



Presidency of Malta
Council of Europe
May - November 2025
Présidence de Malte
Conseil de l'Europe
Mai - Novembre 2025



High-Level Conference on Building Democratic Resilience to Disinformation

*Organised by
the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Malta
under the auspices of the
Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe*

**17 September 2025
Villa Bighi, Kalkara, Malta**

As highlighted by the 2025 Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe calling for a New Democratic Pact for Europe, disinformation poses a significant threat to the foundations of democratic societies, challenging public trust, electoral integrity, pluralism, and fundamental rights. The growing sophistication and scale of information manipulation, often driven by hostile actors and amplified by digital platforms, undermine the ability of citizens to receive reliable information and make informed decisions. It ultimately erodes trust in democratic institutions.

This High-Level Conference will bring together government representatives, law- and policy-makers, regulators, civil society, journalists, academics and representatives from the technology sector to discuss effective, rights-based strategies to counter disinformation and build democratic resilience. It will provide a platform to discuss the multifaceted threats that disinformation poses to democratic institutions, values, and social cohesion, and to consider the responses that could help restore public trust and information integrity. Upholding the imperative to counter disinformation within a framework of the rule of law and respect for freedom of expression, as enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and reaffirmed by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe at the 2023 Reykjavik Summit, the conference will primarily focus on the demand side of the information environment, exploring approaches and measures to strengthen the resilience of citizens and democratic societies to information disorder. Emphasis will be placed on policy responses in the fields of media freedom, media literacy, education, youth and culture, while underlining the importance of coherent, joint-up national strategies, supported by international cooperation and the Council of Europe's expertise and standards, as well as showcasing best practices by civil society organisations in addressing this challenge.

Serving as a milestone in the Council of Europe's broader democratic renewal agenda and supporting the Secretary General Alain Berset's initiative for a "New Democratic Pact for Europe", the conference stands as an opportunity to reflect on the ongoing work of the Council of Europe and other relevant actors. It will facilitate dialogue on current and future standards and support member states to respond to disinformation while fully complying with the European Convention on Human Rights and other Council of Europe standards.

The Conference will also inform about the new Council of Europe project "RESIST: Strengthening Societal Resilience to Disinformation in Europe", funded by the EEA and Norway Grants. The project will support member states in developing comprehensive and sustainable strategies to build resilience to disinformation and to empower individuals, particularly youth, through media and information literacy and other relevant measures.



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Programme

10:00 – 10:30	Registration and Welcome Coffee
10:30 – 10:50	Opening – Welcome speeches
	<p>Ian BORG, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Malta</p> <p>Bjørn BERGE, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe</p>
10:50 – 12:10	Panel I – Disinformation: A Challenge to Democracy
Moderator	Herman GRECH , Editor-in-Chief, Times of Malta
Panellists	<p>Michael O’FLAHERTY, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights</p> <p>Jan BRAATHU, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media</p> <p>Matjaž GRUDEN, Director for Democracy, Council of Europe</p> <p>Vebjørn HEINES, Vice Chair of the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDem), Council of Europe</p> <p>Carmen CROITORU, Chair of The Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP), Council of Europe</p> <p>Salvatore ROMANO, Head of Research and Co-founder, AI Forensics</p> <p><i>The session will conclude with a 15-minute Q&A</i></p>
12:10 – 13:30	Panel II – Building Democratic Resilience to Disinformation: Standards and Practice
Moderator	Cesare PITEA , Legal Adviser, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division, Democratic Institutions and Freedoms Department, Council of Europe
Panellists	<p>Maja ZARIĆ, Chair of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI), Council of Europe</p> <p>Marie-Anne PERSOONS, Chair of the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU), Council of Europe</p> <p>Martina CHAPMAN, Independent Chair of the former National Counter Disinformation Strategy Working Group, Ireland</p> <p>Liliana VITU, Chair of the Audiovisual Council, Republic of Moldova</p> <p>Vitor TOMÉ, Council of Europe Expert, Autonomous University of Lisbon, Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal</p> <p>Neville BORG, Fact Checker, Times of Malta</p> <p><i>The session will conclude with a 15-minute Q&A</i></p>
13:30 – 15:00	Lunch hosted by the Maltese Presidency



15:00 – 16:20	Panel III – Resisting Disinformation: A Multistakeholder Effort
Moderator	Matthew XUEREB , President, Institute for Maltese Journalists (<i>Istitut Ġurnalisti Maltin</i>)
Panellists	George PAPANDEYOU , General Rapporteur on Democracy, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Antoine BERNARD , Director, Advocacy & Assistance, Reporters without Borders Miriam TEUMA , Chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth and Vice-Chair of the Joint Council on Youth, Council of Europe Cherise SULTANA , President of the National Youth Council of Malta (KNŻ) Patrick PENNINGCKX , Secretary General of the European Seniors' Union Arthur CHAPMAN , Vice-Chair, Scientific Advisory Council of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe, Council of Europe <i>The session will conclude with a 15-minute Q&A</i>
16.20 - 17.30	Panel IV: National Experiences in Strengthening Resilience
Moderator	Irena GUIDIKOVA , Head of the Democratic Institutions and Freedoms Department, Council of Europe
Panellists	André XUEREB , Ambassador for Digital Affairs for Malta Viktors MAKAROVŠ , Special Envoy on Digital Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Tomasz CHŁOŃ , Foreign Minister's Plenipotentiary for Countering International Disinformation, Poland Eva KLØVE , Special Adviser to the Managing Director – Strategy and Policy, Financial Mechanism Office of the EEA and Norway Grants Ganna KRASNOSTUP , Director of the Department for Strategic Communications and Promotion of Ukrainian Culture, Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine Dainius RADZEVIČIUS , Media Ombudsman (Journalists' Ethics Inspector) of Lithuania <i>The session will conclude with a 15-minute Q&A</i>
17:30 – 17:50	Conclusions and Next Steps
	Christopher CUTAJAR , Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Malta
17:50 – 18:20	Refreshments
18:30 – 20:00	Boat Tour
20:00 – 22:00	Dinner hosted by the Maltese Presidency