Programme

EU Parliamentary Democracy Forum

European Parliament

Day I – 29 September

PRE-SESSIONS (BY INVITATION – FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS ONLY)

9:00 – 10:30 **PRE-SESSION I: 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 **PRE-SESSION II: 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**

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14:00 – 15:00 OPENING

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 Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Leader of Democratic Forces of Belarus

CHAIRED BY

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

15:00 – 16:30 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.

SCENE SETTER

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

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REGULATORY GUARDRAILS AND INSTITUTIONAL DEFENCES

- **Mika Aaltola**, Member of the Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield and Vice-Chair of the Delegation to the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, European Parliament
- **Meri Disoski**, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Austrian National Council

ADVANCING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY FROM THE GROUND UP

- **Gillian Coughlan**, Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions
- **Rodrigo Saraiva**, Vice-President of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal
- **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

16:30 – 17:00 COFFEE BREAK

17:00 – 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.

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STRENGTHENING CIVIC SPACE AND DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

- **Marina Kaljurand**, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, European Parliament
- **Galyna 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
- **Ivan Ilchev Angelov**, Vice-President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria

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

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Day II – 30 September

8:45 – 9:30 WELCOME COFFEE

9:35 – 9:50 OPENING

INTRODUCTION BY

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

VIDEO MESSAGE FROM

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

9:50 – 11:20 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.

SCENE SETTER

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

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OVERSIGHT, ACCOUNTABILITY & TRUST

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

IMPLEMENTATION OF EU LEGISLATION & COORDINATION

- **Marjolein Moorman**, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Netherlands
- **Brando Benifei**, Chair of the Delegation for Relations with the United States and Co-Chair of the Working Group on the Implementation and Enforcement of the AI Act, European Parliament

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

11:20 – 11:55 COFFEE BREAK

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11:55 – 13:20 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.

SCENE SETTER

- **Elene Panchulidze**, Head of Research at the European Partnership for Democracy

PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY, DEMOCRACY & GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES

- **David McAllister**, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament
- **Carmen Navarro**, Secretary of the Bureau of the Spanish Congress of Deputies

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

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13:20 – 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