



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, 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	

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Full agenda