

Detached, distrustful, disengaged? TEPSA hosts a high-level conference rethinking democracy in today's Europe

Brussels, 28/01/2026 – On **5 February 2026**, TEPSA will host a **high-level conference** in Brussels to find the answer to one crucial question: *is political trust declining under the pressure of crises and growing polarisation?*

The event, titled "Detached, distrustful, disengaged? Rethinking democracy in today's Europe", will take place at the **Press Club Brussels Europe in Rue Froissart 95, 1040** and will mark the **Final Conference** of the Horizon Europe-funded "Activating European Citizens' Trust in Times of Crises and Polarization" (**ActEU**) project. The project, launched in 2023, has gathered experts from leading universities and research institutes across Europe to investigate persistent problems of declining trust, legitimacy and representation.

The Final Conference will comprise interactive panel discussions, encouraging questions and input from the audience. The event will feature high-level speakers from EU institutions, the media, and civil society organisations. It will also be an occasion to showcase ActEU's numerous communications activities, including the winning video of the **ActEU's video contest** "Through my eyes: Stories of democracy", which ran in the autumn of 2025.

Commenting on what to expect from the Final Conference, ActEU Coordinator **Prof. Dr. Michael Kaeding** (University Duisburg-Essen) and Scientific Lead **Prof. Dr. Daniela Braun** (Saarland University) stated, "*Across Europe, citizens are confronted with problems of trust between the citizens and the elites and intensifying divides over issues such as migration, climate change, and gender equality. These challenges have a clear effect on representative democracy. The ActEU project has pioneered innovative ways to measure political trust and democratic resilience. With this conference, we not only wish to share our results, but also include practitioners, policy-makers, and young citizens in the discussion and generate solutions to recapture legitimacy and reinforce political trust.*"

Registrations are **open** on TEPSA's website. Click **here** to view the conference's agenda.

Notes to editors

ActEU is a Horizon Europe-funded, consortium project, launched in 2023 under the leadership Prof. Dr. Michael Kaeding of the University of Duisburg-Essen as Coordinator and Prof. Dr. Daniela Braun of Saarland University as Scientific Lead. Alongside the University of Duisburg-Essen and Saarland University, the ActEU consortium includes Paris-Lodron-Universität Salzburg (Austria), Institute of International Relations, Prague (Czechia), Åbo Akademi University (Finland), Institut Catholique de Lille (France), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece), University of Trento (Italy), Uniwersytet SWPS (Poland), University of Oviedo, CSIC (Spain), and TEPSA (Belgium).

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