



## Background Note

### Session II: Democratic Resilience in Times of Change

In a time marked by rising levels of political confrontation, ongoing regional and international conflicts, and rapid technological change, democracies are facing mounting internal and external pressures. Europe's national parliaments operate in an environment marked by accelerating technological change, misinformation and declining public trust in democratic institutions. These pressures influence how parliamentary work is conducted, how information is processed, and how citizens engage with politics. Grasping these dynamics is essential to understanding the role of national parliaments in strengthening democratic resilience and in assessing their capacity to maintain credibility and transparency within an increasingly complex democratic landscape.

#### *The European Democratic Shield*

The European Commission has introduced the *European Democratic Shield* in response to increasing pressures on Europe's democratic systems. Following the President of the European Commission's announcement in the 2024–2029 political guidelines, the Commission published a communication in November 2025 outlining the measures to be implemented by 2027. The initiatives fall under four main categories: (1) a European Centre for Democratic Resilience; (2) the safeguarding of the integrity of the information space; (3) the strengthening of institutions, fair and free elections, and a free and independent media; and (4) the boosting of societal resilience and citizen engagement. The European Democratic Shield builds on the EU's work to counter foreign information manipulation and interference, and the EU's regulatory framework to threats against democracy. A key element is digital regulation, including the Digital Services Act and the Artificial Intelligence Act. Other central pieces of legislation include the 2023 Defence of Democracy package, the Regulation on Transparency and the Targeting of Political Advertising, the European Media Freedom Act and the Audio-Visual Media Services Directive.

The European Parliament has established a Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield (EUDS) to assess the EU toolbox, propose tangible solutions, and strengthen overall institutional resilience. In January 2026, the EUDS presented a draft own-initiative report calling, among other things, for a concrete reform agenda focused on operational capacity, accountability and preparedness, with the integrity of elections at its core. The committee vote is scheduled for June 2026, with the plenary vote expected in July.



Session II will examine the key challenges facing democracy in Europe and explore how both national parliaments and the European Parliament can strengthen democratic resilience in the face of misinformation, technological change, and declining institutional trust.

**Guiding questions for the discussion:**

- What are your experiences with misinformation, foreign information manipulation and interference? How does the rise of misinformation, foreign information manipulation and interference affect the ability of parliaments to engage citizens and uphold confidence in parliamentary decision-making?
- How does declining public trust in democratic institutions affect the capacity of parliaments to ensure transparency and accountability within a changing political landscape, and what can be done to counter this development?
- In what way can parliaments strengthen their capacity to safeguard democratic institutions and reinforce the confidence of citizens? Moreover, what concrete measures have you taken so far?
- How can parliaments adapt to rapid technological change – including artificial intelligence, digital platforms and emerging information technologies – to ensure that democratic processes, transparency and parliamentary oversight remain both robust and credible?