

Opening the seminar, IED President Francesco Rutelli addresses the participating institutes, thanking their collaborative efforts to rise against the challenges threatening Democracy in Europe. Rutelli notes the timeliness of this collaboration – a fifth of Sweden has voted for an alt-right political party, and Italy prepares for a similar election in a matter of days. Presently, Europe is discussing *how* democracy can deliver in the face of deteriorated relations with countries like Hungary. In collaboration with the Quality of Government (QoG) Institute, Rutelli seeks to identify the capability of democracy to deliver solutions and mitigate the daily worries and fears of society. For now, Rutelli says, in the face of rising populism our job is to show that democracy has the capability to deliver value for ordinary people, in concrete ways. We come together to produce conclusions, proposals, and common purposes that can come out of collaboration in the following years in the interest of European citizens. Victor Lapuente from the QoG Institute kicks off the first session, introducing the panel who will present the QoG institute and its goals, showcasing some of the cutting-edge research being completed.

As the Director of the QoG institute, Marina Nistotskaya's contribution to the seminar is to detail what entails the term Quality of Government and what you get from it. Working from the starting point that institutions make the rules of the game by which society plays, Nistotskaya presents a striking night satellite map to show the importance of institutions in public service delivery - a stark divide between light emittance in North Korea and South Korea shows a contrast between the lands, differing first and foremost in the make-up of their institutions, altering how people receive public goods. But what sets QoG apart from typical measures of institutional

quality? QoG was created to measure *GOVERNMENT*, not *governance*. This sets QoG apart from approaches such as good governance which is ill defined and ambiguous, conflates concepts, and is difficult to measure. Instead, QoG is established strictly as the **impartiality in the exercise of power**. This means that when people access public goods, they should be treated impartially and equally unless stipulated by law. Importantly Nistotskaya asserts that QoG distinguishes between the input and output of political power, and that QoG is concerned with how institutions can effectively deliver public goods.

Yet how does QoG affect democratic countries? Nistotskaya presents theoretical and empirical evidence that indicates countries with high levels of QoG are more satisfied with democracy, have higher levels of political participation and trust in institutions, and show less support for populist parties. At its core, when public service provision is impartial, this signals that society will share equally the cost of investments that are required for higher rates of entrepreneurship, innovation, and government regulations that support economic growth.

Afterwards, Monica Bauhr proceeds by introducing her work on the European Quality of Government Index (EQI), and its contributions to the study of corruption and QoG. This index has been constructed from surveys collected over the past 10 years and aims to aid in the measurement of QoG by going beyond the national level and examining regional and local level measurements. To make her point on the importance of drilling down to a regional measurement of QoG, Bauhr presents a telling graph, highlighting the relationship between corruption control and democracy. The graph reveals that many democratic countries perform poorly in controlling corruption. This phenomenon, Bauhr asserts, can be best explained by

examining regional and local variations of QoG, making it possible to understand why some democracies are better at controlling corruption than others. Considering that the results of the EQI indicates that QoG varies significantly between European Regions and not only at the national level, the EQI supports the idea that it cannot be democracy that solely dictates the level of QoG experienced by citizens. For Bauhr, the EQI is a rare and innovative opportunity to investigate important questions about the relationship between democracy and corruption.

Several questions are fielded to the panelists, including a poignant observation from Debora Spini, asking Nistotskaya to explain the rising populist parties in countries with high QoG like Denmark and Sweden. Nistotskaya connects the question to Bauhr's work with the EQI, which previously found evidence that support for populist parties in France and low levels of QoG were correlated at the regional level, supporting the case that despite high levels of QoG at the national level, regional variation can have serious effects on democratic outcomes. Ultimately, Nistotskaya and Bauhr's panel served to drive home the importance of delivering high quality public goods. Without QoG, people become dissatisfied with democracy, increasing their psychological distance from political problems, and further diminishing their motivation to participate. The question remains however, how a democracy can reasonably augment its QoG.

Victor Lapuente rounds off the presentations from the QoG Institute by presenting the most well-researched ways of improving QoG. First, he outlines democracy, noting that poorer democracies have lower QoG than autocracies, but consolidated rich democracies produce very high QoG. Second, social trust can play an important role in the consolidation of QoG. When people in society do not trust

each other, it becomes an obstacle to collective action because no one wants to bear the costs of necessary investments. However, when social trust is high, you trust that the investments will be made responsibly, helping governments overcome the collective action problem. Third, Civil Society actions, such as the Arab Spring, protests in Europe and elsewhere, can increase QoG through the passing of specific anticorruption bills and increasing societal accountability. Fourth, electoral rules can alter perceptions of individual accountability, which can affect QoG. For example, systems that cultivate a personal vote, strengthening accountability between voters and individual legislators, increases QoG. Fifth, Meritocracy plays an important role in the impartial delivery of public goods. Empirically, Lapuente notes that there is clear evidence that meritocracy, and especially separated career paths, are highly correlated with QoG. Sixth, Lapuente presents research on the effect of de-bureaucratization on QoG, following with evidence that countries that are meritocratic *and* flexible tend to rank highest in QoG, despite the long-time assumption that bureaucratization and meritocracy go hand in hand. Seventh, transparency in government, intuitively, in the long-term will always be a valuable tool to QoG. Finally, Lapuente emphasizes the importance of reforms in determining levels of QoG in a country. He emphasizes how service orientation that was created in New Zealand during reforms in the 80s, has mixed with strong evaluation and internalization of talent reforms in the 2000s to produce one of the highest QoG states in the world.

To complement the academic's approach to improving QoG, former member of the French National Assembly, Sylvain Waserman, from his perspective as a practitioner, gives us the honour of presenting his important work on legislating protections for whistleblowing (WB), and the vital role it plays in protecting

democracy in Europe. Wasserman introduced the topic by detailing his report to the Council of Europe on the current state of whistleblowing policy across Europe. The results were less than ideal, with national legislations in Europe lacking consistency and producing inefficient outcomes. In response, his report contained 13 proposals to enhance and make more coherent, policy on WB protection, proposals which he later applied to inefficiencies in French legislation on WB. Thus, Wasserman describes his experiences of applying his report to French law, using his position in politics to push legislation into the mandate. The outcome of his work led to 10 significant improvements to French legislation on WB, each significantly consolidating the protections placed upon WB. The work Wasserman has done for European democracy cannot be put lightly. His attention to WB highlights how important it is that citizens can hold companies, governments, and individuals accountable, without taking on the risks of such actions. Elsewise, how can Europe sustain accountable and equal democracy? What needs to be ensured, Wasserman emphasizes, is that citizens must feel confident, even if they cannot prove it, to come forward and alert the appropriate authorities of potential instances of wrongdoing. By introducing state-of-the-art legislation, Wasserman has created a model template to which other national legislatures can aspire. To conclude his presentation, Wasserman notes a conversation with infamous WB Edward Snowden. Having been asked what can be done for him, Snowden responded that he requires nothing but for legislation to be improved. How can citizens decide to become WBs, how can risks be taken if we are not capable as a democracy to give them the protection they deserve.

The following panel presents a nuanced understanding of the state of Democracy and citizenry in Europe, providing context to why the important work by practitioners and academics alike is so essential now more than ever. Staffan

Lindberg, Director of the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute, highlights global trends for democracy and autocracy, beginning by introducing the Varieties of Democracy institute, which expands upon existing measurements of democracy. Utilizing innovative measurement standards created by V-Dem, Lindberg brings our attention to the rise of autocracies in the world, noting that the share of the population living in an autocracy is back to 1989 levels, about 70% of the population. Lindberg asserts that this will result in more conflicts – democracies do not fight other democracies. Spelling deeper troubles for the state of democracy, Lindberg identifies 33 countries that, as of 2021 are in the process of becoming autocracies, while the number of countries democratizing is only 15. In general, V-Dem has found that all characteristics that make democracy meaningful are on the decline, compared to 2011 when they were increasing. A serious turn in the seminar, Lindberg makes it clear that Europe is not saved from this global trend – 6 out of 27 EU member states are now autocratizing, including several neighbours to the east. Concerningly, autocratization itself is changing in nature – less gradual than before, 2021 experienced 6 coups, as compared to the average of 1,3 coups per year since 2000. Additionally, polarization is fast approaching toxic levels in 40 countries and, as Lindberg puts it, goes hand in hand with autocratization, resulting in diminished liberal democracy. To conclude his presentation, Lindberg makes a hard case for the instrumental value of democracy, including evidence that countries who democratize give stable, predictable growth and can avoid disastrous crises, contribute much more to social spending, experience improved human health, and empirically lead the way in actions against climate change.

Following Lindberg, Debora Spini provides nuance to the discussion of the state of democracy in the World and Europe by presenting a review of a motivational deficit in European citizenry. Poignantly, Spini emphasizes that there is something profoundly wrong at the motivation level, leading to civil society projects failing, such as the Arab Spring. According to Spini, Democracy has failed to deliver on some of its most basic promises, such as solidarity and redistribution, and this is leading to people feeling ignored, and left out of the system. This problem, Spini says, feeds into itself, as authoritarianism, polarization, and antipluralism grows in response to increasing dissatisfaction with society, the motivation issue only deepens. A terrible prospect, Spini notes, the solution cannot be to de-politicize public spheres, but rather addressing the motivation crisis requires democratic parties to play a specific role in engaging society and responding to the real demands of people. In this way, Spini clarifies, European democracy can learn from populism – political concerns are real and valid, and simply de-politicizing society serves nothing than to accelerate the motivation deficit.

Fielding questions from the audience Spini and Lindberg are asked the pertinent question of what changes will be seen in the world, given the diminishing level of democracy in the US. Spini, offering a bleak perspective on the future, suggests that Trump will likely return to office, and that his position in the US government will go beyond a Democrat-Republican divide, possibly into the territory of authoritarianism. Spini emphasizes that the effects would go far beyond geopolitical borders, and such will drag the rest of the world into similar action. Lindberg corroborates Spini, stating in no uncertain terms that in any other country, January 6 would have been considered an attempted coup. He explains that the underlying conditions that made

January 6 a possibility are still there, and even without Trump at the helm, such conditions may be activated, with the risk of civil war never being so far out of sight.

Turning to the War in Ukraine, Lindberg and Spini offer a sobering perspective, indicating that flaws in the EU have been exposed regarding the idea of unanimity and one member being able to block action against another. However, while they emphasize that there are serious issues and challenges facing democracy in Europe in that respect, there is the silver lining that Russia's aggression has unified Europe, coming to the realization that we need to stand up for democracy, potentially extending into the long future regarding realistic expectations about China's ambitions to lead the world down a particular path.

Concluding the discussion period, Lindberg leaves us with a grim prognosis – Democracy dies with lies. Institutions that safeguard democracy against threats are being undermined by nationalist, reactionary populists, and misinformation is increasing the perception of extreme inequality that make people open to their rhetoric. The spread of lies and misinformation on social media and elsewhere is the heart of the problem, and Europe needs to learn how to regulate freedom of speech to save it and keep truth alive.

Mikel Burzako introduces the final panel of the seminar, presenting "Democracy and Collaborative Government: The Future of the Democracy". Burzako presents first the mission statement of the institute since coming under the presidency of Francesco Rutelli. With the aim to give greater coherence to the institute, IED has worked to pinpoint key issues in line with the priorities of the EU, and further engage significant European players in a collaborative, knowledge-sharing format, wherein

the aim is a better European future. Burzako, reaffirms the present division in the world between democracy and autocracy, recalling their previous event in Venice during which the former President of the European Parliament argued emphatically for revitalization of European Democracy. Indeed, Burzako passionately makes the case that Democracy has always been the pillar of the EU, and that we must work together, involving practitioners, academics, politicians, and institutes in a collaborative mission to update European Democracy. As it stands, he asserts, we are not doing enough to mend the tears in our societies – we must remind that democracy is the best chance for a better life and welfare for Europe. Recounting his experiences as part of the Basque Nationalist Party, Burzako looks to the Basque Country as a leader, in some ways, in overcoming the challenges of Democracy in Europe, and, at the same time, as facing important challenges. He considers the very close engagement the political party has with the local citizens, looking to how his party actively and continuously works on the constantly evolving issues faced by society. In this, Burzako introduces the following presenter, who will detail the innovative process of Collaborative Government being used in the Basque Country to utterly reimagine how citizens can engage in policy creation. To conclude his contributions, Burzako reiterates why IED decided to take on Democracy as a strategic goal – it is a profound political duty to face the challenges against democracy, and projects like those in the Basque Country could be inspirational for future success, although require constant re-examination. As a final word, Burzako acknowledges on behalf of IED, under the presidency of Francesco Rutelli, the importance of this seminar and enriching the discussion in collaboration with QoG and V-Dem. Thus, IED takes on the challenge of defending democracy and identifying how to make democracy meaningful again.

Presenting the innovative approach of collaborative governance, Xabier Barandiaran makes the argument that for European democracy to thrive, we must reinforce the democratic and civil character of the people. To do so, he suggests establishing communication between civil society, public administration, and policy creation. According to Barandiaran, contemporary society is profoundly disconnected from the political community, and rehabilitating this connection goes beyond simple political participation. Instead, collaborative governance seeks to generate social capital among society and the political community by developing deliberative spaces wherein there is the ability to share power. This actively generates the conditions for social innovation, and the capacity to respond and adapt to issues that arise. To make his case, Barandiaran details a local initiative wherein collaboration between different agents was generated: *Etorkizuna Eraikiz* (Building the Future through cooperation) by the *Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa*. The intent was to improve public trust and value by creating open spaces of community and communication. The initiative has found promising results and has learned several unique perspectives from their experiences, including that experimentation is important to creating adaptive, relevant policy; anticipation is essential to managing challenges and crises; innovation is considered necessary to meet constantly evolving challenges; and how effective it can be to involve an entire community in the creation of these policies and programs. Ending on a final piece of advice, Barandiaran emphasizes that collaboration between civil society and policy creation is of vital importance, and to do so we need to evolve and move away from the presumed client relationship between society and government, instead looking to community as equal stakeholders in the equation.

Marco Perduca provides the unique and valuable perspective as a former Italian Senator about political detachment, institutions, and threats to European Democracy. Detailing his experiences as a politician in Italy and his interactions with democratic institutions, Perduca makes the compelling case that part of the problem we are facing is not exactly with democracy, but rather it is a problem of a disconnect within the institutions themselves, which are filled with redundancies and contradictions. Perduca recounts how his party has missed the opportunity to participate in the most recent Italian elections due to the institutions being inundated with inefficiencies. Given his experiences, Perduca advocates strongly and passionately for institutions to update the way in which we engage with each other, with particular emphasis on a digital future. Institutions are sticky and try not to incite change and clearly, there are issues that exist no matter who is in the government, resting in the hands of outdated and undemocratic institutions. For Perduca, the democratic deficiency he and his party have faced in Italy should not be allowed to happen to others, else we face even greater disconnect, diminished motivation, and deteriorating democracy.

Ardita Driza Maurer's significant contribution to this seminar lies in her expertise on the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in electoral processes. In her view, votes and elections are the mechanisms for delivering political choices, and while ICT brings opportunities to increase engagement and improve democracy, it also presents new risks that threaten to undermine citizen confidence in the electoral process. In Driza Maurer's experience, traditional paradigms shift and need to be accounted for when ICT solutions are used. Such shifts will affect public confidence and democratic outcomes. On this subject, Driza Maurer is firm in her stance that ICT cannot be used as an instrument to build trust, instead asserting that

if trust does not exist, the benefits of technology are useless. To have the best outcome, she says, verifiability is essential, and enables the voter to follow their vote from the moment it is cast to when it is counted. This should present the best solution wherein participation is increased, and trust is not undermined. To conclude, Driza Maurer reiterates that the strength of ICT lies in its ability to complement traditional tools of electioneering to achieve certain goals. ICT is not perfect – useability is not likely to ever be full, and there is always the chance for risk, but the acceptance of these risks is ultimately a political decision and most importantly, need to be taken with careful evaluation of how an ICT backed solution will affect democratic outcomes given the public space in which it is implemented.

To cap the seminar, a brief discussion period brings forth some interesting interactions between the institutes and presenters. Lapuente makes the observation that collaborative governance could violate the rule of impartiality that is central to QoG, in that it puts emphasis on those who are already engaged in the community, and may further distance those who are already socially disengaged. Barandiaran however, counters that collaborative governance requires that the participation of civil society is defined with very precise regulations. The role of the deliberative spaces, he insists, is for the policy creators to be supported throughout the process of decision-making, not necessarily changed by it. He adds in response to a follow-up question, that collaborative governance is ultimately a trust-building exercise and should not act as a forum for endless consultations, but rather an instance where politicians can develop their policy alongside engagement with the community. This, he emphasizes, is not to say the community makes the decision-making. Rather the community acts in a facilitator capacity alongside the process.

The seminar ends with brief words from Lapuente, thanking IED and the collaborating academics, practitioners, and institutes for their efforts to make today happen. Together, we look towards future collaborations to build bridges between our institutes, for the sake of making European democracy meaningful again. While democracy in Europe certainly faces unprecedented challenges, from a war at our Eastern flank, to surging populist support and endemic misinformation, Europe is well positioned to make democracy meaningful again. Through these collaborations, we can come to innovative solutions, whether they be in the form of collaborative governance, digital electioneering, or new transparency measures.