

Policy Roundtable

In defence of democracy: Towards greater openness, stronger resilience and better governance in the EU political system

26 - 27 September 2022

Sala del Consiglio & Online - Villa Salviati, Via Bolognese 156 - Florence

European University Institute | **EUI**

European Parliamentary Research Service | **EPRS**

Directorate General for Internal Policies of the Union | **IPOL**

Programme

26 September

14.00 - 14.15 **Welcome**

Erik Jones, Professor and Director, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI

Riccardo Ribera d'Alcalá, Director-General for Internal Policies of the Union (IPOL), EP

Étienne Bassot, Acting Director-General and Director, Members' Research Service, EPRS, EP

First session

14.15 - 16.00 ***Innovating democracy: Citizens' participation in the EU system after the Conference on the Future of Europe***

The Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFE) and its set-up represented a unique (for the time being) opportunity to put European citizens at the centre of the debate and reflections on Europe's challenges and priorities and make their voices heard also in between elections. Experts could give their views on the Conference process and outcome, the follow-up and lessons to be learnt in view of further strengthening citizen participation in EU decision making

Moderator: Micaela del Monte, Head of Citizens Policies Unit, EPRS

Parliamentary perspectives:

Damian Boeselager, MEP, Member of the Delegation to the Conference on the Future of Europe

Silvia Kotanidis, Policy Analyst, Citizens Policies Unit, EPRS

Gaby Umbach, Part-time Professor, Director GGP research area Knowledge, Governance, Transformations, and EPRS non-resident Visiting Fellow



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Academic perspectives:

Franca Maria Feisel, Doctoral Researcher in Law, Department of Law, EUI

Dietlind Stolle, James McGill Professor in Political Science, McGill University

Olivier Costa, Director of research at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique at CEVIPOF, Sciences Po, Paris and Director of Political and Administrative Studies at the College of Europe, Bruges

Questions and comments from the audience

16.00 - 16.15 Coffee break

Second session

16.15 - 18.00 ***Consolidating democracy: Reform of the electoral system for the European Parliament and its right to initiate legislation***

This panel will look at the various aspects of the European Electoral law (EEL): including transnational lists, the lead candidate process, and their relation to each other in ensuring that the Commission President has a democratic mandate based on parliamentary support. This session should also examine further developing Parliament's right of initiative into a direct and general right to initiate legislation.

Moderator: José Luis Pacheco, HOU AFCD, IPOL

Parliamentary perspectives:

Domènec Ruiz Devesa, MEP, Rapporteur on European Electoral Law

Prof. Danuta Maria Hübner, MEP, former Rapporteur (8th legislature) on the reform of the electoral law of the European Union

Academic perspectives:

Brigid Laffan, Emeritus Professor, EUI

Daniele Caramani, Ernst B. Haas Chair in European Governance and Politics, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI and Director, European Governance and Politics Programme

Catherine De Vries, Dean for Diversity & Inclusion and Professor of Political Science, Bocconi University

Simon Hix, Stein Rokkan Chair in Comparative Politics, EUI

Questions and comments from the audience

18.00 - 18.30 **Conclusion**

Erik Jones, Professor and Director, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI

Riccardo Ribera d'Alcalá, Director-General for Internal Policies of the Union (IPOL), EP

Étienne Bassot, Acting Director-General and Director, Members' Research Service, EP

27 September **First session**

A close eye on some of the challenges to our democratic system in particular following the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

8.45 - 10.30 ***Protecting democracy: How to defend and advance the rule of law within the European Union?***

Democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights are essential building blocks of our societies and the very foundation of the European project. In particular, the rule of law is the cornerstone of all democratic societies and one of the fundamental values of the Union, enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. The core of the rule of law is effective judicial protection, which requires the independence, quality and efficiency of national justice systems. Without rule of law, democracy collapses and disappears. Unfortunately, in some EU Member States, a process of “Rule of law backsliding” is taking place.

This panel will examine the instruments at our disposal to counter these processes, how they are being used and how they could or should be better used, notably Article 7 TEU procedures, infringement procedures, the conditionality regulation, the Resilience and Recovery Fund, the rule of law framework, and other similar instruments.

Moderator: Marcin Walecki, Visiting Fellow at St Antony’s College and the Board Member of a number of Thinks Tanks in Poland

Parliamentary perspectives :

Vladimír Bilčík, MEP, Member of the Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group (DRFMG)

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, MEP LIBE Standing Rapporteur on the rule of law situation in Hungary and member of the Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group (DRFMG)

Academic perspectives:

Gabor Halmai, Professor of Law and Director of Graduate Studies at the Law Department at the European University Institute (EUI)

Veronica Anghel, Lecturer of Risk in International Politics at the Johns Hopkins University SAIS and Europe’s Futures Visiting Fellow of the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) and Erste Foundation

Filip Kostelka, Professor and Chair in Political and Social Change in the Department of Political and Social Sciences, EUI

Heather Grabbe, Director, Open Society Foundation and Europe’s Futures Fellow at the IWM Vienna and ERSTE Stiftung

Questions and comments from the audience

10.30 - 10.45 Coffee break

Second session

10.45 - 12.30 **Protecting democracy: How to safeguard rational political debate from disinformation, whilst respecting free speech?**

Disinformation, information manipulation and propaganda pose numerous threats to democratic societies. They aim at manipulating individuals, undermining trust in democratic institutions and distorting public opinion and democratic debates.

This panel will debate the evolving techniques used by anti-democratic state and non-state actors to disrupt or influence democratic processes – including the use of algorithms, automation and artificial intelligence – boosting the scope and the efficiency of disinformation campaigns. In addition to looking at the main conclusions of the first INGE special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes, the panel will zoom in on the following questions: how do certain techniques of disinformation permeate our information sphere, including democratic debates and hard science? How can we counter information manipulation without compromising freedom of expression? How is misinformation affecting trust in science and undermining collective sense making and collective action? How can we build (back) critical knowledge infrastructure to enhance collective cognitive resilience against anti-enlightenment and anti-democracy campaigns?

Freedom of expression as a human right involves a positive obligation of governments to guarantee freedom of the media, which includes promoting and protecting diverse media. The human right to impart information is not limited to statements deemed “correct” by authorities but extends to information and ideas that may shock, offend and disturb. Which are the limits to restrictions that states may impose on the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media to be in accordance with international law in this regard? What does the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights state with regard to propaganda for war and incitement to certain types of hatred?

Moderator: Richard Youngs, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe

Parliamentary perspectives:

Tonino Picula, MEP, Member of Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2)

Naja Bentzen, European Parliament resident fellow at the German Marshall Fund US and George Mason University, Senior Policy Analyst, European Parliament Liaison Office Washington DC

Svetla Tanova, Coordinator of the European Science-Media Hub, STOA Panel, EPRS

Academic perspectives:

Pier Luigi Parcu, Director of the Communications & Media Area, Part time Professor, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI

Péter Krekó, Europe’s Futures Visiting Fellow of the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) and Erste Foundation, and non-resident Associate Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University SAIS Bologna Institute of Policy Research

Jelena Dzankic, Part-time Professor, European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre

Iva Nenadić, Research Fellow, European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre

Questions and comments from the audience

12.30 - 13.00 **Conclusion**

Étienne Bassot, Acting Director-General and Director, Members' Research Service, EPRS, EP
Brigid Laffan, Emeritus Professor, EUI