

Within the framework of the New Democratic Pact for Europe

Towards Trusted and Inclusive Electoral Processes: The Role of Observers



28 (afternoon) - 29 (full day) April 2026

Paris, OECD, 2 Rue André Pascal, 75016 Paris (16e arrondissement), Room CC12

Moderator:

DAVID EADES

Broadcaster and Conference Host, former BBC
Europe Correspondent and Anchor

**Session I: Legal Frameworks for Domestic and International Election
Observation – Guarantees, Gaps and Good practices**

SPEAKERS

Chair:



STEWART DICKSON

Vice-Chair of the Council for
Democratic Elections, member
of the Congress of Local and
Regional Authorities of the
Council of Europe (United
Kingdom)

Stewart Dickson has been a Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly since 2011, representing East Antrim. He serves as Deputy Chair of the Executive Office Committee and sits on the Standards Committee. A member of the Alliance Party, he has long been active in strengthening democratic processes. Since 2011, Stewart has represented the United Kingdom in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, taking part in more than twenty election observation missions and acting as rapporteur on several major reports. He is the Congress Thematic Spokesperson on Elections, President of the Liberal and Independent Group, and a Bureau member. He also serves as Senior Vice-Chair of the Council for Democratic Elections of the Venice Commission and is an accredited election observer with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.



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LEAD SPEAKER:



OLIVER KASK

Substitute member of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe in respect of Estonia, Rapporteur of the 2024 Venice Commission report on "Election Observers as Human Rights Defenders"

DISCUSSANTS:



ZOFIA LUTKIEWICZ

President of the Political Accountability Foundation (Poland), Board member of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) and the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM)

Zosia Lutkiewicz is a democracy and civil society expert focused on electoral integrity and citizen engagement across Europe and globally. As President of the Political Accountability Foundation (PAF), she leads Poland's non-partisan election observation efforts and promotes comprehensive electoral reform. She serves on the boards of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) and the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM) working to address global threats to election integrity. Her experience advancing democracy and civil society development in Belarus, Russia, and Uzbekistan, including from the EU level, informs her strategic, values-driven approach grounded in non-partisanship, solidarity, and civic empowerment.



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Rasa Nedeljkov is the Program Director at CRTA, a leading Serbian organization committed to strengthening democratic governance, transparency, and accountability. Since 2016, Rasa has led CRTA's election observation mission, which has set new standards for impartial and professional election monitoring in Serbia. Under his leadership, the mission has delivered outstanding results in exposing irregularities and advocating for improved electoral conditions. Since joining CRTA in 2013, Rasa has also developed programs that safeguard information integrity, counter disinformation, and empower citizens to recognize and resist propaganda. Through data-driven analysis, advocacy, and innovative media literacy tools, he works to build a more informed and engaged society. He believes that active, informed citizens are the cornerstone of a resilient democracy and essential to Serbia's EU integration path.



RASA NEDELJKOV
Program Director, CRTA (Serbia)



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Session II Security and Operational Challenges in Election Observation

Chair:



**SRDJAN
DARMANOVIĆ**

Vice-Chair of the Council for Democratic Elections, member of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe in respect of Montenegro

Born in Cetinje, Montenegro, Prof. Dr. Srđan Darmanović is Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Montenegro. He served as Montenegro's Minister of Foreign Affairs (2016–2020) and Ambassador to the USA (2010–2016). He is a member of the Venice Commission and Vice-President of the Council for Democratic Elections. A founding dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Prof. Dr. Srđan Darmanović is also a founder and board member of CEDEM and author of several books and articles on politics and democracy. He has been a guest lecturer at renowned institutions, including Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, and La Sapienza University. He is a Reagan-Fascell Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy (2023).

Meaghan holds degrees in International Affairs, Russian Studies, and a Juris Doctorate. She has worked with the US State Department in Belarus and Estonia and with the OSCE since 2002 in Belarus and Tajikistan. In election assistance she began with the UN in Sudan for the 2010 elections and 2011 Referendum. From 2011-2019, she contributed to election observations as Mission Director, Deputy Head and Legal Analyst with ODIHR and The Carter Center. In 2019, she became the Deputy Head of the Democratization Department and since 2021, the Head of ODIHR's Election Department managing all of the office's election observation efforts.

LEAD SPEAKER:



**MEAGHAN
FITZGERALDI**

Head of the Election Department, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)



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DISCUSSANTS:



**NICOLAE
PANFIL**

Director of the Monitoring
Democratic Processes
Programme at Promo-LEX
(Republic of Moldova)

Nicolae Panfil is the Director of the Monitoring Democratic Processes Program at Promo-LEX Association, a leading civil society organization in Moldova focused on democracy, human rights, and electoral integrity. He has over 15 years of experience in promoting electoral integrity, democratic reforms, oversight of democratic institutions - particularly the electoral bodies and Parliament, as well as civic oversight of political finances. Since 2013, he has coordinated over 20 election observation missions in Moldova and contributed to key electoral reforms. From 2009 to 2016, he also served as Secretary of the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections in Moldova.

Ms. Ruthrauff has 25 years of experience in election observation. She has served as the Team Leader of the Election Observation and Democracy Support (EODS) project for the past five years, supporting the EU's election observation worldwide. Previously she has worked for the OSCE/ODIHR and National Democratic Institute, where she was responsible for planning and organising election observation missions. She now works as an independent consultant for a range of international organisations, developing methodology and building capacity for international and citizen election observers, including handbooks, training courses, and e-learning modules, and has written research papers on prevention of electoral violence and election reform. Ms. Ruthrauff has an MA in East European Studies from the University of Washington and a BA in International Relations from Stanford University.



**HOLLY
RUTHRAUFF**

Team Leader, Election
Observation and Democracy
Support (EODS) (United
Kingdom)



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Session III: Fostering Co-Operation for Enhanced Electoral Integrity and Public Trust

Chair:



**LORD
DAVID BLENATHRA**

Chairperson of the
Parliamentary Alliance for
Free and Fair Elections,
member of the Parliamentary
Assembly of the Council of
Europe (United Kingdom)

The Rt Hon the Lord Blencathra is a Conservative British politician and member of the House of Lords since 2011, after serving as MP for Penrith and The Border from 1983 to 2010. Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) since 2015, he has participated in election observation missions in several European countries and chaired the PACE delegation in Belarus in 2019. In October 2024, he became the first Chairperson of the PACE Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections. Lord Blencathra serves on key PACE committees and remains a strong advocate for democratic institutions.

Founder and Co-Director of the European Exchange gGmbH in Berlin. Stefanie Schiffer, born in 1965 in Heilbronn, Baden-Württemberg, studied Slavonic languages and Eastern European History in Tübingen, Kyiv and Munich. She has a broad experience in international democracy support and in civil society cooperation in Europe with a focus on the EU's Eastern neighborhood. She has been a founding member and initiator of several civil society cooperation programs and international platforms as the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE), the Kyiv Dialogue or the Plattform Wahlen. She has been an advisor to the Board of the Marion-Dönhoff-Foundation and to the filia Frauenstiftung, a member of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung e.V., a jury member of the Free Media Awards of the ZEIT Stiftung Bucerius and the Fritt Ord Foundation Norway. Also she has been a founding member of the organization Human Rights in Belarus e.V. She has been an organiser and participant in numerous international and domestic civil society election observation missions and has developed tools for the protection of the integrity of elections.

LEAD SPEAKER:



**STEFANIE
SCHIFFER**

Director of European
Exchange, Chair of the Board
of the European Platform for
Democratic Elections (EPDE)



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Discussants:



**ZLATKO
VUJOVIĆ**

Executive Director of the
European Network of Election
Monitoring Organizations
(ENEMO)

Dr. Zlatko Vujović is President of the Centre for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) in Montenegro, Vice Chair of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), and Executive Director of the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO), where he previously served as General Secretary (2017–2022). He is also a professor of electoral systems at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Montenegro. With over two decades of experience, he has led more than 10 international and over 15 national election observation missions. His expertise focuses on electoral integrity, democratic governance, and strengthening public trust in electoral processes.

Senior Election Expert at the EU External Action Service, has more than 20 years of experience with election observation, supervision and technical assistance gained working with the UN, OSCE/ODIHR, the Council of Europe, and now the EU. His current work focuses on advising his head of division on all matters related to EU election observation, with a strong focus on EU observation methodology implementation and development, new electoral technologies and internal quality control, together with a strong commitment to advancing multilateral cooperation, especially in the context of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.



**RICCARDO
CHELLERI**

Senior Election Advisor,
European External Action
Service (EEAS)



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Session IV: The Way Forward: Priorities for Action

Chair:



NIKLAS WILHELMSSON

Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDDEM), Head of Democracy and Elections Unit, Department for Democracy and Public Law of the Ministry of Justice of Finland

Niklas Wilhelmsson is Head of the Democracy and Election Unit in Finland and Deputy Director of the Department for Democracy and Public Law at the Ministry of Justice in Finland. Wilhelmsson has 20 years of experience working with democracy, elections and civil society issues within the Finnish government. Wilhelmsson is the vice-chair of the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDDEM). He has a broad experience of international collaboration in the field and has amongst other worked as a temporary expert on elections, democracy and transparency issues in Western Balkans, in EU's eastern partnership countries and on an OECD mission in Biscay (Spain). Wilhelmsson has before joining the government worked as a researcher and acting lecturer at the University of Helsinki. Wilhelmsson has published several research articles on democracy and elections.

Mr. Rastó Kužel is a media and election expert with over 27 years of international experience. Since 1998, he has led MEMO 98, a media-monitoring organisation with extensive experience in providing analyses and technical assistance to the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and numerous other international organisations. Over the past nine years, Rastó has focused intensively on online disinformation in the context of elections, as well as on the role of AI and social media and the ways to mitigate their negative impact on electoral integrity. He co-authored White Paper on Social Media, Disinformation and Electoral Integrity for IFES, as well as the UNESCO/UNDP guide Elections in Digital Times. He also wrote the Council of Europe's media-monitoring toolkit and prepared the PACE report Elections in Times of Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities.

LEAD SPEAKER:



RAST'O KUŽEL

General Rapporteur of the debate,
Executive Director of MEMO98



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Discussants:



**KONSTANTINOS
KOUKAS**

Congress Bureau Rapporteur for the
New Democratic Pact for Europe,
President of the Chamber of Local
Authorities of the Congress (Greece)

Konstantinos Koukas is a Greek elected official and lawyer, serving as Vice-President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe since 2020. He also acts as Congress Bureau Rapporteur for the New Democratic Pact for Europe, contributing to strengthening democratic resilience and restoring citizen trust in institutions. He has extensive experience leading and participating in election observation missions of local elections across Europe. As Mayor of Mykonos (2014–2023), he promoted sustainable development and accountable governance. He currently serves as Municipal Councillor and President of the Supervisory Board of the Regional Union of Municipalities of South Aegean. He advocates for stronger local democracy and institutional credibility.

Dr. Beata Martin-Rozumiłowicz is an Electoral Expert with more than two decades of election observation experience globally. She's most recently served as Deputy Head of Mission for the OSCE/ODIHR EOM to Moldova (2025). She's also been DCO on EU EOMs to Zimbabwe (2023), Kenya (2022), and The Gambia (2021/2022). Previously, she was Director for Europe and Eurasia at IFES (2016–21) and also headed (first deputised) OSCE/ODHIR's Election Department (2009–16). Over the past four years, she's been an independent electoral consultant, working with EU, EODS, EPD, OSCE/ODIHR, UNDP, USAID, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

Beata has recently co-authored a special edition on new political party assistance strategies with Policy Studies. She's also published on issues of election observation, technology in elections, disinformation, political/electoral developments, media reform, and political/campaign finance. She holds a D.Phil. (Ph.D.) and a M.Phil. (Masters) in Politics from the University of Oxford and was research fellow for Oxford's Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (1999–2000).



**BEATA
MARTIN-ROZUMIŁOWICZ**

Senior International Election
Expert (United Kingdom)



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