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Background Note II: Parliamentary Cooperation and Democratic Resilience in an Uncertain World

The European Union is currently operating in an increasingly complex and contested environment, characterised by geopolitical instability, rapid technological transformation, and growing pressures on democratic systems. Disinformation, cyber threats, and foreign interference are placing significant strain on democratic processes across the Union, while the accelerating deployment of digital technologies—particularly artificial intelligence—is reshaping the information space, public discourse, and the broader relationship between citizens and institutions.

This session will benefit from contributions by leading policymakers and experts, including:

- **Mr Michael McGrath**, European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection; *and*
- **Professor Brigid Laffan**, Emeritus Professor of European Politics.

Their perspectives will provide valuable insights into how these evolving EU instruments can be implemented effectively and how democratic resilience can be strengthened in practice.

Strengthening democratic resilience has emerged as a central priority for the European Union and for the Irish Presidency of the Council. The protection of democratic values, including the rule of law, media freedom, and the integrity of electoral processes, is fundamental to the Union's functioning and legitimacy. At the same time, the evolving nature of threats—often hybrid, cross-border, and technologically driven—requires increasingly coordinated and multifaceted responses at both national and European level.

In recent years, the European Union has developed a more comprehensive policy framework to address these challenges. The European Democracy Action Plan has provided a foundation for promoting free and fair elections, supporting independent media, and countering disinformation. Building on this, the emerging European Democracy Shield seeks to strengthen the EU's capacity to respond to foreign information manipulation and interference, enhance coordination among Member States, and reinforce democratic institutions and processes across the Union.

Alongside these initiatives, the EU has introduced a robust digital regulatory framework, including the Digital Services Act and the Artificial Intelligence Act.

These measures represent a significant step towards ensuring greater transparency, accountability, and responsibility in the digital environment, particularly with regard to



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online platforms and AI-generated content. They aim to address systemic risks such as the spread of harmful content, manipulation of information, and the impact of emerging technologies on democratic discourse.

These developments are complemented by strengthened cybersecurity obligations under instruments such as the NIS2 Directive and broader EU efforts to counter hybrid threats. Increasingly, the boundaries between security, technology, and democracy are becoming blurred, requiring integrated policy responses that address risks to critical infrastructure, electoral systems, and public trust.

Within this evolving policy landscape, national parliaments and the European Parliament have a critical role to play in safeguarding democratic governance. Parliamentary scrutiny is essential to ensuring accountability, transparency, and the effective implementation of EU legislation and policy. At a time when many of the challenges facing the Union transcend national borders, interparliamentary cooperation has become an increasingly important mechanism for exchange, coordination, and collective oversight.

The Irish Presidency will place particular emphasis on strengthening such cooperation, including through COSAC, as a means of reinforcing democratic legitimacy and ensuring that responses to shared challenges are both effective and democratically grounded. Enhancing dialogue between national parliaments and the European Parliament, sharing best practices, and deepening mutual understanding of policy developments will be central to this effort.



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Questions for Consideration in Connection with the Discussion at the COSAC Chairpersons' Meeting

- What further steps can the European Union and its Member States take to strengthen resilience to disinformation, cyber threats, and foreign information manipulation and interference, including through existing EU instruments?
- How can national parliaments enhance their scrutiny of emerging technologies, in particular artificial intelligence, to ensure their development and use are consistent with democratic values, fundamental rights, and the rule of law?
- In what ways can interparliamentary cooperation, including through COSAC, be strengthened to reinforce accountability, transparency, and democratic legitimacy in EU decision-making?
- What additional measures may be required at European and national level to safeguard electoral integrity and strengthen public trust in democratic institutions, particularly in the digital environment?
- How can coordination at EU level be further improved in responding to hybrid threats while fully respecting the competences and responsibilities of Member States?