



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE L'OTAN

## WORKING GROUP ON A NATO DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE CENTRE

### ORIGINS AND PURPOSE

In 2019, in his report on the 70th anniversary of the founding of NATO, [Gerald E. Connolly](#) (United States), then General Rapporteur of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA)'s Political Committee, [proposed](#) the creation of a Centre within NATO to coordinate Allied efforts to strengthen democratic resilience. This recommendation was endorsed by the full Assembly in [resolution 457](#).

Elected President in November 2020, Mr Connolly has placed safeguarding the Alliance's shared democratic values at the heart of his presidency. The establishment of a NATO Democratic Resilience Centre is a key priority in this regard.

In April 2021, the Assembly established a Working Group to refine the proposed concept for the Centre. The current proposal for the Centre suggests establishing a small unit *within NATO Headquarters*, which can reach into a broad network of governmental and non-governmental experts and could be augmented in case of need. It could be tasked with monitoring and identifying challenges to democracy, human rights and the rule of law among member states as well as with facilitating democracy and governance assistance to member states *when requested*.

The proposal is a response to the growing threat to democracies both from within and from without. As stated in its founding treaty, NATO is an alliance of democracies, committed to safeguarding "*the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law*". Yet, no dedicated structure currently exists within NATO which is fully dedicated to democratic resilience.

As NATO develops its next Strategic Concept – the Alliance's key strategic document, which will be adopted at the NATO Summit in Madrid in June 2022 – the Assembly has argued that strengthening the Alliance's democratic foundations must be a central part of its adaptation.

### MEMBERS

The Working Group is composed of the Assembly's enlarged Bureau and the Chairperson of the Committee on Democracy and Security:

#### Chairperson:

[Gerald E. Connolly](#) (United States), NATO PA President

#### Rapporteur:

[Attila Mesterhazy](#) (Hungary), NATO PA Vice-President & former President

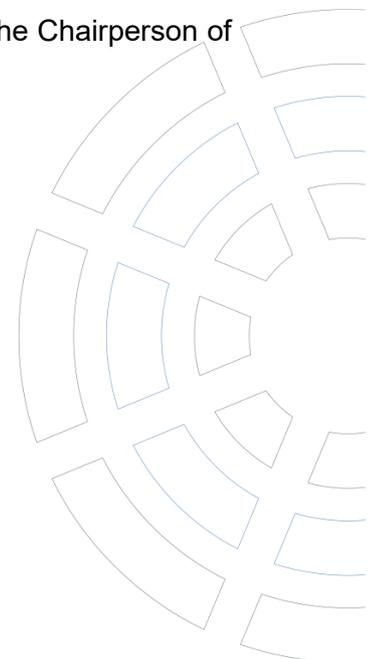
#### Members:

[Mimi Kodheli](#) (Albania), Vice-President

[Julie Dzerowicz](#) (Canada), Vice-President

[Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam](#) (France), Vice-President

[Marietta Giannakou](#) (Greece), Vice-President





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[Wolfgang Hellmich](#) (Germany), Treasurer  
[Prof. h.c. Dr Karl A. Lamers](#) (Germany), Former Vice-President, Former President  
[Michael R. Turner](#) (United States), Former Vice-President, Former President  
[Philippe Folliot](#) (France), Former Vice-President  
[Lord Campbell of Pittenweem](#) (United Kingdom), Former Vice-President  
[Linda Sanchez](#) (United States), Acting Head of the United States Delegation  
[Angel Tilvar](#) (Romania), Chairperson of the Committee on Democracy and Security

## THE WORKING GROUP'S WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

Since its establishment, the Working Group has collected testimonies and contributions from a dozen NATO officials and experts. It held a public [hearing](#) on 2 June with former NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller and Daniel S. Hamilton, Director, Global Europe Program & Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation Distinguished Fellow at the Wilson Center. The Working Group last met during the Assembly's Annual Session in Lisbon, Portugal, on 9 October 2021.

Thanks to the Working Group's work, the concept is gaining traction in Allied parliaments, governments, among NATO officials and outside experts.

At its recent Annual Session in Lisbon on 8-11 October 2021, the Assembly adopted two [resolutions](#) which reaffirm its support for the creation of a NATO Democratic Resilience Centre.

In his [engagement with the Assembly in Lisbon](#), NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that: *"This Parliamentary Assembly has been a strong voice for our democratic values, and we need to recommit to them as we continue to adapt our Alliance. [...] Then on the Democratic Resilience Coordination Center. First of all, I think, it's extremely important that you raise that issue what, how can NATO do more to stand up for and protect our core values. Because we see that these values are under pressure and threat in some NATO Allied countries. And of course the most shocking example was what we saw the 6th of January in Washington. [...] I also believe that the new Strategic Concept is a way for us to re-commit but also step up when it comes to addressing our democratic values, and we should work on your proposal, but as you know, for that to be agreed, we need consensus. So sometimes, it takes some time to get consensus, but that's for all of us and all those who engaged to work at the Member States. And then at the end, if all the 30 Allies to decide whether we are able to agree on this or not."*

## THE CURRENT PROPOSAL FOR A NATO DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE CENTRE

The Working Group proposes that a structure be created *within* NATO Headquarters, dedicated to democratic resilience. This would send a powerful signal of the Alliance's commitment to the democratic values underpinning NATO.

The proposal suggests that **the Centre's activities** could fall into two broad lines of effort:

1. **Monitoring and identifying challenges to democracy, human rights and the rule of law among member states.** The Centre could call constructive attention among member states to specific violations of alliance principles, such as erosions in judicial independence or the undermining of civilian oversight of the military, and, when appropriate, make remedial recommendations.



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2. **Facilitating democracy and governance assistance to member states, *when requested* – i.e. on a voluntary basis.** For example, the Centre may partner with democracy promotion organizations to assist member state governments to develop laws, policies and institutions to prevent and combat corruption, improve election integrity and other governance challenges that undermine democracy and make member states vulnerable to external malign influence.

One existing structure within NATO Headquarters which could serve as a model for the Democratic Resilience Centre is the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (a small, scalable unit which serves as a clearing house for the provision of assistance in the event of natural or manmade disasters).

## NEXT STEPS

At its meeting in Lisbon in October 2021, the Working Group agreed to step up its efforts to build support for the Centre in national parliaments and governments, including through the adoption of resolutions in national parliaments.

The Working Group will also continue to build support within the NATO PA. A dedicated panel discussion on democratic resilience is planned during the Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum at the end of November – one of the largest Assembly seminars and the largest annual gathering of European lawmakers in Washington, DC.

The Assembly's Standing Committee – its governing body – is due to adopt its recommendations for NATO's next Strategic Concept at its meeting in Brussels in February 2022. Until then, Assembly members will hold several internal discussions as well as be engaged in the broader consultations organised by NATO and Allied governments.

## MORE INFORMATION

See [here](#) for more information on the Working Group and the Centre proposal.

