

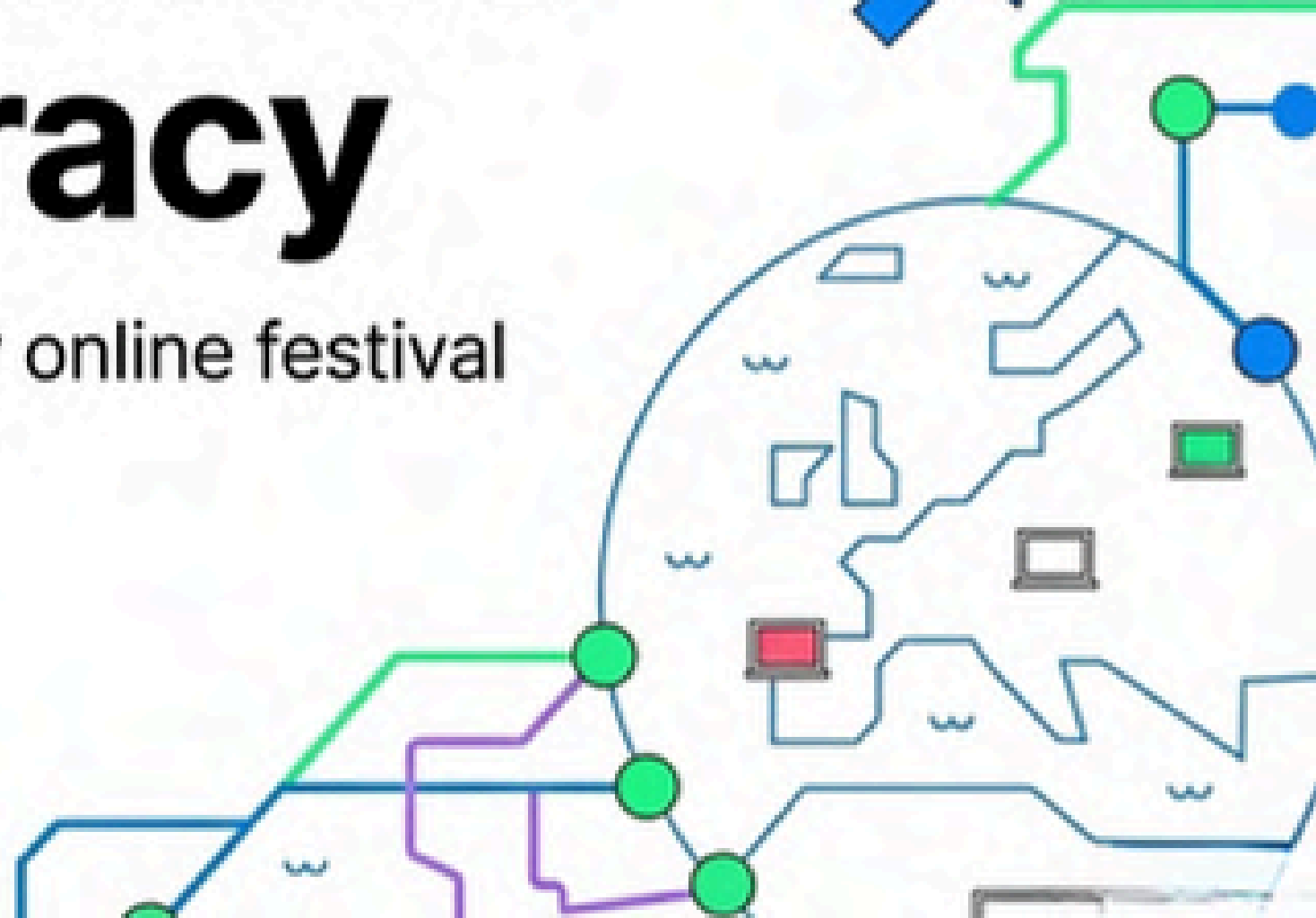


OpenEU

The Open
European
University

OpenEU Festival: The Open Canvas of Democracy

October 23–25, 2026 | A 3 day online festival





Democracy as an institution.

Parliaments. Courtrooms.
Polling stations.



Democracy as a lived human practice.

Listening to someone we
disagree with. Designing
Organizing a workplace.
Caring for **communities.**

We are looking for researchers, practitioners, students, and storytellers to co-create a live democratic experiment.

This is Not a Conference.

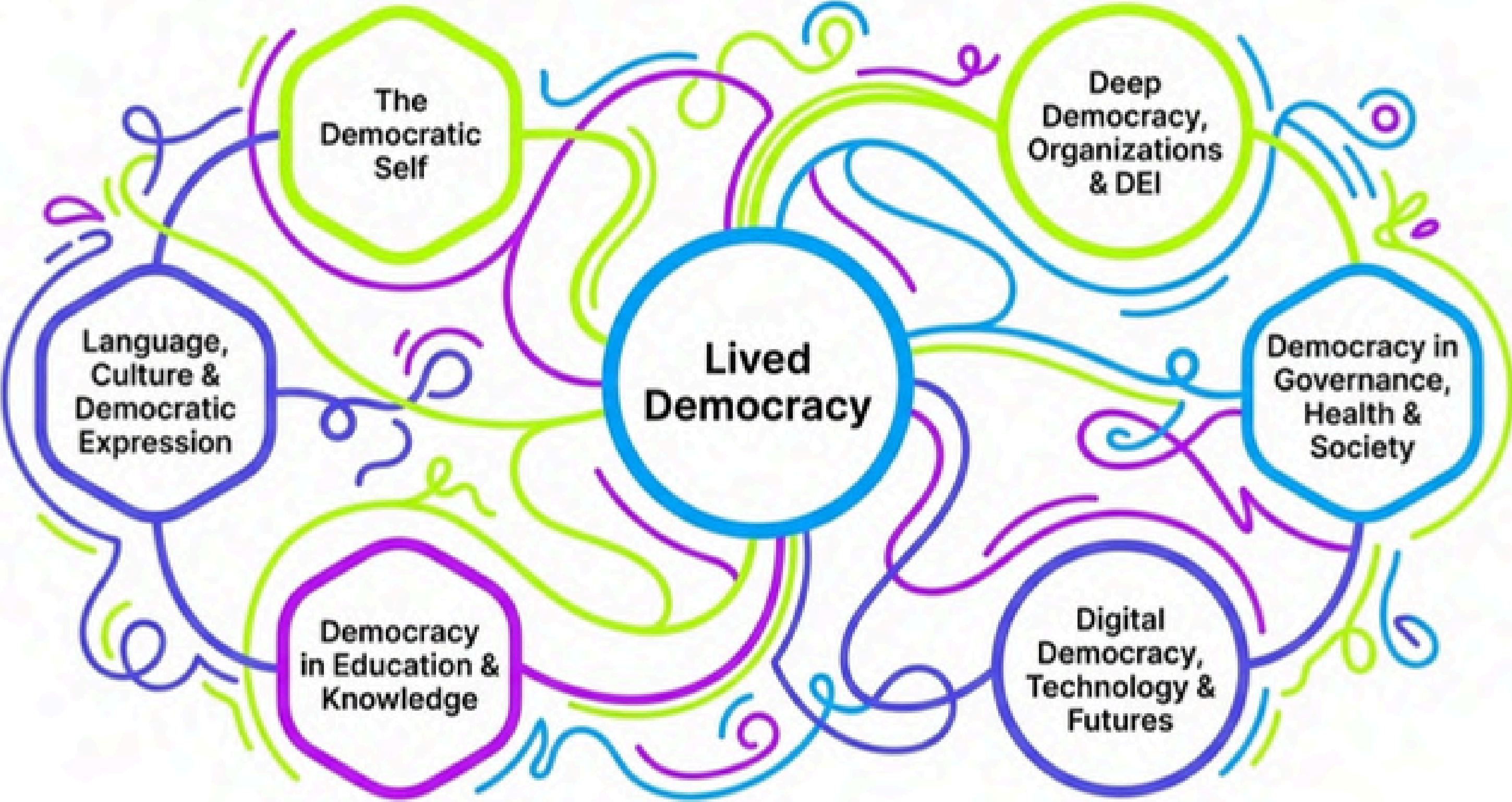
The Traditional Conference

- Rows of passive listeners staring at slide decks.
- Long lecture sessions.
- Panels where five experts talk at you for an hour.
- A neutral moderator reading off a script.
- Goal: One-way knowledge transfer.

The OpenEU Festival

- Active participants shaping the conversation and flow
- Short, dynamic TED-style provocations (20 min + 10 min Q&A).
- Everyone participates (polls, breakout rooms, shared canvases).
- Curious, intervening hosts who challenge and connect dots.
- Goal: Shared experience and reflection.

The Thematic Landscape



The Festival Experience



The Warm Interruption

Imagine presenting a decade of research, only to be warmly interrupted by the host because fifty people in the chat just raised an urgent question. The conversation goes where it needs to.



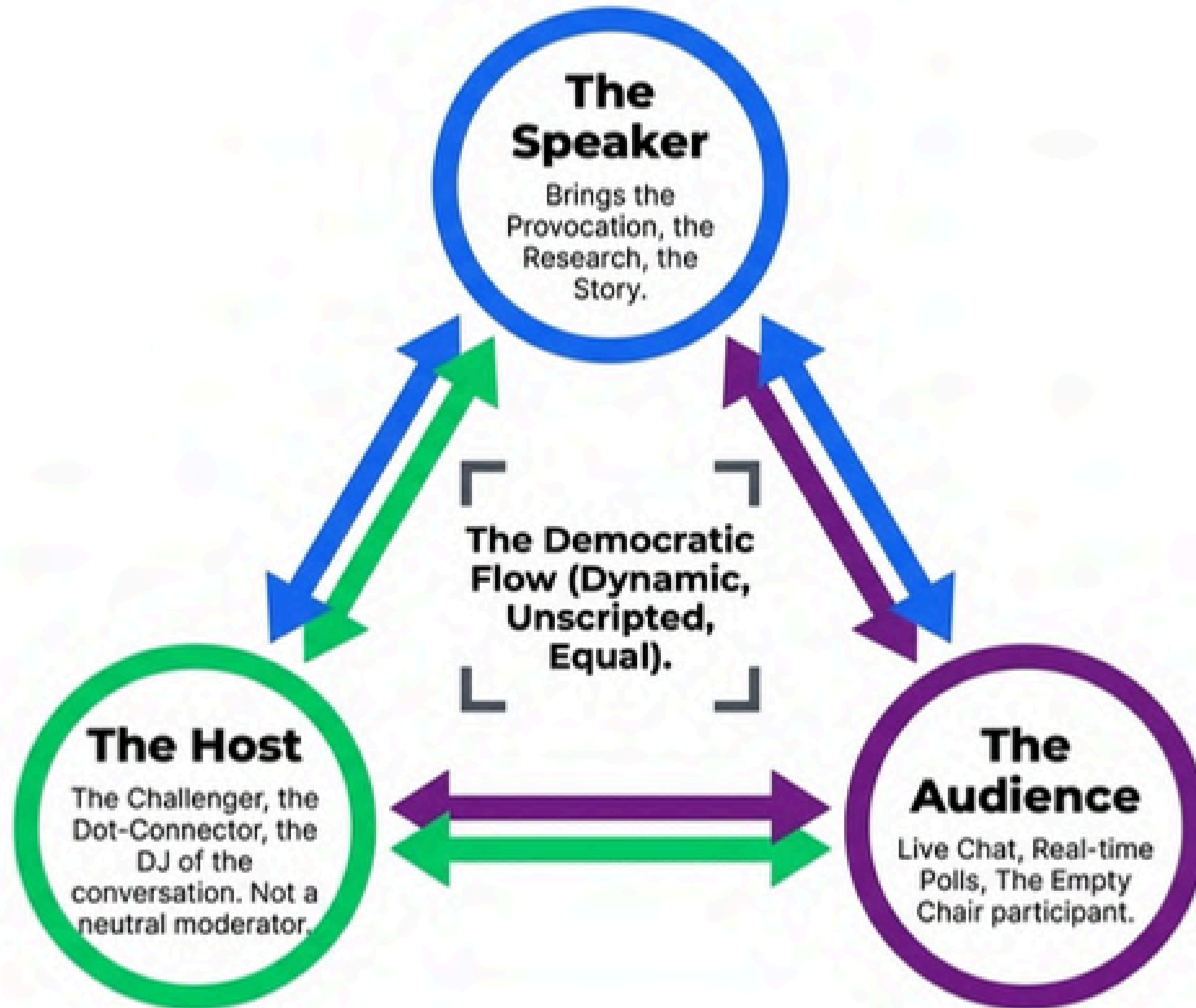
The Provocation

Start not with a heavy PowerPoint, but with a story, a provocation, or a question you genuinely do not know the answer to.

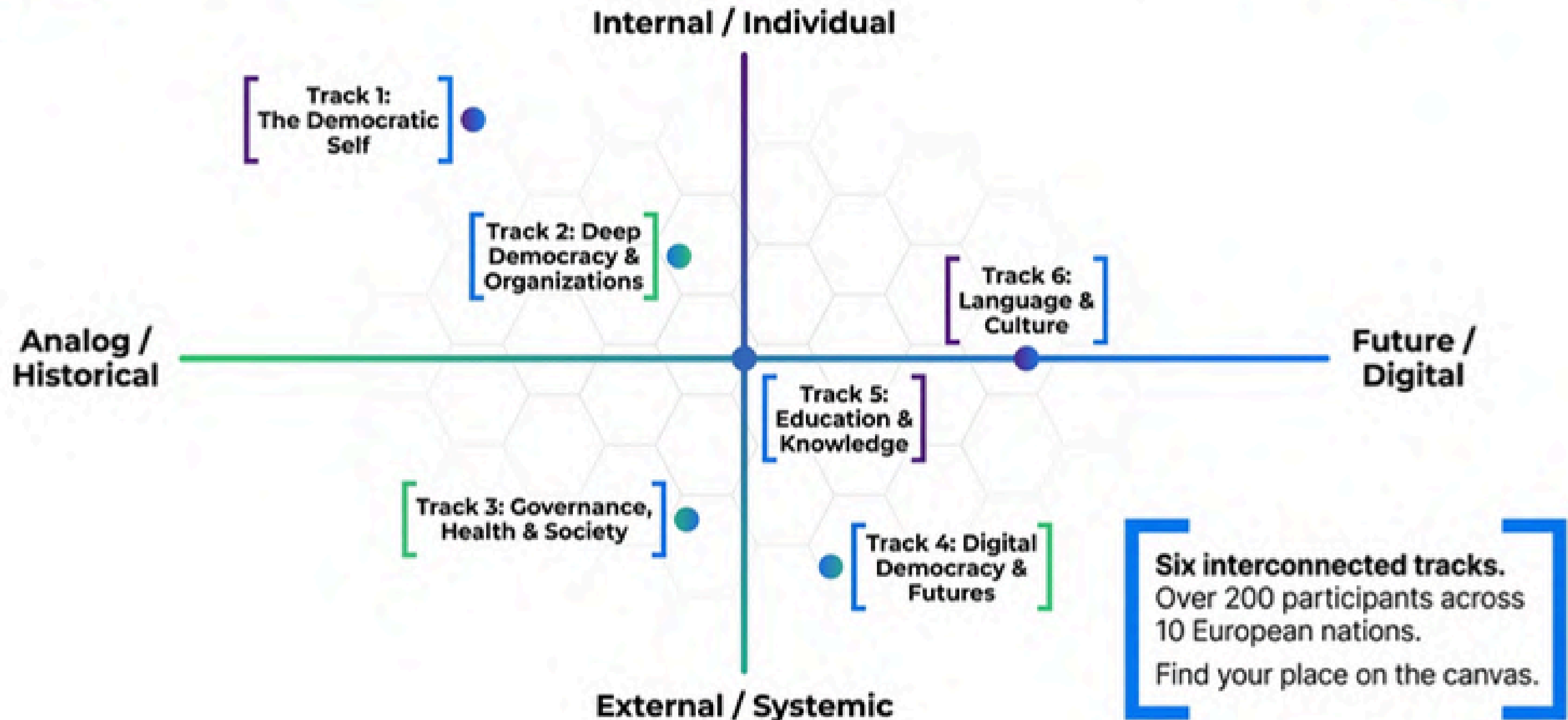


The Active Audience

The audience is not waiting to clap. They are voting on directions, dropping ideas into a shared canvas, and shaping what happens next.

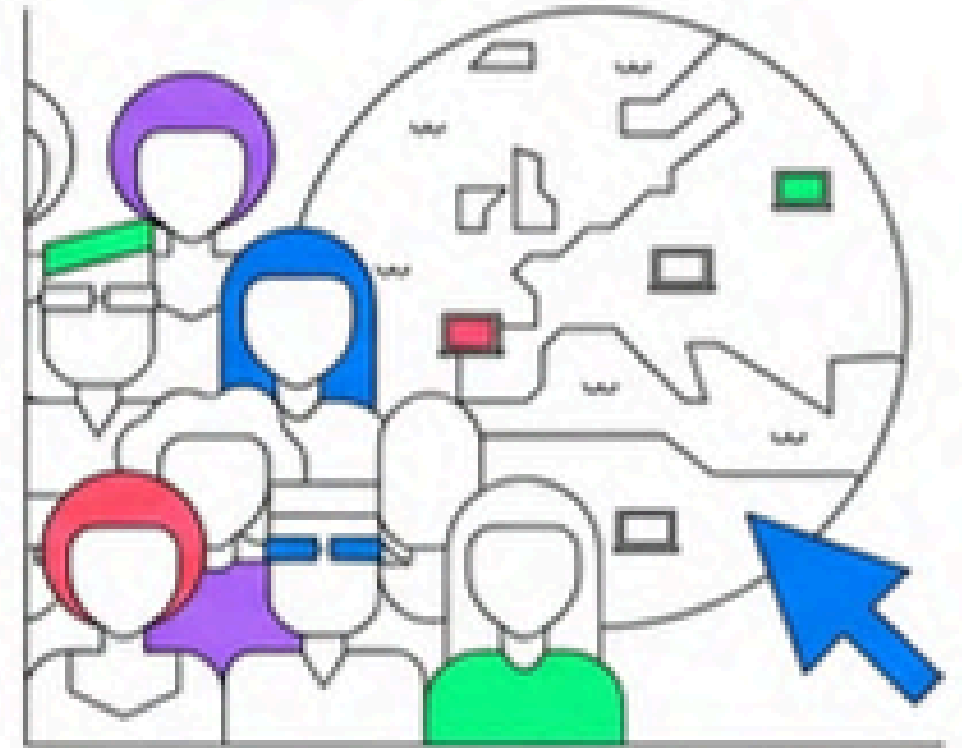


The Track Spectrum: Map Your Expertise



Six Tracks of Inspiration.

We have created six thematic tracks to spark your creativity. These are not exhaustive categories, but starting points for non-partisan, accessible dialogue aligned with EU core values (human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights).



● Track 1 — The Democratic Self

● Track 2 — Deep Democracy, Organizations & DEI

● Track 3 — Democracy in Governance, Health & Society

● Track 4 — Digital Democracy, Technology & Futures

● Track 5 — Democracy in Education & Knowledge

● Track 6 — Language, Culture, History & Democratic Expression

Topic examples

Track 1 — The Democratic Self

How do we become democratic citizens — from the inside out? Exploring the psychological, philosophical, and personal dimensions of democratic life, taking seriously the barriers that prevent people from having a voice.

Democratic Participation as a Skill,
not just a legal right

The Psychology of Citizenship:
conflict transformation and listening

Inner Development Goals (IDGs) for
democratic participation

Democratic Dialogue: Thinking,
Listening & Disagreeing Well

**Mental Health Days as Democratic
Acts:** care as a right, not a luxury

**Long COVID/MECFS & Democratic
Participation:** chronic illness as a
barrier to voice

**The Right to Rest as a Democratic
Right**

Who Gets to Decide What's Normal?
Neurodiversity, autism, ADHD &
democratic norms

Mad Pride: When Psychiatric Survivors
Organize

Care Is Political, Not Personal: disability,
care work & democratic structures

Ableism in Democratic Spaces:
recognizing and dismantling barriers

Crip Time: When Democracy Moves
Too Fast

Does Truth Matter for Democracy?
Post-truth politics & philosophical
foundations

**Democracy Is Slow. Authoritarians
Get Shit Done. So What?**

**What Do We Owe to People Who Hate
Democracy?** The tolerance paradox

**The Trolley Problem Is About
Democracy:** philosophical foundations
of democratic choice

Can Democracy Survive Stupidity?
The epistocracy debate

Track 2 — Deep Democracy, Organizations & DEI

What does real democratic practice look like inside teams, companies, and institutions?

Bridging theory and practice to explore democratic models (holacracy, sociocracy) applied to real organizational life, neurodivergent teams, and systemic constraints.

Deep Democracy: theory, practice, and lived experience

Democracy as a Concept: what it actually means beyond voting

Holacracy, Sociocracy & Beyond: scientific research on applying democracy in organizations

When a Small Group Still Holds All the Power: the limits of holacracy in practice

Workplace Democracy & Participatory Management

Democracy Within Companies: from boardrooms to self-managed teams

Democracy and DEI: how inclusion shapes and is shaped by democratic structures

Deep Democracy in Neurodivergent Teams: do democratic structures help or harm?

How Neurodivergent Voices Change Democratic Outcomes in Organizations

The 4-Day Workweek: it's about power, not productivity

From Consumers to Citizens: stewardship of shared resources

Fast Fashion Democracy: who decides what gets made and worn?

Your Rent Keeps Going Up and You Can't Vote About It: housing as democratic failure

Nothing About Us Without Us: disability rights as organizational principle

Accessible Democracy: more than just ramps

Topic examples

Track 3 — Democracy in Governance, Health & Society

Who has power, who is left out, and how do we rebuild trust? Examining how democratic values are contested across legal, political, health, and civic structures, and how we hold power accountable.

Trust, Accountability & Democratic Transparency

Ethics and Restorative Justice

Is It Democratic to Ban Anti-Democratic Parties? Germany's defensive democracy

Your Rights End Where Mine Begin. But Where Is That Line? Freedom vs. harm

Societal Resilience & Citizens' Engagement: European Democracy Shield

Civil Dialogue as Prerequisite for Democratic Legitimacy

My Body, Their Vote: reproductive rights and democratic backlash

Why Can't We Die on Our Own Terms? Euthanasia, autonomy & democratic taboos

Vaccine Mandates: where does your freedom end and mine begin?

Why Do Anti-Vaxxers Exist in the Age of Google? Information vs. trust

Your Doctor Googled Your Symptoms: medical knowledge democratization

Rural vs. Urban: the democratic divide in voice and power

Urban Democracy: who decides your city's future?

Borders, Walls & Democratic Belonging: geographic mobility and citizenship

Climate Migration Is Already Here: geographic displacement & democratic rights

Should Trees Have Voting Rights? Legal personhood for nature

Track 4 – Digital Democracy, Technology & Futures

Who controls the tools and systems that shape our collective future?

Exploring digital infrastructure, AI deliberation, and the design of democratic systems for the challenges of the coming decades.

AI in Citizens' Assemblies: scaling democratic quality and institutional capacity

Augmented Deliberation: AI to cluster citizen viewpoints in real-time

AI as Tool for Representation, Not Substitute

Navigating Disinformation: maintaining agency in a digital world

Taiwan's Digital Democracy Experiment

Estonia's E-Residency: Can You Be a Digital Citizen?

Technological Sovereignty: building independent democratic digital infrastructure

Europe as Digital Colony? Resisting tech dependency

The Right to Repair as Radical Democracy

Smart Contracts & Democratic Ownership at the local level

Why Voting Machines Can't Be Trusted

Your City Council Meetings Are on YouTube. Nobody Watches: democratic infrastructure design

Digital Nomads Are Rewriting Citizenship: place-independent democracy

Long-termism & Intergenerational Justice: Guardians for Future Generations

Anticipatory Governance: how policy professionals navigate global change

Futures Literacy: using the future to change what we do in the present

How Can AI Help Current Citizens Negotiate Fairly with Future Generations?

Circular Economy Requires Circular Institutions

Democracy as Infrastructure: radical civic ownership of shared resources

Citizen Science: crowdsourced truth-telling against institutional failure

Open Science vs. Publish or Perish: democratizing academic knowledge

Peer Review Is Broken. Can We Crowdfund Scientific Truth?

The Math That Proves Voting Systems Are Broken: Arrow's Impossibility Theorem

Your Phone's Battery Is Mining Violence: rare earth minerals & democratic supply chains

Flat Earthers Aren't Stupid, They're Democratic: why conspiracy theories thrive

Topic examples

Track 5 — Democracy in Education & Knowledge

Who gets to learn, teach, and decide what counts as knowledge? Tensions between academic freedom, access, institutional prestige, and the role of students as democratic actors within their alliances.

Student Voice in University

Governance: students as democratic actors in their institutions

OpenEU and the Democratization of Higher Education in Europe: students in governing boards

The TikTok University: When Students Teach Each Other — peer-to-peer learning

Teaching Democracy or Teaching Democratically? Is pedagogy democratic?

Free Education as a Democratic

Right: tuition, debt & access to knowledge

Decolonizing the Curriculum: whose knowledge gets taught?

The Hidden Curriculum: what schools really teach about authority and power

Grade Inflation or Democratic Education? Assessment as power structure

Trigger Warnings or Academic Freedom? Safety vs. intellectual challenge

The University Strike: when students and staff unite

Open Educational Resources: Wikipedia for Everything?

Disabled Students Taught Us About Flexible Learning: pandemic lessons and universal design

The OpenEU Micro-Degree on European Values and Democracy

Topic examples

Track 6 — Language, Culture, History & Democratic Expression

How does culture — and the language we speak — shape, challenge, and inspire democracy? The cultural, artistic, linguistic, and historical dimensions of democratic life, proving that communication access is a prerequisite for equal participation.

Why Languages Matter in Democracy: how language barriers prevent full participation

Music Blending Cultures to Reflect Shared Democratic Values

Bernie's Mittens Won the Internet: meme art and political power

Language Diversity and Multilingualism as a Result and Requirement of Democracy

Art as Political Risk: from protest murals to dissident performance

Failed Democracies: lessons from Weimar, Ancient Rome & beyond

Language as a Tool for Equal Participation: translation, interpretation & plain language

Banksy vs. Advertising: who owns public space?

Forgotten Democratic Innovations: sortition, citizen juries & lost practices

Equality Through Language Access: reducing barriers and empowering minority languages

Eurovision's Secret Democratic Power: music and European identity

How Voting Rights Were Won (and Lost, and Won Again)

Plain Language Movements and Accessibility in Democratic Communication

Fandom as Political Organizing: how pop culture shapes participation

The Museum Gave Back the Stolen Artifacts. Now What? Repatriation & historical justice

Social Media Language Trends and Youth Democratic Expression

Graffiti Is a Vote: why cities criminalize visual dissent

Your Grandchildren's Lawyer: intergenerational democracy lessons from history

Media, Arts & Expression: theatre, poetry, and social media as platforms for public voice

Your Spotify Wrapped Is Propaganda: cultural algorithms and identity

Climate Scientists Are Gluing Themselves to Roads: when expertise meets activism

Selection Criteria.

We are looking for speakers, researchers, practitioners, and storytellers who bring fresh, inspiring perspectives.

Related to theme

Addresses democracy as a lived practice.

Inspiring

Provokes thought, dialogue, and new perspectives.

Non-partisan

Focuses on human experience and systems, not party politics.

Accessible

Designed for a broad audience across disciplines and backgrounds.

Innovative

Breaks away from standard lecture formats.







Aligned with EU values

Upholds human dignity, freedom, equality, rule of law, and human rights.

The Deadline:

**May
30,
2026**

Selection Criteria

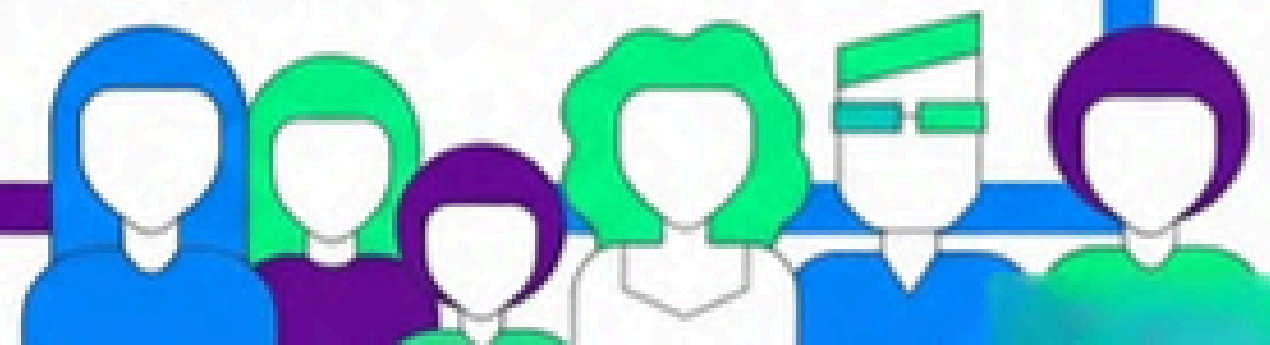
-  Related to theme
-  Inspiring
-  Non-partisan
-  Accessible to a broad audience
-  Innovative
-  Aligned with EU values (human dignity, freedom, equality, rule of law, human rights)

Submit your proposal:

<https://forms.gle/rr67QWPpuWdj3WM9A>

Questions? Contact:

openeufestival@gmail.com





Come ready to think.
Come ready to talk back.
Come ready to be surprised.

We look forward to your submissions. Let's build the canvas together.