solid Level 4**
- *Strengths:* Deeply embedded tradition and legal framework for civilian control, military professionalism respects subordination, robust legislative/executive oversight mechanisms.
- *Weaknesses/Challenges:* Sheer scale/complexity makes detailed oversight difficult, classification limits transparency, occasional debate about influence of retired military personnel. Generally operates effectively at a managed level.

## 10. Education & Knowledge Base (Governance):

- **Assessment: Level 3 / Level 4 Cusp**
- *Strengths:* World-class research institutions studying governance, widespread information access, high general education levels, government utilizes expertise (though inconsistently).
- *Weaknesses/Challenges:* Uneven quality/focus of K-12 civic education, political polarization diminishes trust in expertise, challenges in public media literacy, evidence-based policy often undermined by political considerations. Hinders L4/L5 ideals of strong evidence culture and high civic literacy.

## Conclusion:

The US democratic system possesses mature, well-defined formal structures (Level 3/4) across most areas, particularly in its legal frameworks, rights protections on paper, and civilian control of the military. However, its *functional maturity* is significantly strained by deep political polarization, declining trust, challenges in transparency and accountability mechanisms, and difficulties ensuring equitable access and participation. The political culture component appears particularly stressed, potentially



operating closer to a Level 2 reality despite Level 3+ structures for participation. This gap between formal structure and functional reality is a key characteristic of contemporary American democracy when assessed against this model.

## 5.6 Actions

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*Okay, building on the conclusion that the US democracy largely has Level 3/4 formal structures but struggles with functional maturity due to polarization, trust deficits, transparency/accountability gaps, and equity issues (especially a stressed political culture), here are concrete actions the Democratic Party could take while not holding governmental power to address these specific points:*

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### 1. Addressing Polarization, Trust Deficit, and Political Culture:

- **Develop and Model "Constructive Opposition":** While opposing policies, actively seek areas for potential common ground, however small. Train party spokespeople and support candidates who focus on substantive policy debates rather than solely relying on ad hominem attacks or fueling outrage. Publicly commit to principles of civil discourse.
- **Promote Media & Civic Literacy Initiatives:** Partner with non-partisan NGOs and educational institutions to support programs that help citizens identify misinformation, understand different perspectives, and engage constructively in civic life. This addresses the low-quality public discourse aspect of the stressed political culture.
- **Run Targeted Campaigns on Shared Values:** Develop messaging focusing on broadly shared American values (e.g., fairness, opportunity, security, community) and frame policy proposals within that context, aiming to connect with voters beyond the usual base and rebuild cross-partisan trust on specific issues.
- **Support Local-Level Dialogue Projects:** Fund or provide organizational support to grassroots initiatives focused on cross-partisan dialogue and community problem-solving, demonstrating a commitment to bridging divides from the ground up.

### 2. Tackling Transparency & Accountability Gaps:

- **Champion Specific "Democracy Reform" Legislation:** Make campaign finance reform (addressing "dark money," promoting small donors), stronger lobbying

regulations, enhanced ethics enforcement, and robust whistleblower protections central, detailed planks in the party platform. Constantly advocate for these specific proposals through media, town halls, and candidate platforms.

- **Publicize Failures of Transparency/Accountability:** Use party resources (research, communication channels) to systematically track and publicize instances where current rules fail – e.g., specific examples of opaque influence, blocked oversight efforts, ethics violations that go unpunished. Connect these failures to tangible public costs or harms.
- **Support Watchdog Organizations:** Politically endorse and encourage member support for independent watchdog groups (journalistic, legal, civic) that work to expose corruption, demand accountability, and litigate for transparency (e.g., via FOIA).
- **Promote Transparency Within the Party:** Lead by example where possible, for instance, by adopting higher standards for disclosing donations to party committees or related entities than legally required.

### **3. Addressing Equity Issues (Access, Participation, Efficacy):**

- **Advocate for National Voting Rights Standards:** Make restoring and strengthening voting rights (e.g., advocating for legislation similar to the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act or the For the People Act) a top, non-negotiable priority. Focus on combating voter suppression tactics and promoting easier, equitable access to registration and voting.
- **Support Efforts Against Gerrymandering:** Champion independent redistricting commissions and support legal challenges and ballot initiatives aimed at creating fairer electoral maps, directly addressing representational fairness.
- **Amplify Marginalized Voices:** Use party platforms and resources to elevate the concerns and policy ideas of communities often excluded from political power. Support candidates from diverse backgrounds and organizations working on racial and economic justice.
- **Promote Policies Enhancing Access to Justice:** Advocate for increased funding for the Legal Services Corporation, support pro bono initiatives, and champion reforms aimed at making the civil and criminal justice systems more affordable and navigable for ordinary citizens.

### **4. Bridging the Gap Between Formal Structures & Functional Reality:**

- **Focus on "Making Structures Work":** Frame arguments not just around new laws, but around demanding that existing institutions (like congressional

oversight committees, ethics offices, the courts) function according to their intended purpose, free from partisan obstruction or capture.

- **Promote Evidence-Based Policy Arguments:** Consistently use data and credible research (from CBO, GAO, academics, etc.) in policy debates and critiques, reinforcing the value of the "knowledge base" component and pushing back against purely ideological or misinformation-driven arguments.
- **Mobilize Grassroots Pressure on Institutions:** Organize supporters to engage with existing democratic structures – contacting representatives, participating in public comment periods, attending town halls, monitoring local government – to demand better performance and responsiveness from the established L3/L4 institutions.

By focusing on these actions, the Democratic Party, even without formal power, can work to improve the functional maturity of American democracy by fostering a healthier political culture, demanding better performance from existing institutions, and advocating for reforms that enhance fairness, transparency, and participation, directly addressing the weaknesses identified in the maturity model assessment.

## 5.7 Actions ranking

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*Here are 5 actions from the provided list, prioritized based on their potential feasibility and impact on elections over the next four years:*

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1. **Advocate for National Voting Rights Standards (from Addressing Equity Issues):** This involves pushing for federal legislation to protect and expand access to voting.
  - **Feasibility:** While facing significant political hurdles at the national level, sustained advocacy, particularly in response to ongoing state-level changes, is feasible and a constant area of focus for various groups. Public pressure and potential shifts in political power could open windows for progress within four years.
  - **Impact:** High. Federal standards could counteract restrictive state voting laws, standardize access, and significantly impact who can vote and how easily, directly influencing the electorate and potentially election outcomes across the country.
2. **Expand Early Voting and Mail-in Voting Options (from Addressing Polarization, Trust Deficit, and Political Culture - *Reclassified as it directly impacts access*):** While listed under polarization, expanding these options is

fundamentally an equity and access issue. This involves advocating for and implementing policies that make it easier for people to cast their ballots over a longer period or by mail.

- **Feasibility:** Relatively High. Many states already have these options, and expansion often requires legislative changes at the state level, which can be more attainable than federal reform depending on the state's political landscape. Public support for convenient voting methods is often strong.
- **Impact:** High. Increased early and mail-in voting has been shown to increase voter turnout, particularly among busy individuals, those with transportation issues, or those who face long lines on Election Day. This broader participation can directly affect the composition of the electorate and election results.

3. **Support Efforts Against Gerrymandering (from Addressing Equity Issues):**

This includes championing independent redistricting commissions and supporting legal challenges.

- **Feasibility:** Medium. Establishing independent commissions often requires ballot initiatives or legislative/constitutional changes at the state level, facing political opposition. However, legal challenges to maps can yield results within a four-year cycle, and public awareness and support for reform are growing in many areas.
- **Impact:** High. Reducing partisan gerrymandering can lead to more competitive districts and fairer representation, making individual votes more impactful and potentially shifting the partisan balance in legislative bodies over successive elections.

4. **Promote Media & Civic Literacy Initiatives (from Addressing Polarization, Trust Deficit, and Political Culture):** Partnering with non-partisan groups to help citizens identify misinformation and engage constructively.

- **Feasibility:** Medium to High. This can be pursued through various channels, including supporting non-profit organizations, incorporating it into educational programs, and public awareness campaigns. It doesn't necessarily require significant legislative change, relying more on support and implementation.
- **Impact:** Medium to High (Long-term). While the immediate impact on the very next election might be harder to measure, improving media and civic literacy can lead to a more informed and engaged electorate over four years. This can influence how voters evaluate information, resist manipulation, and participate in the democratic process, subtly but

significantly impacting the quality of public discourse and potentially voting behavior over time.

5. **Champion Specific "Democracy Reform" Legislation (Campaign Finance Reform, Lobbying, Ethics - from Tackling Transparency & Accountability Gaps):** Making these a central part of a political platform and advocating for specific laws.

- **Feasibility:** Low to Medium. Campaign finance reform and strong ethics regulations face significant political and legal obstacles due to the influence of money in politics and existing legal interpretations.
- **Impact:** Medium to High. While challenging to pass comprehensively, even incremental reforms in these areas can reduce the appearance and reality of undue influence in politics. This can impact public trust and potentially alter the dynamics of campaigns and who is able to run for office, which can have a meaningful, though perhaps not immediately transformative, effect on elections within a four-year period. Exposing failures of the current system (also listed) enhances the impact of championing reform by building public support.