

European Partnership Initiative Program Summary

The International Republican Institute (IRI) launched the European Partnership Initiative (EPI) in 2005 to expand and strengthen the Institute's ties with colleagues in governmental, party, and nongovernmental institutions in the European Union (EU) and in its member states. IRI's close partners in this effort since the outset have been the European People's Party (EPP), its party foundation the Centre for European Studies, and the member parties and foundations of the EPP family.

Through EPI, the Institute leverages its experience with transatlantic issues to build alliances and partnerships with European institutions for global democracy promotion. This new dimension of work builds on years of cooperation with organizations like the British Conservatives, the Austrian People's Party and its Political Academy, Spain's Partido Popular and its Foundation for Social Analysis and Studies (FAES), the Christian Democratic Appeal and its Eduardo Frei Foundation of the Netherlands, Greece's New Democracy and its Constantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy, Germany's Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and others, which have long provided support for democracy building.

These relationships are bearing fruit in a number of creative and productive ways. Party partnerships have provided expert support for democracy promotion efforts. Partido Popular supports IRI's efforts in Cuba and Venezuela. IRI partners with the Eduardo Frei Foundation to conduct trainings in Turkey and the Balkans. Through this partnership IRI is fostering a greater understanding of U.S. foreign policy among traditional and new partners in Europe. It also enables IRI to tap into a network of trainers and experts who have recently made the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy – experiences that are invaluable to other nations seeking a better future.

Since IRI began this effort, more than 200 Europeans, including Austrians, Britons, Bulgarians, Czechs, Dutch, Estonians, French, Germans, Hungarians, Irish, Italians, Norwegians, Poles, Serbs, Slovaks, Spaniards, Swedes, and others have contributed to IRI's training and election observation missions throughout the world.

To improve transatlantic dialogue, IRI also conducts a speakers' series in Brussels in cooperation with the EPP. The speakers' series has served as a forum to present U.S. views in Europe and as a means to gather influential political and policy leadership from both sides of the Atlantic. Featured guests in the series have included U.S. leaders such as IRI Chairman Senator John McCain, IRI board member and former Congressman Jim Kolbe, former Republican National Committee Chairman Frank Fahrenkopf, former Special Assistant to the President Barry Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Kurt Volker, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Near East Affairs Scott Carpenter, and U.S. Ambassador to the European Union C. Boyden Gray.

IRI also partnered with FAES to host Congressman Kolbe in Madrid and with the Eduardo Frei Foundation to host former Chairman Fahrenkopf in The Hague.

Over the past five years, IRI has also organized a series of high-level meetings in Brussels and Washington to increase U.S. input into the policy debate in the EU, with particular regard to issues related to democracy assistance. Among these have been discussions with the president of the European Commission and a number of commissioners, the president of the European Parliament and chairpersons of groups and committees, and senior staff of the European Council, on issues ranging from China to Egypt to Cuba and others.