

# Citizens' Forum & Innovation Lab



*Innovative practices in the fight against autocratisation in the European Neighbourhood*



**06** FEBRUARY  
2024



9:00 - 5:00 p.m.



IEE-ULB  
39 Avenue Franklin Roosevelt, 1050  
Brussels

## SCOPE

The Forum aims to explore the interplay between European Union strategies, policies, instruments or actions, and autocratic politics and governance in the EU's neighbourhood. The Forum will bring together citizens, researchers and experts, including EU and Member States policymakers and civic leaders active in the EU's neighbourhood. Participants will discuss the EU's place in the fight against autocratisation in the EU's neighbourhood by reflecting on the role, instruments, actions, legitimacy, and scope for further intervention to support democracy. More specifically, the Forum will address issues pertaining to the EU's role in supporting counter-autocratisation initiatives, civil society, electoral monitoring and assistance, anti-corruption drives and the defence of judicial independence. Given that citizens are the final 'consumers' of democracy and therefore the final 'beneficiaries' of counter-autocratisation measures, the Forum will place citizens and the EU's capacity to empower citizens to defend democracy at the core of the discussions. Based on the discussions, the event will explore improvements and innovative practices that the EU could adopt to enhance its response in the face of autocratisation dynamics in the EU neighbourhood.

## Opening Plenary Session: Democracy and Autocracy in the European Neighbourhood. What role for the EU?

Speakers



Sarah Leah Whitson  
DAWN



Kurt Bassuener  
DPC



Veronika Kucherchuk  
EED



Chair: Luca Tomini  
ULB / CEVIPOL

PROJECT: 101061621 — RED-SPINEL —  
HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Attendance is Free

Registration is Obligatory by Fri. 02/02/24:

<http://bit.ly/3Ub7mnd>



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## FORUM PROGRAM

09:00 - 09:30 *Welcome Coffee*

09:30 - 09:45 *Opening Remarks*

- & Presentation of the RED-SPINEL Project*
- Ramona Coman - RED-SPINEL Principal Investigator
  - Luca Tomini - Coordinator of RED-SPINEL's Work Package 3

09:45 - 10:45 *Opening Plenary Session*

*Chair: Luca Tomini (ULB-IEE / CEVIPOL)*

- **Sarah Leah Whitson** - Executive Director, Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), Washington
- **Kurt Bassuener** - Co-founder & Senior Associate, Democratization Policy Council (DPC), Berlin
- **Veronika Kucherchuk** - Programme Officer, European Endowment for Democracy (EED), Brussels

10:45 - 11:00 *Coffee break*

11:00 - 12:30

*Session 1 - Salle Spaak*

**Support to Civil Society**

*Moderator: Andrew Bradley, IEE-ULB*

*Rapporteur: Claudia Badulescu, IEE & Cevipol, ULB*

- **Ragnar Weilandt** - Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
- **Senada Šelo Šabić** - Institute for Development and International Relations
- **Marta Matrakova** - IEE-ULB
- **Sarah Leah Whitson** - Democracy for the Arab World

*Session 2 - Salle Geremek*

**Electoral Monitoring and Assistance**

*Moderator: Nienke van Heukelingen, Clingendael Institute*

*Rapporteur: Ioanna Christodoulaki, IEE- ULB*

- **Laurence Carlier** - Democracy Reporting International
- **Kurt Bassuener** - Democratization Policy Council
- **Régis Dandoy** - UNU-CRIS & ULB

12:30-13:30

*Lunch break*

13:30 - 15:00

*Session 3 - Salle Spaak*

**Anti-corruption Drives**

**& institutional Capacity-Building**

*Moderator: Claudia Badulescu, IEE & Cevipol, ULB*

*Rapporteur: Venelin Bochev, Cevipol, ULB*

- **Antoaneta Dimitrova** - Leiden University
- **Nisida Gjoksi** - European Commission - DG NEAR
- **Kurt Bassuener**, - Democratization Policy Council
- **Gergana Noutcheva** - Maastricht University

*Session 4 - Salle Geremek*

**Defence of Judicial Independence**

*Moderator: Pauline Thinus, IEE-CEVIPOL, ULB*

*Rapporteur: Nienke van Heukelingen, Clingendael Institute*

- **Sarah Leah Whitson** - Democracy for the Arab World Now
- **Senada Šelo Šabić** - Institute for Development and International Relations
- **Veronika Kucherchuk** - European Endowment for Democracy

15:00 - 15:15

*Coffee break*

15:15 - 17:00

*Closing Plenary Session - Wrap-Up & Concluding Remarks*

*Chair: Frederik Ponjaert (ULB-IEE)*

- *Rapporteur Session 1* - **Claudia Badulescu**, IEE & Cevipol, ULB
- *Rapporteur Session 2* - **Ioanna Christodoulaki**, IEE, ULB
- *Rapporteur Session 3* - **Venelin Bochev**, Cevipol, ULB
- *Rapporteur Session 4* - **Nienke van Heukelingen**, Clingendael Institute

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