



International Conference of the Institute of European Democrats

EUROPEAN UNION

BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL EXTREMISM

Friday 6 October 2017, 9:00 – 14:00

Hotel Yasmin, Tyršovo nábrežie 1675/1, 040 01 Košice, Slovakia

In recent years, we have witnessed the rise of popular support for right-wing and extremist parties and movements across entire European Union. A record number of these parties have entered European, national and regional parliaments, most recently this was the case of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) which has become the first far-right nationalist party to enter the German parliament since the Second World War. More and more voters feel frustrated from the current state of affairs and, as a result, they vote for what they consider as “alternative”. Sadly, extremist parties find support even in economically secure regions and among highly educated citizens or young people. Extremist parties abuse the fears of people and combine Eurosceptic, anti-migrant and racist positions with populist rhetoric and unrealistic promises. In this way, the rise of political radicalism represents one of the most acute challenges to European democratic systems, liberal freedoms, human rights, rule of law and existing political institutions; however, the appeal of these political entities and the profile of their supporters remain very poorly understood.

Reflecting this dangerous trend, the Institute of European Democrats is organizing the International Conference titled “European Union between Democracy and Political Extremism”. The conference will take place on 6 October 2017 (Friday) from 9:00 to 14:00 in the congress hall of Yasmin Hotel in Košice, Slovakia.

The aim of the event is to analyse the reasons for the current successes of radical politicians, explain who is responsible for this trend, why extremists are dangerous for the society and how the rise of political extremism can be viewed in the European context. Last but not least, the speakers of the conference will try to formulate possible suggestions how to warn about the dangers of such politicians and eliminate the rise of political extremism across EU Member States.





PROGRAMME

09:00 – 09:20 Registration and Welcome Coffee

09:20 – 09:45 Welcome Speeches

- ★ **Luca BADER**, Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of European Democrats (IED).
- ★ **Roman BRECELY**, Member of the Board of the Institute of European Democrats (IED).
- ★ **Anna Lujza FUREKOVÁ**, President of Mladí Európania/Young Europeans (ME).

09:45 – 11:15 Panel I.: **RISE OF POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN POLITICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Moderator: **Alena BAŠISTOVÁ**, Member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and university lecturer.

- ★ **Grigorij MESEŽNIKOV**, President and Program Director of the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) in Bratislava and political analyst.
- ★ **Michal VAŠEČKA**, Sociologist and Assistant Professor at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic.
- ★ **Jakub DRÁBIK**, Historian at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) in Bratislava and expert on fascism.

Discussion

Key points:

- What are the main roots of political extremism and the reasons for its sudden rise across the EU Member States?
- Who are the voters of far-right and extremist parties? Why so high number of young people support these parties? Why supporters of extremist parties can be found also in economically secure regions?
- Are we back in 1930s? To what extent the current crisis in the EU can be compared to the situation in Europe in the 1930s? What important lessons we should learn from this period? Why is education in history so important?
- From what issues extremist parties benefit? To what extent economic crisis, migration and unpopular European decisions contribute to generate solutions connected to national identity and far-right ideology?





11:15 – 11:40 Coffee Break

11:40 – 13:00 Panel II.: **ROLE OF SOCIETY, POLITICAL ELITES AND EUROPEAN UNION IN TACKLING POLITICAL EXTREMISM**

Moderator: **Alena BAŠISTOVÁ**, Member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and university lecturer.

- ★ **Andrzej POTOCKI**, Vice-President of Stronnictwo Demokratyczne and Vice-President of Parti Démocrate Européen-European Democratic Party (PDE-EDP).
- ★ **Jose Felix MERLADET**, Professor at the University of Deusto and at the University of Navarra in Spain and long-term European Commission delegate.
- ★ **Gabriel EŠTOK**, Lecturer at the Faculty of Politics of the University of P.J.Šafárika in Košice and expert on the European Union.

Discussion

Key points:

- What are the reasons behind growing intolerance, islamophobia and euroscepticism in European society?
- How to detect which political party has to be considered as “extremist” and how to explain the dangers of political extremism for the society?
- Do political elites contribute to elimination of the support for extremists or not? How can democratic movements be more active and efficient in fighting against anti-democratic political forces?
- How the EU institutions can become more involved in protecting the democratic systems and values across the EU? How the rise of radicalism in politics can be viewed from the European perspective?

13:00 – 14:00 Buffet Lunch

The Conference is organized with the financial support of the European Parliament and with the help of Slovak youth organization Mladí Európania / Young Europeans (ME).

Find out more about the activities of the Institute of European Democrats: www.iedonline.eu

