

# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The Polish Academy of Sciences – Scientific Centre in Vienna invites all to submit abstracts for the conference

## MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

### VARIATION, COMPLEXITY, AND PRACTICE

16-17 NOVEMBER 2023

#### SUB-THEMES

- ✓ critique of democratic theory
- ✓ study of democracy – theory and practice
- ✓ evolving meaning of democracy
- ✓ democracy in crisis – the how, where, and why
- ✓ teaching democracy beyond academia
- ✓ democracy and the digitization of social life
- ✓ democracy and political polarization

#### IMPORTANT DATES

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<b>25 SEPTEMBER 2023</b>	<b>29 SEPTEMBER 2023</b>	<b>6 OCTOBER 2023</b>	<b>16-17 NOVEMBER 2023</b>
Abstract submission deadline	Acceptance notification	Confirmation of participation	Conference date

#### IN COLLABORATION WITH



Faculty of Political Science  
and International Studies  
University of Warsaw

#### SUBMISSIONS AT

[office@vienna.pan.pl](mailto:office@vienna.pan.pl)

## ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The aim of the conference is to discuss democracy in a multifaceted frame, but especially in relation to the many definitions, interpretations, forms and challenges (crisis) that are attributed to this phenomenon. The initial question we pose is: what meaning does democracy hold? We believe it to be a good starting point for theoretical as well as empirical considerations.

There are numerous approaches to the study of democracy and its challenges. One could critically approach the popular diagnosis that modern democracy is undergoing crisis/being challenged. "Democracy" (and "crisis" as well) is an essentially contested concept, and as such can be redefined for various purposes. Due to the lack of agreement as to the use of these terms, consideration should be given not only to their interpretation, but also to the possibility of their redefinition. Hence, there would be a need to restate the seemingly simple questions: What is democracy? Where is democracy taking place? Which democracy is challenged/in crisis? What exactly does the term crisis mean? How democratic theorists should define and study democracy?

Leaning into the thesis that democracy is being challenged gives focus to the recent and past mainstream challenges to democracy, such as the emergence of movements and discourses (ex. illiberal or populist) that strive to redefine democracy and question its hegemonic liberal interpretation. According to the latest Bertelsmann report "Transformation Index", an increasing number of countries in the world are losing their democratic status and moving towards other political forms (e.g. autocracy). Historically, in Central and Eastern Europe, such changes occurred repeatedly. In the interwar period, only Czechoslovakia remained a democratic state until the end of its existence. Other states, sooner or later, took on authoritarian or totalitarian course.

Given the above, the conference could focus on, but is not limited to, the following subjects:

- how to define and study "democracy" - an essentially contested concept – in theory and practice;
- evolution of the meaning of democracy throughout history;
- is democracy in crisis? – the how, where, and why;
- how to teach and/or disseminate knowledge (and meaning) on democracy beyond academia;
- alternative forms of political participation and democracy, in particular the challenges associated with progressive digitization of social life;
- political polarization and its importance for the future of democracy;
- the changing balance of geopolitical forces and the future of democracy;

The organisers of the conference wish to foster a lively and multifaceted discussion on democracy and invite scholars to present their research on this topic. We welcome all approaches and topics, especially those that represent theoretical and methodological novelty and discuss democracy through an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary perspective.

## FORMAT OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference will be a 2-day event, taking place on-site in Vienna at the residence of the Scientific Centre of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Boerhaavegasse 25, 1030 Vienna, Austria). The organizers hope that it will be possible for all of speakers to meet in Vienna, but some presentations may be delivered on-line, if such a necessity arises. If needed, invited speakers will have their travel expenses reimbursed up to a sum of 200 EUR and accommodation will be provided by the organisers.

## TIMELINE AND SUBMISSIONS

All are invited to submit a paper abstract (maximum 1000 words) by **25th of September 2023**. Selected speakers will be contacted by **29th of September** and will need to confirm their participation by **6th of October 2023**.

Abstracts should be sent by e-mail to: [office@vienna.pan.pl](mailto:office@vienna.pan.pl)

Please include your name and affiliation in the e-mail. Selected speakers will need to submit a short bio. Invited speakers secure their transport to/from Vienna on their own. The organizers will reimburse their travel costs after the conference.