

(English version)

Question for written answer E-003864/25

**to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
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(2 October 2025)

Subject: Violence in Timor-Leste: how can the European Union help restore the rule of law and good governance amid clashes between students and police?

The EU has long been a key development partner for Timor-Leste, one of the world's youngest countries (it has been independent since 2002), investing approximately EUR 134 million as of September 2025 in sectors such as good governance, institutional strengthening and development. While substantial funding continues to support institutional reforms, recent priorities have shifted towards a progressive agenda, with over EUR 260 million earmarked for 'sustainable infrastructure' and EUR 22 million allocated to 'civil society programmes', which address issues less central to the country's immediate realities. This change coincides with rising tensions in Timor-Leste, exemplified by recent clashes between students and law enforcement authorities, about the misuse of public funds, which raises questions about the EU's evolving focus.

1. Given recent clashes between students and police, why have the priorities for EU cooperation in Timor-Leste shifted away from the rule of law and governance towards an ideologically and socially driven agenda, despite previous investments of hundreds of millions of euros in judicial and institutional strengthening?
2. How might the EU's increasing financial focus on 'sustainable infrastructure' (a planned expenditure of EUR 260 million) and 'social programmes' (EUR 22 million assigned to civil society and NGOs) influence the long-term stability and governance of Timor-Leste?
3. How can the EU restore and strengthen its focus on the rule of law and good governance in Timor-Leste?

Submitted: 2.10.2025

Answer given by Mr Sikela on behalf of the European Commission

(21 November 2025)

The EU is monitoring the recent incidents involving students and police in Dili. Lasting stability and social peace can only be achieved through strong democratic institutions, accountable governance and respect for fundamental rights.

Support to good governance is one of two priority areas of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Indicative Programme for Timor Leste ⁽¹⁾, which includes projects that strengthen public finance management and bring public administration and services closer to the people.

For instance, under the Multiannual Action Plan 2025-2026, the EU will finance a EUR 6 million action to facilitate citizens' access to justice by digitalising the Ministry of Justice and streamlining its service delivery.

The EU also allocated EUR 1.5 million from its 2025-2027 thematic programme on Human Rights and Democracy ⁽²⁾ to support civil society organisations, democracy activists and human rights defenders working on human rights, rule of law and democracy issues in Timor Leste.

Moreover, the EU stays committed to engage with Timor Leste's youth. The EU Youth Sounding Board provides young Timorese with a platform to express their views, take part in policy dialogue and contribute to shaping more inclusive governance.

The EU listens to young people, promotes civic engagement and supports opportunities for youth to become constructive agents of change.

In response to the events in September 2025, the EU Ambassador met with the President of the National Parliament to voice the EU's concern, urge calm, and repeat the EU's readiness to promote dialogue, transparency and trust between citizens and institutions.

The EU stands ready to work with all partners to boost the rule of law, improve governance and support a peaceful and democratic Timor-Leste.

⁽¹⁾ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/62aeefcf-5be2-4d72-a568-3c419d34d6b5_en?filename=mip-2021-c2021-9071-timor-leste-annex_en.pdf.

⁽²⁾ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/peace-and-governance/human-rights_en.