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<http://www.democracyranking.org/en/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Ranking

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Google link summary of the international press reactions to the press conference in Vienna on December 13, 2010 (gross entries to “democracy ranking”, not always related to the press conference):

http://www.google.de/#hl=de&tbs=qdr%3Ad&q=democracy+ranking&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&oq=democracy+ranking&gs_rfai=&fp=79b0406084f0bae8

Key Findings (Summary Abstract) of the Democracy Ranking 2010 and the Democracy Improvement Ranking 2010

A few general statements:

1. The Democracy Ranking indicates what happens if the Freedom Ratings from Freedom House are equally compared with the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Program, in order to be able to comprehensively understand democracy and the quality of democracy. International organizations are often wary of making a direct statement about democracy, since they are worried to come into conflict with some of their member states. This is also an “innovation trap” for international organizations. Here play civil-society projects an important and innovative role.
2. Freedom is often associated with conservative, equality with left ideologies. This democracy ranking purposely considers the performance profile of various non-political dimensions

(economy, gender, knowledge, health, and ecology). Thus the subjective expert estimates for freedom and equality should be made additionally objective. The Democracy Ranking tries to be more neutral, balanced, and fair with respect to left and right ideologies. Sustainable development is here of a crucial importance.

3. Every model of evaluating quality of democracy can of course be criticized. If, for example, other indices or weightings are used, does then the democracy ranking change? However, whichever model is being used: an important argument is finally that models of measuring and evaluating democracy assign a crucial awareness to the themes of democracy and quality of democracy in the public and the media-based discourses. Then, more will be spoken about democracy and the meaning of quality of democracy.

Country-specific (region-specific) statements:

1. **The top 10 (top 15) countries of the Democracy Ranking 2010:** The Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark) and Switzerland are the top 5 countries, also New Zealand, the Netherlands, Ireland, Germany, and the UK have very high scores. This continuing global top position of the Nordic countries is impressive, also because this top position is being reproduced quite stable across the different (sub-)dimensions. **Thus it can be said that the Nordic countries define – in a positive view – a global benchmark for quality of democracy that is empirically already available.** From the top 10 countries seven belong to the EU. **In total, the prominent representation of European democracies at the top positions is remarkable. This underscores that the European integration process should be understood, in the global context, even more clearly as a “democracy project.” The “quality of democracy” of Europe’s democracies will influence and support the endurance of the European integration and of the EU.** Germany also scores high for quality of democracy. Germany could hold and improve its top position and therefore belongs, in a globally comparative perspective, to the stable democracies with a high quality of democracy. Germany exhibits an interesting model case of how a democracy can be successfully implemented and even more successfully and continually improved in quality. All of the classical English-speaking countries are within the top 15. During the last years the U.S. has improved from rank 16 to 15. For a further and sound academically-based discussion it would certainly be interesting to compare, more systematically than previously, the quality of democracy of the U.S. with the “entire area” of the EU15 or EU27.
2. **Austria:** In 2005-2006 as well as in 2008-2009, Austria was ranked at position 11 in the Democracy Ranking. This is a very high rank in the international comparison, but Austria is not under the top 10. Austria scored relatively higher for economy and health, but not as good for knowledge (education) and politics – in the political dimension, Austria even became worse for “political rights” and corruption. In gender equality, Austria also scores not so fine. In the current Democracy Improvement Ranking 2010, Austria only lies in the weak middle area.

3. **Hungary, Bulgaria, and Italy:** Hungary is the European democracy, which is this time the “relative loser” – Hungary slipped from rank 26 to rank 32. Bulgaria is the only democracy in Europe, which lost not only by the relative ranking but also by absolute scores. For the political dimension Bulgaria – as well as Italy – acquired losses for “political rights”, “civil liberties”, and freedom of the press. This demonstrates that a certain amount of democracy and democracy quality cannot be misunderstood as a “given constant”. Democracy is always in flux, each society and each political system must be in continual reflection of maintaining its democracy and its improvement. This is valid not only for democracies within the EU but also elsewhere outside of the EU.
4. **Poland:** Within the EU, Poland achieved the largest improvement of quality of democracy. Poland improved continuously and throughout all dimensions. In addition to a fast economic development there is also a considerable improvement of its democracy quality. Thus this young EU member country impressively shows that improvement in democracy is certainly not a privilege of the established old democracies of Western Europe.
5. **Serbia:** In the worldwide comparison, Serbia is that democracy which realized the second largest relative improvement during the last years. Serbia even attains the first place at a pronounced distance for the relative improvement in Europe. Serbia improved itself over all dimensions. If Serbia can continue this speed then an EU membership of Serbia will present itself within the coming years increasingly as an option.
6. **Israel, South Korea, Singapore, and Kuwait:** The Democracy Ranking 2010 demonstrates that often democracies from emerging countries – at least for individual dimensions – scored higher than many of the “traditional western” democracies. **Democracy and quality of democracy are becoming an even more global phenomenon and are for certain not only a privilege of the old industrial nations – the World of Democracies turns increasingly pluralistic.** Israel and South Korea score very high in the dimension knowledge (education) – for example considerably higher than Austria –, Kuwait and Singapore place very high in the economic dimension. While Kuwait often scored lower in the other dimensions, the development in Singapore manifests itself to be more sustainable, since Singapore can also score better across other dimensions.
7. **India and Bangladesh:** Relative to the quality of democracy, India and Bangladesh ranked worldwide in the lower third of all democracies, in which India (rank 69 for 2008-2009) scores higher than Bangladesh (rank 78 for 2008-2009). Above all, India is characterized by scoring higher in the political and economic dimensions than in the dimensions gender equality, health, and knowledge (education). A special challenge for India’s democracy quality is whether the political system there will succeed in transferring the economic achievement to other areas, so that a wider population can participate in the economic development. This will decide on the mid-term and long-term sustainability of India’s democracy. In the case of Bangladesh, these inequalities between the different dimensions of political, economic and social development are not so large, although the economy in Bangladesh has developed less dynamically. On the other hand, the increase in democracy quality in Bangladesh is higher than in India during the last years (see the Democracy Improvement Ranking 2010).

8. **Russia and China:** Although Russia and China are classified by Freedom House as “not free”, Russia and China were included in the Democracy Ranking this year in order to show how these two countries would rank by using an appropriate formula. These “virtual scores” attest a low rating: position 87 for Russia and 97 for China (before Nigeria and behind Zambia). Both of these countries score somewhat better for economic development and knowledge, but worse for health, and at the political dimension even catastrophically. Russia and China cannot be currently considered as “normal” democracies. It should be stressed that in spite of the economic appreciation of China’s development, the political structures of this emerging economic super giant are by tendency authoritarian. What effect will this have for the future international system? A continuing democratization in both these countries will be extremely important, for domestic and geopolitical reasons. Viewed for the short term, a further democratization in Russia is perhaps even more realistic. The present (2010) award of the Nobel Peace Prize to a Chinese dissident (democracy activist) appears thus in a different light. The required courage of the Norway-based committee must be emphatically congratulated in spite of the current silence of many, even western governments. An accompanying remark: in the current Democracy Ranking for 2010, Norway scored at the first place. Also in the coming years it is planned to continue to report scores for Russia and China.