



EU Parliamentary Democracy Forum



European Parliament | 29-30 September 2026

Draft Programme

Pre-sessions (by invitation - for parliamentarians only)

09:00 – 10:30 | Good practices and ongoing initiatives on electoral resilience and integrity (with the European Parliament's Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield)

Members of EU National Parliaments, MEPs and national experts will discuss effective and innovative practices to enhance electoral integrity and democratic resilience. By showcasing national experiences and ongoing initiatives, the pre-session seeks to identify practical responses adapted to each country's electoral landscape and to foster mutual learning across the Union.

11:00 – 12:30 | European Democracy Shield - Protecting the safety of political candidates and elected representatives (with the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission)

Building on the discussions held during the 2025 EU Parliamentary Democracy Forum session on "Overcoming political polarisation", European and national parliamentarians will exchange views with the European Commission to inform the preparation of its forthcoming "Recommendation on safety in politics" and the dedicated "Guide of best practices", expected to be ready by the end of 2026.

13:00 – 14:00 | Welcome coffee

14:00 – 14:50 | Opening session

Introduction by

- ❖ **Sanna Lepola**, Director-General for Parliamentary Democracy Partnerships, European Parliament

Opening addresses

- ❖ **Katarina Barley**, Vice-President for Relations with National Parliaments, European Parliament
- ❖ **Verona Murphy**, TD, Ceann Comhairle, Houses of the Oireachtas (Speaker of the Lower House of the Irish Parliament)

Conversation with **María Corina Machado**, 2025 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Venezuelan democracy leader (online)

Chaired by

- ❖ **Esteban González Pons**, Vice-President for Relations with National Parliaments, European Parliament

14:50 – 16:25 | **Session I: Mobilising a Whole-of-Society Approach to Safeguard Elections**

This session will explore the main challenges to electoral resilience across the EU and present the related proposals under the European Democracy Shield. It will examine how a whole-of-society approach to safeguarding elections can be put into practice. Participants will discuss the roles of parliaments, independent authorities, civil society and digital platforms in protecting electoral processes, as well as ways to strengthen citizens' engagement in elections.

Setting the scene

- ❖ **Péter Krekó**, Associate Professor at the Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences, Director of Political Capital Institute and Coordinator of the Hungarian Digital Media Observatory

Regulatory guardrails and institutional defences

- ❖ **Nathalie Loiseau**, Chair of the Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield
- ❖ **Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica**, Vice-President of the Latvian Parliament

Advancing electoral integrity from the ground up

- ❖ **Gillian Coughlan**, Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions
- ❖ **Vasilije Čarapić**, Chairperson of the Committee on International Relations and Emigrants, Parliament of Montenegro

Moderated by

- ❖ **Delphine Colard**, Spokesperson, Directorate-General for Communication, European Parliament
- ❖ **Philip Tulkens**, Director for ICT Infrastructure and Security Operations, Directorate-General for Information Technologies and Cybersecurity, European Parliament

16:25 – 16:55 | **Coffee break**

16:55 – 18:30 | **Session II: EU strategy for civil society**

This session will examine the EU Civil Society Strategy as a key instrument to reinforce democratic resilience across the Union. It will explore how stronger protection and support for civil society organisations can help safeguard civic space. The discussion will also clarify the political responsibilities of the European Parliament and national parliaments in this area. Finally, participants will consider how to embed meaningful and sustained participation of civil society in EU and national democratic decision-making, going beyond ad-hoc consultations.

Setting the scene

- ❖ TBC

Strengthening Civic Space and Democratic Resilience

- ❖ **Marina Kaljurand**, First Vice-Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
- ❖ **Member of National Parliament** (TBC)
- ❖ **Halyna Mykhailiuk**, Representative of the President of Ukraine in the Verkhovna Rada and People's Deputy of Ukraine

Embedding Civil Society in Democratic Decision-Making

- ❖ **Katarina Barley**, Vice-President for Relations with National Parliaments, European Parliament
- ❖ **Séamus Boland**, President of the European Economic and Social Committee

Moderated by

- ❖ **Emilie Tournier**, Deputy Spokesperson, Directorate-General for Communication, European Parliament
- ❖ **David Lundy**, Acting Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Democracy Partnerships, European Parliament

18:30 – 20:00 | Networking dinner

DAY II

08:45 – 09:25 | Welcome coffee

09:25 – 09:40 | Opening

Introduction by

- ❖ **Leticia Zuleta Reales Ansaldo**, Director-General for Citizens' Rights, Justice and Institutional Affairs, European Parliament

Video message

- ❖ **Professor Timothy Snyder**, Historian, Author and Chair in Modern European History at the University of Toronto

09:40 – 11:10 | Session III: From legislation to implementation: strengthening parliamentary oversight at EU and national level

This session will examine parliamentary oversight as a key instrument to reinforce the role of parliaments vis-à-vis the executive in a challenging geopolitical context. It will explore how stronger oversight can enhance democratic accountability and increase citizens' trust. Participants will also discuss approaches to ensure the effective implementation of EU legislation, including improved coordination between the European Parliament, national parliaments and civil society actors.

Setting the scene

- ❖ **Sacha Garben**, Professor of European Law, Legal Studies Department, College of Europe

Oversight, Accountability & Trust

- ❖ **Peter De Roover**, President of the Belgian House of Representatives
- ❖ **Nils Ušakovs**, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Petitions
- ❖ **Ellie Whiteaker**, Senator, Parliament of Australia

Implementation of EU Legislation & Coordination

- ❖ **Marjolein Moorman**, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Netherlands
- ❖ **Vice-President of the European Parliament (TBC)**

Moderated by

- ❖ **Markus Warasin**, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Citizens' Rights, Justice and Institutional Affairs, European Parliament
- ❖ **Gaia Manco**, Administrator, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Democracy Partnerships, European Parliament

11:10 – 11:45 | Coffee break

11:45 – 13:15 | Session IV: Defending democracy amid geopolitical disruption: towards a Team Europe parliamentary diplomacy approach

This session will provide an opportunity to exchange best practices in parliamentary diplomacy across the EU and to examine its role in countering democratic backsliding in a context of fragmentation and geopolitical instability. Participants will explore ways to strengthen cooperation between EU national parliaments and the European Parliament and discuss how to better coordinate parliamentary diplomacy tools under a Team Europe approach.

Setting the scene

- ❖ **Richard Youngs**, Senior Fellow in the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Europe

Parliamentary diplomacy, democracy & geopolitical challenges

- ❖ **David McAllister**, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament
- ❖ **Member of National Parliament (TBC)**

Towards a Team Europe parliamentary diplomacy approach

- ❖ **Sven Simon**, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament
- ❖ **Naaja Nathanielsen**, Chair of the Greenland Committee, Danish Parliament

Moderated by

- ❖ **Sarah Sheil**, Director for Members' Research Service, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services, European Parliament
- ❖ **James Maher**, Deputy Spokesperson, Directorate-General for Communication, European Parliament

13:15 – 14:00 | Exchange of views with Michael McGrath, Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection

Chaired by:

- ❖ **Katarina Barley**, Vice-President for Relations with National Parliaments, European Parliament

14:00 – 14:10 | Closing remarks

- ❖ **Roberta Metsola**, President of the European Parliament

14:10 – 15:30 | Networking lunch