

Democracy Retreat #1

The future of EU democracy

DATE: 13 October 2026
TIME: 16:00-18:00 CET
LOCATION: Salle Francqui
Fondation Universitaire,
Rue d'Egmont 11 - 1000
Brussels



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Democracy Retreat

Brussels
13 October 2026

Concept Note

Democracy and the rule of law are core, shared, foundational values of the European Union (EU). In the last decade, these two fundamental principles have consistently resurfaced as key topics in EU policy debates, on account of the rising threats they face from both internal and external sources. In this context, the European Commission has increasingly highlighted the importance of both democracy and the rule of law as cornerstones of the EU. However, this raises the question:

What does the future of the European Union look like in the face of these challenges, and what can be done to reinforce our democratic institutions and societies?

Under the Chatham House Rule, this panel will bring together a group of around 20-30 EU policy-makers, experts in democratic innovations and researchers from Nets4Dem, an ongoing Horizon project on democracy.

Programme At a Glance

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|-------------|---|
| 15:45 | <i>Doors Open</i> |
| 16:00-16:05 | Opening Remarks |
| 16:05-17:00 | <i>Scene-setting based on the ART paper “What Future for Democracy in Europe?”</i>

Salvatore Finamore (Political Administrator in the Analysis and Research Team of the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union)

<i>How can European Institutions adapt to profound technological and societal transformations?</i>

Vladimir Šucha (former Director-General of the European Commission's Joint Research Center, Senior Fellow at Florence School of Transnational Governance and Professor at Comenius University in Bratislava)

<i>Exchange with the audience</i> |
| 17:00-17:55 | <i>A closer look at democratic innovations by the European Commission</i>
<i>Supported by the co-authored volume “The Promise of EU Democracy: Reconnecting European Citizens?”</i>

Alvaro Oleart (Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Political Science and the Institute for European Studies at the Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul (Head of Unit for Public Opinion and Citizens' Engagement COMM.B.3 at the European Commission, Directorate General for Communication)

<i>Exchange with the audience</i> |
| 17:55-18:00 | Concluding Remarks |
| 18:00 | Networking Reception |

About Nets4Dem



This retreat is organised as part of the second iteration of Networks of Networks 4 Democracy (Nets4Dem), a Horizon Europe project coordinated by Democratic Reporting International, which endeavours to reshape the landscape of democracy initiatives. Since 2026, Nets4Dem has entered its second phase. With continued EU funding, the network has grown to more than 81 members across 38 European countries, reaching over 200 cities, 75 national governments, 50 universities and think tanks, and 400 civil society organisations. This new chapter brings a more agile governance model and new institutional partners and gives members a greater role in shaping priorities and guiding the network's longer-term development.



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.

More information on its activities can be found at <http://www.tepsa.eu>.

About Egmont



EGMONT – The Royal Institute for International Relations 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 own 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.



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