

Concept Note

2-3 November 2026, Strasbourg

World Forum for Democracy

Democracy is not in crisis. It is, however, experiencing a profound rupture.

Across Europe, growing inequalities, the shrinking of civic space, and loss of public trust in institutions continue to intensify, leading to a form of disillusionment, especially among young people. Citizens are increasingly questioning democratic systems that no longer seem to address their concerns and are ultimately losing interest in them or even gradually disengaging.

At the same time, threats are no longer coming only from within. On the one hand, cyberattacks and foreign digital interference are increasingly targeting electoral cycles and democratic institutions. On the other hand, information manipulation campaigns are weakening public debate and polarising opinion. Moreover, geopolitical shifts now appear to be redefining the rules of the international order and undermining shared universal values, foremost among them the rule of law, human rights, and democracy.

In this context, **democratic security** has become an existential concern. It raises questions such as: how can we continue to protect the ability to hold free elections, preserve the checks and balances and the independence of the judiciary, and guarantee freedom of expression and media freedom? Democracies must not only respond to crises but also anticipate them.

The New Democratic Pact for Europe, firmly focused on the future, is the Council of Europe's response to these new challenges. Supported by the Council of Europe's member states since 2025, the Pact provides a framework for reflecting on the future of European democracies and how to prepare for it. Over two years, the Council of Europe has conducted a broad consultation with its member states, regions, territories, civil society, and universities in order to better prepare for the future of democracy in Europe.

The World Forum for Democracy 2026 will mark the culmination of the Pact's consultation phase, placing emphasis on "**democratic foresight**", that is, the ability of our democracies to anticipate the future in order to strengthen democratic security in Europe.

Adapting to a new reality is no longer enough. Democracies must learn to imagine and build possible futures. Democratic foresight makes it possible both to identify emerging trends, risks,

and opportunities, and to foster collective and appropriate responses. In this spirit, the World Forum for Democracy 2026 will bring together political leaders, representatives of civil society and academia, youth voices, the general public, and experts from all backgrounds.

Over two days, participants will take stock of European democracies, project themselves into possible futures based on forward-looking scenarios, and commit to implementing concrete actions at all levels of governance. Discussions will draw on work carried out by specialists in policy planning and strategic analysis, exploring not only future threats but also the choices still available to democracies to strengthen themselves.

The discussions will address both immediate threats and long-term resilience: how can democracies withstand upheaval while renewing themselves?

Take part in this collective exercise and make your voice heard for the future of democracy!