

Democracies in Europe under threat

Vienna, 20-21 November 2014

Hotel Park Royal Palace, Schlossallee 8. 1140 Vienna

Open Society Foundations, in partnership with ERSTE Stiftung, will bring together participants from civil society, research, activism and politics, to discuss the many stresses on democracy in Europe today. This event will diagnose the deeper changes in European societies that are driving the rise of protest politics, populism and extremism. We will look in depth at some of the most worrying trends in democracy in specific countries in Europe and consider what influences the outlook and decisions of voters in the “squeezed middle”. Empirical research by political analysts will offer insights into how to re-engage the many disillusioned democrats. By bringing together policy analysts, academics, pollsters, journalists and activists the conference aims to match the demand for new ideas with supplies of alternative policy solutions. We will welcome participants with a cocktail reception at 18:30 on 20 November with an open “policy ideas market”, followed by a dinner. All discussions during this event will be held under Chatham House Rules.

Thursday, 20 November 2014

- 18:30 Cocktail reception with welcoming words and policy ideas market at the Orangerie Schönbrunn (Schönbrunner Schloßstraße 47)
- Doraja Eberle, Board Chairwoman of ERSTE Stiftung
 - Goran Buldioski, Director of the Open Society Think Tank Fund
- 20:00 Dinner

Friday, 21 November 2014

- 8:45-9:00 Registration
- 9:00-9:15 Welcoming words, opening remarks, and overview of the conference sessions
- Heather Grabbe, Director of the Open Society European Policy Institute
 - Boris Marte, Head of Erste HUB Innovation Center

9:15-10:45 **What are the deeper trends that are driving protest politics in Europe?**

This session aims to highlight some of the deeper changes in European societies that are driving the rise of protest politics, populism and extremism. Deeper analysis of the European election results reveals complex social as well as political trends. The session will open with insights into three factors that are changing Europe’s political landscape fundamentally – demography, social media and economics – followed by an open discussion.

- Jamie Bartlett, Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at Demos
- Rainer Münz, Head of Research & Knowledge Center at Erste Group
- Nicolas Véron, Senior Fellow at Bruegel
- Moderator: Heather Grabbe, Director of the Open Society European Policy Institute

10:45-11:15 Coffee break

11:15-12:45 **Hotspots in European politics: What will it be like to live in these societies in 2019?**

Politics is changing very rapidly at national level. In three parallel groups, participants will discuss what it will be like to live in three fast-changing countries in 2019 if you are from a sexual, ethnic or religious minority. Each group will have an initial brief presentation of current trends, followed by an open discussion.

Group A: Hungary

- Balázs Váradi, Senior Researcher at the Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis
- Kinga Göncz, Advisory Board Chair at OSF Roma Programs
- Attila Mong, Board Member and Deputy Editor-in-chief at atlatzso.hu
- Moderator: Goran Buldioski, Director of the Open Society Think Tank Fund

Group B: France

- Guillaume Liegey, Co-founder of Liegey Muller Pons
- Catherine Fieschi, Director of Counterpoint
- Moderator: Thomas Klau, Chairman of Asylos

Group C: Greece

- Dimitris Christopoulos, Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights
- Apostolis Fotiadis, Freelance Journalist
- Marilena Katsimi, Coordinator of Beat the Fear
- Moderator: Jordi Vaquer, Director of the Open Society Initiative for Europe

12:45-14:00 Buffet lunch

14:00-14:30 **Recap from the break-out sessions on 'Hotspots in European politics'**

In this session the rapporteurs of the three parallel discussions on Hungary, France and Greece will present the key issues addressed in their respective break-out groups.

- Endré Bojtár, Editor in Chief of Magyar Narancs
- Jon Worth, Blogger
- Kostas Argyros, Editor of Ependisi Newspaper
- Moderator: Tamsin Rose, Director of Tamarack

14:30-16:00 **Beyond protest: How could the disappointed democrats and reluctant radicals get interested in politics again?**

Politics is changing because many voters disengage from politics, having lost trust in democratic institutions and the process of politics. In this final plenary panel, participants will discuss potential routes for re-engagement of disillusioned and apathetic voters. There will be brief initial presentations of current trends, followed by an open discussion. Questions that will be addressed include: What would make people interested again in finding common solutions rather than apportioning blame to marginalised minority groups? How can seemingly mainstream minority groups feel less marginalised? What would change how voters think about politics and democracy these days?

- Jørgen Nielsen, Honorary Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Copenhagen
- Paul Taggart, Professor of Politics at the University of Sussex
- Peter Vermeersch, Professor of Politics, University of Leuven
- Moderator: Ivan Vevjoda, Senior Vice President of the German Marshall Fund

16:00 Closing remarks

- Jordi Vaquer, Director of the Open Society Initiative for Europe