No Democracy without Accountability

International Day of Democracy

European Committee of the Regions │ Tuesday, 17 September 2019

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#EU4Democracy2019

Accountability is the cornerstone of a well-functioning democracy. Accountability refers to all the different ways that citizens, political parties, parliaments and other democratic actors can provide feedback to, reward or sanction elected officials in charge of setting up and enforcing public policies. Proper accountability mechanisms provide incentives for governments to work in the best interest of their citizens.

The conference *No Democracy without Accountability* aims to take stock of the role of accountability within the democratic framework, to examine possible challenges and to explore how accountability may evolve in years to come. The event will serve as an exchange of practice between citizens, government officials and elected politicians who will come together to discuss traditional and new forms of accountability, and explore ways to improve accountability.

PROGRAMME

09:30-10:00 |REGISTRATION & COFFEE

10:00-10:15 |WELCOME REMARKS   *Room JDE52*
Marjeta Jager, Deputy Director General for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission

Franco Iacop, Member of the Committee of the Regions and CIVEX coordinator, Party of European Socialists in the European Committee of the Regions

10:15-10:35 |KEYNOTE SPEECH   *Room JDE52*
Maina Kiai, Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

10.35-10.45 |PRESENTATION OF THE "VOX POP" SURVEY   *Room JDE52*

10:45-12:00|PANEL DISCUSSION: *HOLDING ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES ACCOUNTABLE*   *Room JDE52*
What does accountability actually mean? How does accountability work? Our panel of highly qualified speakers will address these important questions during this opening plenary session. Each of our speakers will bring their unique experience and insights to this session. They will reflect on what accountability means within their particular context, and will discuss their experiences of working to ensure accountability as the basis for transparent democracies. Each speaker has a unique story to tell about how they have held and continue to hold elected representatives and officials to account.

Panellists:

Jessica Musila, Executive Director, Mzalendo, Parliamentary Oversight Organisation, Kenya
Caoilfhionn Gallagher, Barrister specialising in human rights and civil liberties at Doughty Street Chamber
Karim Vera, Deputy of the National Assembly of Venezuela
Tundu Lissu, Member of Parliament, CHADEMA, Tanzania

Special Guest:

Maina Kiai, Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association (honourable guest)
Facilitator:

Ilya Lozovsky, Managing Editor, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)

12:00-12:20 | *THE EU'S SUPPORT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AROUND THE WORLD*   *Room JDE52*
Christian Leffler, Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Global Issues, European External Action Service

12:20-13:30 | LUNCH   *ATRIUM5*

13:30-15:00 | **BREAKOUT SESSIONS:**

Workshop 1 |*New methods for a traditional form of democratic accountability – the*   *Room JDE52*
importance of civic courage to counter corruption
Hosted by European Endowment for Democracy (EED)

In an era of shrinking democratic space, the role of civil society in fighting governmental corruption is of ever-increasing importance. Corruption is a significant issue in many countries worldwide, including within Europe, and this is particularly the case in countries where civil activists' freedom to operate is curtailed. In such environments, civil activists risk severe consequences for exposing the corruption of their governments.

This workshop brings together three courageous civic activists from the European Neighbourhood and Western Balkan countries who are working to expose corruption at the heart of government, thereby ensuring accountability of these governments to their citizens. Through their work, they have helped to empower citizens to engage in anti-corruption efforts. The activists will share their experiences and exchange ideas on how best to encourage a grass-roots citizen-based approach to anti-corruption activities. They reveal some of the innovative methods that can be used to fight corruption in weak-democratic contexts.

Panellists:

Ilya Lozovsky, Managing editor, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)
Assaad Thebian, Founder, Gherbal Initiative, Lebanon
Elena Varta, Director, Centre for Policies and Reforms (CPR), Moldova

Facilitator:

Kristina Vaiciunaite, Senior Programme manager, European Endowment for Democracy (EED)

Workshop 2 |*Digital accountability: social media platforms and digital political*   *Room JDE51*
advertising
Hosted by European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)

The phenomenon of digital political campaigning has caught global public attention since the twin shocks of Brexit and the US Presidential election in 2016. This challenge was highlighted again by the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018. Since then, the tension between the integrity of electoral systems and a vastly unregulated digital sphere have arguably become an inherent danger to democracies worldwide. Therefore, this workshop will look at accountability of social media platforms, and specifically digital political advertising, in Europe and beyond.
Panellists:

Pavel Havlicek, Research Fellow, AMO Research Center
Marie-Hélène Boulanger, Head of Unit, Union Citizenship Rights and Free Movement, DG Justice, European Commission
Patrick Costello, Head of Division, Democracy and Electoral Observation, European External Action Service
Facilitator:

Sam Jeffers, Director and Founder of "Who targets me"

15:00-15:30 | **COFFEE BREAK**   *Corridor*

15:30-17:00 | BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

Workshop 3 | *Accountability Initiatives and opportunities in shrinking space context*   *JDE51*
Hosted by the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP)

Civil society and political parties are crucial part and parcel of all political processes, be they local, national or international. Civil society and political parties can shape political processes, successfully organise political participation, uncover corruption and human rights abuses – and demand accountability from state actors. They are watchdogs of official policy, drawing attention to unsound developments, initiating and focusing public debate, and offering political and social alternatives.

However, all across the world, civil society and political opposition parties are under growing pressure. In many countries, state authorities are taking more and more systematic measures, aimed at restricting the work of civil society and the political opposition. The freedoms of opinion, association, and assembly - the essence of democracy - are increasingly under threat. Efforts to limit such freedoms must be regarded as a challenge to all democratic governments and to global cooperation – and they must be stopped. This session discusses civil society's ways of reacting to and holding governments accountable in environments of shrinking spaces.

Panellists:

Nitai Mehta, Managing Trustee, Praja Foundation, India
Preap Kol, Executive Director of TI, Cambodia
Karim Vera, Deputy of the National Assembly of Venezuela
Chiara Adamo, Head of Unit, Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance, DG DEVCO, European Commission
Facilitator:

Cornelia Hoffmann, ENoP Network Coordinator

Workshop 4 | *Using ICTs for transparency and accountability in political finance*   *JDE52*
Hosted by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

Democracy is ultimately about popular control over decision-making. A lack of information on how much money circulates in and around elections, where resources are coming from and how they are spent leads to diminished transparency and deprives the public of the opportunity to make informed choices and keep the elected representatives accountable. Over the past decade, significant steps have been made by many governments to use information technology and the internet to improve the effectiveness of political finance oversight and to enhance transparency in this area. The rapid digitalization of government agencies, political parties and citizens alike has significantly expanded the potential to use digital tools to enhance transparency and accountability. Along with government-led efforts, an increasing number of civil society organizations work to promote transparency and public accountability of political parties by building public databases of political and campaign finance information, based on data released by oversight bodies and data that they gather themselves through monitoring of party assets, activities and expenditures. The panel will feature examples of government-led, political party-led and CSO-led ICT initiatives in political finance transparency and accountability from across the globe.

Panellists:

Pavel Cabacenco, Head of the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training, (CICDE), Moldova
Vita Dumanska, Representative of Ukrainian CSO Chesno/Gold of Parties, Ukraine
Raghav Chadha, National Spokesperson, Aam Aadmi Party, India
Facilitator:

Sam van der Staak, Head of Europe Programme, International IDEA

17:00 | **END OF CONFERENCE**

17:30 | **DEMOCRACY DRINKS**   *Aloft Hotel*

Aloft Hotel, Place Jean Rey, Bruxelles (300 metres from the Committee of the Regions)

Hosted by by Defending Democracy, today partnering with Open Government Partnership and the Open Government Network for Europe (OGNfE), ENoP, EED, International IDEA, EPD and Supporting Democracy.