Final Report

This report was prepared by the World Forum for Democracy Secretariat on the basis of the key elements issued by the various sessions.

It intends to improve the understanding of the topics and to promote all related recommendations.

Most innovative and impactful lab initiatives are directly mentioned within the text body with the aim of supporting main conclusions, while the info boxes highlight key contributions offered by other sessions.

Storytelling	
Lightning talks	
Panel discussions	
Satellite events	

Table of Contents

Conclusions and recommendations

The sixth edition of the World Forum for Democracy gathered more than 2000 participants from over 80 countries. Politicians, journalists and international leaders provided their views on the question of populism and its impact on traditional party and media structures as well as on multilateralism. Civil society actors, politicians, experts, journalists and youth leaders reviewed in laboratories innovative initiatives to counter populist trends and to safeguard pluralistic and open democracies.

Why we need to talk about populism

Populism is now Europe's third political force behind conservatism and social democracy, with 19% of European voters choosing populist parties. Left and right-wing anti-establishment parties are here to stay, pursuing a three-decade long trend which has reduced extremism to a fringe phenomenon. To what extent their authoritarian and illiberal ideas will be adopted by mainstream parties remains an open question[1].

Across a number of countries polled world-wide, half consider representative democracy a very or somewhat good way to govern their country. Yet, in all countries, pro-democracy attitudes coexist, to varying degrees, with openness to nondemocratic forms of governance, including rule by experts, a strong leader or the military. Countries with more democratic systems and greater wealth show more widespread commitment to representative democracy.[2]

At the same time, majorities in nearly all nations also embrace another form of democracy that places less emphasis on elected representatives. A global median of 66% say direct democracy – in which citizens, rather than elected officials, give a binding vote on major issues – would be a good way to govern. This idea is especially popular among Western European populists.

Dealing with disruptions: clear political vision, enhanced citizens' role

Major disruptions, from rapid climate to technological changes – which in turn call into question the limits of capitalism as a viable and sustainable economic model – were considered as genuinely difficult to deal with and required articulate answers from mainstream political parties, failing which populist parties would continue providing theirs.

Indeed, anxieties related to globalisation, migrations, terrorism, income inequalities lead to people's perceived lack of control on their lives. To such fears, politicians tended to respond through the prism of the "nation state" notion as the only available. This lead to the scapegoating of communities, with rhetoric against migrants, refugees, LGBTI, Roma and other minorities.

In order to deal with the major disruptions of our time political parties needed to devise convincing, articulate responses, but also to support the citizens in going through such disruptions by not leaving it only to market forces. Populism thrives in the absence of convincing visions of a future which offers justice and opportunities to everyone.

Voters questioned that established parties and parliaments adequately represent them. Representative democracy was harmed by public officials' and politicians' illegal practices, such as corruption and tax evasion. Therefore, besides a clear vision, a stronger involvement of citizens was called for. A number of alternative participatory democracy practices/initiatives were reviewed at the WFD.

The wide-spread use of technology facilitated democratic participation and a sense of empowerment, as witnessed by the emergence of civic movements experimenting with more authentic, direct citizen participation based on new forms of representation and deliberative processes. These practices and initiatives all had in common a concern to give a clear mandate to citizens, allowing them to make informed choices over a sustained period of time, with the outcome being considered by elected representatives. However questions as to the exact nature of such initiatives (private vs. public), their sponsorship, transparency and relative inability to deliver on substantial issues were raised. The risk of

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[1] Timbro Authoritarian Populist Index 2017
[2] PEW Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy, October 2017

disappointing citizens further through such initiatives was also assessed.

Social media: from leveler to amplifier

Technological innovations allowed politicians to engage directly with a broader set of constituents. Availability of broadband across continents was initially seen as a major democratic enabler and leveler of playing fields, a true democratic promise. Internet and social media have indeed enabled unseen levels of information, global communication and mobilisation of social movements.

Today, however, technological inventions such as online platforms and big data were exploited for hate crimes and disinformation. Furthermore, social media could serve as amplifier of authoritarian populism through simplified narrations. The demise of gatekeepers such as legacy media which obey common standards of decency, respect of opponents and fact-based debate was worrying. Unlike legacy media, technology operators were not held accountable for the negative impacts on a pluralistic, fact-based political debate.

Different views were expressed on how to deal with social media in the current landscape. Some believed that they should no longer be seen as platforms but as publishers and therefore be subject to regulations, others that they should stick to the "rules of the road": separation between news and views, take all sides of the story , therefore only using traditional media type answers and refrain from legal measures. Overall, keeping contradictory debate was seen as a superior way at countering populism than creating an "editorial line".

Strong calls were made to safeguard the integrity of journalists and their ability to expose the "lies of politicians". Their struggle for freedom of speech remained crucial.

Multilateralism questioned

Domestic challenges to mainstream parties were paralleled with the increasing questioning of multilateralism and of the functioning of organisations that have shaped international relations since the end of WWII both at regional and global level. Such trend was seen as worrying notably in conjunction with the emergence of non-democratic world powers seen as possible alternative models to. Whilst it was considered

that so far multilateral institutions had served well in their preventive and conflict-resolution role, calls were made to strengthen a delivery culture and the capacity of the UN to deliver and notably to ensure that the excellent work realised through the SDGs format would yield concrete results.

Recommendations

To political parties

➢ Develop convincing and bold visions –away from single issue platforms- to tackle the current "disruptions" (climate, migratory, technological, etc.) coupled with clear step for step roadmaps.
➢ Make more use of technology for democracy, through broader participation in party debates and decision-making via face to face digital means. E-platforms have to be clear, transparent and accessible to all citizens.
➢ Ensure that electoral lists more broadly represent the societies in which parties operate.
➢ Reinforce and apply codes of ethical conduct, through use of sanctioning mechanisms.

To media and social media[3]

➢ Continue to support investigative media to expose party funding, corruption, inequalities etc.
➢ Join international fact-checking partnerships based on: alliance of media outlets of across spectrum of views, transparency and monitoring of impact on readers
➢ Ensure that business model guarantees independence through, inter alia: crowd-funding, citizen journalism, solution journalism.
➢ Be more self-critical, responsibility for keeping democracy on line is a shared one.
➢ Apply more self–regulation and/or better interfacing with ombudsman type institutions to counter hate speech.
➢ Provide whistleblowers with secure communication channels and legal support.

[3] See also:" Information Disorder : toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making". Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09

To national authorities

➢ Improve electoral systems to increase participation.
➢ Encourage citizen participation through citizen assemblies and other mechanisms.
➢ Reinforce the editorial independence and the financial sustainability of public service media broadcasters and strengthen vigilance on respect of the related standards, especially the protection of journalists.
➢ Dedicate specific public buildings and spaces to citizen participation.
➢ Enhance integration policies.
➢ Review systems for large-scale political education building upon the strengths of the model of political foundations. A main focus should be on increasing media literacy.

To local and regional authorities

➢ Launch participatory democracy initiatives (participatory budgeting, citizens' assemblies etc.).
➢ Explore alternative voting rules (e.g. evaluative voting, etc.) in local and regional elections, together with impact analysis to assess their effective impact on voter turnout.

To civil society

➢ Co-operate with media and justice institutions to counter political corruption.

To Council of Europe and other international organisations

➢ Explore evaluation and monitoring standards for the democratic quality of participatory democracy practices.
➢ Establish and monitor standards for the use of big data for political campaigning. Ensure that standards are enforceable and enforced.
➢ Effectively address migration and integration challenges, through a better division of competences among the concerned international organisations
  o UN to deal with migration flows
  o CoE to contribute to better integration policies based on HR and RoL standards and acceptance of diversity
➢ Enhance the governance of multilateral institutions to incorporate more direct input from, and accountability to civil society organisations, academia and other forms of citizens' fora on the model of the SDGs.
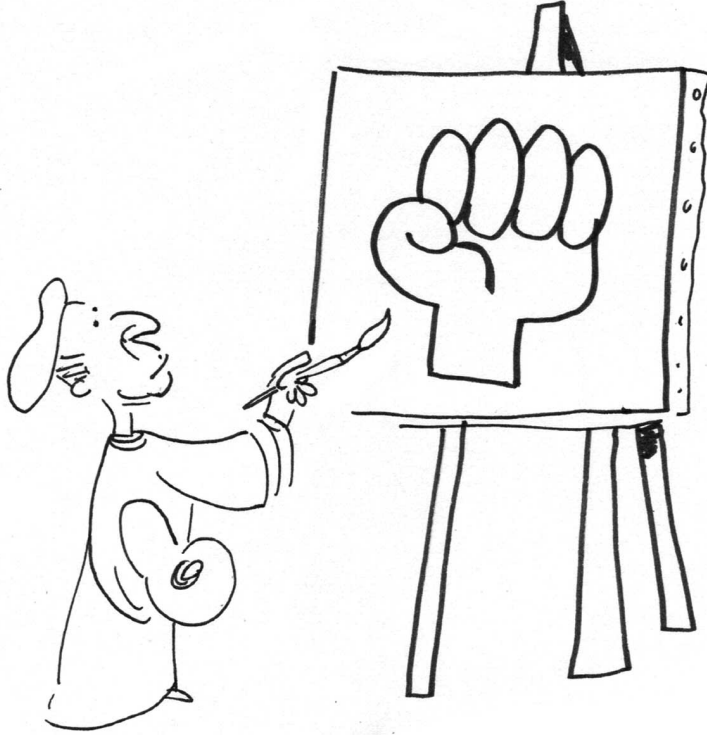
A word from the Organisers

Populism may take many forms and vary in definition, but it is almost always a symptom of democratic malaise.

Democracy requires public trust and an institutional balance, enabling fair political competition, the alternation of power, and constructive political negotiation. This trust is being rapidly eroded. Many citizens now believe that the actors of liberal democracy – in particular traditional political parties, and the media, do not serve their interests. They feel that liberal democracy has failed them and they are looking for new opportunities for political participation.

This sentiment of powerlessness and desperation provides fertile ground for populism.

Some populists claim to make marginalised voices matter by formulating more equitable, fair, and sustainable policies. Others hijack the political debate with an aggressive, divisive rhetoric and attacks on liberal values. They claim to embrace democracy – but not of the liberal kind. They curb political pluralism and freedom of expression, and undermine the judiciary, media and multilateral institutions that can hold them accountable.

The liberal democratic consensus was born from the immense suffering of the Second World War. Mass political parties and the mass media were the guardians of liberal democracy in the industrial era. We need to profoundly rethink democracy in the age of the internet, big data, and social media and bring citizens to the heart of policy-making.

The World Forum for Democracy 2017 will enable political leaders, activists and change-makers from around the world to share solutions that can help stop authoritarian populism, now a pathology of democracy, from becoming the norm.

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Jean-Baptiste Mattéi, Ambassador, Permanent representative of France to the Council of Europe
Jean Rottner, President of the Region Grand Est
Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg

... and from the plenaries' speakers

"I believe that the way of populism is not as much related to the economic situation. It is rather the perfect storm of emerging social media, big data and the fact that societies in the west are changing at a rapid rate and there is a backlash in that change." Reuf Bajrović, Former Minister of Energy, Mining and Industry of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

"When we talk about populism, or individual party politics, the deterioration of politics or the negligence need to be recognized… It is extremely important to see why populism is coming up, politicians have to ask themselves if there is any divide between them and the general public… this is the most important mission for a politician." Masazumi Gotoda, Member of the House of Representatives, Liberal Democratic Party of Japan

"What can a political party learn from civil society and social justice movements? We try to involve the most marginalized… if we are talking about refugees, we need refugees at the table, if we are talking about immigration, we need immigrants at the table… those who are closer to the problems are also closer to the solutions." Carmen Perez, Civil rights activist and representative of the Women's March

"Is it possible to guarantee a separation between news and views? It is difficult… as citizens have views, also journalists have views. The challenge is to ensure that some kind of separation is maintained between the report of news/facts and the opinionism…" Siddharth Varadarajan, India, Founding Editor of The Wire

"Education brings us together; it makes us think in a healthier manner. In all societies where education is strengthened, democracy flourishes, human rights get stronger, and there is no way for populism to grow." Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Turkey, President of the Republican People's Party

"Populism is a problem, but there are also other problems… one major problem is how parties are financed, in many countries it is a scandal …many people don't feel included in politics… we need to change our institutions to make them less vulnerable to populism." Stéphane Dion, Canada, Prime Minister's Special Envoy for the EU and Europe

"Democracy is about delivering…you have to address the real issues, coming back to the economic insecurity, as it is a very worrying time for many people… it is important to talk about the disruptions that affect the world." Helen Clark, New Zealand, Former Prime Minister of New Zealand

"Once populists take the power, they don't give it back… they are masters in confiscating the power." Nathalie Loiseau, France, Minister in charge of European Affairs

"When I look at the Bretton Woods institutions, I see signs of decay… We are facing a parallel challenge of revitalizing the institutions of global governance." Kevin Rudd, former Prime Minister and Foreign minister of Australia and chair of the Independent Commission on Multilateralism

"The Council of Europe, together with the European Union, is the best prove that multilateralism works in preventing and containing conflicts." Terje Rød-Larsen, International Peace Institute,

"We need temporary measures, such as quotas in the parliaments, in order to encourage politicians, who are not willing, to empower women." Thea Tsulukiani, Georgia, Minister of Justice of Republic of Georgia

"Youth engagement starts with the empowerment of the youth and their participation in the political process: our study shows that people under 30 make up less than 2% of the world MPs." Anda Filip, International Parliamentary Union, Director for Member States and External
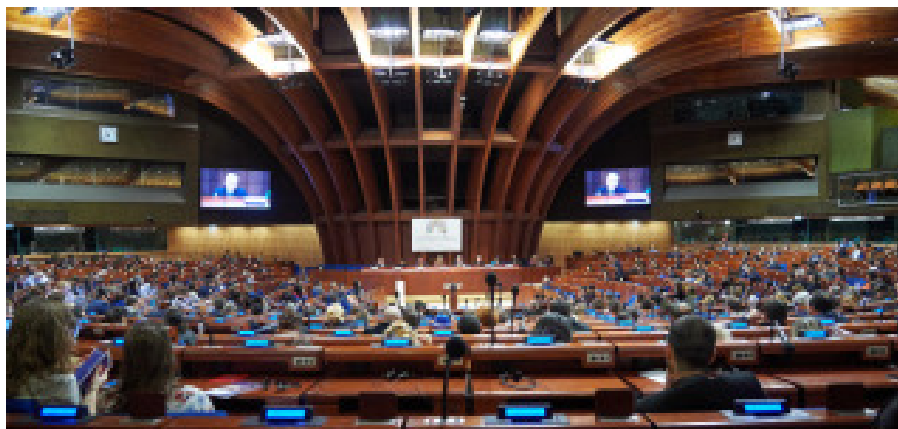
Citizens, political parties and media: the gatekeepers of democracy

1. Citizen engagement

If "the people" were being described as a monolithic entity by populist leaders, the only possible response for present WFD initiatives was to go at the encounter of citizens, to discover their diversity of sorrows, views and talents, to encourage them to seize their political rights, in brief, to foster active citizenship. Echoing concerns about social inequality and missing political visions for dealing with globalisation and its major disruptions (e.g. technological innovation, migration, climate change, security), many lab debates dealt with solutions to overcome the citizens' disconnect from politics. How do we begin to empower people who want to 'take back control', in such a way that they don't need a strong leader or leave alone the military, to do it for them? How can we give them and their children a confident future in the highly diverse, pluralist, multi-layered societies in which we live?

Citizen participation in decision-making

A first response issued by this three day debate was to establish new opportunities for citizens to be part of political processes, not only to express their problems and protest at public hearings as well as through elections, but also to take part – more frequently and more substantially – in the solution-finding and decision-making processes.

Some labs looked into examples of participatory democracy initiatives and practices, with multiple forms of citizen engagement. Most of them shared a desire to go beyond consultation towards co-designing of public policies.

The concerned labs highlighted two important pre-requisites to make such co-design process effective: more investments on popular education and more efforts in making citizen participation more inclusive.

Participation can be, in fact, incisive and meaningful only if participants are able to critically reflect on the issues. At the same time, to avoid that only most educated citizens participate, such education opportunities must be pervasive and be able to reach most vulnerable target groups.

The *Argentinean Defender of the Public of Audiovisual Communication Services* represents a successful example of a wide participation able to channel the citizens' voice in a systematic way. 20 regional public hearings, three national meetings, and countless training courses were, in fact, organized to ensure citizen participation, even from more remote areas. 4,940 people attended the Public Hearings and 10,866 took part in the stages related to its organisation since 2013. Participants were asked to formulate recommendations that were to shape the future of audiovisual public media programming, making it reportedly more representative and interesting for the diverse parts of the Argentinian society.

Participatory roundtables involving victims of armed conflicts, Colombia

Ms Paula Gaviria Betancur, Advisor to President Santos

In the course of the Colombian armed conflict, civil victims have mostly been invisible. In 2005 a civil society organisation started listening to their stories and lobby for their rights. In 2007 the Congress of Colombia discussed a law to promote their access to justice and compensation. In 2011, when president Santos came to power, he submitted a new bill to the Congress, known as "the victims law", which intended to implement the most comprehensive reparation policy of the world. Since then, participatory roundtables for victims have been organised in each Municipality. As Ms Gaviria Betancur said, *"this initiative rebuilt citizens' trust in the state and brought people to value democracy again"*.

Watch the video: https://www.coe.int/en/web/world-forum-democracy/lightning-talks-2017

Engaging citizens in public policy making does not need to be a punctual intervention, as the *Irish Citizens' Assembly* shows. With the benefit of expert, impartial and factual advice the 99 citizen members consider topics such as abortion rights, demographic changes, climate change etc. Their conclusions formed the basis of a number of reports and recommendations that will be submitted to the Houses of the Oireachtas, the legislature of Ireland, for further debate by the elected representatives. In its first iteration it consisted of 66 randomly selected citizens chosen to be broadly representative of society according to the Census, plus 40 politicians, who were actually persuaded in the course of the deliberations to change their minds. While

participants felt strongly about its benefits both with regards to creative and sustainable policy-making, and its value for reaching broader understanding of the complexities around political decision-making processes, they also agreed that more training opportunities for participatory democracy, such as political simulation games in school curricula, were needed. The quality of these processes, by true democratic engineering, was therefore considered to be as important as the result.

Citizen watchdogs

A second response concerns the increase of transparency and accountability of elected officials and political parties, in order to enable citizens to take better-informed choices. This being merely the role of media, it was pointed out that, especially due to current economic stress on (local) media outlets with their fragile business models, citizen watchdogs – any citizen who documents an injustice or other wrongdoing and shares that evidence with an audience, including journalists, internet or social media – were a necessary addition to reveal corruption and other forms of elitist misbehaviour.

From fake to fact

In the face of proliferation of fake news via social media, and the spread and 'normalisation' of uncivil and manipulative behaviours in the public sphere by populist and extremist parties for political gain, the demand for evidence-based resistance has become visible. While researchers, policy makers, and the media operate along different logics, interests, and time-frames for their action, there is a pressing need to re-examine responsibilities of research and academia, politicians and public administration, as well as the media and the organised civil society, and recast their strategic partnerships.

Watch the video of the debate:
https://www.coe.int/en/web/world-forum-democracy/-/from-fake-to-fact-video-available

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On *Vouliwatch*, a Greek online platform, citizens can monitor MPs' votes and behaviours, and also compare political positions to understand the political landscape. Every MP has an individual profile providing information about their function, their committee, their party, their political history, and their financial declaration. But in order to rebuild trust in democracy, there is also a need for strengthening the dialogue between civil society and the political elite. Therefore, *Vouliwatch* allows citizens to ask questions to the MPs through

the website – the questions are monitored by webmasters who will approve them before they are addressed via email to the MPs, whose answers are then published on the platform. For instance citizens can ask their representatives the reasons for their voting behaviour on specific subjects, but they can also share their thoughts and suggestions with them.

Similarly, through *Partidos Públicos*, a project by the Chilean *Foundacion Cuidadano Inteligente,* citizens can inform themselves about the incomes and expenses of a party, their last decisions, the mechanisms of decision making, how to join them, the national presence and the number of militants, the participation of historically excluded groups among its members, among many other features. The first challenge these initiatives faced was the access to the data. In the Chilean case, a huge political financial scandal, facilitated a push for legal reform forcing political parties to publish certain amounts of data concerning for example their finances, their organisation, decision-making and the connections with other structures and institutions. However, this kind of information is still hardly accessible and readable. Collaborations with parties themselves, journalists and volunteers are fundamental in order to link other relevant information with financial data. Citizen watchdogs' work seems to be fundamental as long as legal texts do not include demands for visualisation or other methodologies to render published information more accessible to larger audiences. *Cumuleo.be* addresses this issue by collecting, analysing and summarising the data, hence helping the citizen to understand the activities of politicians. The elements published by *Cumuleo.be* are regularly quoted by the press and discussed on social media, helping therefore to keep the debate on cumulated mandates and conflicts of interest in the public discussions. The discussion about the reach of broader audiences was also highlighted by various participants.

ArtiVism – citizen engagement through arts and culture

Certainly, a coherent response to the citizens' disconnect had to involve new forms and methodologies for mobilisation. In the opening session "Time for facts" cultural participation was correlated with tolerance, trust and active citizenship. Cultural activities can help people can help people to engage in a sophisticated dialogue and not get trapped by the simplistic solutions offered by populists.

Forum participants turned to popular culture and the arts in general for inspiration, recognising their unique successes to attract popular interest over time. It was recognised that populist political speeches intended to trigger an emotional reaction from the targeted audience, often disguising or turning attention away from fundamental policy shifts. As a result, most political decisions seemed to be the end-product of an emotional process rather than the outcome of rational thinking (cf. debate "From fake to fact").

Being aware of this highlights the necessity for the use of new tools, new languages and new methods in order to strategically make activism more efficient and to allow it reaching a broader audience. Thus *the School for Creative Activism* started a 4-5 day training model that uses techniques from popular culture and artistic practice to improve civil society actors' ability to mobilise citizens for political causes.

The *documentary "Boiling Point"* was produced to promote dialogue and respect between people with opposite views as a division in the country slowly emerged since 2015 due to the refugee crisis and the emergence of the "True Finns". As a result of this division, people either discuss only with like-minded people or they prefer to avoid talking about the issue. The aim of the documentary was to reach everyone, even the people who hold populist and racist views. With 738 screenings including subsequent political debates, the initiative has reached into private homes and public spaces in Finland and 20 other countries, 'to be watched together wherever people meet'.

The World Forum for Democracy as a direct experience of participation and co-design

Since its first edition, citizen participation has been a recurring issue for the WFD, as it was considered a key element to advance democratic governance worldwide.

This 6th edition introduced for the first time design sessions and a deliberative assembly to capitalise on participants' expertise and creativity.

Participants' knowledge and creativity was greatly appreciated and valued within the design session *"An agora for the 21st century",* which tried to ideate the ideal physical space for citizen participation. The session laid the basis for the construction of different examples in every city on the basis of specific architectonic styles, space constraints and other local regulations and

considerations, by addressing the following challenges: how to retrospectively make changes to places where spaces are not adequate for enabling participatory democracy, for enabling people to live happy, healthy and safe lives; how to convince, encourage and incentivise developers who are often driven by profit motives to take into account the need for these spaces and to incorporate them into their plans; and finally how to halt or reverse the loss of public space.

Participants agreed on minimum prerequisites: these spaces should be accessible, without hierarchy, be defined and relevant to daily life – possibly incorporated into the places people pass and frequent in their everyday flow through the city, instead of creating new sites and expecting people to travel there. The design session highlighted the importance for such spaces to be 'middle space' between citizens and institutions.

According to the urban design experts who led the session, the city is a space that evolves every thirty years. The project of developing the modern agora is, therefore, seen as a long term project, but there are interventions that can be already made to adapt existing spaces.

Participants' expertise was, instead, channelled in the *Forum's own Participants' Assembly*, which offered a chance to directly experience such forms of participatory democracy by debating and voting for a WFD key recommendation: the role of citizens' bodies in our democracies. How far should their power extend? How should members be elected? Intensive deliberation arose around five proposals designed by a panel of experts who laid out the pros and cons. There was a particular concern with the question of how citizens' bodies might fit into existing institutions. On the basis of participants' comments, the expert drafted three proposals. Submitted to participants' vote, all three passed but the highest majority of votes went to the proposal that such an assembly should play a role in proposing legislation in Parliament. To the present day there are no binding international texts obliging public authorities to involve citizens in decision-making processes. Is it possible to legislate a spontaneous and multi-faceted democratic process based on citizen participation, beyond the generic principles?

A third opportunity for an active participation of the audience was offered through the online vote. Participants were asked to vote five of the forum's recommendations, using a new election system – the random sample voting – combined with the evaluative voting option.

By receiving a ballot at the entrance of the lab rooms, participants were randomly selected to vote just for one of the five recommendations. Each ballot, in fact, contained a personal login code associated to only one of the five recommendations, together with two distinct vote codes corresponding to the two (YES and NO) options. It was the casual distribution of the ballots among participants which made the random selection possible.

In addition to the first Yes-No voting system, participants could then rate each recommendation under evaluative voting.

The five recommendations for the WFD Participants Vote

1. Parties (traditional and emerging ones) should seek to propose inclusive visions and programmes that deliver benefits for all citizens, and not only for a part of the voters.

2. Participatory and deliberative platforms and initiatives (citizens' assemblies, juries, forums, etc.) should be structurally embedded into the decision-making processes to balance the oligarchic tendencies of electoral democracy.

3. Social media should be regulated and held accountable for their impact on a pluralistic, fact-based and hate-free political debate, in the same way as legacy media.

4. The use of electronic platforms and big data in party activities and for political mobilisation and campaigning should be transparent and auditable.

5. Civil society organisations defending human rights and equality against attacks by populists should agree on a common agenda and strategy across identity politics divides.

The turnout rate of the demonstration experiment was rather low (less than 20%), but interesting results can be extrapolated. Voter turnout was uniform for all the five recommendations. Three of them received an overwhelming support that is n. 4, followed by the n. 1 and by n. 3 (with about 90% of voters in favor for them). The other two recommendations, n. 2 followed by n. 5, received 75% of approvals.

Concerning the evaluative option, the grades from -2 to +2 given by the participants enabled to split the five conclusions of the Forum into three

groups. First, recommendation n. 4 was clearly favored by the participants with an average grade of 1.55. Second, if not rejected, the conclusions 3 and 5 obtained much lower averages (0.85 and 0.82, respectively). Finally, the conclusions 1 and 2, with medium averages (1.25 and 1.19), form the third group. Conclusion 4 is also the winning conclusion of the Random Sample Voting. In other terms, the two systems produced equal outcomes.

2. Political parties

In a time of growing disconnect between citizens and political elites, the role of traditional parties, as political intermediaries to consolidate public opinion and to voice citizens' views, is questioned. Their legitimacy is undermined, as a matter of fact: people vote less, participate less, and identify less with them. The trust in institutions is at an-all time low: the Pew Research Center's global surveys presented in the time for fact session highlighted an overall lack of commitment to the idea of democracy. Although some positive figures, in particular 78% of people in favor of representative democracy and 66% in favor of direct democracy, many people support non democratic governing systems: 40% would support rule by experts, 26% would support rule by a strong leader and 24% would support rule by the military. The commitment to democracy is higher in wealthier nations, as well as in those that have longer experience with democracy.

Populism, as emerged from these three days of debate, is nothing more than the consequence of "the failure of parties and politicians to deliver". How to rebuild trust in parties and democratic institutions? How to increase cooperation among concerned actors (parliamentary institutions, parties and citizens)? How can traditional parties better capitalise on new technological opportunities to empower their members and voters? What mechanisms and electoral rules can make electoral votes count more? Some labs addressed these specific challenges and offered concrete ideas for possible solutions.

Opening up traditional political parties

The Forum highlighted an urgent need for parties to open up. Parties have to be more responsive to people and listen to them in a process of mutual learning. It is, in fact, such lack of representation that has led to the rise of populist parties.

Many lab initiatives well answer to such evolution: they contribute to increase inner-party democracy; they propose ways to involve not just party members, but also supporters and sympathisers, included ways to circumvent party lists, which do not allow for much elective choice. Once in government, online practices and other forms of participation also allow people to inform themselves and to hold political parties accountable, to have a say on their policies and to increase transparency. All these initiatives prove that participation and trust go hand in hand. Technological innovation, in the form of e-platforms and e-tools, can support this mutual relationship, in particular by involving certain categories such as younger generations, but it is not a panacea for everything. Complex issues cannot be processed online. In addition e-platforms cannot guarantee to effectively target the community that will be affected by that political decision. Finally, they pose concern in terms of representation, as they require IT-literacy and attract mostly well-educated users. Statistics show that online debates tend to be entirely dominated by middle class males, so a key challenge is to successfully address gender equality and to balance different classes, urban and rural participation. In any case, a multidimensional and multichannel approach, resorting to e-platform for simple and immediate issues, while addressing more complex issues through offline interactions, must be preserved.

Populism in Electronic Democracy

Münster, Germany *(6 November 2017)*

The University of Münster organised a satellite event to discuss the promise and perils of e-democracy to media and political parties in the context of rising populism. New forms of online communication have raised hopes to reconnect citizens and their elected representatives. However, the anonymity of the internet serves a populist agenda, as populist political communication tries to discredit traditional media and political parties. Can digitalisation be a trigger for populism or can electronic democracy be a panacea against this failure. Can online participatory instruments enhance the quality of democracy? Are there new instruments to identify Fake-News and foster democratic integrity?

More information here: https://www.coe.int/en/web/world-forum-democracy/satellite-event-populism-in-electronic-

While capitalising on technological opportunities, parties need to prove citizens that such participation has a clear impact and that their voices are effectively heard. Lab discussions highlighted important pre-requisites for that: access and participation need to be made both simple and personal. Online debates must be moderated, in order to reduce the influence of those determined to boycott the process, and also foresee the intervention of experts to guarantee accurate information on specific issues.

#ForzaNazzjonali proves that traditional parties are able to address this challenge, if there is an effective will. Two Maltese traditional parties, Nationalist Party (PN) and Democratic Party (PD), which formed the alliance Forza Nazzjonali in the run up to the 2017 general election, created their own e- platform to allow users to scrutinise and criticise the alliance's proposals, by suggesting possible amendments or making new proposals. More than 2.000 ideas were uploaded, illustrating the success of the website which managed to reach up to one third of the Maltese population.

PASOK is, instead, an example of a traditional party which adapted its organisational structure to address the democratic deficit registered in Greece. Founded in 1974 as a socialist and left-wing nationalist party, PASOK introduced a number of participative actions (such as open meetings at local level, called demos) and deployed a decentralised structure (local organisation, prefectural committee and regional committee) in

order to connect citizens in general – and not only its supporters – more directly with decision-makers and the decision-making process. Aware of the importance of monitoring such participation, performance indicators were elaborated.

Parties' openness not only concerns the participation dimension, but also addresses their accountability. Their full integrity and transparency is a key prerequisite for a public trust. Some lab initiatives, based on their collaboration with citizen watchdogs, as well as on the adoption of codes of conduct in national parliaments and democratic institutions, facilitate this accountability process. The respect of international standards and all regulation efforts made by international organisations can lead the way to it.

The initiative proposed by ODIHR *"Integrity of elected politicians"* clearly goes in this direction. Over the last ten years, twelve national parliaments across the OSCE participating States adopted codes of conduct. Beneficial effects have already been proved: they helped members of parliament in raising the level of professionalism into politics, they allowed the civil society to judge the parliamentary conduct, and they introduced a healthy debate on ethical standards and integrity. These codes cover various topics: conflict of interest, conduct in chambers, lobbying and third parties, gender equality, use of parliamentary resources. They should increase the politicians' ability of self-monitoring, as well as restore public trust in those politicians.

Reforming representative democracy

Another bloc of initiatives focused more on a reform of representative democracy as such, included the idea of platform parties to bring together abstainers, protesting voters, discontented politicians, those who are alienated from traditional politics, who could be, in the absence of such an opportunity, drawn towards populist parties.

On the other hand, there are initiatives that allow to further opening up political choices, like negative voting, that is the option to vote against, or evaluative voting, by grading each candidate on a numerical scale. These options should positively affect voter turnout and contribute to reduce extremism and polarisation. Many challenges are still present, in terms of functionality (a need to adapt the technology) and legitimacy (in case of only negative nets).

The *Balanced ballot* initiative implemented by the Negative Vote Association in Taiwan shows evidence in relation to the positive impact of the negative voting option on the quality of the vote (higher voter turnout, depolarisation of the political spectrum, etc.). The initiative aims at improving all election systems in the world by incorporating the option to vote against. The principle of "one person, one vote" is maintained, as each voter still has only one vote, but the latter can be used to vote AGAINST or FOR a candidate. The AGAINST vote would be counted as minus one. The winner is the person who receives higher net positive votes. Researchers have shown that this option would increase voter participation significantly, and that so-called "populist" candidates would receive net negative votes. What would happen if every candidate has a negative vote? Corrective measures can be introduced, as the option to vote again if no one has the right number of votes in favor. The introduction of new systems also poses possible problems in terms of functionality: as new to voters, there could be a malpractice, but citizens should quickly learn how to use it.

Although all these initiatives potentially lead to the strengthening of democratic institutions, which are under attack by populism, they all require time to be effectively implemented, as well as education and learning to help citizens to use them in the best way.

The *Argentinian Net Party* showed a successful adaptability to contextual challenges. Example of new political parties and movements, the Net Party does not have a predetermined programme and agenda. The latter is, in fact, the progressive result of citizens' contributions: with 1500 formal members and about 100 active members involved in daily decisions, its goal is to elect deputies in the legislative elections that make decisions according to decisions voiced by regular people, through a software (DemocracyOS) that gathers opinions and votes. Net Party is also one of the few examples which effectively questioned the profile of the citizens reached via internet. Studies and analysis highlighted that the main internet participants were middle-income men in their forties. Dissatisfied by such a result, Net Party elaborated new tools to effectively target other citizens.

Youth engagement and civic education

Statistics reported by presenters in various sessions confirm that less than 30% of young people are willing to actively participate in political parties and to vote. The problem is that youngsters have varying degrees of political knowledge and are more vulnerable to computational propaganda which triggers their emotions rather than their reasoning. Social media can be easily used to polarize them, in particular to provoke fear, incite hatred, and generate distrust. A study on educational achievement, mentioned by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement during the time for fact session, found that the more students learn about civic institutions and democracy the more there is resilience to populist messages. But this higher knowledge also correlates with students being less willing to engage in conventional politics. Open and democratic environment in school is also connected to more aware and active citizenship attitudes.

Which educational approaches better develop their critical thinking, allowing them to cope with misinformation and avoid the simplistic answers of populists to complex questions? Some of the presented initiatives encourage young voters through small steps, they contribute to build social capital and to increase participation.

Civic education is considered as one main pillar of a strong democratic system: it should be a compulsory choice in all school curriculums, but it should also be led by political parties. The latter, in fact, better know how to take constructive criticism and to shape the public opinion. Taking the example of the migration issue, political parties should provide people with its positive effects, in order not to let it feed the populist propaganda.

Although it doesn't directly address education, the American initiative *"Next Generation Engagement Through Direct Grassroots Investment"* proved to have a strong impact on Youth's political awareness and participation. The mission of this initiative is to engage the millennial generation in the political process through grassroots fundraising or, "direct grassroots investment". This included the involvement of celebrities in public events and in interact activities with youngsters in order to make a social media trend out of it. A key strategy to increase millenials' participation is to make political involvement more attractive and amusing by organising affordable fundraising events with a high level of networking opportunities.

To effectively reach its purpose of making citizens aware of their role in the society and in the political decision-making process, the format of civic and political education programmes should be adapted to different contexts and to evolving challenges.

Konrad Adenauer Foundation, as other German political foundations, managed to do it. Civic education was, in fact, indispensable in building a liberal democracy in the Federal Republic after 1945 and in reunited Germany after 1989. While there was an immediate link to the experience of totalitarian rule in the early days, in this country civic education is today confronted by new challenges, in particular the rise of political extremism, as proved by the last elections. Such reality makes necessary to connect politicians and citizens, through education, in particular through a comprehensive approach consisting in:

- ✓ Political education given by the state is schools;
- ✓ Political education learnt in the civil society;
- ✓ Civic education given by the church;
- ✓ Civic education given by federal and regional agencies;
- ✓ Political education given by the political foundations, such as the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Concerning the latter, there is more than one foundation focusing on this topic, using different tools and ideas to attract young people. The "Smart Camps" initiative is just one of the on-going projects implemented by the Adenauer Foundation. It is based on the idea that social networks can be used to disseminate political and civic values. During these 3-4 day camps, pupils have the chance to meet experts, such as bloggers and youtubers, and to create anti-populism campaign themselves, by learning how to use digital tools and social networks in a professional way. Teachers can also participate in these activities in order to capitalize on these tools and information for their teaching activities.
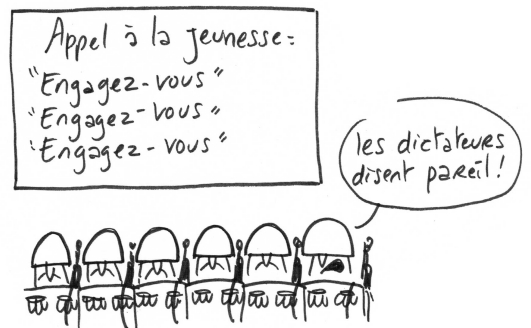
3. Media

The Forum emphasised in more occasions the fact that media are essential to the functioning of democracy: ensuring that citizens are well informed and making it possible to hold elected representatives and officials to account, but many voices warned that it is not happening anymore.

Parallel universes

One of the clearest signs of trouble is the rising tide of what has been called 'fake news'. While it has always existed, the internet has allowed it to have unprecedented scale and influence by troll-factories or automated 'bots'.

This is not just a matter of spreading disinformation or lies: "fake news" undermine public confidence and trust in institutions. They prevent a proper debate: in recent years it seemed as if the very coin of truth or journalistic facticity is becoming devalued, so that otherwise powerful media organisations and organised political parties appear unable to gain traction or to push back

effectively against untruths and half-truths, unable to focus public attention away from distractions to the realities that matter. Another even more disturbing sign is the perception that people can no longer rely on any common ground of shared assumptions or undisputed facts that would allow them to adjudicate disagreements. Instead, rival political groupings inhabit parallel universes, "echo chambers" where they see or hear nothing except that which confirms their own views. And the national public media institutions that are supposed to build social cohesion and provide the frame for these discussions are more and more exposed to pressure by their governments.

The World Forum for Democracy 2017 focused on what has to be done. In various lab sessions, delegates proposed and discussed a wide range of imaginative and resourceful plans, such as apps and browser extensions that deconstruct the filters that social media impose on users, and that encourage people to 'read outside their bubble'.

The *Read Across the Aisle* is an example of a digital tool that encourages people to read news more fully, to understand the scope of their media intake, and to seek perspectives from sources that they may not usually read.

Facebook Tracking Exposed pursues the same objectives. This browser extension looks Facebook's by allowing users to visualize their own newsfeed with infographics and statistics (e.g. on the time spent on social media, the number of friends effectively populating one's newsfeed, etc.)
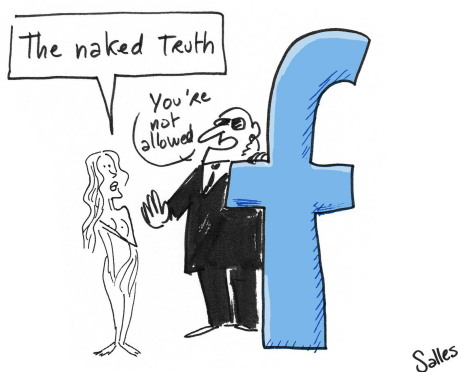
Collaborative initiatives, such as *Africa Check*, *Crosscheck* and *EuCheck*, where media institutions and journalists work together to respond in real time to combat false rumors were also presented. Courageous groups of critical and investigative journalists, such as the *Union of Informed Citizens* in Armenia or *The Insider* in Russia, work intensively to expose the lies of politicians, often at risk of their careers or lives.

Launched in February 2017 before the French presidential election, *CrossCheck France* is an example of a real-time collaborative verification service. It brought together 37 local, regional and national newsrooms in France, as well as three from the UK (including the BBC) and one from Belgium. CrossCheck debunked 64 stories.

Although collaborative efforts are fundamental to multiply the impact reached by single fact checking initiatives, the coordination of these platforms poses a number of problems, first of all in terms of priorities and workflow balance among the partners. As Cross Check reported, some newsrooms tend to give priority to stories that they think will get good traffic, which is not always the case.

Although they are all creative and relevant initiatives, representing valuable contributions to the strengthening of democracy in their contexts, they cannot directly fight authoritarian populism. Media and Technology cannot, in fact, solve a political problem, but they can contribute to shape the public opinion by making people more politically aware.

Aware of that, *the Union of Informed Citizens* developed a multidimensional approach to fact checking based on complementary and interlinked activities, including direct fact-checking via its website, awareness raising and competence building activities targeting local citizens and civil society organisations, as well as the media.

Making sense of the world

The Forum sessions which focused on fact checking show that existing approaches and methodologies have not an effective impact, because many people are simply disaffected.
Fake news involve powerful and compelling stories that not only purport to explain the world around us, but that also systematically 'poison the well' against competing versions of the truth: delegitimising or questioning the trustworthiness of central media institutions, the veracity of science, the authority of experts, and the legitimacy of universities. This kind of narratives find adherents not because people are naïve or poorly educated, but rather because they make some kind of emotional and political sense.

In this regard, the presented fact-checking initiatives emphasised the importance of being more proactive in exposing fake news narratives rather than just reactively debunking stories one by one. It is fundamental to focus on the core of the problem by looking at the tactics, strategies and objectives of the protagonists – what narrative they are propagating – and then bring that to the attention of citizens.

Authoritarian populism is an example of it: it is about much more than centralising authoritarian power in the name of 'the people'. Rather, populism is a way of making sense of the world.

Populist discourse stitches together a wide range of popular grievances into a coherent story that confers a powerful sense of social belonging; a sense of an 'us' that is beleaguered and marginalised. Once it has been established, that embattled sense of belonging becomes the lens through which everything is viewed.

The key challenge is to find ways of getting people to care about the truth - and about the others' views of - again. It is important that we go beyond checking facts to challenging myths. The simple stories of belonging created by populism need to compete with others, more inclusive ways of thinking about identity and about who 'we' are.
It is also important to consider that people are not only passive consumers of news. Legacy media and new media platforms must become places where people can have honest conversations and where they can take the risk of trying to hear each other.

How to build an automated bomb?

Mr Hannes Grassegger, Switzerland, Journalist, author, editor

Earlier wars were nation state based wars with states fighting each other. They used physical weapons, whose high manifestation was the nuclear one. As result of a massive technological disruption, we assist today to multiple overlapping conflicts with coalitions fighting other coalitions in a non-linear way. Today we have tools that help to spread information more quickly and less costly: Social media. Texts don't transmit information in the classic form. They rather spread emotions. Social media are emotional social networks, able to synchronise emotional states and emotions are the thriving force for action. The emotion that mostly circulates is the hanger, pushing people to go against each other.

Although new media technologies and the internet figured prominently in most debates, legacy media, in particular public service media, received a particular attention in a dedicated lab, "Can democracy survive public service media?" Public Service Media (PSM), that are still in many European countries the most relevant source of information, are more and more exposed to pressure by their governments. The lab analyzed the two-way relationship between public service media and populism: how populism affects public service media and, vice-versa, how PSM can counter populist strategies and propaganda.
The debate concluded that PSM are still an important safeguard for Democracy, but its main challenge is to compete with new media in engaging with the citizens.

Public service media have still a fundamental role in serving the public interest, spreading fact-based information and tackling any propaganda. It's the subjective perception and the manipulative use of the concept of public interest by populists that undermine such role. Fact checking is essential, just like shared validated data is. It is the duty of traditional media to check facts but cannot make this job alone.
Important complementary pre-conditions to allow PSM to effectively accomplish its role of gatekeeper of the public interest are: its editorial independence and financial sustainability, the independence of the independent regulator for audiovisual media in accordance with the international standards on freedom of expression and the full conformity of national laws with international standards on freedom of expression, including the protection and promotion of pluralism and diversity.

Lab 1 - Is hybrid democracy more inclusive?

Sponsored by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Moderators:
Ms Gunn Marit HELGESEN, President of the Chamber of Regions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the CoE (Norway)
Mr Marko BOKO, Member of the Bureau of the Advisory Council on Youth (Croatia)

Initiatives:
#ForzaNazzjonali (Malta) by Mr Franco CURMI Digital Director for the Forza Nazzjonali party
POP: Public Opinion Platform (France) by Mr Geza TESSENYI, Initiator and main designer of the Public Opinion Platform (POP)
Is media the next democracy platform?, Poll Town (USA) by Ms Keren FLAVELL, Founder and CEO of Poll Town (United States of America)

Discussants:
Mr Alfred HEER, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Switzerland)
Ms Rosaleen O GRADY, Councilor, Sligo County Council (Ireland)
Mr Chakshu ROY, Head of Outreach, PRS Legislative Research (India)

The lab in brief

In a time of growing disconnect between citizens and political elites, this lab examined the impact of new instruments for citizen participation, especially taking into account e-participatory tools. These innovative tools – summarised under the theme of *Hybrid Democracy* – can be a new approach to reach broad levels of the population and a new way to address people who are not involved in political processes yet.

The aim of the Lab was to explore the effectiveness of these e-participatory tools and to assess their impact on decision-making processes. Furthermore, the lab tried to examine how political parties can capitalise on these opportunities to hand back power to their supporters. Modern ways of citizen participation can help to foster civic commitment, and in conjunction with democracy, help to strengthen democratic processes in a whole.

About the initiatives

#ForzaNazzjonali, Malta

The open democracy platform #ForzaNazzjonali is a new system of e-democracy, created by the electoral alliance

Forza Nazzjonali - formed in April 2017 between the Nationalist Party (PN) and Democratic Party (PD) in the run up to the 2017 general elections to crowd-source proposals and new policy ideas. It mainly targets the younger generation who is having the stronger disconnect from politics. It is a generation too busy to participate and frustrated by seeing that its participation in political decision-making does not impact the society. The online platform allows users to interact directly with the alliance's proposals and make suggestions on how to amend them.

Therefore, the users can also scrutinise and criticise the suggestions, and make entirely new suggestions of their own. More than 2.000 ideas were uploaded, illustrating the success of the website. In terms of functioning, there are two columns per idea where pro and con arguments can be discussed and shared immediately on various social media platforms. The result is a high virality of the idea and the platform as a whole – contributing to the success of #ForzaNazzjonali which managed to reach up to one third of the Maltese population. Lots of effort was put into the visual design of the website to successfully compete with other content on social media. One of the greatest challenges is to track the impact of the shared ideas, which is essential to prove users that their engagement matters and so to motivate them to keep using the platform in the future.

Public Opinion Platform – POP, France

"POP: Public Opinion Platform" is designed to gradually build up real-time democracy within the existing constitutional framework of indirect democracy – without any need for legislative

change. Within the concept of real-time democracy, citizens can exercise permanent control over political decisions and the government. It is an experimental tool to improve the workings of indirect democracy and a flexible mix at the same time. It is a platform in its substance – open to all people and all opinions – and a registered political party in its legal structure. The main feature of POP is to invite the expression of real-time majority public opinion on important legislative and governing decisions. POP representatives in the legislature and in government are obliged to vote according to the majority public opinion as expressed by citizens on the platform. The platform is made for all citizens, who feel adult enough to take political decisions about the questions that concern them directly – paying particular attention to abstainers from politics, protest voters, but also politicians who do not like to make promises that they cannot keep. POP can be used at local, national and regional levels, but it is not implemented in practice at the present time.

Is media the next democracy platform?, Poll Town, USA

Started in 2013 as a Facebook app, Poll Town wants to simplify citizen engagement in the light of low political participation in most democratic countries. The aim of this initiative is to reinvigorate public debate and to engage the silent majority to have their say. In order to reach better and wider audiences, the tool was further developed as an embeddable widget that could be placed on webpages and news stories. Political leaders and government organisations have to pay to embed their polls within news articles. The positive results are more funds for journalism and media as civic hubs, where civic engagement effectively takes place. For a stronger impact, political actors need to overcome their fears of this kind of engagement and to experiment new different ways to bring the community into decision making in order to make the citizenry more active and aware.

Security, transparency and representation. The reliability of e-democracy outcomes is called into question by the difficulty of certifying who is really behind the internet page. Polls in particular can be misleading as happened in the latest American elections. Low participation in polls and other e-democracy tools then question their effective

representation, as they cannot represent the whole electorate (differently from direct democracy tools). For their use IT-literacy and a certain educational background are, in fact, required posing concerns for their effective inclusiveness: not the entire population knows how to use computers and electronic devices or does not have them at their disposal. The example of India where the number of people who have access to the internet is limited questions then the transferability of e-tools to less developed countries. Finally, how can we be sure that such e-tools effectively target the community that will be affected by political decisions in the end?

E-tools are not the solution for everything but, as websites can be citizen-driven, they are a precious opportunity to collect and present their ideas. As in the case of #ForzaNazzjonali, they intentionally target younger and educated people in the light of the existing participation gap between young and older generations. A multidimensional solution, including different and complementary tools suitable to every part of the population, need to be adopted for a greater and more inclusive participation.

Simplification vs. complexity. Complex issues are beyond the yes and no answer and other simplified mechanisms offered by e-tools. Do users understand everything that is at stake while using such tools? How can leaning questions, behind complex topics, affect the results of such platforms? Platforms have to be designed to embrace meaningful discussions instead of focusing only on simplistic participation. In addition, as explained by Poll Town, not every issue fits into a poll. It is not an exact science, as algorithms are in place to continuously check behaviours of the users to ensure its reliability. By the way the majority of e-tools, such as Poll Town, are not designed to replace the voting act: they serve rather to show trends and to give a voice to "the silent majority".

Non-binding e-participatory platforms. The present non-binding character of e-participatory platforms could lead to frustration and disappointment among citizens, once they realize that their online-engagement has no impact in the real world. E-tools can only influence the public opinion, but not the final decision taken by government and parliament bodies. A different result could be obtained if parties embedded such tools in a more binding way: POP, for example, was conceived as a way to give a real influence to citizens on the legislative process. With 51% in the

Parliament POP could, in fact, govern. At the same time the non-binding character could be an advantage, as online more extreme and intolerant ideologies tend to rapidly spread and become popular.

E-platforms still have to find a solution to their main dilemma: on the one hand they want to allow as many users as possible to use their websites to express their thoughts. On the other hand, the more binding a decision should be in the end, the more important it is to identify users who are engaging on the platform, creating problems in places where freedom of speech is not guaranteed. While waiting to find an effective solution to such dilemma, e-tools can be seen as ways to sensitise and train citizens for more active citizenship: they can, in fact, engage in small issues which are not overexerting them. Over the time, by seeing that their engagement has an impact and that they are heard, their trust in political decision-making processes could become stronger.

✓ To make the use of e-platforms simpler and faster in order to foster a higher participation.
✓ To preserve the consultative role of e-tools as a way to sensitise and train citizens for more active citizenship, while leaving the binding legislative process to representative institutions.
✓ To allow users tracking the impact of their engagement and their ideas.
✓ To use a multidimensional and multichannel approach, resorting to e-platforms for simple and immediate issues, while addressing more complex issues through offline interactions.

Lab 2 - "Corruption and populism: can the international community help?"

Sponsored by the Group of States against Corruption and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Moderator:
Mr Michele NICOLETTI, Italy, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Rapporteur on "Promoting integrity in governance to tackle political corruption"

Initiatives:
Integrity of elected politicians, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights – ODIHR, (Poland) by Mr Jacopo LEONE, Democratic Governance Officer, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Group of States against Corruption - GRECO of the Council of Europe by Mr Christophe SPECKBACHER, Administrator Officer at the Secretariat of the Group of States against Corruption - GRECO

Discussants:
Ms Gülsün BILGEHAN, Turkey, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Mr Finn HEINRICH, Germany, Director of Programmes, Democracy Reporting International

The lab in brief

Corruption is the abuse of public power for private benefit. Corruption threatens the rule of law, democracy and human rights, undermines good governance, fairness and social justice, distorts competition, hinders economic development and hampers growth. Corruption can be used as an instrument to increase fears and to deceive citizens. It endangers the stability of democracies, undermining trust in public institutions as well as the moral foundations of society.

The lab explored how the international community could strengthen the fight against corruption.

About the initiatives

Integrity of elected politicians (Poland)

The initiative aims to improve integrity in parliaments and political systems, by promoting the adoption of codes of conduct by national parliaments, in order to set high ethical standards for members of parliament in due consideration of their duties towards the state and the society.

A legislative code of conduct is intended to create a political culture, which places considerable emphasis on the propriety, correctness, transparency and honesty of parliamentarians' behaviour. These codes cover various topics: conflict of interest, conduct in chambers, lobbying and third parties, gender equality, use of parliamentary resources. They should increase the

politicians' ability of self-monitoring, as well as restore public trust in those politicians.

Over the last ten years, twelve national parliaments across the OSCE participating States adopted codes of conduct. Beneficial effects have already been proved: they helped members of parliament in raising the level of professionalism into politics; they allowed the civil society to judge the parliamentary conduct; they introduced a healthy debate on ethical standards and integrity, etc.

Nevertheless, further additional research will need to be conducted in the upcoming years, to better classify different types of codes of conducts, looking at the specificity of the areas they attempt to regulate.

Group of States against Corruption - GRECO of the Council of Europe

Since its establishment, the Council of Europe has addressed corruption as a serious threat to democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Anticorruption instruments, like the *Twenty Guiding Principles for the Fight Against Corruption* (1997), the *Criminal Law Convention* on Corruption (1999), have been adopted. GRECO's priorities are to prevent corruption in the legislative and executive branches of powers and to increase the transparency and supervision of political financing. GRECO works in cycle, called evaluation rounds, each round covering specific themes. To fulfil this mission, GRECO follows a two-step procedure comprising a mutual evaluation and a compliance

programme, which is applied to all members for each evaluation round.

Corruption in the common perception. Citizens don't know much about corruption because corruption is by nature something secret (as it could have negative effects on the reputation of concerned institutions, NGOs, governments etc.). Furthermore, corruption is barely reported and its measurement is complex. There is, in addition, an information gap between regulations on paper and the effective corruption level of certain countries (e.g. Uganda). The main challenge is to enforce legislations and recommendations.

Finally, there is a correlation between the economical level of a state and its corruption level. For the civil society, the most corrupted groups are the political parties and politicians at national, regional and local levels.

Corruption and populism. The emergence and success of populism is usually connected to a crisis of democratic systems. The most exposed to its influence are political systems which experienced an institutional transition. People do not feel anymore that they can voice their dissatisfaction effectively, or that their interest is the important factor for elites in power. Corruption is a vicious circle: to win elections, populists use the discontent and the fear of the populations, but at least once in power, they tend to be the most corrupted.

Recommendations

- ✓ To fight for more transparency and to combat corruption by protecting journalists, investigative reporters and whistle-blowers (e.g. the platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, created by the Council of Europe).
- ✓ To guarantee judicial independence for the conduct of investigations.
- ✓ To educate citizens against corruption by spreading ethical values and by adopting codes of conduct in schools and universities.
- ✓ To strengthen the coordination between the international community and other institutions, organisations, NGO's etc. for a joint fight against corruption, as only the combination of efforts of international organisations, domestic institutions and civil society can make such a fight effective.
- ✓ To provide support by the international community to states and investigators who want to expose facts or behaviours related to corruption.
- ✓ To encourage the adoption of codes of conduct in national parliaments and democratic institutions in order to promote integrity, transparency and public trust.

Lab 3 - Fact-checking: Is it worth the effort?

Moderator:
Mr Bertand LEVANT, International Organisation of La Francophone, France

Initiatives:
CrossCheck (France/United Kingdom) by Ms Marie BOHNER, Project Coordinator of CrossCheck
Africa Check by Mr Robert HOLLOWAY, Chair of Africa Check, United Kingdom

Discussants:
Mr Jamal Eddine NAJI, Director General, Audiovisual Communication, Morocco
Mr Goston PIERRE, Editor, AlterPresse, Haiti

The lab in brief

Fact-checking is an important dimension of journalism that contributes to a healthy democracy of informed citizens. However, fact-checkers can be depressed by the obstacles of the lack of an independent press where they operate, the lack of reliable data and sources of official information, and the time and effort required to investigate and report on a suspicious claim.

The discussion explored the effects of news and information distribution, i.e. the significance of social media platforms. Some expressed a desire to instill a greater appreciation of traditional journalism (as editors of legitimate information), while others suggested an earlier intervention in schools.

There was a consensus that more and better engagement with citizens is required, and the CrossCheck initiative showed how this could be achieved, through an interconnected model among professional journalists, the public and social media providers.

About the initiatives

CrossCheck (France/United Kingdom)

CrossCheck was launched in February 2017, to create a claim verification service for the French presidential campaign. The project had 37 partner news organisations that investigated 64 claims and produced videos and infographics. To go beyond a simple true-false dichotomy, Cross-Check developed a typology of seven types of misinformation/disinformation: 1. Satire or parody (no intention to cause harm but has potential to fool); 2. Misleading content (misleading us of information to frame an issue or individual); 3. Imposter content (when genuine sources are impersonated); 4. Fabricated content (new content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm); 5. False connection (when headlines, visuals or captions don't support the content); 6. False context (when genuine content is shared with false contextual information); 7. Manipulated content (when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive).

The joint collaboration within the media sector wasn't obvious: some saw participation as a way of increasing competition, while others didn't see the need for increased transparency. For local media partners, it was an opportunity to increase trust with their audiences. An important lesson the project partners learned was that their reaching out to ordinary people on the ground — showing individuals how fact-checking works — resulted in direct engagement with those on both extreme sides of the political spectrum. The presenter saw this as a way of satisfying a public service mission of media organisations.

Africa Check

Africa Check was established in 2012, as a UK-based non-profit organization two years ago but it created a French-speaking subsidiary and it is now in the process of transitioning the business to Africa. Africa Check employs 15 staff full-time and operates in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal. It has fact-checked over 1,500 claims; the major theme is public health, but it also covers migration, economy, and weapons.

The initiative contributed to get rid of certain contagious diseases. From 1998–2001, Nigeria had an annual rate of about 50 new cases of polio. Then in 2002 there was a rumour that vaccines were part of a conspiracy to make women infertile, and politicians did nothing to dispel such rumour; new cases of polio increased to 1,600 in 2006. A

public information campaign helped reduce that number, but the presenter made the point that more than 3,000 people got polio because of unfounded rumours that were not checked by the media.

The responsibility of public service by journalists and fact-checkers. It was argued that journalists provide a public service by investing time and resources to uncover information that would otherwise remain unknown; the role of investigative journalists was highlighted. It was also argued that citizens will seek more accurate information once they are showed what it is, which is a role of a fact-checker.

Challenges included the capacity to establish independent media channels in regimes where freedom of the press and/or access to reliable data (especially from government sources) does not exist.

Another challenge is the influence of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Google, which do not see themselves as media outlets and thus not accountable to established standards of journalism. Here a conundrum is the practical need for journalists and fact-checkers to use social media to communicate with their audiences, thus compelling a pragmatic engagement with the platform providers.

The re-engagement between journalism and the public. It was mooted whether the formal profession of journalism has become endangered. A suggested response was to train the principles of journalism to children, from the age of five.
Legislating against those who publish false claims was deemed impractical (e.g. jurisdiction enforcement) and potentially undesirable (as governments could use such powers to curtail voices of opposition). Yet there was a wish to have this conversation between journalists and governments.

Educating the general public on the subject of misinformation was agreed as a good, long-term solution. It was suggested that such learning should take place at a local level, where there should be a higher level of trust (than at a higher, more abstract, national level). Also, this could be a way to revitalise local journalism: "Journalists need to understand what their responsibilities are, their ethics and what they do as a public service. Citizens have to understand how important freedom of expression is for journalists."

The innovative response of mainstream media. A view was expressed that a trained journalist knows the difference between 'fake news' and 'real news', so the issue is to not republish the misinformation. That is, are we giving too much importance to false claims in influencing public opinion (recalling disinformation campaigns decades ago)?

This led to a discussion on the regulation of standards of professional journalists, and whether self-regulation would encourage evermore cooperation, in order to restore and ensure credibility and trust by the public.
CrossCheck was cited as a positive example of how professional journalists can be closer to individual citizens across the political/social/economic spectrum, and with the application of social media.

- ✓ To enforce norms of freedom of speech, an independent media, and professional civil service.
- ✓ To provide financial support to misinformation education in schools and local communities, to engender local journalism.
- ✓ To promote projects that demonstrate innovation among professional journalists, the public, and global social media providers.

Lab 4 - Making votes count more

Moderator:
Mr Paul ROWSELL, Head of Governance Reform and Democracy Unit, Department for Communities and Local Government

Initiatives:
Balanced Ballot (China) by Mr Sam CHANG, President, Negative Vote Association (NVA)
President 21 (Czech Republic) by Mr Jonáš **VNOUČEK**, Community Manager and Analyst at the Institute for Democracy 21

Discussants:
Mr Nicolas K. BLANCHARD, Random Sample Voting Project and Public Opinion Platform
Ms Adele GAMBARO, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Ms Herrade IGERSHEIM, CNRS Associate Research Professor, BETA (UMR 7522) and University of Strasbourg

The lab in brief

Making votes count more means giving more weight to each vote, by assessing the impact of existing and new voting methods both on voter turnout and political legitimacy. Electoral systems have a different effect not only on the number of competing candidates, but also on the probability for each of them to be elected. Such probability, in turn, affects voters' attitudes (tactical voting, protest voting, abstentionism, etc.), and so the quality of the vote.

It is widely agreed that a democratic system institutionalised pluralism by creating parties that represent diverse groups of voters with distinct ideas. Within that range, some candidates divide more than others. Some candidates polarised the debate to very extreme positions: although a large majority of voters do not share their ideas at all, with the existing electoral rules they can be elected.

To guarantee a higher and better consensus, it is possible to act on the way candidates are selected, with the purpose to make them more "acceptable" for a larger part of the electorate. Is it possible to change the voting systems in place to assure that the ones who divide the most the society won't stand any chance to be elected on the D-day? Can a new voting system reduce such a risk? Will changing the math change the result? The answer to all these questions is YES.

To fight populism efficiently a possible solution could be to invent an equation that provides a strong incentive to reach consensus. As populism is not based on consensus, but on divide, we should not elect the candidate that has more votes casted for him but the one who is the most easily accepted by everyone.

Someone, who does not see own favorite candidate elected, will easier accept electoral defeat, if the new political leader is moderate. Therefore, adding the option of a negative vote could depolarise the political spectrum. The main consequence could be a moderation in the political platforms and a consequent decrease of most hateful words, radical or violent solutions. Could it wreck down the incentives for populism? If yes, what would be the most appropriate equation to make it happen?

This lab looked into alternative voting rules and systems and explored their potential impact on voter turnout. The panel discussed the advantages and challenges of negative and plural voting. They underlined the effect that it could have on the political landscape by reducing the vote in favor of extremist parties.

About the initiatives

Balanced Ballot (China)

A Balanced Ballot is a ballot where voters have the option to vote AGAINST or FOR a candidate. The AGAINST vote would be counted as minus one. The winner is the person who receives higher net positive votes. Each voter still has only one vote. The initiative aims at improving all election systems in the world by incorporating the option to vote against. Researchers have shown that this would increase voter participation significantly, and that so-called "populist" candidates would receive net negative votes. Some elections, such as the one of the UN Secretary General, make already use of such an option. The result is considered to be more transparent and trustful, as the winner cannot proclaim to own the majority of the electorate's support.

President 21 (Czech Republic)

This online civic game is a real time voting app, where citizens can nominate and vote for their ideal presidential candidate using the Democracy 21 voting system. As of now, the game has over 100.000 active users and it is expected to produce an ideal candidate, acceptable for the majority of voters due to the nature of the system. Each voter can cast up to three positive votes of equal value and up to one negative vote. The voter must use at least two positive votes to be able to cast the negative vote.

Potential impact on populism. An election survey in the United States of America, sponsored by the Negative Vote Association, measured the potential impact of negative vote. Respondents were asked to imagine if each voter can cast an "against" vote instead of just "for", how they might vote. Each voter still has only one vote. The "against" vote is counted as minus one and is called a "negative vote". The survey results clearly established that voter participation will increase when voters have the option to vote "no". As a matter of fact, only 16.6% of respondents reported zero intention of voting in the presidential election. When voters are given the option to cast a negative vote, 12.2% report no intention of voting. This is a statistically significant reduction in nonvoting (of 4.4 percentage points). Without the option to vote "against", the survey showed Clinton leading with 38.2%, Trump 27.0%. With this kind of voting system, Donald J. Trump would not have been elected in the US against Hillary Clinton. In fact, Hillary Clinton would only receive 6.7% net positive votes and Trump would have more votes "against" him than "for" him. Mathematical modalities change results, making them better. As a matter of fact, extreme rhetoric will be reduced and so will populism.

The same potential impact is confirmed by Democracy 21. While traditional voting systems only looks for winners and losers, systems, such as the one promoted by the Institute for Democracy 21, value voter satisfaction, which means real preferences. If we focus on satisfaction, those who cleave public opinion will lose because of the high number of rejections against them. In brief, extremist opinion would suffer from the democracy 21 system because more preferences would be expressed.

Functionality, legitimacy and governability. What would happen if every candidate has a negative vote? Corrective measures can be introduced, as the option to vote again if no one has the right number of votes in favor. The introduction of new system poses also possible problems in terms of functionality: as new to voters, there could be a malpractice, but citizens should quickly learn how to use it.

Cultural change. Traditional liberal democratic theory stresses not only one person, one vote, but also that this vote is indivisible. It is hard to convince citizens that they can have a multiple choice. Indeed, the rule of "one voter, one vote, one candidate" is still well rooted and is quite intuitive. Nonetheless, experimental works prove that people endorse this new paradigm. The evaluative vote is another interesting option, but do citizens have the sufficient knowledge and interest to do so? It's important to embrace a flexible approach. Negative vote is already a tendency in our traditional voting systems, because voters adopt strategic behaviors to vote.

- ✓ To test new voting rules (e.g. negative voting, evaluative voting, etc.) in more and different contexts and to measure their effective impact on electoral turnout.

- ✓ To encourage and monitor experiments in real political elections, while accompanying voters on their functioning in order to avoid malpractices.

Lab 5 - Participatory democracy: an antidote to populism?

Sponsored by the Conference of the INGOs

Moderators:
Ms Anna RURKA, Poland, President of the Conference of the INGOs of the Council of Europe
Mr Marko **GRDOŠIĆ**, Croatia, Chair of the Joint Council on Youth and the Advisory Council on Youth

Initiatives:
Citizen participation in public hearings to strengthen democracy, Defender of the Public of Audiovisual Communication Services (Argentina) by Ms Paula CASTELLO, Training and Participation Department Chief, Defender of the Public of Audiovisual Communication Services
The Citizens' Assembly (Ireland) by Ms Sharon FINEGAN, Secretary to the Citizens' Assembly
The Plan C for a citizen-generated Constitution (France) by Mr Etienne CHOUARD, Professor of Economics and Management

Discussant:
Mr Joseph SPIEGEL, France, Mayor of Kingersheim

Presentation of the conclusions from the simulation exercise implemented by the Bulgarian School of Politics during the Forum:
Mr Nastimir ANANIEV, Bulgaria, Former Member of the Bulgarian Parliament

The lab in brief

To the present day there are no binding international texts obliging public authorities to involve citizens in decision-making processes. Is it possible to legislate a spontaneous and multi-faceted democratic process based on citizen participation, beyond the generic principles? Can a public recognition of existing and already institutionalised practices of participatory democracy facilitate this legislation process? What is the right way to go forward on this issue?

On the other side, are participatory bodies and experiences vehicles for raising citizens' expertise? How do decision-makers use voters' expertise in political decision-making, and vice-versa, what effective influence do participants have on this process?

The lab looked into examples of participatory democracy to identify the best ways to involve citizens in political decision-making processes.

About the initiatives

Citizen participation in public hearings to strengthen democracy (Argentina)

The Argentinean Defender of the Public of Audiovisual Communication Services held 20 regional Public Hearings, three national meetings, and countless training courses to ensure citizen participation. 4,940 people attended the Public Hearings and 10,866 took part in the stages related to its organisation since 2013.

Participation Public Hearings are spaces for citizen participation, where people can express their opinions about media functioning. It is the first time in Argentine history that a public organisation has systematically called upon citizens to voice their opinions about media and has taken their comments into consideration when defining public policies. Beyond a request to take into account the territorial diversity of the different Argentinian regions, it represented a real mobilisation to demand that the Argentinean audiovisual sector reflected the country's population, taking into account programmes concerning young people, women, people with disabilities, the elderly, transgender people, etc. It is a concrete way to strengthen the bond between the state, citizens and media.

The Citizens' Assembly (Ireland)

Established by the Irish Parliament, the Citizens' Assembly is an exercise in deliberative democracy, placing the citizen at the heart of important legal and policy issues facing Irish society today. With the benefit of expert, impartial and factual advice the 99 citizen members consider topics such as abortion rights, demographic changes, climate change etc. Their conclusions form the basis of a number of reports and recommendations that will be submitted to the Houses of the Oireachtas, the legislature of Ireland, for further debate by the elected representatives. Members of the Assembly are chosen at random to represent the views of the people of Ireland, and are meant to be broadly representative of society with regards to age,

gender, social class, regional spread etc. So far it revealed that the Irish society is less conservative than its parliamentarians.

The Plan C, for a citizen-generated Constitution (France)

Through the organisation of constituent workshops, the initiative aims to show that ordinary citizens can read and criticise their constitutions, by encouraging them to write amendments they would like to see ratified. Citizens must ensure that a constitution is at their service and not at the discretional (sometimes demagogical) use of their representatives. Once the population is thus prepared to reflect personally and concretely on its constitution, "Le Plan C" aims to promote a constituent assembly drawn by lot.

According to the presenter, the Icelandic experience based on the popular elaboration of a new constitution did not succeed, only because the Constitutional Court judged such step illegitimate, so allowing the Parliament reducing its scope.

<div style="background:#E8491D;color:white;padding:4px;">Key points issues by the debate</div>

Pre-requites for an effective democratic process. Four principles must be guaranteed:
1. No democracy without a public action based on ethics and with a limited access to power for any elected official;
2. The elected representative(s) must dedicate a physical place for the exercise of democracy by citizens, in order to allow them to meet whenever they wish;
3. Democracy is foremost a process, with a time and various steps needed to develop citizen opinions (the elected representative is primarily a facilitator of this process rather than a representative);
4. The elected official must nourish citizens' will to give their opinion, starting with those excluded from the city's life (the elected must apply a maieutic method, to facilitate the delivery of these opinions).

Participatory democracy and the centrality of education. Public affairs are inherently complex and paradoxical, which requires that:

- Citizens need more training opportunities for participatory democracy to succeed. Engaging in participatory democracy initiatives is an education experience in itself.

- The quality of the process, by true democratic engineering, is more important than the result.
- The objective is not to arrive to a soft consensus, but to highlight, where appropriate, contradictory opinions in the same way as the disputations of the Middle Ages.

The sovereignty belongs to the people, with representatives being only servants in the service of the latter, which entails, on behalf of the citizens, to build a framework (constitution) which makes it possible to control the representatives and to contain their power.

<div style="background:#E8491D;color:white;padding:4px;">Recommendations</div>

- ✓ To boost people to practice active citizenship through popular education, so that they seize the tools of participatory democracy and make them live, in order to get involved in political decision-making processes.
- ✓ To educate citizens on the best use of participatory tools and on strategic and effective ways to lobby for their opinions to be heard.

Participants' Assembly

The debate on possible legal frameworks for participatory democracy continued within the Participants' Assembly. All interested participants had the opportunity to directly experience participatory democracy, by debating and voting for a key recommendation of this year's Forum.

Like in real citizens' assemblies, Forum participants took seats in the hemicycle, the heart of the Council of Europe's decision making process, to deliberate on an issue of global importance.

Moderator:
Ms Sharon FINEGAN, Secretary to the Citizens' Assembly (Ireland)

Experts:
Mr Gregory DICKOV, Lawyer of the Secretariat of the Venice Commission (acting in individual capacity)
Mr Yves MATHIEU, Founder and Director of Missions Publiques (France)
Mr Gráinne McMORROW, Lawyer of the Secretariat of the Venice Commission (acting in individual capacity) (Ireland)
Mr Robert WILSON, Independent Researcher (United Kingdom)

The moderator, Ms Sharon Finegan, welcomed the participants and briefly explained the process for the session. With reference to the Irish Citizens' Assembly, Ms Finegan explained that this session was going to replicate a specific stage of a deliberative democracy exercise – voting and formulating recommendations. Due to time constraints and practicalities it was not going to be possible to replicate a full deliberative democracy exercise in the session.

Mr Robert Wilson provided a brief background to the history of deliberative democracy exercises. He described how they are typically introduced at the discretion of governments. He explained the draft proposal for deliberation by the participants. The draft proposal, as introduced, was as follows:

- The Constitution should proclaim the principle of deliberative democracy, but operating principles (e.g. assemblies, juries, etc.) should be regulated by law.
- Citizens' bodies should have a formal power to approve/veto certain laws taken by the legislature, and this power should be guaranteed by law.
- Citizens' bodies formal power should extend to all matters, both at the local and national levels.
- Citizens' bodies should be permanent institutions.
- Members of the citizens' bodies should be elected by lot and they should represent the diversity of the society (age, gender, culture, etc.).

He described the draft proposal as seeking to place deliberative democracy bodies on a permanent basis and providing citizens with a right to such deliberation which would be enshrined in constitutions/legislation.

Mr Dickov and Ms McMorrow, as members of the legal expert team, briefly outlined the pros and cons of the draft proposal to inform the participants' thinking.

The floor was then given to participants for their questions and proposals. A broad range of issues were raised during the discussion: some raised the issue of whether such an activity could exist as part of our existing democratic mechanisms, instead of the creation of additional bodies. Existing mechanisms mentioned included joining political parties and use of the referendum procedure.

These would remove the requirement for new institutional frameworks.

There was a tension between such bodies having a meaningful impact and the removal of power from a wider base of citizens.

During a brief recess, the expert team re-formulated the wording of the proposal based on the feedback from the floor. The team agreed that there was consensus on point 1 of the draft proposal. It was also agreed that there was consensus on point 5 with one minor textual addition so that it read "Members of the citizens' bodies should be elected by lot and they should represent the diversity of the society (age, gender, culture, etc.) with consideration to be given to ensuring that marginalised groups are represented." It was agreed that there wasn't sufficient debate or discussion on points 3 and 4 to warrant voting on them or to deem there to be a consensus on them as they stood. As most of the discussion focused around the amount of power such a body should possess it was agreed that point 2 should be amended to provide three options for the participants to formally vote on the level of power afforded to citizens' bodies.

Point 2 was re-drafted as follows:

"Citizens' bodies should have a formal:

A. Power to approve/veto certain laws taken by the legislature, and this power should be guaranteed by law;
B. Power to propose the agenda for legislation to Parliament;
C. Right to be consulted on issues within the remit provided by Parliament."

Voting results

The participants voted on options A-C and the results were as follows:

A. Power to approve/veto certain laws taken by the legislature, and this power should be guaranteed by law	
Number of Voters	21
	RESULT
YES	13
NO	6
ABSTENTION	2

B. Power to propose the agenda for legislation to Parliament	
Number of Voters	21
	RESULT
YES	14
NO	4
ABSTENTION	3

C. Right to be consulted on issues within the remit provided by Parliament	
Number of Voters	25
	RESULT
YES	13
NO	9
ABSTENTION	3

The voted recommendation of the Participants Assembly is that citizens' bodies should have formal power to propose the agenda for legislation to Parliament.

Lab 6 - Citizens' disconnect: can parties open up?

Moderators:
Mr. **Răzvan** RUSU, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Romania to the Council of Europe
Mr Mohammad SHARIFI, ICAN youth activist, Youth Department's youth delegation, the Netherlands

Initiatives:
Organisational transformation though democracy innovation, PASOK (Greece) by Mr Antonios SAOULIDIS, Supreme Court Lawyer, Member of the Political Cabinet and of the Central Political Committee, PASOK
Four years of a direct Democracy Party in Argentina, Net Party by Mr Alejandro INTI BONOMO, Member of the Executive board of Net Party
Changing the dynamics of politics. Citizenship as an engine of change, Coalició Compromís by Ms Àgueda MICÓ, Compromís co-spokesperson

Discussants:
Mr Ebrahim ADIA, elected Councillor in the Municipal Council of Bolton, Greater Manchester, UK
Mr Augustine MAGOLOWONDO, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy c/o Malawi, Centre for Multiparty Democracy, the Netherlands.

The lab in brief

Nowadays, the role of political parties within modern democracies is questioned, as citizens do not feel represented by established political representatives, sometimes showing complete disinterest. This is manifested through the high rates of abstention during recent European elections but also through the worldwide rising popularity of former marginalised political parties. The gap between citizens and political parties is more perceptible today than ever before and the populist threat clearly established itself as a democratic priority. In this context, some parties aim to reinvent themselves by working on answers how to minimise the citizens' disconnect.

This lab discussed the level of attractiveness of political parties and movements that are based on different forms of participatory democracy. Opportunities for traditional parties to transform themselves and develop new political narratives enhancing citizens' trust in policy-making were explored.

About the initiatives

Organisational transformation though democracy innovation, PASOK (Greece)

PASOK is now a social-democratic party in Greece. It was founded 1974 as a socialist and left-wing nationalist party. Stimulated by electoral losses after the 1981 electoral success (majority in parliament), PASOK introduced a number of participative actions, such as open meetings at local level, collaboration with local authorities and CSOs, etc. In order to achieve increased citizen participation, PASOK deployed a decentralised structure, i.e. local permanent representations, prefectural committees, regional committees. PASOK is aware that their intention to better include citizens must be monitored. Therefore, performance indicators were elaborated, amongst them the number of participants, the number of organised meetings, the number of decisions taken, etc. These initial indicators were all quantitative, instead of qualitative (quality of dialogue, extent of agreement …). The PASOK transformation-process encountered several difficulties, for instance sometimes disappointment was expressed by citizens towards politics in general. To overcome these obstacles PASOK tried to address this democratic deficit through adapting their political organisation towards connecting citizens more directly with decision-makers and the decision-making process.

Four years of a direct Democracy Party in Argentina, Net Party" (Argentina)

The Net Party is a political party in Argentina, with 1500 formal members and about 100 active members involved in daily decisions. Their goal is to elect deputies in the legislative elections that make decisions according to decisions voiced by regular people, through a software (DemocracyOS) that gathers opinions and votes. The deputees vote according to the decisions taken by online participants, thus promoting "liquid", "hybrid" and "direct" democracy.

Dating back four years, about 60 people gathered once every week to discuss a specific topic on which they made a decision by consensus. These meetings often took a long time before consensus was reached through persuasion, argumentation, sharing of experiences etc. But this was not

considered as waste of time or inefficiency. On the contrary, people were satisfied that their voices were heard and that they could unconditionally share their thoughts, doubts and arguments.

The Net Party does not have a predetermined programme and agenda. The party's sole aim and reason of existence is to really represent citizens. To find out people's opinion about a certain issue and come to a joint/ consensus decision about this issue, internet tools were used to reach out to as many citizens as possible. As the figures of people responding rose, the Net Party started wondering to whom they concretely reached via internet. From dedicated studies they learned that the main internet participants were middle-income men in their forties. This was dissatisfying, and stimulated the Net Party to elaborate new tools to include citizens' opinions.

Changing the dynamics of politics. Citizenship as an engine of change, Coalició Compromís (Spain)

Founded in 2010, Compromís is a political coalition of three former socialist political parties, supplemented with about 1.000 citizens and CSOs in the county of Valencia, taking responsibility in the county's government and parliament (about 20% votes in the 2015 elections). The coalition's ideology can be summarised as "political Valencianism": situated at the left of the political-economic spectrum, people form the core of their politics. Compromís' process to put forward candidates for the regional 2015 elections was presented: political list formation was the result of an open online participative process including about 40.000 involved citizens (out of which 30.000 persons voted on the list formation). The dedicated website contained both information on the candidates, the process, as well as on how citizens could get more involved. As Compromís is now participating in the government, structural changes have been introduced: for instance, for the first time ever in the Valencia county, the Ministry for Transparency in the Consel Generalitat Valencia implemented regulations on transparency (comprising i.e. rules on budget spending and control, data privacy) and a good governance code (to counteract and prevent corruption).

Citizens' bottom-up decisions vs. top down party/coalition's ideology and institutional/legal constraints. Citizens often expect politicians to 'be there' for them/ not to be 'let down'. How do parties respond to it? Do citizens need to learn more about institutions' current powers and limits? Are the presented initiatives sustainable (e.g. embedded in the constitution or legal instruments)? The Net Party, for instance, was a reaction to people's lack of trust in politics, using new tools and introducing a new mode of decision-making. The underlying starting point for this new mode was that citizens' costs for participating had to be smaller than citizens' potential costs/impact of decisions taken without their involvement (rational cost-benefit calculation). Realising lasting changes is a long-term learning process for all involved stakeholders- people).

In more general terms, people (especially youngsters) might need realigned expectations regarding politicians: governors' powers are limited or often less extensive than people often think (e.g. next to executive government, rule of law entails legislative power and the judiciary). Today's youngsters grew up in an age where 'getting things right and quick' became the norm, while democratic political decision-taking is often a time-consuming process. Many people have the feeling that decisions are taken above their head; on the one hand they feel unheard, on the other hand they often lack knowledge about political institutions and their functioning. How can these feelings and lack of information effectively be eliminated/ reduced? What are the tools and the methods to enhance citizens' knowledge and involvement into policy-making? Coalition governments are seen as possible way to make people understand how political decision-making works. People do want to be involved in politics, but they often lack the culture of participation. Therefore, political education (and patience/time) towards citizens is necessary, as well as politicians behaving as good examples (for instance, since the Coalició Compromís promotes green mobility, the accountable governor comes to office by bike). Finding lasting solutions that correspond to the specific context is a learning process by definition.

✓ To promote face-to-face dialogue opportunities (thus at local level) to allow citizens to realise that change is a long-term process, to learn from one-another, to (re)shape their opinion and to come to joint decisions. Therefore, mutual learning is an important driver for democratic change (e.g. citizens' personal interests versus general interests; citizens' expectations

towards politicians versus politicians' legal powers).

✓ When starting a democratic change-process it is important to first analyse clearly what is causing disconnect between politics and citizens in order to find fitting responses.

Furthermore, it must also be considered from the start how the process will be translated into political actions once elected and thus accountable.

Lab 7 - Bursting Social Media Echo Chambers

Moderators:
Ms Corina **CĂLUGĂRU**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova to the Council of Europe
Mr Mukunda NEPAL, Communications professional, Nepal

Initiatives:
Empowering users and community by opening Facebook echo chambers, "Tracking Exposed" (Italy) by Mr Claudio AGOSTI, Founder of Facebook Tracking Exposed
A Toolbox for Digital Citizens, Nupinion (United Kingdom) by Ms Denise XIFARA, Co-founder and Data scientist, Nupinion
The Read Across The Aisle app (USA) by Mr Nick LUM, Co-founder of Read Across the Aisle

Discussants:
Ms Khedir MABROUKA, Tunisia, video journalist, correspondent and reporter for Deutsche Welle
Ms Milena SANTERINI, Italy, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The lab in brief

Social media echo chambers are posing a clear problem for healthy civic debate, and this manifests differently in different parts of the world – e.g. presenting stories from only one side of the political spectrum or providing a platform for populist attempts to denounce traditional sources and news outlets. In an effort to counter populist narratives, a number of initiatives are building tools that help people to assess their "information diet" by seeing the full story, what they might be missing and where news outlets fall on the political spectrum.

Understanding one's "information diet" can be a way to increase healthy debate by reframing the issues and exposing people to different perspectives. As new tools are being developed to help people understand these different perspectives, it will be important to recognise and compensate for inherent biases (use of artificial intelligence, underrepresentation of certain voices) in their design and to also ensure that they do not undermine trust in the media. They will also have to take into consideration that not everyone has the desire or the capacity to open up their echo chambers. Toolmakers should try to account for psychological factors that may determine why people would be motivated to use their products.
Real investment is required for these kinds of initiatives to succeed, and not just financially, as start-ups, partnerships and funding sources are as essential as building a user-base. If bursting social media echo chambers is the goal, it will take a greater effort on the part of other actors to get involved – including institutions that are able to hold private interests to account.

The lab examined the detrimental effects of social media filter bubbles and algorithms and explored solutions to make readers more aware of their reading habits and help them to integrate different worldviews.

About the initiatives

Empowering users and community by opening Facebook echo chambers (Italy)

Facebook Tracking Exposed is a browser extension, which looks at what content Facebook is giving to a person and also showing what is hidden from others. The decision about what is seen and what is hidden is not in the user's control. The presenter emphasised the need to empower citizens to have more control over their own "information diet" and explained how they should keep algorithms accountable. He also warned that technology will not solve a political problem, but it can be used to help people to become more politically aware.

A Toolbox for Digital Citizens (United Kingdom)

Nupinion is a platform that delivers different news sources from across the globe and the political spectrum, without depending on any personal information about the reader. Demonstrating the various filters that Nupinion offers to readers, the platform aims to increase media literacy and help people to make up their own minds about what they can trust and need to know, and more broadly, to foster empathy and healthy debate.

The Read Across The Aisle app (USA)

The Read Across the Aisle is a tool that encourages people to read news more fully, to understand the

scope of their media intake, and to seek perspectives from sources that they may not typically read. Despite the increasing usage of this tool, it faces some of the challenges for start-ups that are trying to address these issues – going global, building partnerships, and finding funding. Many start-ups are able to get kick-starter funding to begin their projects, but growth and sustainability will depend on finding new resources, institutional partnerships and support.

Manipulation vs. Information. Challenges to civil discourse exist all over the world and populist sentiment spreads more easily through the manipulation of social media platforms. Tunisia is the example of a country, where misinformation and vilification of the media are occurring all too often. Populism is the means for corrupt politicians to come to power, taking advantage of social media platforms for disseminating their messages. This is having a detrimental effect on democratic processes, with increasing voter abstention and declining trust in journalism.

The problem that populism is perpetuating is an "us" vs. "them" mentality. The customisation from social media platforms is transforming politics into a commodities market, facilitating the control of information, and leading people to believe certain things and to only talk amongst themselves. Democracy is built together, sharing different points of view, so initiatives like those presented in the LAB are a useful way to create empowerment through direct access to news sources and a broader media diet. However, two critical issues have to be considered: 1) that initiatives should be careful not to undermine the media's impartiality, and 2) that it's important to consider the underlying psychological motivations for staying within one's filter bubble. Not everyone wants to change their information diet.

Empowering users. How can we encourage a critical mind, while also being aware that people may have already formed opinions and biases around an issue or news source? What kind of outreach is used and needed for those that may be unreceptive? It is important to acknowlede that being useful and not alienating potential users, as well as finding information on where sources lie on the political spectrum are important elements for producing an effective impact. All presenters are exploring different ways to improve their tools, through artificial intelligence, adding dialogue and debate or voting options. However, as start-ups, these initiatives need to focus first on certain elements to get off the ground before they can add new functions, particularly when funding relies on the development of a reliable product. Bursting social media echo chambers is not easy, especially when social media platforms are becoming a primary source of information. All presenters still believe that it is possible to reach people at the far sides of political spectrums with efforts that increase awareness of opposing views and help to reframe the issues.

The role of institutions. With so many interconnected agendas and interests, institutions can play a part in the accountability of private companies and visibility for small projects that are aimed at supporting an informed and healthy public dialogue.

- ✓ To encourage critical mindsets and to raise people's awareness on all unconscious tendencies and on all mechanisms produced by algorithms.
- ✓ To sustain and give visibility to projects that create and disseminate alternative algorithms to facilitate access to diverse viewpoints.

Lab 8 - Corruption and Populism: can citizen watchdogs help?

Sponsored by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Moderators:
Mr Jean-Baptiste MATTEI, France, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe
Ms Aline ZUNZUNEGUI, Mexico, Founder of Ollin, Youth Department's youth delegation

Initiatives:
Vouliwatch: "Empowering Democracy" (Greece) by Mr Stefanos LOUKOPOULOS, Director of Vouliwatch
Partidos Públicos (Chile) by Mr Pablo COLLADA CHAVEZ, Executive Director of Fundacion Ciudadano Inteligente
Cumuleo, Cumuleo.be / Anticor.be / Transparencia.be (Belgium) by Mr Christophe VAN GHELUWE, Founder of Cumuleo.be

Discussants:
Ms Anne BRASSEUR, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Luxembourg)
Ms Gunn Marit HELGESEN, President of the Chamber of Regions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the CoE (Norway)
Mr Paul MAASSEN, Director for Civil Society Engagement at the Open Government Partnership (Netherlands)

The lab in brief

Democracy is a political system in which citizens are supposed to participate, not only by electing their representatives but also by discussing a wide range of political debates. Although they are recognised as vital, some debates, like the amount and the origin of all money earned by a politician, still suffer from a lack of transparency. Transparency is the key to draw links of trust between politicians and the civil society. Mistrust towards political leaders is at the heart of corruption and, consequently, populism. Politicians can rather make themselves accountable to citizens, by opening some sort of pieces of information they believe should be known to prove they are not corrupted.

Citizen watchdogs are initiatives taken by citizens who wish to document a fact: the lack of transparency regarding what politicians do, what they vote for or against, what their views were on a question being discussed in the public debate, who they might work for on top of the political mandate etc.

Enabling and encouraging citizens to know more about these topics should renew the interest towards politics while reducing hostile behaviors at the origins of populism. It should also encourage politicians' responsiveness towards their votes, as

well as their funding, which in the end could reduce the level of corruption. If corruption and populism go hand in hand, can citizen watchdogs help out?

The lab analysed the impact of citizens' monitoring initiatives on corruption and their potential influence on tackling populist trends through strengthening the integrity of, as well as trust in, parliamentarians and other elected officials.

About the initiatives

Vouliwatch: "Empowering Democracy" (Greece)

In the midst of the financial and political crisis which hit Greece, people lost their trust in the Greek democracy, which provoked growing sympathy for extremist parties. As a matter of fact, 93% of the people interviewed in 2013 thought that the Greek politicians are corrupt. The idea behind *Vouliwatch* is that promoting accountability, transparency and information can reconnect the citizens and the political elite. In order to reach this objective, the founders of *Vouliwatch* put their hopes in the possibilities offered by the digital era. *Vouliwatch* (*vouli* means "parliament" in Greek) is an online platform which provides different kind of tools enabling the users to get an overview of what is going on in the Greek Parliament. Citizens can therefore monitor MPs'

votes and behaviours, and also compare political positions to understand the political landscape.

On *Vouliwatch*, every MP has an individual profile providing information about their function, their committee, their party, their political history, and their financial declaration. But in order to rebuild trust in democracy, there is also a need for strengthening the dialogue between civil society and the political elite. Therefore, *Vouliwatch* allows citizens to ask questions to the MPs through the website – the questions are monitored by webmasters who will approve them before they are addressed via email to the MPs, whose answers are then published on the platform. For instance citizens can ask their representatives the reasons for their voting behaviour on specific subjects, but they can also share their thoughts and suggestions with them.

Another interesting aspect of this initiative concerns the presentation and reorganisation of political data. Every bill that goes to the Parliament is analysed and presented by *Vouliwatch*. Considering that political documents are written in a very technical and formal manner, the organisers translate these bills into texts which could be readable and understandable for citizens without political and legal background. There is also a filter tool which enables citizens to easily cruise through different bills and types of legislation, delivering historical and political backgrounds on political debates.

Other features provided by the platform concern policy monitoring, which allows the comparison between political parties on specific issues by providing voting data and crossing activities from different stakeholders inside the Parliament. Last but not least, *Vouliwatch* collects financial data which are displayed on the platform. Citizens can monitor and ask questions on the budget used by the Parliament, in particular which exact amount was spent on every topic.

Partidos Públicos (Chile)

In a recent survey carried out at the national level, *Foundacion Cuidadano Inteligente* noticed that citizens' trust in the political parties was around 5%, while 70% of the Chileans stated that for them the political parties are the most important stakeholder for a healthy democracy. Such suspicion was seen by *Founcacion Cuidadano Inteligente* as a fertile soil for populism and authoritarianism. The initiative *Partidos Públicos* wants to address this challenge and contribute to turning political parties into trustable entities by

promoting a culture of transparency and openness. This project provides citizens with participation tools and channels to strengthen transparency and accountability in political parties, through a digital platform for the publication and display of information on their finances, decision-making, organisational structure and relationship with other entities.

The first challenge that *Partidos Públicos* had to face was the access to the data. In the meantime a Chilean law passed in 2016 because of a huge political financial scandal. This law now forces political parties to publish certain amounts of data concerning for example their finances, their organisation, decision-making and the connections with other structures and institutions. However, this kind of information is still hardly accessible and readable. Collaborations with parties themselves, journalists and volunteers, are fundamental in order to link information with financial data. Through *Partidos Públicos*, citizens can inform themselves about the income and expenses of a party, their latest decisions, the mechanisms of decision making, how to join them, the national presence and the number of militants, the participation of historically excluded groups among its members, among many other features.
Partidos Públicos also has a strategy for the promotion of citizen participation, through workshops with civil society organizations and the media, in order to promote the use of the platform and spread a democratic culture of transparency.
To reach a larger audience and to encourage public debate on this issue, the initiative also makes a communication campaign to relieve the role of political parties as intermediaries between the State and citizens. In this campaign, the activists from the Foundation Smart Citizens make concrete propositions to improve the democratic culture in Chile – for example, while the law on transparency in politics was drafted in 2016, they could contribute to the debate by suggesting to add certain elements to the law in order to strengthen it.

Cumuleo, Cumuleo.be / Anticor.be / Transparencia.be (Belgium)

Since 2004, all Belgian public offices are to be declared to the national court of audit and the documents are published online. This concerns high level politicians as well as every other official, for example police officers. But the way this information is available to the citizens makes it unreadable because of the complexity of the data and the multiplicity of formal documents.

Cumuleo.be addresses this issue by collecting, analysing and summarising the data, hence helping the citizens to understand the activities of politicians. The elements published by *Cumuleo.be* are regularly quoted by the press and discussed on social media, helping therefore to keep the debate on cumulated mandates and conflicts of interest in the public discussions.

In 2017, in the midst of corruption scandals in Belgium, *Cumuleo.be* received a lot of public attention. But this fact is not enough to prevent conflicts of interest, as the legal frame which exists in Belgium is not implemented correctly, and still needs to be improved. Officials do not give all information they should and only 40 of all the cases of possible conflicts of interest were brought before the court – and none of them had real legal consequences. The lack of political will to change the situation, as well as the inadequate financial support to the legal system in Belgium, which consequently results in lack of sufficient financial means to fulfil such investigations, are the two major problems, which can only be addressed by strong protest from the civil society.

<div style="background:orange">**Key points issues by the debate**</div>

Positive counter-narrative to reestablish trust. The press and social media only focus on scandals and draw all the attention on corrupt individuals. This leads to a systematic negative image of politics which is devaluating the work done by MPs. Good practices done by MPs are not mediatised, neither are the efforts made by politicians on an everyday basis. By masking the fact that most of the MPs do a good job, the public simply does not get the chance to understand what the work of an average MP is made of. Citizen watchdog initiatives, such as those presented, are therefore welcomed: "politicians need the civil society, because without civil society, what politicians say is not believed by the people anymore", as proved by the testimony of the politician acting as discussant, Ms Anne Brasseur, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. She reported cases where citizens rejected what she said. When she encouraged them to verify her statements in the press, people replied that they did not believe in anything from the press either. In this context, people from the civil society – associations, watchdogs, activists – seem to be in the good spot to enable a constructive dialogue between citizens and politicians.

Transparency behind initiatives addressing transparency. How to be sure that the citizen watchdogs – or someone else – do not intentionally or unintentionally misuse pieces of information? As example, Ms Brasseur explained that a similar initiative in Luxembourg monitors MPs' parliamentary work. During the time she is participating in the World Forum for Democracy (WFD), the application will display that she is absent from the parliament – therefore reinforcing an image of a politician who does not do her job – while she, in fact, is contributing to the WFD precisely in her quality as MP. Other politicians among the lab participants confirmed such concern: they agree on the idea to foster transparency and openness, but they are worried about the misuses such information can generate. A culture of transparency and openness does not only mean an effort from politicians to change their habits, but also requires fostering the publics' ability to handle the data they are given access to. It is a process of mutual trust and learning from both sides which will lead to a new way of re-thinking our modern democracies. At the beginning, there might be some abuses but with some time and good will these challenges will be effectively addressed.

Data interpretation and cross-collaborations with parties and institutions. How do these initiatives use the data? Are they politically engaged? The three presenters agreed that they want to contribute to the creation of a new political culture, which is based on trust and on transparency. But while *Vouliwatch* aims to remain neutral and refuses to interpret politically the data as much as possible, the *Foundacion Ciudadano Inteligente* and *Cumuleo.be* have political aims. Cumuleo considers its work as part of a broader lobbying – in the manifesto published on its website, the Belgian government is called to implement GRECO's propositions, which are repeatedly ignored.

One of the main challenges, as reported by *Partidos Públicos*, is to display valuable information and to discuss it with various stakeholders – parties, institutions and other relevant partners. The *Fundacion Ciudadano Inteligente* tries, for instance, to come up with new ideas in order to improve the democratic institutions: while avoiding judging parties and politicians or choosing sides in the political arena, their actions inevitably do lead to a certain political engagement.

On the other side, politicians appear sometimes sceptical, suspecting that these initiatives are financed by rivals or will work against them in some way. In the beginning, *Vouliwatch* was accused to be a far-left initiative, before being accused of being managed by far-right activists, then to be sponsored by the right wing. Concerning other aspects which require the cooperation of politicians – for example the online Q&A, *Vouliwatch* noticed that more and more politicians are willing to collaborate. The situation of *Partidos Publicos* is slightly different. Their initiative relies mostly on the data freely shared by the parties. In the very beginning, the *Fundacion Cuididano Inteligente* met opposition and scepticism. Political parties refused the dialogue, they were not used to this kind of initiatives – but with the time politicians were more comfortable with sharing their data, also understanding the benefits they could get from it.

Right to privacy? Many politicians among the audience voiced their concern about privacy. Displaying information about political parties and the parliamentary work is one thing, but what about more private data, like personal finances, investments and belongings related to individual MPs? Are they to be shared with the public as well? Some politicians might be comfortable with these requirements, but others would prefer to preserve their private sphere. Do politicians have a right to privacy? In the audience, certain MPs supported the idea, because MPs are also individuals like everyone else and therefore have the same rights as everyone: a distinction between their public life, which should be open and transparent, and their private life must be preserved. At the same time, it was argued that elected offices imply such high responsibilities that the need for transparency has to prevail on the right for privacy. This is indeed the only way to fight corruption. The cultural context makes the difference: in US, for example, people are comfortable with talking about their private finances and income, but in most European countries these questions are very sensitive. Some

of this information is of public interest to the point that initiatives, such as *Vouliwatch,* display any relevant information about MPs even without their consent.

Watchdogs as a symptom of this crisis, and not an answer to it. These citizen initiatives contribute to solutions but we cannot expect them to solve the trust and corruption issues which are damaging our societies. Transparency is important, but it is not an end in itself: we have to create opportunities for dialogue, for citizens to interact with politicians. These tools will never be able to change the situation by themselves; they need to be translated and embedded into stronger institutions. In combination with other efforts and by synergising with other projects, these initiatives can contribute to strengthen democracy with a "trickle-down effect". According to FCI, tools are useless by themselves. Their potential utility derives from being part of a greater advocacy plan. *Vouliwatch.org*, for example, launched a project which consists of going to schools in right extremist neighbourhoods and explaining democracy to young people.

<div style="background-color:orange">Recommendations</div>

- ✓ To promote mutual collaborations between neutral citizen watchdogs, parties and institutions to make reliable information more easily accessible.
- ✓ To create a culture of transparency, by sensitising politicians as well as citizens on the correct use and interpretation of the data. Transparency is not a goal in itself – but a first step on which a relation of trust and dialogue between politicians and citizens can be built.
- ✓ To embed these citizen watchdog initiatives into democratic institutions.

Lab 9 - Fake News: Does Fact Checking Work?

Sponsored by the Region Grand Est

Moderators:
Mr **Erdoğan İŞCAN**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the Council of Europe
Mr Conor MCARDLE, Youth Department's youth delegation

Initiatives:
Protection of democratic values through fact-checking journalism (sut.am), "Union of Informed Citizens" NGO (Armenia) by Mr Daniel Ioannisyan, Founder of Union of Informed Citizens
EUCHECK: Journalism schools for fact-checking, an impartial network, European Journalism Training Association – EJTA (Netherlands) by Ms Catherine SHANAHAN, senior lecturer and Head of Journalism and Communications, Dublin Institute of Technology and Ms Carien J. TOUWEN International officer and senior lecturer journalism research, HU University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht
The Insider (Russian Federation) by Mr Roman DOBROKHOTOV, Russian Federation, editor-in-chief of The Insiders

Discussants:
Mr Simas **ČELUTKA**, Lithuania, Director of European Security Programme at Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis
Mr Gunnar GRÍMSSON, Iceland, Visionary at Better News and Co-founder of Citizens Foundation

The lab in brief

This lab looked into examples of fact checking methodologies to identify the most effective approaches in cracking down on fake stories. The aim of the session was to "address the growing disconnect between citizens and political elites and the impact of populism on the capacity of democracies to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms".

About the initiatives

Protection of democratic values through fact-checking journalism (sut.am), Armenia

The Union of Informed Citizens is a non-governmental organisation that aims to increase public support for democratic values through fact-checking journalism. It fights against disinformation that undermines the activity of NGOs, democratic values, human rights, freedom of expression, and political reforms. The organisation, through fact-checking journalism, aims to increase public support for democratic values, human rights, freedom of expression, and political reforms.

It seeks to promote facts for the wider population, disclose "the real face and narrative of propagandists and populists", and build the capacity of free media through training of

journalists on foreign policy, publishing unpublished official documents, preparing media-useful materials and debates.

Democracy in Armenia faces a triple challenge: disinformation, propaganda and populism. Fake news emanate from a range of sources including both within the country and from abroad. Some of it is official, some of it unofficial, some is propagated deliberately, some by mistakes or misunderstandings. The presenter mentioned the role of "hurray patriotism" in fanning populism though an anti-democratic and nationalistic ideology.

To counter all of this the Union has a range of interlinked activities including direct fact-checking via the SUT.am website, as well as undertaking awareness raising and capacity building with local citizens and civil society organisations as well as the media.

Overall, their solution to the problem of fake news is the promotion of fact-based information and its distribution widely amongst the population primarily through pictures, videos and social media, disclosing the real face and narrative of propagandists and populists.

The Insider (Russia)

The Insider is an investigative newspaper that seeks to provide its readers with information about the current political, economic and social situation in Russia, while also promoting democratic values

and shedding light on issues related to human rights and civil society. In addition, the Insider implements the "Antifake" project, with the objective of systematically debunking fake news in Russian media in order to help its audience to distinguish relevant information from fake news and propaganda.

Fake news is not a new phenomenon – indeed it has existed as long as news has. However, there is some evidence that the situation is changing in terms of the methods used to propagate it and its potential to cause serious harm and instability. The example of Russians volunteering to fight in the recent conflict in Ukraine was given, based on fake news stories, allegedly produced by digital teams paid by the Russian state. This then had a direct consequence on which parts of Ukraine experienced conflict. A further example was a story propagated by senior Russian political figures and recently debunked by The Insider reporting that western agents were gathering Russian biological materials to use in the creation of targeted biological weapons against ethnic Russians. These examples indicate how the fake news has become part of information warfare.

EUCHECK: Journalism schools for fact-checking, an impartial network, European Journalism Training Association (EJTA), the Netherlands

EUCHECK strives to be a reference point for fact-checking EU policies and politics, while promoting European studies and developing fact-checking. It consists of 15 journalism schools throughout Europe (within EJTA, which itself consists of 70 journalism schools in 28 countries). EUCHECK aims to support quality journalism and journalism education while testing new cooperative arrangements, to enhance credibility of media; to contribute to the accuracy of European political statements; to engage European citizens as well as to create incentives to spread fact-checked information on social media; to develop a European open educational resource (OER) methodology; and to establish cooperation with quality national fact-checkers.

Main target group is the Youth. According to Shane Smith, CEO of Vice, young people are angry, disenfranchised and do not trust the mainstream media. This is evidenced for example by the fact that the average viewer of the BBC is 60 years old. The appeal of fake news for younger audiences is clear – most obvious forms are most prevalent on social media. A real challenge for traditional media is for it to recognise that it is operating in a propaganda and disinformation-rich environment. In this context EUCHECK's purpose is to train a new generation to ensure that the public is well informed. Prior knowledge has been shown to be a key defence against fake news.

The project's desired outcomes for 2020 are: (a) co-creation of fact-checking modules in journalism curricula in schools; and (b) establish fact-checking platforms at the national level. For the 2019 European parliamentary elections, EUCHECK intends to bring all their national platforms together in one pan-European portal.

Key points issues by the debate

Fake news as a fundamental threat to democracy and pluralism everywhere. While fake news has always existed, the internet has allowed it to have unprecedented scale and influence. This is already causing serious harm to people in places like Ukraine. Without trust in institutions and in the information available to citizens, proper debate and decision-making cannot take place.

Increasing the impact of fact-checking. Many excellent fact-checking initiatives exist but their scale and resourcing is insufficient compared to the scale of the fake news industry. Solutions to this include engaging the mainstream media and making fact-checking their job, considering other business models (not only relying on commercially driven sensationalism). The quality of journalism has fallen as business models have driven outlets to prioritise advertising revenue over journalistic output. In the case of social media, greater responsibility needs to be taken by the major corporations such as Facebook and Google for the accuracy of content posted through their channels and also the role of filter bubbles in creating greater polarisation in society.

In terms of approaches, it is important to be more proactive in exposing fake news narratives rather than just reactively debunking stories one by one. Overall there is a need to focus on the core of the problem by looking at the tactics, strategies and objectives of the protagonists - what narrative they are propagating – and then bring that to the attention of citizens.

Some of the most important actions for combatting fake news are: building the capacity of media and journalists; educating the public, especially around media literacy; and reaching out to excluded groups – young people, women, and

those who are supporting populists, by simplifying language and producing more visual output (e.g. infographics).

Horizontal collaborations among fact-checking initiatives and vertical collaborations through crowdsourcing. A better coordination among fact-checking initiatives is fundamental to avoid duplication and consequent waste of time and efforts. It is not feasible to debunk stories one at a time. All presented projects share one thing – small groups of people trying to affect change in their surroundings – this is promising because people are more likely to believe in something from someone they know. One possible solution to reach a broader scale could be sourcing more accurate news through crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing can go well or badly – the key difference is whether it is fun to participate and whether you get something out of it personally. Wikipedia is obviously the largest and most successful example of crowdsourcing.

- ✓ To train mainstream media in fact-checking and encourage greater responsibility in journalism.
- ✓ To spread simple fact-checking techniques among the population, considering alternative business models (e.g. crowdsourcing) that allow greater scale.
- ✓ To collectively promote inherent values of the European project, as Europe has lost its influence with European citizens leaving room for outsiders to cause fragmentation.
- ✓ To address the legal and regulatory framework to tackle misinformation (also by monitoring the respect of international standards).

44

Lab 10 - ArtiVism against populism

Sponsored by the City of Strasbourg

Moderator:
Ms Nawel RAFIK-ELMRINI (France), Deputy Mayor of the City of Strasbourg
Co-moderator: Mr Suhaib AL-SHROSH AL-MASEDIN, Jordan, Founder of "Haweytna"

Initiatives:
School for Creative Activism (USA) by Professor Stephen DUNCOMBE, Co-Director of the School for Creative Activism
Fearless Collective (Pakistan/India) by Ms Shilo SHIV SULEMAN, Co-Founder of the Fearless Collective
Boiling Point, Mouka Filmi Oy/Boiling Point campaign (Finland), by Ms Riikka KÄMPPI, Campaign manager of Boiling Point.

Discussants:
Ms Lisa ROBINSON (UK), Black Lives Matter UK
Mr Raphaël COMTE (Switzerland), Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The lab in brief

While thinking of democracy often recalls the image of a coffeehouse where rational men have rational discussions leading to rational decisions on how to solve certain specific issues, the reality of democracy is quite different in practice. Democracy resembles more the following picture: street-protests, charismatic leaders and populist political speeches intended to trigger an emotional reaction from the targeted audience. As a result, most political decisions made by the civil society are the end-product of an emotional process rather than the outcome of a rational thinking. Being aware of this highlights the necessity for the use of new tools, new languages and new methods in order to strategically make activism more efficient and to allow it reaching a broader audience. The field of activism is indeed one of symbols and significations; thus the goal resides in getting to know how to navigate it and use it in one's best advantage in order to initiate change on a significant scale.

The lab explored the role of arts and culture in shaping political ethics and values, and their impact on generating social and political change.

About the initiatives

School for Creative Activism (USA)

The concept of School for Creative Activism was presented. It consists of a 4-5 day training model that uses techniques from popular culture and artistic practice. After the first few days of workshops, interactive exercises, lectures on for instance "Contemporary Case Studies", "Historical Examples", "Theories of Cognition", "Techniques of Mobilization" and "Creative Campaigns", the activists decide on one "action", having 24 hours at their disposal to implement it.

The initiative focuses on the concept of popular culture, which is "a repository of our dreams, fears, desires and nightmares". According to Professor Duncombe, Director of the School for Creative Activism "Popular culture, whether we like it or not, it is popular" and it can "teach us a lot about how to reach people in a way that resonates with them". He pointed out that popular culture can lead us "to a more robust democracy by teaching us about desires and fears of everyday people and how to speak with them in a way they can hear us".

Fearless Collective (Pakistan/India)

"When was the last time you took part in something beautiful?" According to Ms Shiv Suleman, Co-Founder of the Fearless Collective, "Beauty saves us": people experience beauty without being aware of it, while cooking, shopping or in other ways. The aim of the Fearless Collective is to promote a shift from "fear to love" using participative art in public spaces.

The Fearless Collective defines itself as "soft revolution": the key point is "access" and the aim is to create "a participative movement of women and girls reclaiming public spaces through art and storytelling". Anyone can join the Fearless Collective and contribute to the creation of toolkits. It is, in fact, an open source methodology. An emphasis is placed on "positive affirmations", to make messages empowering and positive.

Imagination plays a key role: "love is a collective act of imagination".

Boiling Point, Mouka Filmi Oy/Boiling Point campaign (Finland)

The documentary "Boiling Point" was produced to promote dialogue and respect between people with opposite views, as a division in the country slowly emerged since 2015 due to the refugee crisis. As a result of this division, people either discuss only with like-minded people or they prefer to avoid talking about the issue. The aim of the documentary was to reach everyone, even the people who hold populist and racist views. In the film, two characters with opposing views have a discussion in the sauna. The characters in the film are treated equally and all were created as complex characters.

The distribution of the film was quite unique, the production team set up a website where anyone could register and organise a screening of the film. In the period between February and May, 738 screenings took place in Finland and in other 20 countries (including for instance, Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Malaysia and Paraguay). This figure is higher as more people after May made requests for screening the film. In total, in the mentioned period 18 000 people participated in these events. It was broadcasted in the Finnish television and it was watched by 250 000 people.

Key points issues by the debate

"Whom and what does ArtiVism transform?" The Fearless Collective focuses on the "reclamation of imagination from fear", so everyone can potentially be impacted by this form of activism since its goal resides in facilitating an easier and more inclusive access to the political battleground. The School for Creative Activism has a direct and strong impact on the activists themselves thanks to the workshop format. Once those activists learn the valuable skills that enable them to navigate the political terrain made up of symbols and significations, by using them to their advantage, they necessarily transmit such knowledge to the communities whom they directly work with. A virtuous cycle is in place. In certain cases it can take some years before having an effective impact, but "somehow it always trickles down". A documentary, such as Boiling Point, allows reaching everyone, included the people "from the other side".

"Are ArtiVism models replicable?" The School for Creative Activism's methods and skills are undoubtedly transferrable to other countries and to any aspiring activists (which is actually the purpose of the School for Creative Activism), but the content itself is not: it has to be adapted to national/local circumstances.

The transfer of the Boling Point's model happened by itself without any previous intent or expectation: the film received the interest from other countries as well. A report was published on the film's website and people can read the lessons learned during the project. The production team supported a start-up approach and encourages others to work in a similar way and to develop content in co-operation with people/audience.

"Is ArtiVism inclusive?" Does ArtiVism allow speaking with people who do not have the same opinion and to reach people who currently have less access to culture? What role emotions play? And, is consistently resorting to emotions, in order to trigger change, a populist method? The School for Creative Activism cannot be assimilated to any kind of populism, given its ethnocentric way of doing politics. However, artivists aim at being popular but any simplistic generalisation and association with populism would be inaccurate. All presenters agree that an efficient way to reach to 'popular' categories within civil society consists in resorting to humour. The Boiling Point documentary, for instance, adopted a strategy, named 'comic relief'; it is easier for people to accept tragedy and generally the message conveyed by such campaigns if comedic pictures are in between to relieve from more dramatic aspects. According to the Fearless Collective, it is important to use a combination of catharsis and transmutation.

Recommendations

- ✓ To encourage the use of popular culture and artistic practice and support initiatives that use art and culture to engage activists and the general public. Such initiatives could include for instance, the development of specific trainings and workshops for activists and other activities carried out in public spaces that have impact also on the general public.
- ✓ To encourage start up approaches when designing such activities: for instance, developing content and materials by engaging people with different opinions in

the debate, taking into account their feedback.

✓ To support initiatives that are inclusive and accessible and that reach people with less access to arts and culture: in particular, promoting initiatives that use a methodology that is open source and transferrable in other countries and that can be adapted to national/local circumstances.

Lab 11 – Can democracy survive public service media?

Sponsored by the European Broadcasting Union

Moderator:
Mr Matjaz GRUDEN, Director of Policy Planning, Council of Europe

Initiatives:
BBC's coverage of Brexit campaign by Mr Richard SAMBROOK, professor of journalism at Cardiff University, former BBC director of news (United Kingdom)
Poland's control of the public broadcast media by Mr Stanislaw JEDRZEJEWSKI, professor at Kozminski University, former vice-chairman of European Broadcasters Union Radio Committee (Poland)

Discussants:
Mr Jean-Paul PHILIPPOT, President of the European Broadcasting Union, administrator-general of the Radio Télévision Belge de la Communauté Française (RTBF), (Belgium)
Ms Uduak AMIMO, Journalist, TV host of "Cheche", Citizen TV, (Kenya)
Mr José CEPEDA GARCÍA DE LEÓN, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, (Spain)

The lab in brief

Media has become one of the main battlefields between populism and democracy. Public Service Media (PSM), that are still the most relevant source of information in many European countries, are more and more exposed to pressure by their governments at times when their independence is crucial for effective fact-based information and for debunking the growing impact of the so-called "fake news".

The lab analysed the two-way relationship between public service media and populism: how populism affects public service media and, vice-versa, how PSM can counter populist strategies and propaganda.

Most of populist parties claim to have exclusive representation of the will of "the people". In their name, they delegitimise other groups and refuse any democratic control. Critical and better media can counterweight these arguments. PSM are, therefore, one important safeguard for democracy. In fact, PSM were created and developed across Western Europe when democracy became the norm after the World War II.

Populists oppose PSM because they believe that diversity is a problem for society, while PSM have portrayed more balanced views on the matter. Journalists and mediators are a target for populism which tries to dismantle checks and balances once at power. Today, PSM's main challenge is to engage with the citizens.

Two years ago EBU carried out a study on correlations between PSM and other factors and ascertained these linkages:

- Higher trust in media is usually accompanied by more freedom of press.
- More sustainable PSM funding is linked to higher freedom of press.
- The bigger the market share for PSM, the lower the penetration of extreme right parties.
- The higher the market share of PSM, the lower the corruption.

About the initiatives

The British example

The campaign on the British referendum was very polarised with a country divided almost exactly down the middle on a question of huge social significance.

The country's national PSM, the BBC had a clear responsibility to report the campaign impartially, but with no agreement on the "facts" of leaving the EU – how could this be achieved? Delivering trusted impartial information in this climate requires complex and nuanced management – not simple or easy balance. BBC made significant efforts but some judged them still insufficient.

The polish example

Since December 2015, the new government and the parliamentary majority initiated a series of actions aimed at placing PSM under its close control. A provisional law of December 2015 gave the minister of state treasury the power to appoint and dismiss PSM's managers. Another law transferred the competencies to a new body: the National Media Council, financially dependent on the Parliament's Chancellery, and where members' nomination follows a controversial procedure in absence of any public scrutiny. There was also a big staff shuffle with 232 journalists and editors who have been fired from Polish PSM. The main effects of this reform have been lack of diversity in opinions, less pluralism and less impartiality.

The Polish case is not isolated. The same issues affect other countries, as for example the Netherlands, where various governments have curtailed the independence of PSM through systematic budgetary reductions. Hungary and Greece have even closed some of their national media, cutting their budgets and reopening them with fewer resources.

Key points issues by the debate

The role of Public Service Media nowadays. Non-traditional actors populate today the media landscape. Internet has become one of the main sources of information. As a growing part of the public debate takes place in new media outlets, politicians invest more time and resources on them. Populism uses social media to diffuse its own truth. Such scenario questions at the same time the role of PSM and the profile/profession of journalists. Who is a journalist today? What distinguishes journalists from those who simply insert data on line using the same technologies?
The rules of PSM are constantly challenged. Clear standards on quality journalism exist, but the challenge today is to make sure that these standards are respected and to find a way for PSM to adapt to an environment deeply changed by populism and to a declining demand for a journalism based on fact checking.

PSM still have a fundamental role in serving the public interest, spreading fact-based information and tackling any propaganda. It is the subjective perception and the manipulative use of the concept of public interest by populists that undermines this role. Fact checking is essential, just like shared validated data is. It is the duty of traditional media to check facts but they cannot do this job alone. The Internet Giants also have a clear responsibility in stopping fake news to spread.

Ethics and education in journalism. Governments can change over the time. The key point is which model of journalism will prevail and has to be followed over the time. Schools of journalism have been created and their students have been trained with clear ethical principles and codes of conduct for this profession. Diplomas certify who is a journalist, but is this sufficient in the present reality? Should journalists remain neutral when fundamental values are attacked, or do they have the moral and professional responsibility to be the activists and guardians of democratic values?

The funding challenge. In some countries, the funding system for PSM is at risk and in others it is very fragile and complex. There is growing criticism on paying the license fee for public service media, but people still affirm that they prefer to pay for quality media. How can the financing schemes of PSM be reinforced for general interest?

Cooperation between different countries. In some countries, journalists are in very critical situation and there are considerable threats to fact checking and impartiality. However, the Panama and Paradise Papers prove that transnational cooperation is possible and needs to be explored.

Recommendations

PRECONDITIONS TO BE INSURED:
- ✓ To reinforce the editorial independence and the financial sustainability of public service media broadcasters, also by strengthening the vigilance on the respect of the related standards.
- ✓ To reinforce the independence of the independent regulator for audiovisual media in accordance with the international standards on freedom of expression.
- ✓ To ensure full conformity of national law with international standards on freedom of expression, including the protection and promotion of pluralism and diversity.

SHORT TERM SOLUTIONS:
- ✓ To counter the spread of deliberately misleading information and restore trust in journalism and media in general and PSM in particular, to promote trans-border cooperation (following ICIJ

example), to reinforce the professionalism and recognition of journalists.

- ✓ To strengthen the cooperation between new distribution platforms and traditional media in the fight against fake news at European level and in supporting and promoting fact checking and evidence-based journalism (e.g. using tools such as Open data platform to verify news at European level, fact checking platforms lead by professional media and funded by intermediaries)
- ✓ To enhance the obligations of PSM for transparency of its editorial and policy's decision making process, by recreating a link of trust with the audience, especially in situation of crisis.
- ✓ To promote and preserve diversity, promoting trans-border cooperation on pooling resources, for investigative and bottom up journalism.
- ✓ To reinforce the professionalism of journalists and to ensure better remuneration for their work, to strengthen their autonomy in the newsroom.

LONGTERM SOLUTIONS:
- ✓ To create links and bridges between PSM and educational systems towards a

lifelong-learning experience, especially by strengthening and updating history knowledge and media literacy courses.
- ✓ To offer experiences that do not pass only through "hard news" but also through the other slots of programmes scheduled by national broadcasters.
- ✓ To promote slow news and constructive journalism vs. sensationalism and fast unverified news.
- ✓ To guarantee adequate financing of PSM in order to preserve its independence, by asking EU to verify and punish any eventual overfunding, to establish adequate and reverse mechanisms to measure and penalise any eventual underfunding (because it is a restriction of independence).
- ✓ Engage in and contribute to a broader discussion and progressive democratic response to populist attempts to redefine the European social and political models, including the notions of community and public interest (responding to identity politics, nationalism, nativism).

Lab 12 –Big data: campaigning or manipulation

Moderators:
Mr Bjorn BERGE, Director General and Secretary to the Committee of Ministers (CM) in the Council of Europe
Mr Fausto GERNONE, Member of Youth Department's youth delegation

Initiative:
Next Generation Engagement Through Direct Grassroots Investment (USA) by Mr Dan J. KESSLER, MBA Candidate at MIT Sloan School of Management

Discussants:
Ms Lisa-Maria NEUDERT, Researcher at the Computational Propaganda Project, Oxford Internet Institute
Ms Alice Mary HIGGINS, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The lab in brief

Big data is the latest technological invention to affect politics and political engagement. Political parties have been using the immeasurable online data of the electorate to run political campaigns. But such micro targeted political initiatives often hover around the grey boundary of campaign and voter manipulation. While big data offers political parties a better understanding of the electorate and their pressing needs, it has been used on multiple occasions to incite fear and hatred based on anxieties and uncertainties for sheer political gain. While social media and big data can be used to engage more people in political discussion, it can also be used to prevent fruitful discussion and debate.

Rapid technological innovation in the form of bots, artificial intelligence, psychometric profiling, real time data collection etc. makes it difficult for regulators to catch-up in order to ensure fairness and balance in political campaigning. This is made more challenging by harvesting and opaque use/profiling of data. There is also little regulation about data ownership and data vendors.

Older voters, millennial voters (a person reaching young adulthood around the year 2000), and generation Z voters (born between 1995–2009) are completely different groups of people. Generation Z voters are the most vulnerable and often most ignored. But their political engagement depends on their voting habits in the first two elections of their lives. Their emotions are being tapped by social media and they are faced with mass misinformation with their attention being drawn away by counter-campaigns fueled by bots.

Social media has brought politics to our doorsteps and everyday lives. We are moving from periodic democracy events such as general elections every 4/5 years to everyday political information/misinformation and propaganda. Therefore it is imperative to disburse more critical thinking and better media literacy if political processes are to generate dialogue and trust. Only then we can ensure better voter engagement since many millennial are averse to voting and the whole political discourse.

The lab participants debated how big data affects democracy and how citizens can be made aware of its possible misuses. It also explored possible regulations to secure privacy rights online.

About the initiatives

Next Generation Engagement Through Direct Grassroots Investment, USA

Millennials are America's largest generational group. However, only half of eligible voters aged 18-29 cast ballots in the 2016 US Election. This disengagement is largely due to the deliberate disinclination of Millennials for electoral politics. Therefore, the mission of this initiative is to engage the millennial generation in the political process through grassroots fundraising or, "direct grassroots investment".

The effective use of online social media tools by political parties for their campaigning is considered to encourage millennials to be more involved in politics and decision making processes. According to the presenter, the younger generations need to be addressed using their means of communication, namely social media, and not through conventional media. 30% of millennials globally are averse to governments and do not trust them. A key strategy of this initiative is to make political involvement

more fun by organizing affordable fundraising events with a high level of networking opportunities. This included the involvement of celebrities in public events and in interact activities with youngsters in order to make a social media trend out of it. In more than 20 events in 10 cities, Mr Kessler raised more than 270,000 USD for Hillary Clinton's Campaign. In Philadelphia, millennial turnout in the primaries grew 279% thanks to such initiative.

Key points issues by the debate

Youth engagement and social media in political propaganda. Youngsters, such as millennials, have varying degrees of political knowledge and are more vulnerable to computational propaganda which triggers their emotions rather than their reasoning. Social media can be easily used to polarise people, in particular to provoke fear, incite hatred, and generate distrust. Although it is important to engage young people in "proxy arenas" such as social media, it does not mean that they engage in a real dialogue. Social media activists do not lead to the streets in real political struggles. It is, therefore, fundamental to engage online activists in offline activism. The regulation of political advertisements, advancing pluralism and dialogue, as well as the breaking of social media "bubbles" and social media propaganda, represent key challenges. Germany offers a positive example of a country whose legislation requires social media companies to take down hate speech content within 24 hours. In other terms, the Inter-generational dimension is considered a key element for a better understanding of political processes: parties do not invest in "Generation Z", while they should, as their political views and level of engagement are developed during the first two elections of their lives. In Ireland, for example, high-school students, aged between 14 to 18 years old, attended parliamentary sessions to discuss environmental issues.

Data ownership, transparency and ethical implications. Technology is moving fast (bots, AI,

psychometric profiling, real time data collection etc.). The lack of regulation undermines fairness and balance in political campaigning. This is made more challenging by the harvesting and opaque use/profiling of data which negatively affects democracy.

The case of companies buying data from data-brokers to micro target selected groups of voters poses serious challenges in terms of transparency and data ownership. The use of data to rate people (such as in the context of the Chinese Social Credit System) poses ethical concerns, too. Data is massively available and inexpensive, making very easy to generate large amounts of fake information. "Clickbait" headlines of fake news are an example, diverting the attention away from traditional media. All media, today, sell data including those emanating from phones, GPS, wifi networks and subway ticketing systems. Among latest technological developments posing serious ethical concerns, the facial recognition where data holder companies can target users based on their real time psychological moods is the most controversial one.

Recommendations

- ✓ To strengthen critical thinking and better media literacy to generate dialogue, trust and higher voter turnout (especially among young generations).
- ✓ To burst social media "bubbles" to facilitate a contamination of opposing views in the political spectrum.
- ✓ To connect social media "debates" with offline debates for a more accurate information and more in-depth exchange.
- ✓ To invest in the "Generation Z" (i.e. those born after 2000), as their political views and level of engagement are developed during the first two elections of their lives.

Lab 13 – Civic education – how does it increase resilience to populism?

Moderators:
Mr Irakli GIVIASHVILI, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Georgia to the Council of Europe
Mr Bakary FATTY, Gambia, Administrative Secretary of the National Youth Parliament of the Gambia

Initiative:
Democracies need democrats (Germany) by Mr Ludger GRUBER, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Acting Director for Political Education

Discussants:
Ms Konstantina E. BOTSIOU, Greece, General Director at Konstantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy
Mr Boriss **CILEVIČS**, Latvia, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Mr Augustine MAGOLOWONDO, the Netherlands, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy c/o Malawi Centre for Multiparty Democracy

The lab in brief

Civic education is an important tool that societies and institutions can use to fight the rise of authoritarian governments or populist movements. It consists in increasing citizens' critical thinking in order to allow everyone to understand different political situations and to take a stand in the one that is considered as the best, not as a result of a general consensus but based on an effective reasoning.

In a nutshell, civic education is the study of the rights and the responsibilities related to the exercise of citizenship, included an understanding of governmental operations. It is the subject that makes citizens aware of their role in the society and helps them to get involved in the political decision-making system. As a result, it helps government to be more effective.

In this perspective the format of civic and political education programmes must be adapted to different national contexts.

The purpose of the lab is to understand if a general decision to introduce or empower this type of education could protect citizens from general beliefs and the spreading of movements that are against democratic institutions.

About the initiatives

Political Education at Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Germany)

Civic education was indispensable in building a liberal democracy in the Federal Republic after 1945 and in reunited Germany after 1989. While there was an immediate link to the experience of totalitarian rule in the early days, civic education is today confronted by new challenges, in particular the rise of political extremism, as proved by last elections. Such reality makes necessary to connect politicians and citizens, through education. Civic education gives, in fact, citizens tools to perceive political changes and to understand the on-going situation. The German model of civic education is a comprehensive approach consisting of:

- Political education given by the state in schools;
- Political education learnt in the civil society;
- Civic education given by the church;
- Civic education given by federal and regional agencies;
- Political education given by foundations.

The first one, which should be the first and the easiest to implement, is not adequately provided, this is the reason why civic education needs to be de-centralised, so that it can be more non-oriented and varied. In Germany there is more than one foundation focusing on this topic, using different tools and ideas to attract young people. The "Smart Camps" initiative is just one of the on-going projects implemented by the Adenauer Foundation. It is based on the idea that social networks can be used to disseminate political and civic values. During these 3-4 day camps, pupils have the chance to meet experts, such as bloggers and youtubers, and to create anti-populism campaign themselves, by learning how to use digital tools and social networks in a professional way. Teachers can also participate in these

activities in order to capitalise on these tools and information for their teaching activities.

Education strategies to face the populist challenge. Any education effort made to tackle populism should first of all focus on the feelings that populism use to rise (e.g. the fact that people don't feel represented etc.). The European project emerged from the second global war, based on the idea that welfare should be guaranteed to everyone and on the principle of respecting minorities. It was, therefore, the strategy of making citizens feel included that made possible to build democratic societies. Populism tries to undermine such history and memories. In this perspective, civic education should be strictly connected with history, making people aware of the importance of a common past. Besides, populism should be fought with their same tools, in particular through media (e.g. by focusing on fake news, critical thinking skills, etc.). European media tend to be too homogeneous, and such lack of diversification is not good in regard to education. A greater media diversification needs to be addressed, included the construction of new narratives. Education has not only to target citizens, but also the ruling elites in order for them to be better able to rule and to communicate with their citizens.

To avoid tokenism and any rhetorical approach, the aims of civic education must be clarified in advance; otherwise these education efforts could easily replicate populist contents. In this perspective, populist parties are not the main danger: mainstream parties, addressing citizens in a rhetorical way, could appear even more dangerous.

Pre-conditions for an effective civic education. Civic education can play an effective role in making societies more resilient to populism, if the following elements are adequately taken into consideration.
1. Do we understand what we are talking about with the concept of civic education? Political and civic educations are, in fact, used in the same way, but civic education is more focused on awareness raising actions.
2. Who delivers it?
3. How is it delivered? In fact, the Adenauer foundation seems to arrive just to one type of audience, the youth.

4. Who regulates civic education? Who sets the standards and the conditions? Does it only work in progressive democratic states?
5. In which contexts is it delivered? For example, in case of youth unemployment, how do we ensure that the targeted audience can practise the skills promoted by civic education?

Civic education is not a panacea to populism, but we need to ensure to be prepared for issues that are equally demanding. Often, it is taken as an approach that is just for weak target group, but it must address everyone. Populism makes people lazy, as it brings them to passively blame institutions without adopting a proactive attitude to make things change. The whole education system must change, as the present one is based on a passive learning and not on key transversal competences.

Civic education as a joint effort. Civic education is not only a responsibility of public institutions. Lab participants agreed that an important role is also played by private networks, such as religious organisations, and by the families themselves. In other terms, civic education is not an isolated subject, but a comprehensive approach, whose main aim is to teach people to be more creative and to develop critical thinking skills to effectively and constructively challenge own political and social environment.

✓ To develop a comprehensive understanding of civic education through the joint involvement of institutions, young people, their families and their communities from all social groups.
✓ To tailor civic education and generally education to each context in order to identify concrete solutions with simple messages to pressing, real problems in the "outward" agenda, close to people's needs.
✓ To identify clear responsibilities, in particular who standardises the courses and who delivers them, otherwise the State could easily instrumentalise it.