



THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

Speech, Thought, Sovereignty, and
Power in the Age of Platforms and AI

15–16 OCTOBER • BRUSSELS

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Dear guests,

To think and speak freely is the foundation of democracy and public participation, and a key enabler of human rights and liberties. That's why, for centuries, supporters of democracy fought to prevent state and private control over ideas, and how they are shaped, shared, and debated.

This very foundation is now under threat.

For many years, private companies dominating communication and commerce on the internet have been allowed to exploit their control over chokepoints for economic, and increasingly also political, gain. Those quasi-governments now exercise unprecedented influence over what we read and say, and how and with whom we share news and ideas. In their quest to consolidate power and resist accountability, they found powerful allies in governments intent on adopting absolutist notions of freedom of expression to advance their agendas and censor dissent.

A decade ago, defenders of democracy in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere began to address these threats. And while we understand the threats better, we still need to build consensus on how best to tackle them.

The Open Markets Institute and ARTICLE 19 have convened leading thinkers, lawmakers, technologists, and advocates to address these urgent questions.

This conference aims to:

- Strengthen understanding about how a few private corporations threaten our freedom to speak and to access information; undermine the freedom, pluralism and independence of our media; and distort open and inclusive public debate – much as state actors can.
- Identify future-proofed solutions and detail how to strengthen existing frameworks and tools to fully restore individuals' control over their own communications and thoughts.
- Strengthen ties between defenders of democracy in Europe, the US, and elsewhere to coordinate efforts to hold these corporations accountable and protect free speech, the information ecosystem, and democracy.

We look forward to working with all of you to fulfill our shared mission: ensuring that corporations and technologies respect human rights and that, under democratic oversight, they strengthen – rather than undermine – our democracy.

Barry Lynn
OMI

Quinn McKew
ARTICLE 19

Programme

9:00	Introductory remarks	Barry Lynn, Barbora Bukovska
9:10	Scene-setting	Courtney Radsch, Max von Thun
9:30	Keynote	Jonathan Kanter
9:50	Panel 1: Whose free speech? Corporate power as the missing link in the debate	David Kaye, Jonathan Kanter, Sasha Havlicek, Alexandra Geese
10:40	Recorded remarks	Cory Booker
11:00	Coffee	
11:15	Panel 2: Defending digital sovereignty in the face of corporate and political coercion	Marietje Schaake, Johnny Ryan, Camila Pires Alves, Alex Saliba
12:15	Keynote	Margrethe Vestager
12:45	Lunch & recorded remarks	Chris Murphy
13:30	Panel 3: Safeguarding information integrity in the age of AI	Roger McNamee, Kate Brennan, Natali Helberger, Andreas Schwab
14:30	Keynote (virtual)	Mario Monti
15:00	Panel 3: The role of independent digital infrastructure in strengthening European democracy	Zuzanna Warso, Cristina Caffarra, Bart Butler, Sebastian Vogelsang
16:00	Coffee	
16:10	Panel 4: Fulfilling the promise of the public square: How can policy and regulation protect online expression?	Chi Onwurah, Alberto Alemanno, Thomas Hughes, Cornelia Woll
17:05	Keynote	Michael McGrath
17:35	Recorded remarks	Jamie Raskin
17:50	Closing remarks	Max von Thun, Mark Dempsey
18:00	Drinks reception	

09:30 to 09:50 CET
03:30 to 03:50 EST

KEYNOTE



Jonathan Kanter

served as **Assistant Attorney General for the United States Department of Justice's Antitrust Division**. Throughout his career, Mr. Kanter has been a leading advocate for strong and meaningful antitrust enforcement and competition policy. He was at the center of the Biden administration's broad push to promote competition in the U.S. market, leading antitrust lawsuits against Google and Apple.

09:50 to 10:45 CET
03:45 to 04:45 EST

PANEL

**Whose free speech? Corporate power
as the missing link in the debate**



David Kaye

is a **former UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression**. Law professor at the University of California, Irvine, he is the Independent Expert of the United States to the Venice Commission. He is the author of *Speech Police: The Global Struggle to Govern the Internet*.



Sasha Havlicek

is the **co-founder and CEO of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue**. A social and policy entrepreneur, she has spent the last two decades incubating and scaling global initiatives to counter the rise of weaponised hate, disinformation and extremism, on- and offline.



Alexandra Geese

has been an **MEP for the Greens/EFA** parliamentary group since 2019. She is the Greens/EFA's digital expert, and negotiated the "Digital Services Act". She is the Green coordinator of the newly established special committee on the European Democracy Shield.

moderated by

Courtney Radsch

*Director, Center of Journalism and Liberty
at the Open Markets Institute*



KEYNOTE & COFFEE

10:45 to 11:15 CET
04:45 to 05:15 EST
virtual



Senator Cory Booker

Senator Cory Booker is a United States Senator from New Jersey. A leading figure in the Democratic Party, he made history in April 2025 by delivering the longest recorded speech on the U.S. Senate floor in protest at the Trump administration's policies. The current Chair of the Senate Democratic Strategic Communications Committee, he also spent seven years serving as the mayor of Newark.

11:15 to 12:15 CET
05:15 to 06:15 EST

PANEL

How can governments defend digital sovereignty in the face of foreign interference?



Marietje Schaake

is the **International Policy Director at the Stanford Cyber Policy Center**. A former MEP and current member of the UN's High Level Advisory Body on AI, she is the author of *The Tech Coup: How to Save Democracy from Silicon Valley*, a book exploring the threat to the democratic rule of law that unchecked tech companies pose as they encroach on governmental roles.



Johnny Ryan

is **Director of Enforce at the Irish Council for Civil Liberties**. A Senior Fellow at the OMI, he has held senior roles in the online advertising, media, and technology industries, including as Chief Policy Officer at Brave and Chief Innovation Officer at The Irish Times.



Camila Pires Alves

is a **Commissioner at the Brazilian Competition Authority (CADE)**. She has been an associate professor at the Institute of Economics of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro since 2013 and is a researcher in the Research Group in Law, Economics, and Competition there.



Alex Saliba

is an **MEP Vice President for the S&D Group from Malta**. He is in charge of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO)'s report on the Digital Services Act, a future piece of legislation, which aims to strengthen the single market for digital services.

moderated by

José Ignacio Torreblanca

*Senior Adviser and Distinguished Policy Fellow,
European Council on Foreign Relations*



KEYNOTE

12:15 to 12:45 CET
04:30 to 05:00 EST



Margrethe Vestager

Margrethe Vestager is the former Executive Vice President of the European Commission for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age (2019-24) and European Commissioner for Competition (2014-24) where she oversaw cases against multinationals including including Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Qualcomm, Siemens, Alstom, and Gazprom. She previously served as Minister for Economic Affairs and the Interior (2011-14) and Minister for Education (1998-2001) of Denmark.

LUNCH

12:45 to 13:30 CET
06:45 to 07:30 EST

13:30 to 14:30 CET
07:30 to 08:30 EST

PANEL

Safeguarding information integrity in the age of AI



Roger McNamee

is co-founder of Elevation Partners and Silver Lake Partners. An early-stage investor in both Facebook and Google, he has since become a leading critical voice, campaigning to warn elected officials about the threat to democracy from Big Tech. He is the New York Times bestselling author of *Zucked: Waking Up to the Facebook Catastrophe*.



Kate Brennan

is Associate Director at the AI Now Institute where she spearheads programs to shape the AI industry in the public interest. She has worked in the tech industry for over a decade, including at Google where she oversaw product launches and research initiatives confronting disinformation, censorship, and online harassment.



Natali Helberger

is Professor in Law and Digital Technology at the University of Amsterdam and a member of the Executive Board of the Institute for Information Law (IViR). She is the founder and co-director of the AI, Media & Democracy Lab, and of the AlgoSoc (Public Values in the Algorithmic Society) Gravity Consortium.



Andreas Schwab MEP

is an MEP for the EPP party from Germany. He has been the parliament's rapporteur on the DMA since 2021 and serves as the EPP's coordinator on the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO).

moderated by

Maria Donde

*International Affairs Director, Coimisiún na Meán, Ireland;
former Vice-Chair of the European Platform of
Regulatory Authorities*



14:30 to 15:00 CET
08:30 to 09:00 EST
virtual

KEYNOTE



Mario Monti

Mario Monti is a Senator-for-life and former Prime Minister of Italy (2011-13). He has been a European Commissioner twice, as Commissioner for Competition (1999-2004) and Commissioner for the Internal Market, Financial Market and Taxation. The President of Bocconi University, and founder of Bruegel, he is one of Europe's leading statesmen and defenders of democracy.

PANEL

15:00 to 15:55 CET
09:00 to 09:55 EST

The role of independent digital infrastructure in strengthening European democracy

Bart Butler

has served as **Chief Technology Officer at Proton** since 2015. He holds a PhD in physics from Stanford University and worked on CERN's Large Hadron Collider before pivoting to the technology sector.



Zuzanna Warso

is **Director of Research at Open Future** and an independent expert to the European Commission. She has fifteen years of experience in human rights research and advocacy, including eight years with the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.



Cristina Caffarra

is an antitrust expert economist, an **Honorary Professor at UCL**, a founding member of the Eurostack Initiative, and co-founder of the CEPR Competition Research Policy Network. She was Head of European Competition at major economic consultancies for over 20 years.



Sebastian Vogelsang

is a software engineer and the **founder and CEO of flashes.blue**, a photo- and video-sharing app built on the AT Protocol, an open, decentralized network for building social applications including Bluesky.



moderated by

Robin Berjon

*Principal, Supramundane Society;
Deputy Director, IPFS Foundation*



16:10 to 17:05 CET
10:10 to 11:05 EST

PANEL

Fulfilling the promise of the public square: How can policy and regulation protect online expression?



Chi Onwurah

is a **British Labour MP** representing Newcastle upon Tyne Central and West. An electrical engineer with over twenty years of global experience, she is Chair of the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee.



Alberto Alemanno

is the **Jean Monnet Professor in European Law at HEC Paris** and **founder of The Good Lobby**. His research centres on the role of power-shifting reforms in countering social, economic, and political inequalities in European societies and beyond.



Thomas Hughes

is the **CEO of Appeals Centre Europe**, an out-of-court dispute settlement body for social media established under the EU DSA. He was previously the founding Director at Meta's Oversight Board and Executive Director of ARTICLE 19.



Cornelia Woll

is **President of the Hertie School in Berlin** and **Professor of International Political Economy**. Previously co-director of the Max Planck Sciences Po Center, her research focuses on the international political economy and economic sociology, in particular regulatory issues in the European Union and the United States.

moderated by

Max von Thun

*Director of Europe and Transatlantic Partnerships,
Open Markets Institute*



KEYNOTE

17:05 to 17:35 CET
11:05 to 11:35 EST



Commissioner Michael McGrath

Commissioner Michael McGrath is the current EU Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection. He is in charge of putting in place the new European Democracy Shield to fight against disinformation, foreign information manipulation and interference, is working to preserve the fairness and integrity of elections, and protect the safety of political candidates, and is implementing and putting forward proposals to further support and protect independent media and journalists.

KEYNOTE

17:35 to 17:50 CET
11:35 to 11:50 EST
virtual



Rep. Jamie Raskin

Representative Jamie Raskin is a notable figure in the US Congress as the ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee. There, he has continually defended Europe's right to regulate digital technologies within its borders in the face of growing attacks from the Trump Administration, led by Jim Jordan. A constitutional scholar and long-standing professor, he was the lead impeachment manager for Donald Trump's second impeachment trial.

DAY 2

Programme

15:00	Introductory remarks	Alexandra Geese, Courtney Radsch
15:15	Keynote & fireside chat <i>Facts.Truth.Trust</i>	Maria Ressa
16:15	Panel: AI, Big Tech, and the Future of Media Freedom	Mira Milosevic, Quinn McKew, Alexandra Geese, Dimi Zagorski
17:30	Closing remarks	Barry Lynn
18:00	Drinks reception	

KEYNOTE & FIRESIDE CHAT

15:15 to 16:15 CET
09:15 to 10:15 EST



Maria Ressa

Maria Ressa is a Nobel-peace-prize-winning journalist and the co-founder and CEO of Rappler. She has distinguished herself as a fearless defender of freedom of expression, having exposed abuses of power and increasing authoritarianism in the Philippines under the Presidency of Rodrigo Duterte. She and Rappler have documented how social media is used to spread fake news, harass opponents and manipulate public discourse to the benefit of authoritarian regimes.

moderated by

Courtney Radsch

*Director, Center for Journalism and Liberty
at the Open Markets Institute*



16:15 to 17:30 CET
10:15 to 11:30 EST

PANEL

Fulfilling the promise of the public square: How can policy and regulation protect online expression?



Mira Milosevic

is the **Executive Director of the Global Forum for Media Development**. She previously managed Media Development Programmes at WAN-IFRA. More recently, she authored the World Press Trends reports, the most authoritative global source of data and analysis on the international newspaper industry, published by WAN-IFRA.



Alexandra Geese

has been an **MEP for the Greens/EFA** parliamentary group since 2019. She is the Greens/EFA's digital expert, and negotiated the "Digital Services Act". She is the Green coordinator of the newly established special committee on the European Democracy Shield.



Quinn McKew

is the **Executive Director of ARTICLE 19**, the leading international freedom of expression organisation. She brings a decade-long dedication to the value of freedom of expression to create and maintain a more inclusive, fairer and sustainable world.



Dimi Zagorski

is the **Wikimedia Europe Policy Director** in Brussels. He established Wikimedia's EU advocacy office and leads the Wikimedia movement's advocacy efforts in Europe. He is focused on self-governing communities online and alternative platform models.

moderated by

Courtney Radsch

*Director, Center of Journalism and Liberty
at the Open Markets Institute*



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