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EPISODES' CREDITS AND REFERENCES



EPISODE 1 - POLITICAL TRUST: A THING OF THE PAST?

What does political trust really mean, and can democracy survive without it? Let's unpack what trust is, why mistrust is not always bad, and why the "trust is collapsing everywhere" story is more uneven than it looks.

Host and writing: Eva Ribera

Production: Florence Ferrando, Barbara Vanotti

Editorial review: Mariam Khotenashvili, Alexandros-Christos Gkotinakos, Ilaria Giustacchini

Music: Nicolas Gadrat

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MUSIC 2 LOOPS @EVA SI_QU - WNM

Featuring interviews with: Prof. Daniela Braun (Saarland University) and Dr Alexander Hoppe (University of Duisburg-Essen)

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EPISODE 2 - ARE POLITICIANS LYING OR HAVE WE STOPPED LISTENING?

Many feel politicians don't listen and that nothing changes. In this episode, we explore the roots of disillusionment: accountability failures, material pressures, and the way loud voices can reshape what feels "normal" in politics.

Host and writing: Eva Ribera

Production: Florence Ferrando, Barbara Vanotti

Editorial review: Mariam Khotenashvili, Henrik Serup Christensen, Ilaria Giustacchini

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Featuring interviews with: Kelsey Beltz (The Good Lobby), Dr. Heather Grabbe (Bruegel), and Ophélie Omnes (OMNES Legal & Positive Lobbying)

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EPISODE 3 - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN NO ONE BELIEVES IN DEMOCRACY ANYMORE?

What does "life after trust" look like? Follow us as we explore the effects of political mis and distrust, from disengagement and polarisation to conspiracies and digital echo chambers, but also to the ways mistrust can redirect participation and spark renewal.

Host and writing: Eva Ribera

Production: Florence Ferrando, Barbara Vanotti

Editorial review: Mariam Khotenashvili & Alexandros-Christos Gkotlinakos

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EPISODE 4 - WHY VOTE IF NOTHING EVER CHANGES?

How is political participation changing today? This episode begins with the basics: who gets to vote, and who still struggles to take part, from legal restrictions to everyday obstacles that make voting far from equal. It then looks at how a shrinking civic space and unresponsive institutions can push people away, and what helps bring them back in. Finally, the episode explores the new ways citizens act, organise, and speak up - and what it might take for democracies to truly reconnect with them.

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EPISODE 5 - DOES DEMOCRACY NEED AN UPGRADE?

Democracies today face pressures they were never designed for. So is something fundamentally broken, or is democracy simply overdue for an update? In this episode, we explore whether democratic systems can adapt without losing their core promises. From institutional reform to citizen assemblies and participatory experiments, we look at what still works, what's showing its age, and how democracy might evolve to stay resilient in a fast-changing world.

Host and writing: Eva Ribera

Production: Florence Ferrando, Barbara Vanotti

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EPISODE 6 – IS IT TOO LATE TO SAVE DEMOCRACY?

Democracy is under pressure, from within and from the outside. So what needs fixing now? In the final episode of Democracy Cracks, we move from diagnosis to repair: protecting checks and balances, making accountability visible, and rebuilding the foundations that keep trust alive.

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Editorial review: Mariam Khotenashvili, Alexandros-Christos Gkotinakos, Ilaria Giustacchini

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ABOUT ActEU

How can we conceptualize and empirically measure political trust and legitimacy beyond the usual survey question “How much trust do you have in the parliament?”? Does the multi-level nature of European representative democracies require an identical level of citizen support at the regional, national and EU level? ActEU aimed at findings answers to these questions and more by pursuing two overarching goals: First, in phase 1, we mapped and investigated persistent problems of declining trust, legitimacy and representation in Europe with a particular attention to the polarization of societies and the EU’s multi-level structure. Knowledge gained from phase 1 flowed directly into the development of a toolbox of remedial actions characterizing phase 2, which crafted tailor-made toolkits for political and civil society actors, school teachers and university lecturers to deal with issues of declining political trust in representative democracies in flux and counteract a further decrease. We developed context-sensitive solutions for all polity levels and type of polarizing policy field (migration, environment, gender).

ABOUT TEPSA

The Trans-European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) was established in 1974 as the first transnational research network in the field of EU affairs. It comprises leading research institutes throughout Europe, with an office in Brussels. Its aim is to provide high-quality research on European integration to stimulate discussion on policies and political options for Europe. This is achieved by the interaction between the European and national institutions as well as the academic and research community. TEPSA is active on a wide range of research topics, focusing on differentiated integration, the EU's external relations, democratic participation and citizens' engagement.