

International Day of Democracy Conference 2024

Date: 11 September 2024, 08:45 – 18:00

Location: Democracy Tower (Prison Tower), Marktgasse 67, 3011 Bern (Switzerland)

Media and democracy: collecting tools and options for action on how to strengthen democracy through media engagement

A democratic society relies on media that is both free and independent. It ensures that diverse perspectives are heard and encourages political participation among citizens.

However, in today's world, where misinformation can easily manipulate public opinion and erode trust in democratic processes, understanding the media's role becomes crucial. Beyond just providing information, the media shapes narratives, influences public discourse, and holds those in power accountable. The emergence of social media, algorithms, and artificial intelligence adds complexity to this dynamic, offering both opportunities and challenges. The latest annual World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders) confirms the ongoing trend of a global decline in press freedom: violence and threats against journalists are on the rise, as are actions that undermine the role of journalists or instrumentalise the media through campaigns of harassment or disinformation. Especially in the super-election year of 2024, democratic governments are more and more challenged to protect journalists, as press freedom is a crucial precondition for forming an independent opinion and informed election decision.

Building on the success of last year's International Day of Democracy Conference, the Polit-Forum Bern and the Swiss Democracy Foundation SDF are organising the second edition on 11 September 2024 with a renewed focus on strengthening democracy. This year's conference on «Media and democracy: collecting tools and options for action» is aiming to gather leading experts and practitioners from various countries and backgrounds to discuss and share best practices on how democracy can be strengthened through media engagement in four focus areas:

- **Public Service Media:** Exploring tools and successful examples of public service media to promote democracy.
- **Social Media:** Examining effective strategies for using social media in supporting democratisation.
- **Media Literacy:** Defining meaningful media literacy and exploring comprehensive approaches.
- **Voting and Elections:** Analysing the media's influence on elections and voting, drawing lessons from the 2024 super-election year.

Programme (updated regularly)

08:45 Door opening

09:15 **Opening and welcome by the Co-Hosts**

- **Stefanie Bosshard**, Director of the Swiss Democracy Foundation
- **Stefanie Schuepbach**, Deputy Director of the Polit-Forum Bern

09:25 **Discussion with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA**

Moderated dialogue:

- **Staffan Lindberg**, Director of the V-Dem Institute at University of Gothenburg
- **Christine Löw**, Deputy Head of the Peace and Human Rights division, of the FDFA

Moderated by **Bruno Kaufmann**, Global Democracy Correspondent at the Swiss Broadcasting Company, and Board member of the Swiss Democracy Foundation

09:55 **Panel discussion: What role does the media play in democratising and promoting democracy?**

Experts from different backgrounds will be discussing how and when media are a true force for democracy from the perspective of public service media, social media, media literacy as well as elections and voting:

- **Vesna Nikodinoska**, Senior Program Manager at the Macedonian Institute for Media (North Macedonia)
- **Firas Shamsan**, journalist and filmmaker, specialized in the field of in media and development (Yemen/Switzerland)
- **Konrad Siemaszko** Lawyer at the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
- **Daniela Vancic**, European Programme Manager Democracy International (USA, Germany)

Moderated by **Bruno Kaufmann**, Global Democracy Correspondent at the Swiss Broadcasting Company, and Board member of the Swiss Democracy Foundation

11:15 **Coffee Break and networking**

11:45 **Brief introduction of the World Café session and of the 2nd experts (plenary)**

12:00 **World Café in two parts for the collection of best-practice examples of media work promoting democracy**

Part I: Discussion and analysis of the four topics in practice using concrete examples

Room 1: Public Service Media (moderated by Bruno Kaufmann, SDF)

- **Konrad Siemaszko** Lawyer at the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
- **Sophia Wistehube**, Legal and Policy Advisor EBU

Room 2: Social Media (moderated by Jérémy Schmid, SDF)

- **Firas Shamsan**, journalist and filmmaker, specialized in the field of in media and development (Yemen/Switzerland)
- **Daniel Vogler**, Head of Research and Deputy Director at the fög – Research Center for the Public Sphere and Society (Switzerland)

Room 3: Media Literacy (moderated by Benjamin von Wyl, SWI swissinfo.ch)

- **Vesna Nikodinoska**, Senior Program Manager at the Macedonian Institute for Media (North Macedonia)
- **Markus Spillmann**, operating director of the initiative «Use the News» (Switzerland)

Room 4: Voting and Elections (moderated by Tom Berger, Polit-Forum Bern)

- **Ruslan Mihalevschi**, Board Member of the Audiovisual Council of Moldova (Moldova)
- **Daniela Vancic**, European Programme Manager Democracy International (USA, Germany)

13:15 **Lunch break and networking**

14:30 **World Café in two parts for the collection of best-practice examples of media work promoting democracy**

Part II: Putting the four themes into practice with concrete examples: collecting, summarising and visualising good practice

Rooms and experts: See above «Part I» at 11:45

15:45 **Coffee break and networking**

16:15 **Interactive collection of practical advice and best practice**

Moderated by **Stefanie Schuepbach**, Deputy Head Polit-Forum Bern

17:15 **Wrap up and closing of the conference by the Co-Hosts – followed by an Apéro**

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