

Democracy Retreat #1

‘Innovating democracy: the nexus between national and European democracy’

Date: 26 March 2024 (13:30-16:00, approx. 2h30)

Location: Fondation Universitaire, 11 Rue d’Egmont, Brussels, Belgium

Within the EU’s evolving landscape, the proposed topics for discussion address the pressing need to understand how multi-layered levels of governance can exchange and learn from their experiences on democratic strengthening and renewal. As the EU contemplates enlargement and internal reforms, this dialogue seeks, among other themes, to address the challenges posed by democratic backsliding, polarisation, citizen distrust in or dissatisfaction towards institutions, and national and internal frictions in EU decision-making.

With a keen eye on the 2024 European Parliament (EP) and Belgian elections, the next European Commission’s strategic agenda, and the Belgian Presidency at the Council of the EU, these dialogues will delve into strategies to bridge the gap between theoretical ideals and practical implementations fostering a more robust and resilient EU democratic fabric. Amidst uncertainties, there exists a profound aspiration to reverse these challenging trends, and the discussions will navigate the path toward achieving this by accelerating the pace and expansion of democratic innovations at the levels of parliamentary decision-making within Member States and the EU.

On the sidelines of the 71st COSAC Plenary and as a continuation of its discussion on ‘Democracy and the Rule of Law in Europe’, our concluding lunch dialogues stand as a beacon for innovative thinking, collective exploration and engagement to fortify the EU democratic fabric.

Key discussion points

- 1. How can the European Parliament and national parliaments collaboratively hold executive powers accountable?**
- 2. What tools can enhance citizen participation in democracy and policy-making at various governance levels, extending beyond elections?**
- 3. Identifying and implementing practices that advance and protect democracy through widespread adoption. Are there synergies in exchanging democratic practices?**

Opening remarks and speakers:



Mariam KHOTENASHVILI, Executive Director, TEPSA;

Jean-Louis De BROUWER, Director of the European Affairs Programme, Egmont Institute;

Rieke WÖNIG, Nets4Dem Programme Coordinator, Democracy Reporting International;

Ken GODFREY, Executive Director, European Partnership for Democracy;

Kalypso NICOLAÏDIS, Chair in Global Affairs at the School of Transnational Governance, European University Institute;

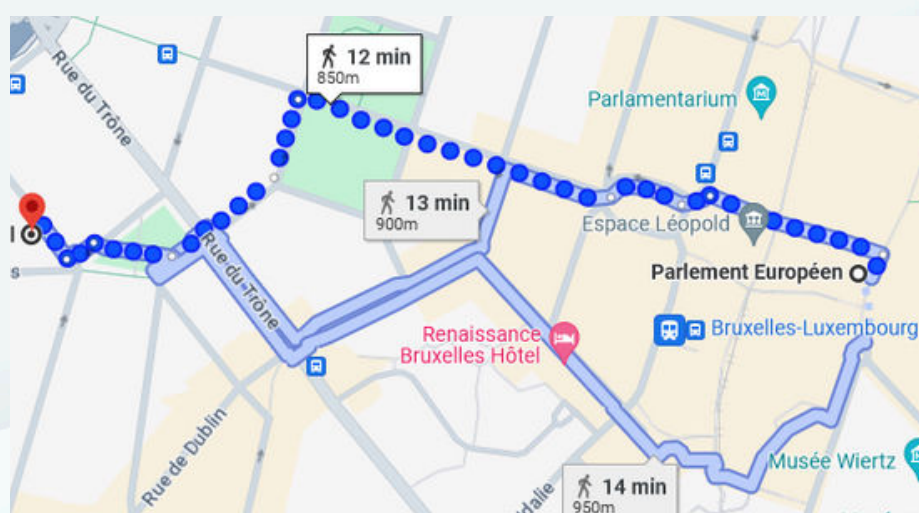
Karolina BOROŃSKA-HRYNIEWIECKA, Professor of Political Science, University of Wrocław and Visiting Professor, Panthéon-Sorbonne

Anthony ZACHARZEWSKI, President, Democratic Society;



Logistical Information

- **Address:** Fondation Universitaire, 11 Rue d'Egmont, 1000 Brussels. The entrance is unlocked and you will be let in by the Fondation's front desk.
- **Venue:** **Room Cattier** is on the ground floor, at the very end of the corridor.



What is Nets4Dem?

This event is slated to be organised as part of **Network of Networks 4 Democracy (Nets4Dem)**, in close partnership with COSAC.



Funded by
the European Union

As a Horizon Europe project coordinated by Democracy Reporting International, Nets4Dem brings together **more than 200 cities, over 50 think tanks and universities, and dozens of democracy-focused NGOs, covering 38 European countries**. Nets4Dem aims to enhance and transform the current landscape of democracy initiatives by creating a unique European network. This network is designed to facilitate **high degrees of connectedness** among policy-makers, practitioners, and researchers, by providing improved access to cross-cutting work on **democratic innovations**. It further aims to weave networks spanning various sectors, geographies and levels of governance, thereby **redistributing power and resources** to those who stand to gain the most from initiatives aimed at engaging citizens in civic renewal.



TEPSA is the first EU affairs research network, consisting of leading research institutes throughout Europe, with headquarters in Brussels. Since our founding in 1974, our network has provided policy-makers with the best policy analysis, assessment, and advice, and we continue to bridge the gap between research, policy-making, and citizens to this day. Our decentralised approach combines the strengths of our over 45 Member Institutes and enriches the results of their work.

See further information about TEPSA [here](#).



The **Royal Institute for International Relations or Egmont** is an independent think tank based in Brussels. Its interdisciplinary research is conducted in a spirit of total academic freedom. Drawing on the expertise of its research fellows, as well as that of external specialists, both Belgian and foreign, it provides analysis and policy options that are meant to be as operational as possible.

See further information about Egmont [here](#).

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NB. This event is by invitation only

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