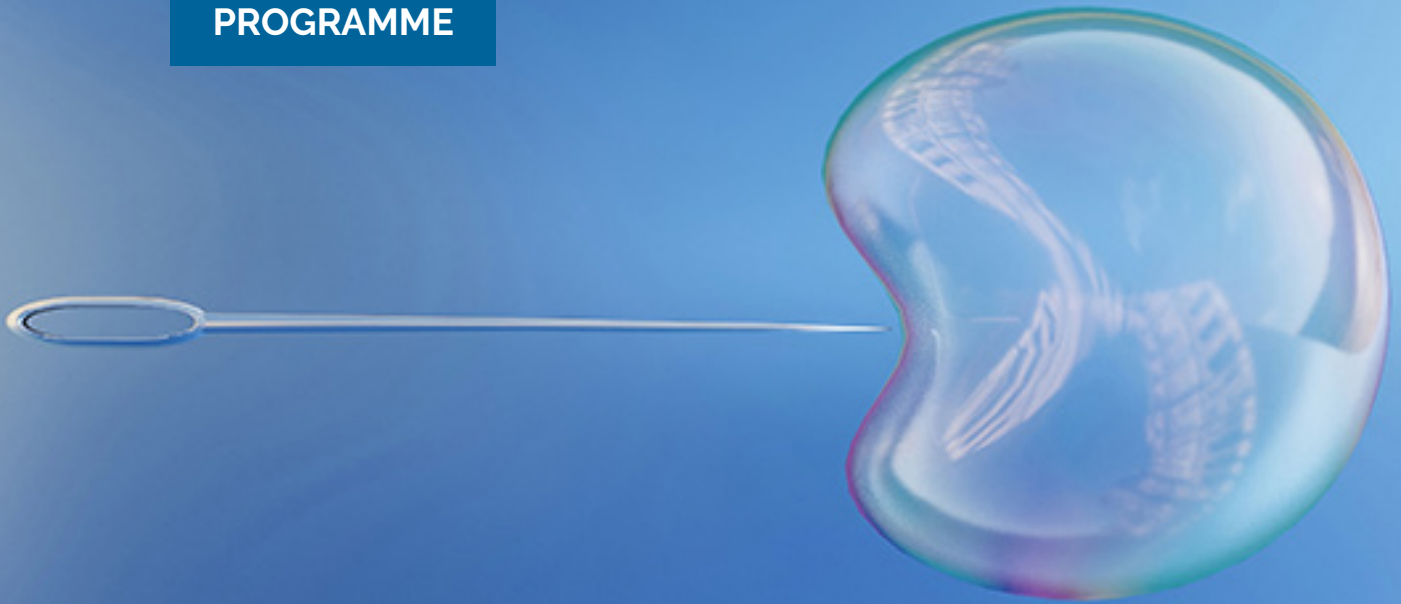


DEMOCRACY &
RESILIENCE
PROGRAMME



DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE INDEX

A project in Austria, Georgia and Poland

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Argument

by Dani Sandu and Oana Popescu-Zamfir

One of the most influential beliefs that surfaced at the end of the Cold War was that countries all over the world were authoritarian, democratic or soon-to-be democratic. This belief was soon to be turned on its head, when we started seeing that some "transitional democracies" did not actually transition toward democracy but found a type of intermediary equilibrium between a full-fledged autocracy and a full-fledged democracy. These polities acquired different names in time and, slowly, the study of democracy evolved from a binary separation of autocracy versus democracy into a wide spectrum of potential political regimes. More so, some of these polities were seen to swing across this spectrum, either in a slow and progressive pace toward democracy or in abrupt stumbles toward autocracy.

The most obvious such examples are offered by Central and Eastern European (CEE) former communist countries, such as Hungary or Poland, which were initially hailed as the leaders of one of the fastest and most solid transitions from autocracy to democracy and started to show strong signs of democratic backsliding more than twenty years after their transition. While we can see there is a regime back-and-forth movement along the autocratic-democratic spectrum, there is no real consensus as to why these movements occur. Apart from the why question, which we seem to be far from solving, we are also facing a more pressing question: how to predict or at least detect these movements before they cause irreversible harm?

The necessity of such an instrument is clear, especially for policy and governance institutions, national and international, which are interested in an early-warning system. Democratic resilience can be consolidated through targeted investment in civil society or political pressure on national leaders, but these are costly instruments, which need to be deployed at the appropriate time to maximise their potential. If such an instrument is clearly necessary, we are forced to deal with the question of whether it is also achievable. Our answer is an unequivocal yes. While scholarship regarding democracy, democratic backsliding and democratic resilience has not achieved consensus regarding the reasons why these phenomena occur, this research has produced a generous quantity of knowledge about individual red flags and factors which indicate when democratic disequilibria occur.

To that end, we developed the Democratic Resilience Index, with the main purpose of uniting the research regarding democratic resilience under a unique empirical framework and measurement,

covering the main factors pertaining to democratic disequilibria. The purpose of this instrument is to construct a framework that brings together the most important empirical findings from democracy research related to democratic disequilibria or short-term movements along the autocracy-democracy axis.

The Index relies on the state-of-the-art social science literature concerning democratic transitions, democratic backsliding and democratic resilience. It starts from a wholesale account-taking of the literature and the isolation of factors, events, mechanisms or features that are seen as consequences or correlates of this type of micro-transition. The intuition we rely on is that an index need not necessarily measure the causes of democratic micro-transition, which are not always integrated, but also on correlates or covariates of these causes and phenomena. What is important for an Index is to be the alarm mechanism that indicates movement. For that, it needs to detect as soon as possible and as efficiently as possible the processes connected to democratic micro-transitions. To evaluate that there is a fire we can also use the fact that there is smoke, as long as we take into account the potential limitations of this indicator.

Main results

For the quantitative part of this study, structured expert interviews were conducted in all countries concerned (see methodology). All indicators were measured on five-point scales, ranging from 1 (minimum score) to 5 (maximum score). Summative scores¹ have been used, for ease of interpretation.

In order to make these results more meaningful to the reader, in-depth, qualitative country reports have been added. These reports start from the same research questions as the quantitative part, but analysts were able to choose what to emphasise in particular.

The quantitative analysis is structured along four domains: politics and governance, media and civil society, external affairs, and economy. For each domain, separate scores were calculated along four dimensions. These are: Institutional structure (institutions and other longue durée structures and features), elite agency, buffers (country-specific safeguards, oftentimes arising from the specific past) and crisis triggers.

| | Institutional structure | Elite agency | Buffers | Crisis triggers. |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------|------------------|
| Politics and governance | score | score | score | score |
| Media and civil society | score | score | score | score |
| External affairs | score | score | score | score |
| Economy | score | score | score | score |

These scores are presented and commented below, taking into account the country-level qualitative analysis. For conceptual, as well as practical reasons, buffers and crisis triggers are usually discussed together,

¹ Thus, each country level score for the four dimensions of democratic resilience is computed by summing up the scores of the corresponding indicators and dividing the total by the number of indicators included. As a result, the country level scores have the same five-point scale and can take values between a low of 1 (indicating a possible negative effect on democratic resilience) and a high of 5 (indicating a possible positive contribution to democratic resilience). It should be noted that this method for aggregating the scores assumes that all indicators have an equal contribution to the final score, being equally important.

GENERAL COMPARISON

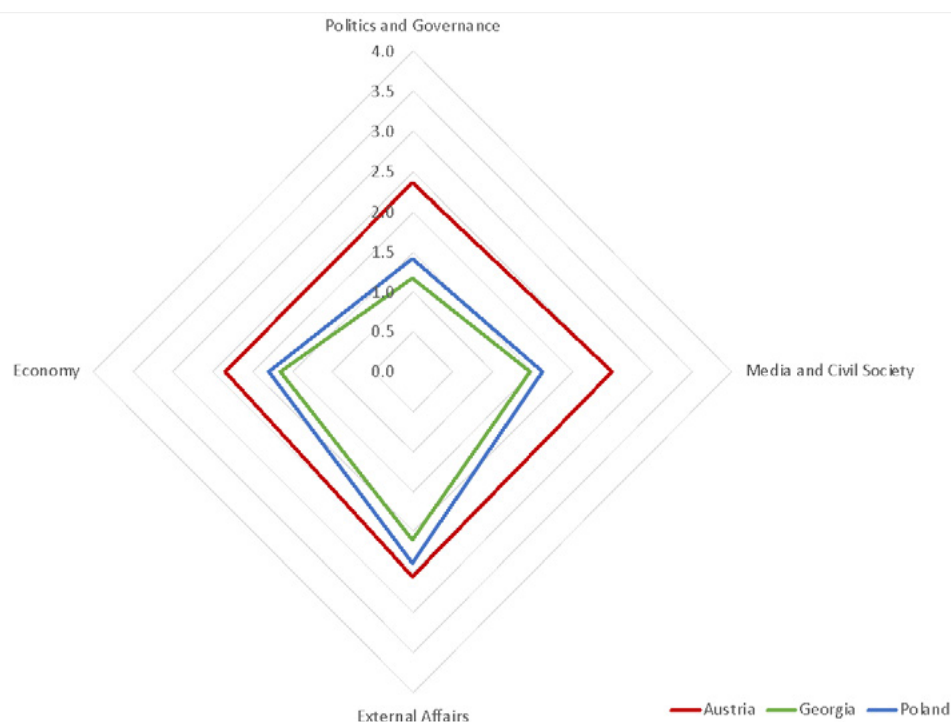
Perhaps predictably, Austria scores higher than both Poland and Georgia on all dimensions of democratic resilience. While all three countries have encountered democratic challenges in the past years, Austria has the advantage of being a long-established democracy.

The difference is most pronounced in the field of **politics and governance**, reflecting perhaps the ability of Austria to rely on stable institutions, as well as in **media and civil society** (reflecting essentially the absence of state interference and a well-established and pluralistic media market)

The difference is smallest in the field of external affairs, reflecting the pro-western orientation of all three countries and, probably, similar positioning in the context of the war in Ukraine.

Poland and Georgia have relatively close scores, with Poland maintaining an advantage.

FIGURE 1
COMPARISON OF AUSTRIA, GEORGIA, AND POLAND
ON THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE



Note: The scores for the four dimensions of democratic resilience are computed as averages of the scores for their corresponding drivers. Higher scores are better.

TABLE 1

AVERAGE SCORES FOR THE FOUR DOMAINS OF DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE BY COUNTRY

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| Politics and Governance | 2.4 | 1.2 | 1.4 |
| Media and Civil Society | 2.5 | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| External Affairs | 2.6 | 2.1 | 2.4 |
| Economy | 2.4 | 1.7 | 1.8 |

Note: The scores for the four domains of democratic resilience are computed as averages of the scores for their corresponding dimensions. Higher scores indicate higher resilience.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

In the field of **politics and governance** the advantage of Austria is mostly perceived by respondents to lie in the *institutional structure* of the country; this is expected given its longer standing democracy. *Elite agency* also has a high enough score, yet significantly lower than the one for institutional structure. Interestingly, the lowest score is for *crisis triggers*, which seems to indicate a non-negligible level of vulnerability, while Austria does not seem to necessarily have strong *buffers*, since that is the second-lowest score.

Poland scores higher than Georgia on almost all criteria, but with practical equality in terms of *crisis triggers*. This seems to indicate that while Poland has higher democratic resilience overall, both countries are prone to destabilisation and backsliding.

However, Poland has significantly stronger *buffers*, which could result in better crisis control if a crisis were to occur.

Georgia appears to benefit more from relatively limited *crisis triggers* (as compared to the scores for the other dimensions) and positive *elite agency*, while it has a lower level of *institutionalisation* of democratic resilience and weak *buffers*.

Poland, on the contrary, seems to be driven by its comparatively stronger *buffers* and positive *elite agency*, which may function as an obstacle to backsliding, despite the weaker *institutionalisation* of democratic resilience and rather notable *crisis triggers*.

FIGURE 2
THE POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE DOMAIN
AND ITS CORRESPONDING DIMENSIONS, BY COUNTRY

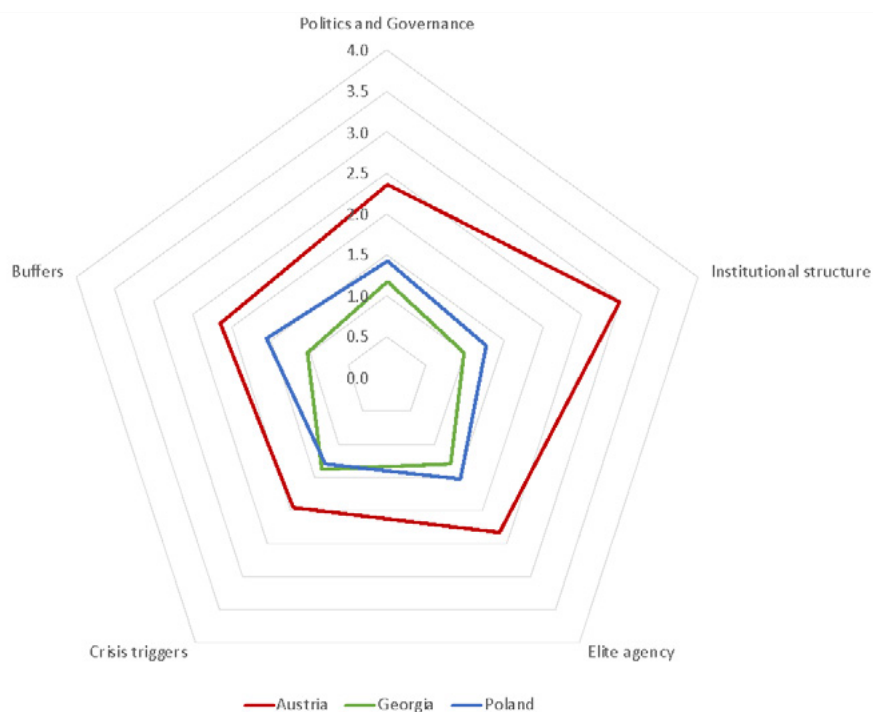


TABLE 2
AVERAGE SCORES FOR THE POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE DOMAIN
AND ITS CORRESPONDING DIMENSIONS

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| Politics and Governance | 2.4 | 1.2 | 1.4 |
| Institutional structure | 3.0 | 1.0 | 1.3 |
| Elite agency | 2.3 | 1.3 | 1.5 |
| Crisis triggers | 2.0 | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| Buffers | 2.2 | 1.0 | 1.6 |

Note: The scores represent averages. The scores for the domains of democratic resilience (represented in red) are computed as averages of the scores for their corresponding dimensions (represented in blue). Dimensions with higher scores could be more important for democratic resilience for the domains analysed.

AUSTRIA

Country analysts noted among *institutional* democracy drivers (positive factors) a functioning system of checks and balances, a sound Constitution, effective parliamentary control over the executive, popular support for democracy and a strong and independent judicial system.

Also, the country has a multi-stakeholder dialogue and consensual policy-making: non-state stakeholders participate in the creation of legislation and formation of political opinions and policies.

However, the long-term growth of right-wing populist Freedom Party (FPÖ) was noted as a point of concern (obstacle to resilience).

In terms of *elite agency*, Austria scores better than either Poland or Georgia. However, country analysts remain concerned with the rapprochement to explicitly euro-sceptical governments critical of liberal democracy (such as Hungary, and respectively the group of the Visegrád-4 especially with regard to migration), which contributed to undermining basic democratic principles of European cooperation and its acceptance in Austria.

We can also see tendencies to weaken the traditional system of social partnership by trying to limit the influence of non-state stakeholders on the legislative process, during the time of the ÖVP-FPÖ government (December 2017 – May 2019). This undermined the institutionalised social dialogue mentioned above as a strength.

There is also growing political corruption and pressure on investigators as well as a tendency to use the EU as a scapegoat for unpopular decisions, which generates emotional and polarising approaches

In terms of *buffers and crisis triggers*, one of Austria's strengths is the parliamentary cooperation across the aisle (about a third of all laws in Parliament were passed unanimously); subsidiarity is another: all parties represented in Parliament also participate in government structures at the level of the Austrian provinces. An additional factor of resilience is the existence of parliamentary investigative committees that look into allegations of high-level corruption.

On the other hand, the impact of transnational crises, like migration and Brexit, touched on questions of national identity and self-determination, which bolstered the position of the FPÖ. The Coronavirus crisis and the perceived intervention of the state in citizens' basic rights led to a deep social divide and the birth of a new political party (MFG). Price increases and inflation as a result of the Ukraine war have the potential to further reduce trust in political actors and strengthen the extremes.

Trust in the political system has decreased to an all-time low since 2018 due to suspicions of corruption and political party collusion, as well as issues with political party financing.

Another problem is the lack of transparency in politics and administration (which is one of the main reasons why Austria was downgraded from a liberal democracy to an electoral democracy in the current ranking of the V-Dem Institute Democracy Report).

The President's wide competences have the potential to act as a crisis buffer, but also as a crisis trigger – as feared by many in 2016, when the candidate of the FPÖ nearly took office and stated in a TV confrontation, "you will be surprised what is possible". However, that potential has not yet been tested.

GEORGIA

Georgian institutions are highly politicised, including the Judiciary, the Civil Service and the regulatory agencies. Meanwhile the Parliament is weak and mostly rubberstamps Government decisions and the State Security Service is believed by many to be ubiquitous and intervening in all aspects of public life.

The political and governance *institutions* themselves are dominated by one party, the Georgian Dream, which is informally ruled by oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili. The ruling party controls every branch of the Government and most regional and municipal governments. Political parties are funded in a non-transparent way by political donors.

Another distinctive trait of Georgia's political system is deep polarization: political opponents perceive one another as outright enemies, and not simply rivals. The confrontation pitches the ruling Georgian Dream against major opposition UNM parties. As an effect of polarization there is a common practice of "destroying" defeated political opponents through arrests, prosecution and demonization.

Politics is also highly personalised. Parties rely on the popularity of their leaders, who get to hijack the political debate. Also, most Government ministers and Georgian Dream majority MPs are personally loyal to Ivanishvili and come from his business or personal connections. This amounts to state capture by private interests.

Georgia's elections have been heavily criticized in 2020 (Parliamentary) and 2021 (Local). There has been widespread electoral fraud (ballot stuffing, intimidation)

In terms of *crisis triggers*, Pro-Russian political forces are on the rise (Alt-info, Patriots' Alliance, Eri), and often embrace anti-Western, chauvinist, and pro-Russian speech. In recent months, after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, pro-Russian and anti-Western rhetoric has also frequently been used by the ruling party.

Georgia will have a proportional electoral system from 2024, but the 5% threshold, and the ban on electoral blocs may lead to the waste of the opposition vote as long as no alliances are formed.

There are still a few buffers left to limit democratic backsliding, in the form of independent institutions, including the Public Defender's Office and the State Audit Office. The state inspector's office was independent and often took up cases of excessive law enforcement before being gutted in 2021. There are also a few municipalities that are controlled by the opposition.

POLAND

For the specific case of Poland, we need to distinguish between onset resilience (ability to recover and revert to the initial point before democratic backsliding) and breakdown resilience (ability to prevent or recover from further backsliding). Poland's resilience drivers tend to be in the second category. That is to say a brake in democratic backsliding and perhaps a partial reversal are possible, but despite pressures from the European Union the illiberal and populist party of Jarosław Kaczyński, Law and Justice (PiS), is not likely to abandon its agenda.

In terms of *institutional structure*², Poland remains a functioning electoral democracy, despite its democratic backsliding. The quantitative data evinces scores above average for internal party democracy and electoral fairness, as well as the absence of vote-buying.

However, there is strong judiciary interference in the works of the Constitutional Court, National Council of the Judiciary (KRS), and the Supreme Court of Poland. There has also been a merger of the prosecutor general and justice minister in order to tighten political control.

PiS and its acolytes sought to exert influence over crucial aspects of social life, such as women's and minority rights, the mass media, and national education. However, the legal aspect of Polish democratic backsliding was the crucial one, because it was the first step enabling all later moves.

However, control is not complete and we can see intra-institutional resistance, for example judges and prosecutors manage to act in the legal framework of the third republic, overriding the political intervention from the governing party.

If the situation of the economy worsens (see Economy below) and the democratic opposition is capable of presenting itself as the one who will be better at dealing with the macro- and microeconomic challenges, we could see its victory in the upcoming elections (2023) and thus a return to the liberal democratic path.

MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In the field of **media and civil society** we can see the score for *institutional structure* converging in the three countries. While Austria still comes out at the top, this is one of the few cases where scores are relatively closer to one another.

For all the other factors, Austrian scores are much higher, while scores for Georgia and Poland are extremely close.

² A case can be made that many of Polish institutional developments discussed here are relatively recent and can be considered as pertaining rather to elite agency. This is, however, a methodological distinction that does not affect the conclusions of this summary report.

FIGURE 3
THE MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY DOMAIN
AND ITS CORRESPONDING DIMENSIONS, BY COUNTRY

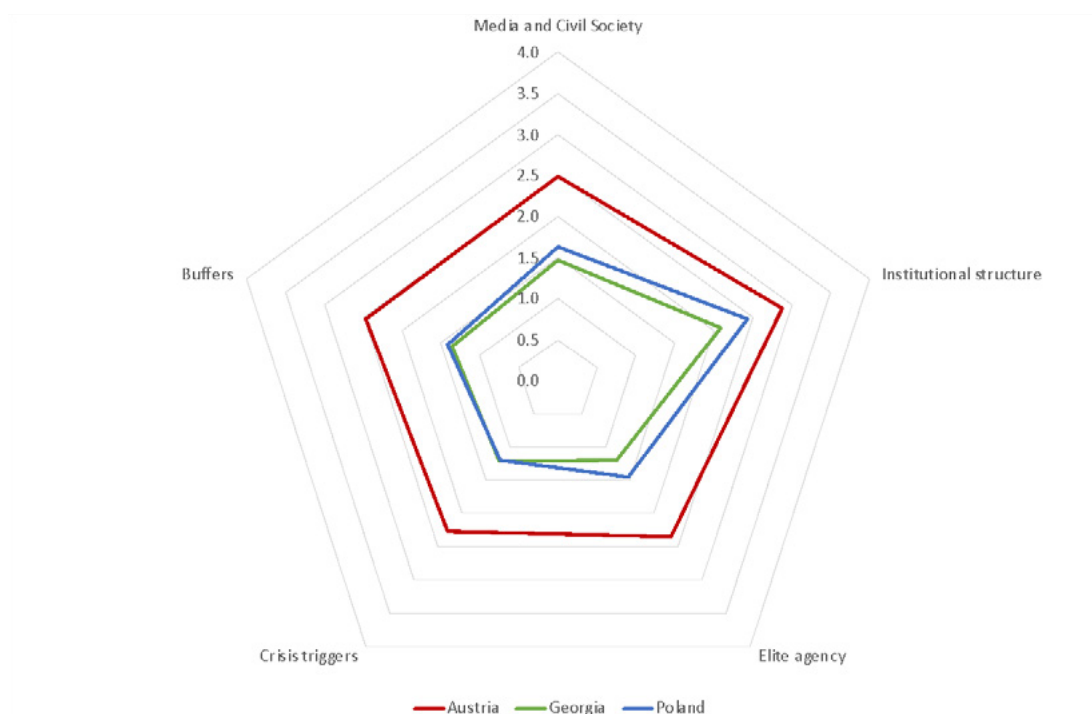


TABLE 3
AVERAGE SCORES FOR THE MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY DOMAIN
AND ITS CORRESPONDING DIMENSIONS

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| Media and Civil Society | 2.5 | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| Institutional structure | 2.9 | 2.1 | 2.4 |
| Elite agency | 2.4 | 1.2 | 1.5 |
| Crisis triggers | 2.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Buffers | 2.5 | 1.4 | 1.4 |

Note: The scores represent averages. The scores for the domains of democratic resilience (represented in red) are computed as averages of the scores for their corresponding dimensions (represented in blue). Dimensions with higher scores could be more important for democratic resilience for the domains analysed

AUSTRIA

From an *institutional* perspective, Austria benefits from the fact that journalism is legally recognised as a service rather than a product and the foundations of the democratic media system are strong. It also has solid framework conditions for civil society.

On the other hand, there is possible undue influence through state-funded advertising, which reduces criticism to the government and encourages tabloids rather than quality media. In addition, there is no freedom of information law to compel authorities to provide journalists with public interest information. Finally, there is horizontal and cross-media concentration, while some shortcomings in the provisions on transparency of media ownership persist.

From the perspective of *elite agency*, recent political pressure and restrictions on access to information have caused a huge drop in Austria's Reporters Without Borders *Freedom of the Media Index* (from 17th position in 2021 to 31st position in 2022). The country has also seen online harassment and intimidation of journalists.

The rating of the space for civil society was downgraded to 'narrowed' in 2018, highlighting the dependence of such conditions on the government composition.

We have also seen the emergence of a Russian-friendly media cluster: *Auf1*, *Report 24*, *Wochenblick*.

In terms of *buffers and crisis triggers* we have seen that some crises (such as the recent pandemic) have reinforced awareness of the importance of the rights to freedom of assembly and expression, thus becoming a source of democratic resilience.

The public broadcaster *ORF* has a strong public education mandate and enjoys popular support.

Very importantly, there is strong support for democracy within society at large, with the public requesting the strengthening of democratic provisions when faced with challenges.

However, not all developments are positive. The expected demise of the oldest daily newspaper, *Wiener Zeitung*, could weaken pluralism. Meanwhile, the promotion of corona-sceptical content (e.g. by nationwide broadcaster *Servus TV*) has opened the way for conspiracy theories and false content.

Other sources of potential crises include: racism and anti-immigrant sentiment reflected in legislation that places Muslims under general suspicion ('Anti-terrorism package', 'Islam Map') and restricts their human rights, antisemitism, exclusion of non-citizen residents from the right to political participation due to excessively strict rules on access to citizenship.

Also, we see a rise in the importance of values associated with public order and conformity as a consequence of the pandemic, as well as low social solidarity, all bringing additional risks.

Overall, while the civil society environment is relatively less under threat currently, significant risks are linked to media pluralism, primarily horizontal and cross-media concentration, a lack of sufficient reflection of the changes in the media landscape in the competition law, threats to the independence of public service media, its governance and funding, endangered editorial autonomy, some shortcomings in the provisions on transparency of media ownership, limited access to media for women and minorities, a missing policy (and missing resources) for promoting media literacy, and a system of state subsidies that is in urgent need of reform.

GEORGIA

Civil society organizations in Georgia are influential but often demonized by the Government, being often accused of being opposition stooges and having political agendas.

Institutionally, opposition media exists and manages to keep the government on the defensive and the Internet is free and an important (if secondary) source of information, as neutral and critical online media prevalently have online visibility.

Yet, internet penetration is low, and the majority of the population receives news from TV channels. The mainstream media landscape in Georgia is highly polarized, with limited substantial debate and opposition outlets can be underfunded.

The influential Georgian Orthodox Church often engages in anti-Western rhetoric, embracing Russian narratives on societal issues, and intervening in electoral processes.

In terms of *elite agency*, Georgian Dream attempted with relative success to create a cohort of pro-Government experts and GONGOs. These entities are often used to nominate independent candidates for those positions that are by law required to be non-political.

In terms of possible *crisis triggers*, an increase in Russian influence on the domestic societal landscape (media, NGOs, Church) can be observed in Georgia in recent years. Russian narratives on the war in Ukraine, the problems of the West, demonisation of minorities are often embraced by the broader public, often with the support of the Government.

Other noteworthy triggering factors that have been observed historically include inclinations to overcompliance among the general population (less likely to react to backsliding, even when they are opposed to it), and more recently low electoral participation, brain drain, Soviet nostalgia (Joseph Stalin is still respected and considered an important political and historical figure in some segments of society) and the failure to integrate minorities.

POLAND

Despite democratic backsliding, Poland has significant societal factors that may be a source of (breakdown) resilience: experience in discontinuity, distrust in the state, (multiple) polarisation.

The Polish experience of discontinuity (changes in the 'rules of the game' often related to dissolution of statehood, invasions, etc) spans a much longer period of time than the past 30 years. This experience may have made Poles more prone to accept the changes brought by PiS, but at the same time the society immediately entered into survival mode: as so many times before, the rules have changed, but the society was able to carry on due to private, unofficial networks, living around the law and rules and developing coping strategies.

Poles experience a high level of distrust in one another and authorities, leading to increased resilience towards the state. The state was usually understood as rule by foreign occupiers, alien to the society. Interestingly, the low societal trust does not exclude strong loyalties, for example among relatively small quasi-dissident groups.

While there is occasional talk of two Polands, this gap is not the only source of polarisation. The Polish society experiences multiple, overlapping polarisations, leading to a situation where no

political party has a majority large enough to really represent the nation (the real number of people who voted for PiS never exceeded 19 %).

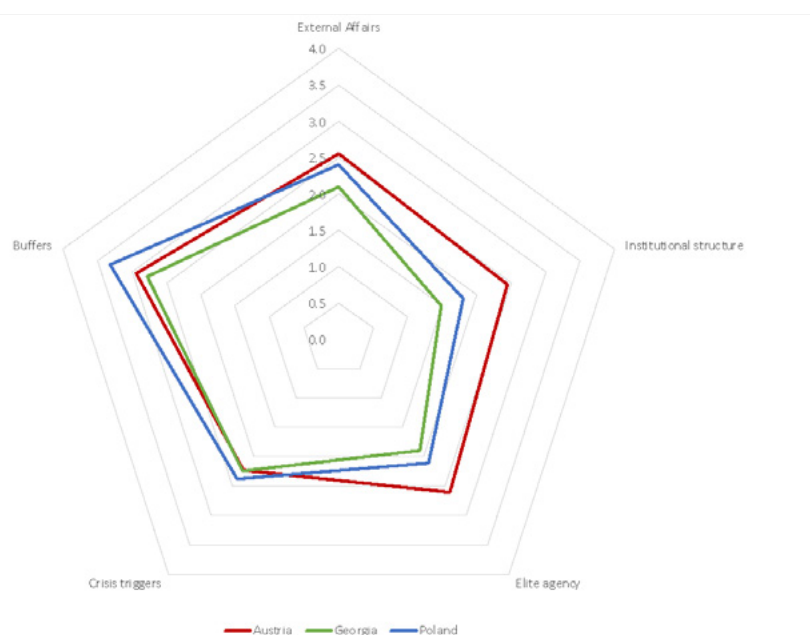
The experience in polarization may be observed in the reaction of Polish media. The private media are functioning well and they constantly bring independent information, alongside, unfortunately, a tribal attitude, somehow mirroring the tribal attitude of the PiS.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

The scores for **External affairs** are close to one other, at least if we compare them with other domains. Austria has better scores for *institutional structure* and *elite agency*, reflecting at least in part the fact that a democratic foreign policy has been practiced for a longer time and has had a chance to institutionalise and trickle down towards internal democracy. The dimensions of *crisis triggers* and, particularly, *buffers* see Poland in front of Georgia and Austria³. This is particularly interesting, as it seems to reflect the fact that despite its repeated clashes with Brussels, Poland's foreign policy (which is staunchly pro-Western on geopolitical issues, especially pro-NATO and perceived as a strategic driver of national security - possibly even more so in the context of the war in Ukraine) is fundamentally a strong driver of democratic resilience.

For *crisis triggers* all countries are pulled downwards by the score for "neighbouring anti-democratic shifts", a factor that is in no way under national control.

FIGURE 4
THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DOMAIN AND ITS CORRESPONDING DIMENSIONS, BY COUNTRY



3 Differences are not necessarily statistically significant

TABLE 4
AVERAGE SCORES FOR THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DOMAIN
AND ITS CORRESPONDING DIMENSIONS

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| External Affairs | 2.6 | 2.1 | 2.4 |
| Institutional structure | 2.5 | 1.5 | 1.8 |
| Elite agency | 2.6 | 1.9 | 2.1 |
| Crisis triggers | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.4 |
| Buffers | 2.9 | 2.8 | 3.3 |

Note: The scores represent averages. The scores for the domains of democratic resilience (represented in red) are computed as averages of the scores for their corresponding dimensions (represented in blue). Dimensions with higher scores could be more important for democratic resilience for the domains analysed.

Interestingly, as seen in the comparative graphs, the External Affairs domain seems to be acting first and foremost as quite a powerful *buffer* even when other domains of democratic resilience present a weaker picture.

The case of Poland (3.3 score) prompts the question whether *buffers* related to the country's foreign policy (strong pro-Western allegiance under circumstances of a heightened regional threat perception) are particularly strong and tend to compensate for trends in other domains, which are heading rather toward backsliding (the difference between the score for *buffers* (3.3) here and for *institutional structure* (1.8) is worth noting, too).

It also bears mentioning that Georgia, the one non-EU and non-NATO member, also one with the most pressing security challenges, has the lowest score, yet its Euro-Atlantic option and ultimately the clarity of its geopolitical orientation may account for a much higher score for *buffers* (2.8) than for anything else (especially *elite agency* (1.9), where options appear rather split, in combination with an unsurprisingly lower degree of *institutionalisation* (1.5) of democratic resilience.

Where foreign policy options have been defined for a long time already and through a multistakeholder process, with significant coherence at all levels, as is the case of Austria, differences among scores are much smaller.

AUSTRIA

The country is involved in stabilisation and peace-building operations in its neighbourhood and around the world and has a role of credible mediator in international disputes because of its neutrality status, which we assume is both a reflection of emphasis placed on democracy and a driver of internal resilience through a certain bounce back effect.

Austria has a complex relationship with Russia. It has had historically close ties with the USSR and then Russia, translating into a 'pragmatic' policy toward Moscow, as opposed to a principled one. However, there is high scepticism among the population regarding Russia and China (83% express a totally negative view of Russia, 74% a totally negative view of China).

Austria's right-wing FPÖ has a close relationship with the United Russia Party, loyal to the Kremlin, as well as with Russian right-wing elites and there is growing involvement of Chinese actors in the Alpine country as well.⁴

Also, historically Vienna has been a traditional centre of espionage and remains so at present because of the weakness of Austrian intelligence agencies and significant latitude from the authorities when it comes to international crime.

GEORGIA

Georgia's foreign policy has been traditionally pro-Western. Georgia signed the Association Agreement with the EU in 2014 and is a strategic partner of the United States. Therefore, the European integration process and the quest to join NATO were important factors contributing to Georgia's democratic development.

EU institutions have historically weighed in on the political crises in Georgia, attempting to dispel disagreements and find political solutions. Sticks and carrots as instruments of conditionality were applied on several occasions by the EU before.

US and EU interest in maintaining stability in Georgia is also matched by the high level of support for Western political institutions and European integration among the Georgian population.

A possible action that may have a *buffer* impact for Georgia's democratisation trajectory is a (potential) decision of the Western partners to sanction oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili (who leads the ruling party 'from the shadows') and by extension his allies in the Government of Georgia for (a) supporting Russia to avoid sanctions, and/or for (b) accelerating the democratic backsliding of Georgia. Ivanishvili appears to fear personal sanctions and feels the heat from the West, however he is also actively promoting domestically the message that Western pressure on himself is meant to drag Georgia into the Russia-Ukraine war.

A major *trigger* for the strengthening of the anti-democratic trend in Georgia could be the decision of the Government to pursue anti-Western rhetoric, which it has already done in 2022. The high risk that Georgia will be left outside of the enlargement track for a very long time might also act as a crisis trigger.

Another major influence on Georgia's democratic development will be the outcome of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Georgia's population is heavily in favour of Ukraine; however, the Georgian Government has openly said it does not plan to join sanctions against Russia. Large numbers of Ukrainian refugees, as well as Russians fleeing mobilisation have flooded the small country in the Caucasus (3.5% of its overall population).

4 See the recent scandal regarding data collection about Austrian politicians and their families by a Chinese company.

Obviously, a potential decision by Moscow to annex Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are now occupied by Russia, would have a profound effect on democratic resilience in Georgia. The government has been “selling” stability and the absence of war as a major achievement of the last decade, thus if Russia decides to annex Georgia's territories as part of a wider annexation policy in Eastern Ukraine, it could have a profound effect on Georgia's internal politics.

POLAND

The country's membership in the European Union has a significant impact on its politics. Through its Euro-Atlantic integration, Poland is seeking reassurances against Russian imperialism and any of its attempts to ‘colonize’ the region yet again.

However, one must bear in mind that Polish illiberal populism has set Brussels and the EU at odds from its beginnings. Opposition to the EU served as an important part of Government identity.

In terms of *elite agency*, Poland seems to have steered closer to the EU, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic, the outbreak of war in Ukraine and the pro-Russian turn of Budapest. At the same time, Warsaw may start to look for a sovereignist alliance with Kiev, which could be used as a cover for illiberal policies and rhetoric.

Rapprochement with the EU has the potential to act as a *buffer* for democratic backsliding and thus slow down the autocratisation trend. It is very difficult to imagine that Warsaw could be ready to resign from meeting at least a part of the European Commission's expectations in order to regain the post-pandemic EU funds, blocked temporarily because of Poland's rule of law crisis. The government in Warsaw does try to outwit the European Commission with regards to it, but eventually it may have to play by the rules to obtain the funds. Much of this evidently depends on developments regarding the regional economic and financial context.

Still, Warsaw does define its interests alongside Brussels' today, but those interests are not married with its values. The current war will not cause the government to change their views on rule of law, respect for women's and minorities' rights or the role of the public media, although crackdown on human rights may diminish ahead of the elections campaign in 2023.

ECONOMY

For **economy**, Austria, a free market economy with safeguards against inequality has the best scores. Poland and Georgia have comparable scores, with Poland scoring better for *buffers*.

FIGURE 5

THE ECONOMY DOMAIN AND ITS CORRESPONDING DIMENSIONS, BY COUNTRY

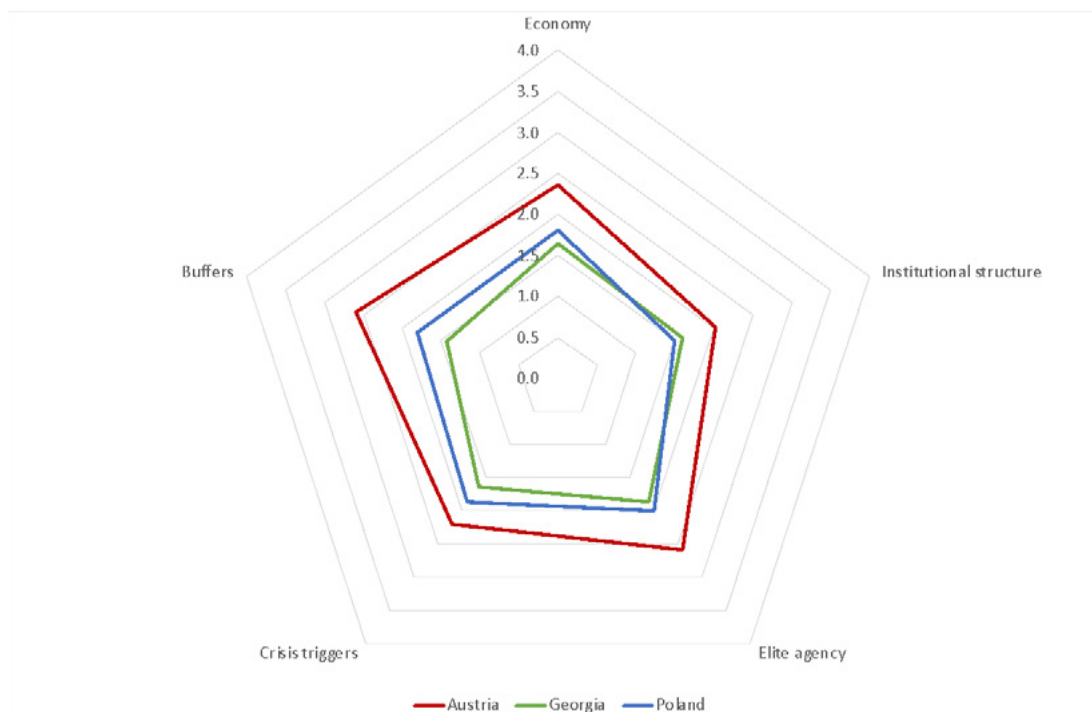


TABLE 5
AVERAGE SCORES FOR THE ECONOMY DOMAIN AND ITS CORRESPONDING DIMENSIONS

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| Economy | 2.4 | 1.7 | 1.8 |
| Institutional structure | 2.0 | 1.6 | 1.5 |
| Elite agency | 2.6 | 1.9 | 2.0 |
| Crisis triggers | 2.2 | 1.7 | 1.9 |
| Buffers | 2.6 | 1.4 | 1.8 |

Note: The scores represent averages. The scores for the domains of democratic resilience (represented in red) are computed as averages of the scores for their corresponding dimensions (represented in blue). Dimensions with higher scores could be more important for democratic resilience for the domains analysed.

AUSTRIA

Testimony to its well-established economy and functioning market, the scores for Austria are rather evenly distributed, with the notable aspect of *institutional structure* (2.0) no longer being the highest-scoring dimension, but the lowest. *Elite agency* and *strong buffers* (both at 2.6) seem to be driving resilience in the economic sector.

In terms of *institutional framework*, an effective welfare state is providing the population with a cushion against instability and economic uncertainty, as well as bridging the inequality gap. However, the country is dependent on Russian energy and has low social mobility (lowest score in OECD-25 with regard to social mobility across generations).

In terms of *elite agency*, it must be noted that ongoing economic volatility threatens democratic resilience (especially in a context where economically deprived Austrians feel that they do not enjoy equal political representation with more affluent citizens). Also, demographic decline has led to the dependence of the Austrian labour market on migration, while anti-migrant sentiment is on the rise.

GEORGIA

The scores for democratic resilience in the realm of the economy are fairly evenly distributed, with the highest one (1.9) for *elite agency* and the lowest for *buffers* (1.4), perhaps a reflection of the country's younger capitalism, highly reliant on entrepreneurship.

Institutionally, the business environment in Georgia benefits from a free market, and Georgia consistently ranks in top 5 of *Doing Business* ratings. The National Bank of Georgia is relatively independent from political influence, just like the Statistics Office, which provides reliable data for evidence-based policy-making. Therefore, major decisions affecting the currency are independent of political considerations.

Georgia has not been economically dependent on Russia since 2012. However, in the last decade, its exports to Russia have grown to almost 20% of the total. Dependence on Russian energy has also increased; however, it has not exceeded 20%, thus the political leverage of Russia is not as strong as in a number of EU states.

Georgia is a poor country, with a GDP per capita of 4,300 USD (PPP). Its economy is highly dependent on tourism and foreign direct investments, as the export-import ratio is usually negative. Inflation in Georgia is very high (10%), and particularly affects the types of products that are socially important.

This makes the electorate more susceptible to vote-buying and intimidation. It is widely believed that vote-buying is more prevalent in poor rural areas than in the cities.

Given the controlling influence exercised by oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, it is widely believed that the major business sectors are carved up and divided among the mini-oligarchs close to Mr. Ivanishvili. Major sectors (oil import, tobacco, transit routes, mining, and ports) are dominated by the pro-Ivanishvili businessmen who are also close to the ruling party and often finance the Georgian Dream. In return, companies friendly to the Government are often awarded lucrative state contracts and tenders.

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit Georgia's economy dramatically, and the country has only managed a partial rebound in 2022, due to the high influx of immigrants from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The tourism industry, on which Georgia relies for a significant part of its GDP, is naturally very sensitive to regional conflicts.

Potential European sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili could impact the Georgian business sector and lead to decreased interest from investors and thus to economic downturn.

POLAND

In macroeconomic terms, Poland's economic condition was very good in 2015, when PiS formed its government and implemented its first policies. Arguably, a vast part of the prosperous and stable economic situation during the years 2015-2020 was a consequence of the economic policies of the previous government. The fact that the autocratisation episode took place anyway seems to contradict the idea that prosperity *always* drives democratisation.

The difference between the highest-scoring dimension (*elite agency*, 2.0) and the lowest one (*institutional structure*, 1.5) seems to point to resilience being grounded in personal and group policies, rather than permanent institutions.

A major reason for this backsliding was the perceived economic inequality before the rise of PiS. Inequality both in relation to neighbouring countries *and* within the country was felt as personal indignity.

Against this background, PiS enacted unprecedented politics of direct money transfers to families with children and retired persons; as a result, the individual sense of dignity and equality has been significantly restored.

Thus, whilst the economic situation in the country so far has rather strengthened the legitimacy for the democratic backsliding created by the current government, the situation could change fairly quickly in the coming months, as PiS is increasingly in a situation where it might not be able to fulfil its economic promises and cause the inequality gap to shrink further.

In depth view: detailed scores per country

In the next chapter detailed scores are presented for individual drivers. **High scores reflect a good level of resilience; low scores reflect a low level of resilience.** The full length report includes correlation matrixes among these drivers, calculated in order to see to what extent they correlate and, thus, contribute to the final score.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

AUSTRIA

In terms of *institutional structure*, the country ranks best in terms of electoral fairness (3.7), internal party democracy (3.4) and Constitutional Court independence (3.4). While the scores are generally average or above, it ranks lowest for social dialogue (2.4), regulatory predictability (2.5) and balance of power (2.6).

As regards *elite agency*, Austria ranks best (most resilient) when it comes to vote-buying (3.2) and party support for the quality of democracy (3.0) and worst for party patronage (2.0) and, especially, political clientelism (1.5).

Looking at *crisis triggers*, the country ranks best when authoritarian values in party elites (2.6) are assessed, as well as liberal values in party elites (2.5) and worst in political activism (1.6) and integration of immigrants (1.1).

In terms of *crisis triggers* and *buffers* we can see good scores reflecting low authoritarian values in party elites (2.6) and high liberal values in party elites (2.5) and political representation (2.3) and low scores for political activism (1.6) and integration of immigrants (1.1).

GEORGIA

In terms of *institutional structure*, the country ranks below average in all indicators, with scores between 0.4 and 1.5. The lowest scores are for Constitutional Court independence (0.4) and internal party democracy (0.6).

When it comes to *elite agency*, Georgia's scores are low to average with the highest being the influence of extremist parties (1.9) and the lowest being political clientelism (0.6), party patronage (0.9) and vote-buying (1.1).

For the *crisis triggers* and *buffers* we have relatively higher scores for liberal values in party elites (1.8) and political representation (1.4) and lower scores for bureaucratic authority (0.6) and political activism (0.9).

POLAND

In terms of *institutional structure*, most indicators are below average, the exception being internal party democracy (2.5) and electoral fairness (2.3). The lowest scores are for Constitutional Court independence (0.4), balance of power (0.7), influence of religious organisations (0.8) and regulatory predictability (0.8).

In what concerns *elite agency*, the highest scores are for vote-buying (2.4) and party support for the quality of democracy (2.0) while the lowest scores are for the influence of extremist parties (1.3) and political clientelism (0.5) and party patronage (1.4).

With respect to *crisis triggers* and *buffers*, the highest scores are for liberal values in party elites (1.8) and political representation (1.9), while political activism scores lowest (0.5).

TABLE 6
INDICATORS OF DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE
FOR THE POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE DIMENSION BY COUNTRY

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|----------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Politics and Governance | 2,4 | 1,2 | 1,4 |
| <i>PG - Institutional Structure</i> | 3,0 | 1,0 | 1,3 |
| Balance of power | 2,6 | 0,4 | 0,7 |
| Constitutional court independence | 3,4 | 1,2 | 0,4 |
| Influence of religious organizations | 2,9 | 0,9 | 0,8 |
| Social dialogue | 2,4 | 1,2 | 1,0 |
| Regulatory predictability | 2,5 | 0,9 | 0,8 |
| Electoral fairness | 3,7 | 0,6 | 2,3 |
| Internal party democracy | 3,4 | 1,2 | 2,5 |
| Minority rights | 3,1 | 1,5 | 1,8 |
| <i>PG - Elite Agency</i> | 2,3 | 1,3 | 1,5 |
| Political clientelism | 1,5 | 0,6 | 0,5 |
| Vote-buying | 3,2 | 1,1 | 2,4 |
| Party patronage | 2,0 | 0,9 | 1,4 |
| Party cohesiveness | 2,4 | 1,7 | 1,7 |
| Party support for quality of democracy | 3,0 | 1,7 | 2,0 |
| Influence of extremist parties | 1,9 | 1,9 | 1,3 |
| <i>PG - Crisis Triggers</i> | 2,0 | 1,4 | 1,3 |
| Authoritarian values in party elites | 2,6 | 1,3 | 1,4 |
| Liberal values in party elites | 2,5 | 1,8 | 1,8 |
| Integration of immigrants | 1,1 | 1,5 | 1,4 |
| Political activism | 1,6 | 0,9 | 0,5 |
| <i>PG - Buffers</i> | 2,2 | 1,0 | 1,6 |
| Bureaucratic authority | 2,0 | 0,6 | 1,2 |
| Political representation | 2,3 | 1,4 | 1,9 |

Note: Yellow indicates average scores. Red marks scores below average, with darker shades indicating lower scores. Green marks scores above average, with darker shades indicating higher scores.

MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

AUSTRIA

On the level of *institutional structure*, Austria ranks above average for all subdimensions, particularly for respect for electoral results (3.2) and media pluralism (3.2), with a somewhat lower score for media independence (2.4).

As regards *elite agency*, it ranks above average, particularly for media censorship (2.8), but with a low score for politicisation (1.7).

In terms of *crisis triggers* and *buffers*, it ranks higher for freedom of speech (3.1), regulatory favoritism (3.1) and liberal tradition (2.7), and the lowest for the influence of the diaspora (1.8), control of the media (2.1) and social polarisation (2.1)

GEORGIA

For *institutional structure*, Georgia ranks above average for media pluralism (3.3) and ease of starting a media outlet (3.2) but has low scores for respect for electoral results (0.7) and media independence (1.1).

When it comes to *elite agency*, the country ranks significantly below average, with particularly low scores for gerrymandering and electoral interference (0.5) and politicisation (0.8).

In terms of *crisis triggers* and *buffers*, scores are significantly below average, with a higher score for freedom of speech (2.0) and liberal tradition (1.7) and the lowest scores for the influence of the diaspora (0.8), social polarisation (0.6) and disinformation and fake news (1.0).

POLAND

In *institutional structure*, Poland ranks higher for ease of starting a media outlet (3.1), media pluralism (2.8) and respect for election results (2.7), whereas scores are low for media independence (1.5).

In terms of *elite agency*, scores are higher for media censorship (2.3) and lower for gerrymandering and electoral interference (0.8) and politicisation (0.9).

Crisis triggers and *buffers* scores are higher on liberal tradition (2.2) and freedom of speech (2.1) and lower on social polarisation (0.6), civil liberties (0.7), the influence of the diaspora (0.7) and control of the media (0.8).

TABLE 7
INDICATORS OF DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE
FOR THE MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY DIMENSION BY COUNTRY

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|-------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Media and Civil Society | 2,5 | 1,5 | 1,6 |
| <i>MCS - Institutional Structure</i> | 2,9 | 2,1 | 2,4 |
| Respect for electoral results | 3,2 | 0,7 | 2,7 |
| Media independence | 2,4 | 1,1 | 1,5 |
| Media support of democratic values | 2,8 | 2,1 | 2,2 |
| Media pluralism | 3,2 | 3,3 | 2,8 |
| Ease of starting a media outlet | 2,9 | 3,2 | 3,1 |
| <i>MCS - Elite Agency</i> | 2,4 | 1,2 | 1,5 |
| Social dialogue | 2,4 | 1,3 | 1,7 |
| Gerrymandering and electoral interference | 2,4 | 0,5 | 0,8 |
| Quality of human resources in government | 2,4 | 1,4 | 1,5 |
| Politicization | 1,7 | 0,8 | 0,9 |
| Media censorship | 2,8 | 2,1 | 2,3 |
| <i>MCS - Crisis Triggers</i> | 2,3 | 1,2 | 1,2 |
| Civil liberties | 2,2 | 1,3 | 0,7 |
| Influence of civil society | 1,9 | 1,5 | 1,3 |
| Social polarization | 2,1 | 0,6 | 0,6 |
| Disinformation and fake news | 2,3 | 1,0 | 1,5 |
| Freedom of speech | 3,1 | 2,0 | 2,1 |
| Control of media | 2,1 | 0,9 | 0,8 |
| Political elite support of pluralism | 2,2 | 1,2 | 1,3 |
| <i>MCS - Buffers</i> | 2,5 | 1,4 | 1,4 |
| Regulatory favoritism | 3,1 | 1,4 | 1,2 |
| General knowledge of political process | 2,2 | 1,5 | 1,6 |
| Influence of the diaspora | 1,8 | 0,8 | 0,7 |
| Liberal traditions | 2,7 | 1,7 | 2,2 |

Note: Yellow indicates average scores. Red marks scores below average, with darker shades indicating lower scores. Green marks scores above average, with darker shades indicating higher scores.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

AUSTRIA

In terms of *institutional structure*, the highest scores are for membership in international organisations (3.4) and politicisation in diplomatic appointments (2.9), while the lowest scores are seen in prevalent malevolent FDI (2.0), democratic values in foreign policy (2.1), independent oversight (2.2) and strategic management of malign foreign interference (2.2).

As regards *elite agency*, the country ranks highest in liberal values of technical experts (3.3) and liberal values in diplomacy (2.9), and it ranks lowest in the influence of think-tanks (2.1) and elite alignment with non-democratic actors (2.1).

With respect to *crisis triggers and buffers*, the highest-scoring factor is, unsurprisingly, communist melancholia (3.6) and the lowest-scoring factors are neighbouring anti-democratic shifts (1.5) and popular support for international organisations (2.2).

GEORGIA

Looking at Georgia's *institutional structure*, the country generally ranks below average, with the highest score in international rules alignment (1.9) and the lowest in the quality of human resources in diplomacy (1.0) and politicisation of diplomatic appointments (1.2).

In *elite agency*, most indicators are also below average, with the highest being the influence of think-tanks on foreign policy (2.6) and the lowest being liberal values in diplomacy (1.3).

In terms of *crisis triggers and buffers*, the country generally has scores above average, with 3.4 for popular support for international organisations and 3.2 for the influence of international organisations. The lowest indicators are neighbouring anti-democratic shifts (0.7) and (2.2) communist melancholia.

POLAND

In what concerns Poland's *institutional structure*, most indicators are below average, with a high score for strategic management of malign foreign interference (2.7) and the lowest score for politicisation in diplomatic appointments (1.2), diplomatic policy centralisation (1.4) and democratic values in foreign policy (1.4).

In terms of *elite agency*, the highest indicator is elite alignment with non-democratic actors (2.6) and the lowest score is for liberal values in diplomacy (1.6).

When analysing *crisis triggers and buffers*, it must be noted that the country generally stands above average, with a high score of 3.4 for communist melancholia. Other high scores are for popular support of international organisations (3.2) and support for authoritarian leaders (3.4). The isolated low score is for neighbouring anti-democratic shifts (1.6).

TABLE 8
INDICATORS OF DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE
FOR THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DOMAIN BY COUNTRY

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| External Affairs | 2,6 | 2,1 | 2,4 |
| <i>EA - Institutional Structure</i> | 2,5 | 1,5 | 1,8 |
| Politicization in diplomatic appointments | 2,9 | 1,2 | 1,2 |
| Diplomatic policy centralization | 2,4 | 1,3 | 1,4 |
| Democratic values in foreign policy | 2,1 | 1,4 | 1,4 |
| International rules alignment | 2,5 | 1,9 | 2,0 |
| International organisations membership | 3,4 | 1,8 | 1,7 |
| Prevalent malevolent FDI | 2,0 | 1,6 | 2,3 |
| Independent oversight of foreign policy | 2,2 | 1,4 | 1,8 |
| Strategic management of malign foreign interference | 2,2 | 1,6 | 2,7 |
| Quality of human resources in diplomacy | 2,3 | 1,0 | 1,7 |
| <i>EA - Elite Agency</i> | 2,6 | 1,9 | 2,1 |
| Liberal values in diplomacy | 2,9 | 1,3 | 1,6 |
| Liberal values of technical experts in foreign policy | 3,3 | 2,0 | 2,2 |
| Foreign policy consensus | 2,7 | 2,0 | 2,1 |
| Elite alignment with non-democratic actors | 2,1 | 1,6 | 2,6 |
| Influence of think-tanks on foreign policy | 2,1 | 2,6 | 1,9 |
| <i>EA - Crisis Triggers</i> | 2,2 | 2,3 | 2,4 |
| Neighboring anti-democratic shifts | 1,5 | 0,7 | 1,6 |
| Popular support for foreign authoritarian leaders | 2,5 | 2,9 | 3,1 |
| Influence of international organisations | 2,8 | 3,2 | 2,5 |
| <i>EA - Buffers</i> | 2,9 | 2,8 | 3,3 |
| Popular support for international organisations | 2,2 | 3,4 | 3,2 |
| Communist melancholia | 3,6 | 2,2 | 3,4 |

Note: Yellow indicates average scores. Red marks scores below average, with darker shades indicating lower scores. Green marks scores above average, with darker shades indicating higher scores.

ECONOMY

AUSTRIA

Along the dimension of *institutional structure*, the highest-ranking indicator is economic transparency (2.8), while the lowest indicators are general welfare (1.5) and the macroeconomic situation (1.7).

In terms of *elite agency*, indicators are above average with higher scores for FDIs (2.8), entrepreneurial reliance on democracy (2.8) and business regulation (2.7).

Among *crisis triggers* and *buffers* the scores are generally above average, with a high of 2.8 for social security for the unemployed and 2.9 for currency fluctuations, and lows of 1.6 for economic expectations and 1.8 for economic inequality.

GEORGIA

For *institutional structure*, indicators are generally below average, with a high of 2.0 for economic transparency and a low of 0.8 for labour market vulnerabilities.

As far as *elite agency* is concerned, the highest indicators are business regulation (2.9) and entrepreneurial reliance on democracy (2.6), while the lowest are politicisation of public procurement (1.2), FDIs (1.4) and popular understanding of capitalism (1.4).

Turning to *crisis triggers* and *buffers*, indicators are generally below average with highs of 2.2 for economic expectations and 2.0 for stagnating entrepreneurship and lows of 0.8 for currency fluctuations and 1.0 for difficulties in finding alternative sources of employment.

POLAND

As regards *institutional structure*, indicators are generally below average, with a high of 2.3 for economic transparency and a low of 1.0 for the microeconomic situation and 1.1 for general welfare.

In terms of *elite agency*, the highest indicator is entrepreneurial reliance on democracy (2.5), followed by FDIs (2.4). The lowest indicators are politicisation of public procurement (1.1) and business regulation (1.7).

The highest indicators pertaining to *crisis triggers* and *buffers* are economic inequality (2.4) and difficulty in finding alternative employment (2.1), while the lowest indicators are currency fluctuation (1.4) and social security for the unemployed (1.5).

TABLE 9
INDICATORS OF DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE
FOR THE ECONOMY DIMENSION BY COUNTRY

| | Austria | Georgia | Poland |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Economy | 2,4 | 1,7 | 1,8 |
| <i>EC - Institutional Structure</i> | 2,0 | 1,6 | 1,5 |
| Macroeconomic situation | 1,7 | 1,8 | 1,0 |
| Microeconomic situation | 2,1 | 1,8 | 1,4 |
| General welfare | 1,5 | 1,6 | 1,1 |
| Labor market vulnerabilities | 2,0 | 0,8 | 1,8 |
| Economic transparency | 2,8 | 2,0 | 2,3 |
| <i>EC - Elite Agency</i> | 2,6 | 1,9 | 2,0 |
| Democratic values of business elites | 2,4 | 1,6 | 2,0 |
| Business regulations | 2,7 | 2,9 | 1,7 |
| FDIs | 2,8 | 1,4 | 2,4 |
| Popular understanding of capitalism | 2,4 | 1,4 | 2,1 |
| Entrepreneurial reliance on democracy | 2,8 | 2,6 | 2,5 |
| Popular distrust of multinational corporations and FDI | 2,5 | 2,1 | 2,3 |
| Politicization of public procurement | 2,5 | 1,2 | 1,1 |
| <i>EC - Crisis Triggers</i> | 2,2 | 1,7 | 1,9 |
| Economic expectations | 1,6 | 2,2 | 1,7 |
| Economic inequality | 1,8 | 1,9 | 2,4 |
| Financialization limitations | 2,6 | 1,7 | 2,0 |
| Currency fluctuations | 2,9 | 0,8 | 1,4 |
| <i>EC - Buffers</i> | 2,6 | 1,4 | 1,8 |
| Social security for the underemployed | 2,8 | 1,3 | 1,5 |
| Difficulty in finding alternative employment | 2,6 | 1,0 | 2,1 |
| Stagnating entrepreneurship | 2,5 | 2,0 | 1,8 |

Note: Yellow indicates average scores. Red marks scores below average, with darker shades indicating lower scores. Green marks scores above average, with darker shades indicating higher scores.

Methodology

The first pilot wave of the Democracy Resilience study was conducted in 2021, in three countries: Hungary, Moldova, and Romania. The results of the pilot study can be found in Popescu-Zamfir and Sandu (2021). The second wave of the study was conducted in 2022, in three additional countries: Austria, Georgia, and Poland.

The second wave followed the same methodology as the pilot study: an online expert survey, using the same theoretical framework, using the same questionnaire as the pilot study.

The framework used for the assessment of democratic resilience is the one developed in Popescu-Zamfir and Sandu (2021: 4-8), composed of a 4-by-4 matrix that includes four domains (*Politics and Governance, Media and Civil Society, External Affairs, and Economy*) and four democratic resilience dimensions (*Institutional Structure, Elite Agency, Crisis Triggers, and Buffers*).

The theoretical arguments for the indicators measuring the Political and Governance dimension are presented in Ciobanu (2021: 9-12). Those explaining the Media and Civil Society dimension can be found in Tiut, Macoveiciuc, and Ghincea (2021: 13-15). Volintiru (2021: 16-18) describes the indicators measuring the Economic dimension, while those related to the External Affairs dimension are discussed in Popescu-Zamfir and Anghel (2021: 19-21).

Following factor analysis applied to the results obtained in wave 2, this model has been very slightly modified. The indicators included in each domain-dimension combination are presented in Table 10 below.

TABLE 10

| | Politics and Governance | Media and Civil Society | External Affairs | Economy |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Institutional structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Balance of power ● Constitutional Court independence ● Influence of religious organizations ● Social dialogue ● Regulatory predictability ● Electoral fairness ● Internal party democracy ● Minority rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respect for electoral results ● Media independence ● Media support for democratic values ● Media pluralism ● Ease of starting a media outlet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Politicization in diplomatic appointments ● Diplomatic policy centralization ● Democratic values in foreign policy ● International rules alignment ● International organisations (IOs) membership ● Prevalent malevolent FDI ● Independent oversight of foreign policy ● Strategic management of malign foreign interferences ● Quality of human resources in diplomacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Macroeconomic situation ● Microeconomic situation ● General welfare ● Labour market vulnerabilities ● Economic transparency |
| Elite agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Political clientelism ● Vote-buying ● Party patronage ● Party cohesiveness ● Party support for quality of democracy ● Influence of extremist parties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social dialogue ● Gerrymandering and electoral interference ● Quality of human resources in government ● Politicization ● Media censorship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Liberal values in diplomacy ● Liberal values of technical experts in foreign policy ● Foreign policy consensus ● Elite alignment with non-democratic actors ● Influence of think-tanks on foreign policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Democratic values of business elites ● Business regulations ● FDIIs ● Popular understanding of capitalism ● Entrepreneurial reliance on democracy ● Popular distrust of multinational corporations and FDI ● Politicization of public procurement |
| Crisis triggers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Authoritarian values in party elites ● Liberal values in party elites ● Integration of immigrants ● Political activism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Civil liberties ● Influence of civil society ● Social polarization ● Disinformation and fake news ● Freedom of speech ● Control of media ● Political elite support for pluralism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Neighbouring anti-democratic shifts ● Popular support for foreign authoritarian leaders ● Influence of IOs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic expectations ● Economic inequality ● Financialization limitations ● Currency fluctuations |
| Buffers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bureaucratic authority ● Political representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regulatory favoritism ● General knowledge of political process ● Influence of the diaspora ● Liberal traditions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Popular support for IOs ● Communist melancholia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social security for underemployed ● Difficulty in finding alternative sources of employment ● Stagnating entrepreneurship |

The questionnaire was applied online to experts from each of the six countries in the study.

Respondents could answer for any of the four domains on which they considered to have expertise, but answering for more than two was generally discouraged. The data on respondents shows that the number of experts who answered to each combination of country and domain varied, but in all but one combination (Polish experts who assessed the Economy field) there are at least 30 respondents, allowing us to use the data not only at the country level or only at the domain level, but also at the intersection between the two. Of course, the standard statistical footnote remains valid: the higher the number of respondents, the lower the errors in our analyses.

TABLE 11
RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY AND DOMAIN
IN THE SECOND WAVE OF THE DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE STUDY

| | Politics and Governance | Media and Civil Society | External Affairs | Economy | Total respondents |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Austria | 64 | 45 | 49 | 42 | 149 |
| Georgia | 54 | 60 | 50 | 42 | 138 |
| Poland | 46 | 54 | 44 | 24 | 109 |
| Total | 164 | 159 | 143 | 108 | 396 |

Note: Since experts could offer information on multiple dimensions, the total number of respondents per country is smaller than the sum of the respondents for each of the four dimensions.

In this updated model, the Politics and Governance domain is evaluated by a total of 20 indicators, Media and Civil Society is measured through 21 indicators, while the last two domains, External Affairs and Economy are measured by 19 indicators each. In total, our model estimated democratic resilience using 79 different indicators. The democratic resilience dimensions for the four domains are measured using between two to nine indicators, the average being five indicators per domain dimension.

Starting from the lessons of the pilot study we decided to supplement the quantitative analysis with qualitative reports made by our expert partners in each country. The initial version of each report was written before collecting and discussing the quantitative data. Thus, we aimed to avoid at this stage any bias that might be introduced.

The experts were encouraged to follow the structure/issues raised in the quantitative questionnaire but were otherwise given a relatively wide margin in choosing the methods and data used in their analysis. We consider this to bring a welcome flexibility: each country has different issues and different primary and secondary data available. Thus, the experts were able to choose the best research strategy for their particular situation as long as they remained within the scope of the project.

After finishing the first stage of qualitative analysis, the experts were presented with the data and results from the expert survey. Through an iterative process, the data analysis and presentation were enriched according to the suggestions of the qualitative experts and the qualitative reports were reviewed by taking into account the results from the survey review.⁵

In an effort to make the result more accessible, this version of the report presents qualitative and quantitative data in an integrated manner. Detailed tables with scores of all the drivers of democratic resilience were added at the end for those who need to go more in depth. Ideally, these tables should be consulted in parallel with the correlation tables in the full-length report, which show how each driver contributes to the whole category in the overall sample.

⁵ We did not presume that quantitative data is of better quality than qualitative data or vice-versa. Thus, in their report, qualitative experts were asked to consider the quantitative results but were also encouraged to critique them where they considered appropriate.

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This list includes both the authors of the current study and the major contributors to the methodological framework of the previous study, without whom this work would not have been possible.



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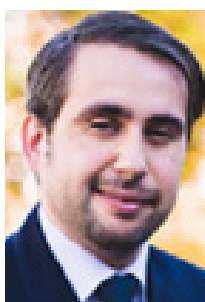
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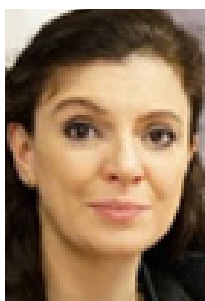
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