

As Europe emerges from the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of European democracy faces threats both from outside and from within. Leading up to 2022, the world has seen a rise of what is known as *autocratization* and Europe is no exception. As of this year, 20% of EU member states are experiencing increased repression of civil society and censorship of free media. Even stable and consolidated democracies that enjoy extensive civil and political rights are experiencing challenges. Polarization is on the rise, and the deliberative quality of meaningful democracy is fading, especially in Eastern Europe. In collaboration with world-leading research groups, IED presents a seminar to both identify these threats and establish the opportunities unique to Europe to strengthen qualities of democracy that make it meaningful. In the process, this seminar aims to provide a detailed look at how to accomplish this from both an academic and a practitioner's viewpoint, effectively bridging the gap between theory and practice.

The seminar will proceed in three distinct parts. First, speakers from the Quality of Government institute will provide their expertise on how policies are implemented, how they affect citizens, and why some public administrations are more capable of delivering policies with efficiency and low levels of corruption. The speakers will introduce their most recent rendition of the European Quality of Government index and its implications on European cohesion and community, speaking from both an academic and practitioner perspective.

Second, the Varieties of Democracy Institute will lend their empirical knowledge on the state of democracy in the world and in Europe, showcasing their innovative approach to measurement standards. In which countries is democracy increasing, and where is it receding? This will be accompanied by speakers who will introduce ways to improve democracy as both academics and as citizens.

By way of concluding the seminar, IED will present Collaborative Governance as a contemporary method of strengthening the deliberative qualities of democracy through engagement between both policy makers and policy implementers, and civil society.

While democracy may be under threat, Europe is well positioned to make democracy meaningful again. Now more than ever, as citizens increasingly become disenfranchised by autocratizing governments, it is essential to think critically about how civil society engages with both policy creation and policy implementation.