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A network of policy centres in  
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# **New democracy foundation will ensure that democracy assistance becomes 'a permanent pillar of EU foreign policy', says Václav Havel**

**PASOS representatives Martin Bútora and Jacek Kucharczyk will serve on Board of European Foundation for Democracy through Partnership (EFDP), launched on 15 April**

*Prague, 15 April 2008* - A new European foundation will "assist democracy to flourish in every corner of the world, from Tibet to Cuba, and work to ensure that democracy assistance becomes a permanent pillar of European Union foreign policy", said former Czech President Václav Havel, speaking at the launch of the foundation in Brussels today. The European Foundation for Democracy through Partnership (EFDP) is an independent European foundation that aims to contribute to the advancement and strengthening of democracy outside the European Union, and to complement existing EU democracy assistance programmes. Former President Havel will serve as Chair of the Council of Patrons of EFDP.

Through advocacy, flexible funding mechanisms, and a knowledge hub for European democracy assistance organisations, the new foundation will co-operate with EU institutions, but retain an arm's-length approach to preserve flexibility where the EU encounters diplomatic constraints.

"The new foundation marks a turning-point as leading figures from across Europe rally round Václav Havel's vision that democracy and human rights must lie at the heart of the European foreign policy agenda. It will be a small, but important, step on the long road to improve the prospects for democracy in complicated areas and societies," said Martin Bútora, founding President of the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), Slovak Republic, and one of the Board members of the EFDP. "The strong impetus behind the new foundation from non-governmental organisations from the new EU member-states - such as People in Need, PASOS, and Pontis Foundation - means that the lessons learned during our recent experience of democratic transition could be reflected in its advocacy and funding priorities," he continued.

For the past 12 months, the Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS) has served on the steering committee that established the new foundation. Jacek Kucharczyk, Research Director of the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), Poland, will also serve on the Board of EFDP. IVO and IPA are both members of PASOS, a network of 35 independent think-tanks spanning 22 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The PASOS Secretariat is located in Prague, Czech Republic.

"PASOS is committed to promoting at the EU level policy initiatives from the new EU member-states and the EU's eastern neighbours, in particular to spreading the positive 'soft power' potential of the enlarged EU in the field of democracy and human rights," said PASOS Executive Director Jeff Lovitt.

"In the run-up to the Czech and Swedish presidencies of the EU in 2009, PASOS and EFDP will work together to increase the level and flexibility of EU support to democratic forces in authoritarian countries," said Jacek Kucharczyk. "This is a unique opportunity in the light of the prominent support given to democracy assistance by both governments and NGOs in the Czech Republic and Sweden."

Speaking in Brussels today, former President Havel said that "democracy is the *raison d'être* of the EU, and the foundation will bring together representatives from across Europe's political and civil society to

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increase our involvement in countries where democracy is absent or under threat". Havel continued: "From China and Belarus to Burma and Zimbabwe, Europeans - at the national and EU level - have a duty to support those striving for human rights and civic freedoms everywhere, and to share Europeans' first-hand, and often recent, experiences of overcoming the indignity of censorship and authoritarian rule, and of joining the community of democratic nations."

Havel was joined at the launch of the foundation in Brussels today by European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, and by four EFDP patrons, former Commission President Jacques Delors, former Vice-President of the European Commission Étienne Davignon, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark Uffe Ellemann Jensen, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Bernard Bot. Other patrons former President of Germany Richard von Weizsäcker.

EFDP is being launched with the support of 15 European civil society organisations focusing on democracy assistance, and its founding Board of Directors and Council of Patrons will meet in Brussels on 15-16 April to coincide with the launch. Supporting organisations include among others the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), People in Need Foundation, the Norwegian Center for Democracy, Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS), DEMO Finland, Pontis Foundation, Slovak Republic, and the Club of Madrid.

The three co-Chairs of the Board are Roel von Meijenfeldt, Executive Director of NIMD, Šimon Pánek, Director of People in Need, and Professor João Carlos Espada of the Institute of Political Studies at the Portuguese Catholic University. Other Board members include German MP Markus Meckel, founding President of the Institute for Public Affairs in Slovakia, Martin Bútora, former Finnish Minister of the Environment Sirpa Pietikäinen, and Research Director of the Institute of Public Affairs in Poland, Jacek Kucharczyk.

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