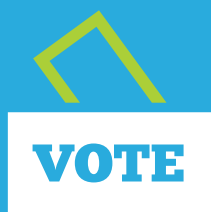


# Democratic Institutions

**COUNTRIES WISHING TO JOIN THE EU MUST  
HAVE STABLE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND ENSURE  
INCLUSIVE DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES.**



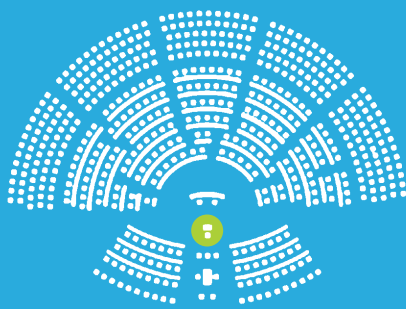
Elections should be conducted freely and fairly.



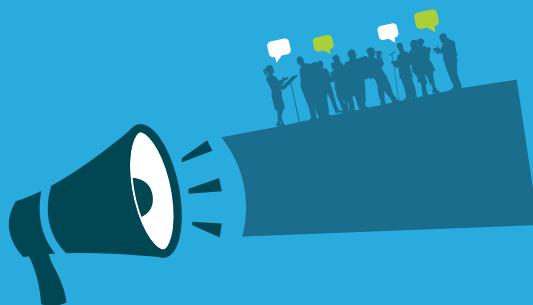
Transparent, accountable and effective public administration is vital. This means professionalisation and depoliticisation of the civil service.



There must be an appropriate balance between the central, regional and local governments to best implement reforms in the interests of citizens.



Democracy needs strong and accountable institutions and participatory processes, centred around national parliaments.



A strong role for civil society is crucial to strengthen participatory democracy and increase focus on the needs of citizens and business.



The independence and effectiveness of key bodies such as the ombudsman and state audit institutions need to be ensured and their recommendations appropriately followed-up.