



Brussels
**Democracy
Dialogue**
2024

**How to Transition
to Sustainable
Democracies?**

Thon Hotel Bristol Stephanie
20 November 2024
09:00 – 19:00

How to Transition to Sustainable Democracies?

Focusing on the topic of successful democratisation processes, the first Brussels Democracy Dialogue will address how transitions to sustainable democracies can succeed. At the onset of the third wave of democratisation, social science research identified four key factors on which the success of democratisation was supposed to depend:

1. a political elite committed to democratic norms and principles;
2. the existence of a liberal and democratic tradition (e.g., pre-authoritarian social movements, organised interests, and a democratic-parliamentary culture) that facilitates the entrenchment of liberal and democratic values in society;
3. socio-economic aspects that favour the development and stability of democracy (e.g., a prosperous economy, low levels of inequality);
4. strong international democracy supporters that make the external costs of authoritarianism high.

Together with politicians, experts in democracy, and representatives of civil society, we will re-assess the validity of these factors, which have been regarded as essential for the transition to and survival of democracy.

Our moderator is **Jacki Davis**, Senior Adviser at the European Policy Centre (EPC).

Conference Programme

09:15 CONFERENCE OPENING

Sabine Fandrych, Secretary General of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

09:30 SESSION 1

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL ACTORS IN SUBVERTING AND DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

In many countries, we have recently seen how authoritarian-minded politicians have undermined democratic principles and eroded the established norms of political discourse and the foundations of democratic institutions. They have increased insecurities in societies, which in turn facilitated their assaults on democracy. How should democratically-minded political actors react to such behaviour? Should they use polarising or de-polarising discourses? Should they fight within or outside of the institutions? What are skilful and creative ways to successfully defend and safeguard democracy?

Input by: Giovanni Capoccia, Oxford University; Andreas Schedler, Central European University, Democracy Institute; Seren Selvin Korkmaz, Co-Director IstanPol Institute; Ana Catarina Mendes MEP; Juan Fernando López Aguilar MEP

11:00 COFFEE BREAK

11:30 SESSION 2
WHY DID LIBERAL AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES NOT TAKE DEEP ROOTS EVERYWHERE?

The role of citizens in defending democracy is essential. In recent years, however, many citizens have been seduced by the illiberal project that opposes pluralism and minority rights and emphasises ethnic nationalism, which has proven to be the gateway to authoritarianism. Why are parts of our societies receptive to illiberal and undemocratic values? How can national governments and the European Union use innovative ways to increase citizens' willingness to defend democracy? Should progressive forces be bolder when defending the civic values and diversity?

Input by: Philip Gorski, Yale University; Maya Tudor, Oxford University; Vukosava Crnjanski, CRTA Serbia; Elif Avci, Advisor Istanbul Planning Agency; Tobias Cremer MEP

13:00 LUNCH BREAK

14:00 SESSION 3
RETHINKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND THE ECONOMY

Solid economic performance, coupled with a low level of socio-economic inequalities, is considered pivotal in stabilising democracy and making it resilient. Yet in spite of solid economic output in some European countries (for example, Poland) voters decided to elect leaders who subverted democracy. On the other hand, in some other countries marked by deep economic crises (e.g. Greece or Portugal) democracy proved to be more resilient. So, what role does democracy's socio-economic output play in the survival of democracy? When talking about the effect of the economy on democracy's sustainability, should we go beyond the GDP and the level of inequality and include other aspects as well?

Input by: Susan Stokes, Head of Chicago Center on Democracy, University of Chicago; Lefteris Papagiannakis, Greek Council for Refugees; Jan Teorell, Stockholm University, V-Dem; Matthias Ecke MEP; Stanisław Kierwiak, Chairman of the trade union OPZZ Konfederacja Pracy

15:30 COFFEE BREAK

16:00 SESSION 4
HOW TO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY IN TIMES OF DE-DEMOCRATISATION?
THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The fall of communism led to a brief period of Western liberal hegemony, during which many Western actors strongly promoted democracy. In recent years, however, the influence of Western liberal democracies has been waning amid the rise of authoritarian actors such as China and Russia. How does this shift in the balance of power influence the work of external actors? The new FES study on the role of international organisations that support democracy will serve as a basis for the discussion. The study investigates how pro-democratic external actors, such as the FES and other pro-democracy NGOs, should adapt to the new context marked by de-democratisation.

Input by: Sarah Bush, University of Pennsylvania; Ivan Krastev, Institute for Human Sciences; Dan Sobovitz, Demo-Crisis Brussels; Tamta Mikeladze, Social Justice Center, Georgia; Sabine Fandrych, FES Secretary General; Evin Incir MEP, Sven Mikser MEP

17:30 CLOSING REMARKS

Martin Schulz, President of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

18:00 RECEPTION

Speakers

Session 1



Giovanni Capoccia is Professor of Comparative Politics in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford, where he is a Fellow of Corpus Christi College. His research and teaching interests focus on democratization, political extremism, theories of institutional development, and European politics. He has been the Rita E. Hauser Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, a Visiting Fellow at the Max-Planck Institute for Comparative Law in Heidelberg (Germany), and a Visiting Scholar at the Center for European Studies at Harvard and at the Institute for Political Science at the University of Heidelberg.



Andreas Schedler is a Senior Research Fellow at the CEU Democracy Institute. He is Head of the Research Group on De- and Re-Democratization (DRD) and a Visiting Professor at CEU Vienna. Before joining the CEU, he was a professor of political science at the Center for Economic Teaching and Research (CIDE) in Mexico City. A leading comparative scholar of democracy, democratization, and authoritarianism, he has widely published on authoritarian elections, democratic consolidation and transition, anti-political-establishment parties, political accountability, and organized violence. His current research focuses on political polarization and the destruction of basic democratic trust.



Seren Selvin Korkmaz is co-founder and board member of the IstanPol Institute. She is also a researcher at Stockholm University's Institute for Turkish Studies. In 2023, Korkmaz was honoured as a Marshall Memorial Fellow by the German Marshall Fund of the U.S. Her previous appointments include positions as a non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington D.C., a Fox International Fellow at Yale University, and a research fellow at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. She works with international and domestic actors as political analyst and advisor on a broad range of issues, trends and developments with a special focus on internal Turkish political dynamics.



Ana Catarina Mendes is a Portuguese politician affiliated with the Socialist Party (PS). In the 2024 elections, she was elected as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and currently serves as Vice-President of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D). Mendes is a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, and the Delegations for Africa-EU and the OACPS-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. Before her role in the European Parliament, Mendes had a significant career in national politics. She was a member of the Assembly of the Republic and the parliamentary leader of the Socialist Party. In 2022, she was appointed Minister for Parliamentary Affairs in the Constitutional Government of Portugal. Prior to her ministerial role, from 2018 onwards, Mendes also contributed as a political commentator on Portuguese television, drawing on her extensive political expertise.



Juan Fernando López Aguilar is a Spanish politician and Member of the European Parliament (MEP) representing the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D). He has been serving in the European Parliament since 2009. López Aguilar is a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO). He also participates in international relations as a member of the Delegation to the CARIFORUM-EU, OACPS-EU, and Africa-EU Parliamentary Assemblies. Previously, López Aguilar held significant roles in European and national politics. He served as Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Vice-President of the Party of European Socialists (PES), and was the Head of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) delegation in the European Parliament. López Aguilar has served as Minister of Justice, Minister for Public Administration, Education, and Science, and as a member of Congress of the Spanish Parliament and Advisor to the Minister of Justice.

Session 2



Philip Gorski is Frederick and Laura Goff Professor of Sociology at Yale University. He is a comparative-historical sociologist with strong interests in theory and methods and in modern and early modern Europe. His empirical work focuses on topics such as state-formation, nationalism, revolution, economic development and secularization with particular attention to the interaction of religion and politics. Other current interests include the philosophy and methodology of the social sciences and the nature and role of rationality in social life.



Maya Tudor is Professor of Politics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government and Fellow at St Hilda's College at the University of Oxford. Her research investigates the origins of effective and democratic states. Maya is a regular commentator on elections and the state of democracy in media outlets, including the BBC and The Guardian. Before embarking on an academic career, Maya worked as a Special Assistant to Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz at the World Bank, at UNICEF, in the United States Senate, and at the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.



Vukosava Crnjanski is the founder and director of the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA). She has been present in the political life of Serbia for more than 20 years, and she has focused her professional career on democratization of society and inclusive political engagement. Most of her work is focused on supporting free and independent journalism, advocating the idea of free and fair elections, and devotion to institutional accountability and openness. She has been working with the National Democratic Institute as a political skills trainer since 2003 and since then she has worked with numerous national and international foundations and non-governmental organizations.



Elif Avci is currently serving as an advisor for the Istanbul Planning Agency, focusing on participatory processes and youth engagement and as an Advisory Board Member for the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA). Avci has extensive experience in social policy, having previously worked as a Social Policy Specialist for Şişli Municipality and as Secretary General of the Şişli City Council. She held the position of Social & Cultural Policy Coordinator for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and was a member of the social policy team for the Istanbul mayoral campaign. Avci is a co-founder and chair of Local Monitoring Research and Implementations Association (YERELİZ), an organization dedicated to enhancing local governance. She also serves as the Director of KızBaşına, a platform focused on raising awareness and creating campaigns to combat violence against women.



Tobias Cremer is a German Member of Parliament with the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. He is a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Subcommittee on Security and Defense, and is part of the Delegation for Relations with the United States and NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Cremer has received diplomatic training at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has previously worked for the ministry, focusing on the Baltic region and the Northern Europe Department.

Session 3



Susan Stokes is the Tiffany and Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago and Director of the Chicago Center on Democracy. Her research and teaching interests include democratic theory and how democracy functions in developing societies, distributive politics, and comparative political behavior. She is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and past chair of the Political Science Department at Yale University.



Leferis Papagiannakis worked in the European Parliament as a parliamentary assistant, on the education of the Muslim minority in Greece, as a legal counselor for the political party Ecologists Green and the Special Secretariat on Environmental Inspection. He was elected in the municipal council of Athens in 9/2014 and named Vice Mayor for Migrant and Refugee Affairs from 3/2016 to 8/2019. Following the end of his term he was named Head of Advocacy Policy and Research for SolidarityNow. He was chair of the working group Migration and Integration of the Eurocities Network and vice President for Refugee Issues of ECCAR (European Coalition of Cities against Racism) and president of the Council for the Integration of Migrants of the Municipality of Athens. He is a member of the Board of The Hellenic League for Human Rights. Currently he is the Director of the Greek Council for Refugees.



Jan Teorell is Professor of Political Science at Stockholm University and holder of the Lars Johan Hierta professorial chair. His research interests include Swedish and comparative politics, comparative democratization, state making and party politics. He is also principal investigator in The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Research Project.



Mathias Ecke is a German politician and Member of the European Parliament with the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats. He serves as Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Tax Matters and is a member of the Committee on Industry, Research, and Energy, as well as the Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula. He previously worked for the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Employment and Transport, the Ministry for Science and the Arts in Saxony, and in the German Bundestag as a head of office and researcher for Members of Parliament.



Stanislaw Kierwak the Chairman of raiders' union Konfederacja Pracy (Confederacy of Labour) in the Polish JustEat Takeaway since 2022. He is active in the field of platform work regulation and workers' rights advocacy and currently working on a campaign for effective implementation of the Platform Work Directive. He is the Co-author of the Platform Workers' manifesto (2023).

Session 4



Sarah Bush is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to coming to Penn, she held faculty positions at Yale University and Temple University and fellowships at Perry World House and the Harvard Kennedy School. Her research examines how international actors try to aid democracy, promote women's representation, and influence elections globally. Her work has been covered in outlets including The Economist and Washington Post.



Ivan Krastev is chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies, Sofia, and Permanent Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna (IWM). He is a founding board member of the European Council on Foreign Relations, a member of the global advisory board of Open Society Foundations, New York, and a member of the advisory council of the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) and the European Cultural Foundation (ECF). He has held fellowships at St. Antony's College (Oxford); the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars (Washington, D.C.); the Collegium Budapest; the Wissenschaftskolleg (Berlin); the Institute of Federalism at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland); and the Remarque Institute at New York University.



Dan Sobovitz is founder of DemoCrisis and spreadable.io, Managing Director of the European Startup Prize for Mobility, Board member of The Secular Jewish Community Center David Susskind (CCLJ), African Dialogue & Inclusion Centre (ADIC), Ceci n'est pas une crise, and EU Inside & Out. He is also former speechwriter and digital strategist of European Commission Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič.



Tamta Mikeladze is one of the founders of Georgia's Social Justice Center. Since the foundation of EMC, she has been a member of the Board of Directors and led the organisation with other program directors. She is responsible for the management and coordination of the Equality Policy Program. The program is preoccupied with matters relating to antidiscrimination policy, the oppression of non-dominant groups (religious and ethnic minorities, as well as LGBT people) and their exclusion at the political, social and discursive levels.



Sabine Fandrych has been a member of the Executive Board and Managing Director of the FES since 2021. Previously, she headed FES's Division of the Political Academy in Bonn (2017–2021). She has gained a lot of experience in her work for the FES, both abroad and at home. She worked as head of the FES in Angola and as an advisor for organizational development and reintegration policy at GIZ (2000–2007). She also headed the FES office in Ethiopia and at the African Union (2007–2010) as well as the FES office in Baden-Württemberg.



Evin Incir is a Swedish politician of Kurdish descent and a Member of the European Parliament as part of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats. She serves as Vice-Chair of the EU Delegation for Relations with Iraq, including the EU-Iraq Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, and is a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs as well as the Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly. She previously worked as Deputy International Secretary for the Swedish Social Democrats and as Coordinator of the Party-Oriented Democracy Support Team.



Sven Mikser is an Estonian Member of the European Parliament (MEP) representing the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) since 2019. He plays a key role in shaping EU foreign and security policy as a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Subcommittee on Security and Defense, and the Delegation for relations with the United States. Before joining the European Parliament, Mikser served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense, bringing extensive experience in international and security affairs. He also held a leadership role as the Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Estonia.

Closing Remarks



Martin Schulz is President of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e.V. and was a member of the 19th German Bundestag. He was Federal Chairman of the SPD, candidate for Chancellor, and a long-standing member of the European Parliament, which he chaired as President for more than 30 years, and was previously Communications Director of the European Policy Centre think tank; Editor-in-Chief of EISharp magazine; and launch editor of European Voice, the Brussels-based weekly newspaper then owned by The Economist (now Politico). She has moderated many conferences in Brussels and in EU Member States, and also has extensive experience on EU affairs.

Moderator



Jacki Davis is an experienced journalist, speaker and moderator of events both in Brussels and in EU national capitals. She also works as editor of many publications, as broadcaster on television and radio news programmes. Davis has been based in Brussels for more than 30 years, and was previously Communications Director of the European Policy Centre think tank; Editor-in-Chief of EISharp magazine; and launch editor of European Voice, the Brussels-based weekly newspaper then owned by The Economist (now Politico). She has moderated many conferences in Brussels and in EU Member States, and also has extensive experience on EU affairs.

Background

In response to the rise of leaders with autocratic tendencies in advanced democracies, creeping autocratisation in many democracies previously considered consolidated, and faltering democratisation processes in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung EU Office Brussels** and **FES Democracy of the Future Office Vienna** are organising the first **Brussels Democracy Dialogue** on 20 November 2024. Just like the [Hambach Democracy Dialogue \(HDD\)](#), this expert conference is a platform to exchange progressive ideas and proposals for further developing European democracies.

About the Organisers

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung EU Office Brussels

<https://brussels.fes.de> [X](#) [@FES_Europa](#)

FES Democracy of the Future Office Vienna

<https://democracy.fes.de> [X](#) [@FES_Democracy](#)

New FES study

**External Actors in Democratization –
Lessons from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung**
by Sarah Bush and Julian D. Melendi

