

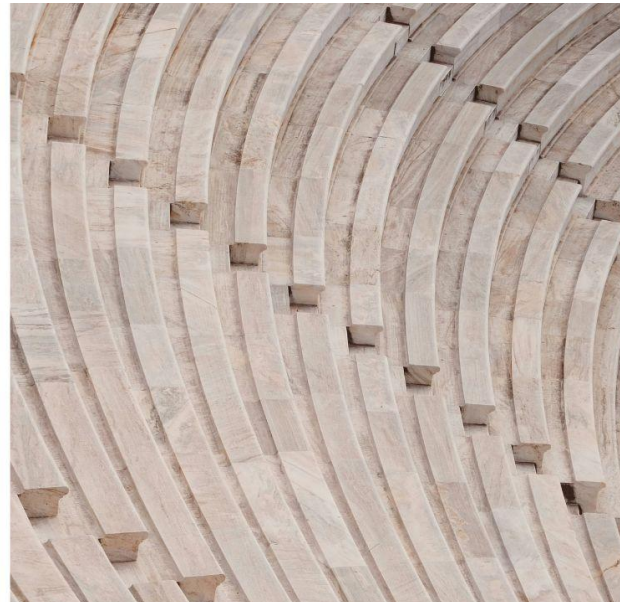
Local Action, European Impact

Strengthening Democratic Resilience

SPARKS, rue Ravenstein 60, Brussels



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Draft agenda v. 15 April 2026

Time	Session title	Room
13:00-14:00	Registration and welcome coffee	
14:00-14:10	Welcome address	Room 8
14:10-15:25	<p>Panel debate</p> <p><i>From local to European: democratic resilience in action</i></p> <p>The opening panel will examine how the European Centre for Democratic Resilience can help turn the European Democracy Shield into a real shared project. It will ask what role different actors should play in that effort, from EU institutions and national governments to cities, civil society and research. The discussion will focus on roles, responsibilities and synergies across levels of governance. It will explore the role of multi-actor democratic infrastructures such as Nets4Dem, which connect institutions, practitioners and knowledge communities through stronger participation, research and building democratic capacity in everyday governance. The European Commission presents the Centre as a flagship initiative of the Democracy Shield and as a structure that should bring together expertise and capacity from EU institutions, Member States and partner countries.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marie-Hélène Boulanger, Head of Unit, Democracy, Anti-corruption, Union Citizenship 	Room 8

	<p>and Free Movement, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - André Sobczak, Secretary General, Eurocities - Anu Juvonen, Executive Director, Demo Finland - Michael Runey, Adviser in the Democracy Assessment Unit, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) <p>Moderation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anthony Zacharzewski, President, Demsoc 	
15:25-15:45	Coffee break	
15:45-17:00	Parallel sessions	
Parallel Session 1	<p><i>Building democratic resilience from the ground up</i></p> <p>Real democratic resilience is built every day, through the everyday actions and participation of ordinary people. It grows when citizens are included, heard and given meaningful opportunities to shape public decisions. This session will explore how cities and civil society nurture democracy on the ground by strengthening democratic literacy, building trust, widening inclusion and making participatory processes more influential in local decision-making. Drawing on impactful practices from the Nets4Dem Democracy Labs, Rising Stars and Democratic Innovations Accelerator, it will present key learnings from these approaches and reflect on what it means to build stronger local democratic ecosystems and resilient communities. The format will also engage the audience, giving participants the opportunity to share their own reflections and perspectives.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nets4Dem Award winners <p>Moderation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alisa Aliti Vlašić, Director of European Strategy and Networks, Coglobal 	Room 8
Parallel Session 2	<p><i>From knowledge to action: what democratic innovation research tells us about building democratic resilience</i></p>	Room 7

	<p>How can research on democratic innovations inform concrete policy responses for strengthening democratic resilience in Europe? This panel brings together key findings from Nets4Dem research and exchanges between researchers, practitioners and policymakers to explore how democratic innovations contribute to strengthening democratic resilience across local, national, and European levels. Drawing on the insights from the Nets4Dem research outputs, including the Knowledge Database on Democratic Innovations, the Governing with Citizens Report and the final policy report and recommendations, this session will synthesise emerging evidence on participatory, deliberative, and co-creative approaches to governance, highlight well-established findings and key gaps, and reflect on their policy relevance. It will identify key questions that research needs to explore and that policymakers need to grapple with. Together with the audience, the discussion will explore how more systemic approaches to empowering and embedded democratic innovation in European governance can strengthen democratic resilience and respond to growing uncertainties.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sahib Singh, Senior Expert, Demos Helsinki - Tara Tepavac, Researcher, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory - Melisa Ross, Co-lead and researcher, Global Citizens' Assemblies Network 	
<p>17:00-17:10</p>	<p>Conclusions and closing remarks</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jean-Louis De Brouwer, Director of the European Affairs Programme at the Egmont Institute 	
<p>17:20-19:00</p>	<p>Nest4Dem Democratic Innovations Awards ceremony & cocktail reception</p> <p>The Nets4Dem Democratic Innovation Awards recognise and celebrate democratic innovations that have been improved, developed, or implemented with support from Nets4Dem capacity building programmes, including Democracy Labs, Rising Stars mentorships, and the Democratic Innovations Accelerator. During the conference, the Awards will be presented to cities and organisations that have</p>	<p>Ground floor or Room 8 tbc</p>

	implemented impactful, innovative and inclusive initiatives. Moderation: - André Sobczak, Secretary General, Eurocities	
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