

Keynote Lecture

By prof. Hanspeter Kriesi

Is there a crisis of democracy in Europe?

On the conditions for democracy to survive



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Abstract:

There is a lot of talk about democratic backsliding across the world and in Europe in particular. In my talk, I shall discuss the general and specific conditions for democracies to survive.

The general conditions include a general consensus on the rules of the game among the citizens and among the political elites. In Europe, there is no danger from the side of the citizens, even if there is a lot of dissatisfaction with the way democracy works among them. The real danger comes from the political elites who may increase polarization and deliberately undermine democracy.

However, there are a number of specific conditions – institutional, partisan, international, market and, last but not least, democratic constraints and opportunities, which ultimately determine the manoeuvring space of the elites. Most problematic is a situation, where the citizens come to tolerate the elites' undemocratic actions for purely opportunistic reasons.

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