



IED Seminar

# The rule of law: a shared value for citizens in Europe

How can we reaffirm our shared values?

*#dialogue with citizens #pluralism #democracy #rule of law #central Europe*

Thursday, 7 November, 2019 Bratislava

“Strengthening the rule of law is a shared responsibility for all EU institutions and all Member States. I will ensure that we use our full toolbox at European level. And I support an **additional comprehensive European Rule of Law Mechanism**, with an EU-wide scope and objective annual reporting by the European Commission. “

Ursula von der Leyen, July 2019

In April 2019, the European Commission has put forward a [Communication](#) on “**further strengthening the rule of law within the Union**”. The initiative sought to find new ways to enhance the EU “rule of law toolbox” by engaging stakeholders in public consultations. Based on this document, the Commission laid out a [blueprint for action](#) in July 2019 outlining several short- and medium-term actions.

Resting on the three pillars of “**promotion**”, “**prevention**” and “**response**”, the Commission’s [proposed actions](#) comprise building a common rule of law culture, strengthening EU capacity to monitor developments in Member States and setting up enforcement mechanisms at EU level. The Commission has expressed its intention to intensify the dialogue with civil societies as well as academia and **support their efforts to promote the rule of law**. In [her agenda for Europe](#), the newly elected Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, has emphasized that “strengthening the rule of law is a shared responsibility for all EU institutions and all Member States”.

These initiatives come at a time when the Union’s fundamental values and principles, including the rule of law, are experiencing challenges and need particular attention. Recent events in some Member States revealed, among others, a **dysfunctional separation of powers**, weakened constitutional courts and an **undermined independence of the judicial process**, the rise of the executive power to the detriment of the legislative and judicial branches, as well as **high-level grand corruption**.

The Union’s ability to deal with rule of law issues internally is also crucial for its successful **values and norms promotion towards non-EU countries**, both in the enlargement context



and within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. If the EU wants to continue to be a coherent and credible external actor as well as a transformative power, it will have to put its own house in order before giving lessons to others.

At the same time, strengthening the rule of law is a **complex and multi-faceted endeavor**, which calls for actions on several fronts. Numerous studies have established the correlation between high democracy ratings, low levels of corruption, a healthy competition-based business environment and a strong rule of law framework. Ultimately, enhancing the rule of law will also require creating **democratic resilience** with a top-down as well as bottom-up approach independent on any structure or organization.

Against this backdrop, the [Institute for European Democrats](#), a Brussels-based think tank funded by the European Parliament, has invited **two high-level panels**, composed by distinguished policy makers, civil society representatives, experts and academics, to **Bratislava**, Slovakia. The conference aims at discussing a variety of subjects related to the **importance of the EU rule of law** framework for **democracy** and anti-corruption efforts, the impact of recent events in some Member States connected to rule of law deficiencies on the lives of EU citizens and entrepreneurs, the EU's tools aimed at enhancing rule of law and the **new EU Commission's approach**.

The event is addressed to the wider public, seeks to start a **dialogue with citizens**, especially young people, in Central Eastern Europe and bring together policy makers, civil society representatives, journalists, academics and students with an interest in discussing the importance of the rule of law for democracy and people's daily lives from a political, legal and economic perspective.