

# ***Thematic Focus for the 2024 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy***



2024 GLOBAL FORUM  
ON MODERN  
DIRECT DEMOCRACY  
15-18 May - Bucharest, Romania

***15 - 18 May 2024, Bucharest, Romania***

*Trust is the cornerstone of our democracies. We trust our leaders to make good decisions on our behalf. We trust our fellow citizens to know things we don't and to bring perspectives we have not considered. We trust that when we cast our votes, they are counted. And we trust that when someone violates this process they are held to account. The main topic of this Forum will be trust - in institutions, in media, in each other - and how to reestablish it in times of democratic backsliding. This Global Forum will examine how democratic trust and resilience contribute to and are bolstered by well-functioning institutions, active citizenship, and, last but not least, direct democracy and citizen participation. We want to take an in-depth look at what the cultural, educational and institutional contexts are that give way to well-functioning tools of direct democracy and citizen participation. Finally, in a record election year, both for Romania and the world, we want to look at how elections are run, how citizens are informed and how parties function today and what the interplay is with citizen participation.*

## ***1. How can democracy and its tools prevent wars and make peace?***

The world faces big problems—war, populism, climate change, pandemics. Is democracy up to preventing them, or even fixing them? Discussions will center on how democratic systems, especially in the Black Sea Region and in the context of conflicts like the ongoing war in Ukraine, rely on the trust and resilience of their citizens and institutions. We will also examine the broader implications of democratic trust, and the role of participatory mechanisms and democratic innovations, in ensuring enduring peace and transitioning from autocratic regimes, with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe and Romania. In this context, we also want to examine the link between democracy and demography. More broadly, we are looking at how democracy, and in particular direct citizen decision-making and citizen participation, can strengthen social cohesion, promote inclusive governance, and enhance conflict resolution. Can democratic instruments play a role within the context of external security threats? And beyond conflict, can innovative tools such as citizens' assemblies and other democratic innovations help ensure lasting peace and facilitate constitutional development?

## ***2. EUROSAT - European democracy and participatory mechanisms***

How can citizens trust in transnational institutions, far removed from their daily realities? In the European Union, current and future issues should increasingly be considered through the lens of democracy, direct decision-making, and citizen participation as means to foster

greater citizen engagement and ownership to address pressing challenges, such as youth power, the digital transformation, the Green Deal, and the enlargement of the EU. Furthermore, the upcoming 2024 European Union elections, one of the largest democratic exercises in the world, offer a unique opportunity to delve into questions of democratic participation on the transnational level. The participatory mechanisms within the EU, unique on the transnational level, such as the Conference on the Future of Europe and the European Citizens' Initiative are areas of significant interest for this track. This track will be combined with the existing format EUROSAT, coordinated by Europuls - Centre of European Expertise. Every year since 2013, EUROSAT marks that vital moment when Europe, in all its forms, becomes the most important topic on Romania's agenda. Our co-host Europuls intends to continue their mission to bring the European Union closer to the Romanian citizens, especially in these difficult times. EUROSAT is the largest EU Affairs Forum in Romania.

### ***3. Informing Democracy: Unveiling the role of media and technology***

At times of declining trust in institutions, what is the role of media in preserving and extending democracy? And how can media better cover, explain and support democratic participation processes? In this track we will be investigating perspectives on independent media in Romania, the wider region and the world. We also want to hear about the intersection of social media and democracy, and how to deal with disinformation. More broadly, we want to examine how technological innovations shape the use of information in democratic processes? We are particularly interested in gathering insights into the impact of new developments such as artificial intelligence and data mining on democracy. The range of topics covered in this track spans from media business models in the era of social media to the roles of influencers and journalists as well as discussions on regulations, tools, and the effects of information on democracy.

### ***4. Is local democracy the last hope?***

There is a democratic recession among nation-states. But at the local level, various forms of democracy—direct, participatory, deliberative, digital—are flourishing and trust in government is higher. How can local democracies serve to counter democratic decline nationally? What would it take for local governments to collaborate and become forces for democracy at the national and transnational levels? In this track, we delve into direct democracy mechanisms to understand the breadth of their impact in the roles that local authorities and civil society organisations have, to show scopes and limits worldwide. We are particularly interested in best practices and experiences with direct democracy approaches and tools on a local level from all around the world. As Romania is the local host country of this Global Forum edition, we are especially interested in local direct democracy from the eastern European region. Furthermore, we are looking for experiences on how especially local participatory democracy processes can further the rights of marginalised communities.