

World Forum for Democracy, Strasbourg, France, 2-3 November 2026

World Forum for Democracy

Call for initiatives

WHAT MAKES THE WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY UNIQUE?

The World Forum for Democracy is a platform where democratic actors from across the globe come together to discuss democracy challenges and shape solutions to them. The Forum focuses on innovative ideas and initiatives: concrete practices developed by governments, civil society, researchers and citizens are presented and critically discussed in order to explore their broader implications for democratic systems. A unique event, the Forum connects ideas, experiences and policy debates – helping democratic actors anticipate challenges and test new approaches.

WHAT IS THE 14th WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY ABOUT?

Democracies in all continents are facing profound challenges: the rise of authoritarianism, weakened democratic institutions, the distortion of public debate through disinformation, the shrinking of civic space, the undermining of electoral and democratic integrity, growing socio-economic inequalities and declining trust in public institutions.

The New Democratic Pact for Europe is the Council of Europe's response to this democratic backsliding. The Pact aims at anticipating trends and what futures democracies are preparing for – to identify both risks and opportunities and prepare collective responses. The 2026 World Forum will contribute to the Pact by focusing on democratic foresight and exploring how democratic actors can better anticipate change and design innovative measures to safeguard democratic values. The Forum will organise its sessions around the three pillars of the Pact:

Learning and practising democracy allow participants to explore how foresight can help empower all actors of the democratic processes to reclaim ownership in the future.

Protecting democracy will explore how can foresight help anticipate risks and strengthen safeguards.

Innovating for democracy will enquiry on how we can foster innovation to ensure a democratic future.

Across all three pillars, the Forum will serve as a laboratory of democratic foresight, exploring in each scenario what learning, protective and innovative responses would be effective, transferable and scalable to local, regional and national contexts.

WHAT IS THE FORMAT OF THE 14th WFD?

The 14th World Forum for Democracy will generate new ideas on democratic foresight to tackle the threats faced by today's societies. The first day of the Forum will focus on understanding the current context, identifying major challenges for democracies, and exploring possible future scenarios. On the second day, the "democracy labs" will present concrete examples of how democratic actors are already responding to these challenges. These sessions will also explore how such initiatives could perform under different future scenarios, and how they might adapt to evolving risks and opportunities. The democracy labs will include short presentations by academics, policymakers and other experts, and the presentation of 2 to 3 innovative initiatives, followed by a discussion with the audience.

TESTING DEMOCRATIC RESPONSES – WHO CAN PRESENT AN INITIATIVE AND HOW?

The World Forum calls for initiatives from public institutions, civil society organisations, and other actors, that help democracies prepare for future challenges. Selected initiatives should demonstrate innovative approaches that strengthen democratic resilience, participation and institutional safeguards, and that can inspire democratic action. The selected initiatives, submitted by any public or private organisations, will be presented and critically assessed by multidisciplinary panels and participants in the afternoon labs on the second day of the Forum. The key conclusions and lessons learnt from these sessions will be discussed in a summing up session to prepare the overall conclusions of the Forum. The Forum participants will vote to choose the winner of the Democracy Innovation Award among the presented initiatives.

The World Forum for Democracy calls for expressions of interest from innovative initiatives from all over the world that develop democratic responses to the challenges of today and anticipate those of the future.

These may be for example, <u>but not limited to</u>:

- Initiatives that explore what different futures, challenges, and responses societies encounter in order to built resilience.
- Actions that analyse which current developments will have the biggest impact in the next decades, and which limits and opportunities will that future scenarios hold.
- Actions seeking to empower citizens through a revitalised democratic culture and critical thinking.
- Projects that explore how deliberative democracy, citizen participation, and digital citizenship can improve democratic processes.
- Actions focusing on safeguarding democracy and social justice.

- Tools to stress test regulation of technologies in democratic settings.
- Initiatives addressing the social and economic factors and inequalities that undermine trust in democracy.
- Initiatives that analyse and seek to improve electoral and democratic integrity.
- Actions that combat hate speech and promote human rights offline and online.
- Innovative methods for fostering and sustaining meaningful political engagement, including that of young people, women and minorities.
- Initiatives focusing on the development, deployment and use of AI tools supporting informed debate, deliberation, participation and decision-making.
- Initiatives affirming democratic values, active citizenship and open debate.
- Initiatives promoting freedom of expression and offering support to independent media and high-quality journalism.
- Mechanisms for improving resilience to disinformation and manipulation.
- Initiatives supporting civil society organisations to act as democratic watchdogs.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION?

Submissions from any public or private organisation should be made by answering the questionnaire in this link by 31 May 2026 23:59 CET: World Forum for Democracy - Call for initiatives – Fill in form

One presenter for the selected initiatives will be invited to Strasbourg to take part in the World Forum. Travel and accommodation expenses may be covered by the Council of Europe if required.

For further information about the World Forum for Democracy 2026, please visit our website.