

## TRUEDEM: Trust in European Democracies (2023-2025)

### Quarterly Project Newsletter - Issue 7 (September 2024)

#### Mid-Term Conference on September 10-12, 2024, in Ljubljana, Slovenia

The [TRUEDEM Conference](#), titled "[Exploring the Frontiers of Democratic Innovations](#)," gathered scholars, policymakers, and experts on September 11, 2024, at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. The event focused on political trust, democratic innovations, and the impact of electoral processes on institutional confidence, providing a platform for discussions on the evolving landscape of democracy in Europe.

The conference opened with welcoming remarks by Andreja Jaklič, Vice-Dean for Research at the Faculty of Social Sciences, and Christian Haerpfer, Project Director of TRUEDEM. The keynote address, delivered by Danica Fink-Hafner, examined the role of artificial intelligence in democracy, exploring its potential to either strengthen democratic engagement or erode institutional trust.



The morning session continued with a roundtable discussion, moderated by Meta Novak and Frédéric Gonthier, on democratic innovations at local and European levels. Panelists, including policymakers and governance experts, shared insights on participatory democracy, policy implementation, and institutional reforms.

In the afternoon, the conference turned to political trust, with a panel moderated by Damjan Lajh. Scholars presented research on corruption, economic inequality, digital transformation, and populism, highlighting their effects on public confidence in democratic institutions. Lars Vinther Johanssen examined trust in central administration, while Marko Hočevár analyzed the impact of economic inequality on political trust. Simon Delakorda focused on institutional trust in digital policies, and Jakub Charvát and Ladislav Cabada explored the relationship between populism and legislative power in Central Europe.

A highlight of the event was a virtual lecture by Pippa Norris, Co-Principal Investigator of TRUEDEM and Professor at Harvard University, titled *A Virtuous Circle Redux: The Media & Trustworthiness in the Digital Age*. She explored the evolving role of media in shaping public trust, providing key insights into how digitalization and disinformation influence perceptions of political credibility.

The final panel, moderated by Céline Belot, focused on the 2024 European Parliament elections and their impact on institutional trust. Christian Haerpfer provided a cross-national analysis of electoral trends, while Katjana Gattermann discussed far-right electoral performance and disinformation threats. Claudiu D. Tufiş examined Romania's elections, analyzing how the



combination of local and EU elections was used to limit extremist representation. Aneta Világi explored Slovakia’s paradoxical pro-European electoral success.

The TRUEDEM Conference 2024 provided valuable insights into the challenges facing democracy today, addressing media influence, trust in governance, and the resilience of democratic institutions. The discussions emphasized both risks—such as rising disinformation and declining trust—and opportunities for democratic renewal in an era of rapid political and technological change.

## Call for Papers: Political Trust, Challenges of Democracies, Democratic Innovations



*Politics in Central Europe*, the journal of the Central European Political Science Association, invites submissions for a [special issue examining trust in political institutions, the challenges facing democracies, and democratic innovations](#). Modern representative democracies are experiencing declining public trust and increasing dissatisfaction, yet citizens continue to view democracy as the most suitable form of government. This special issue will explore how democratic innovations and artificial intelligence influence trust in

### Call for Papers

#### Call for Abstracts

Political Trust, Challenges of Democracies, and Democratic Innovations

*Politics in Central Europe*, the journal of the Central European Political Science Association, invites submissions of manuscripts for a special issue on the relationship between trust in political institutions, challenges of democracies and democratic innovations. Modern representative democracies face many challenges and criticisms related to concerns about the quality of democracy and representation. Various public opinion polls reveal a long-term trend of decline or low levels of trust in the most important representative bodies and satisfaction with the functioning of democracy, although citizens, on the other hand, still believe in democracy as the most suitable form of government. In recent years, with the aim of overcoming these challenges, debate about various democratic innovations has intensified. On the other hand new technologies and artificial intelligence have emerged as a special challenge for democracy and representation.

representative institutions and the functioning of democratic governance.

Guest-edited by Prof. Alenka Krašovec and Assoc. Prof. Meta Novak from the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Slovenia, the issue is produced as part of the European Commission Horizon project *Trust in European Democracies*. The editors welcome theoretically informed empirical case studies, conceptual and theoretical papers, and manuscripts from the field of normative political theory. Authors interested in contributing should submit an abstract of 150 to 200 words to [pce@mup.cz](mailto:pce@mup.cz) by 30 September 2024. The abstract should clearly outline the research topic, design, and key findings. Authors of accepted abstracts will be invited to submit full manuscripts by mid-October, with the final deadline for manuscript submission set for 31 January 2025. The special issue is scheduled for publication in September 2025.

## Call for Papers: Acta Politologica

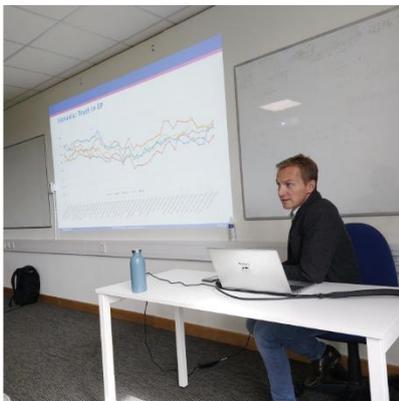


We are delighted to invite you to participate in a special issue of [Acta Politologica \(AcPo\)](#), the peer-reviewed journal published by the Institute of Political Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. This special issue, titled "Political Trust, New Cleavages, and Political Polarization," aims to explore the political consequences of changing levels of political trust in contemporary democracies. For

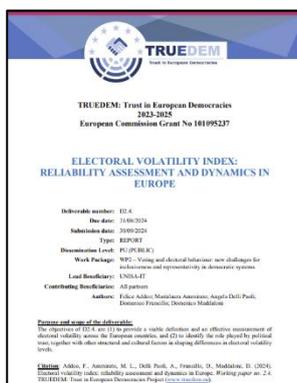
this special issue, we are pleased to have Jakub Charvát (Metropolitan University Prague) serving as Guest Editor. If you are interested in publishing in the Special Issue, please submit the abstract of your intended article to the editors ([acpo@fsv.cuni.cz](mailto:acpo@fsv.cuni.cz)) in the range of 250 to 500 words no later than September 15, 2024.

## TRUEDEM at the ECPR General Conference 2024

On August 15, 2024, the TRUEDEM project hosted a panel on [Political Trust in European Democracies at the 2024 ECPR General Conference](#) at University College Dublin. Chaired by Christian Haerpfer (University of Vienna), with Pavol Babos (Comenius University Bratislava) as discussant. The discussion focused on political trust as a crucial element of democratic stability and engagement, as well as its potential “dark sides” when high trust reinforces authoritarianism. The panel examined both long-term structural drivers of trust and policy interventions to enhance institutional trustworthiness. The panel featured four research presentations. Christian Haerpfer (University of Vienna) analyzed trust in national parliaments across 30 European democracies from 1990 to 2023, highlighting trends in institutional confidence. Pavol Babos (Comenius University Bratislava) presented findings on low trust in the European Union, focusing on public perceptions in Slovakia. Kseniya Kizilova (Institute for Comparative Survey Research, Austria) explored how media consumption and information environments shape political trust, while Kornelia Batko, Dawid Tatarczyk, and Agnieszka Turska-Kawa (University of Silesia) examined religious and political factors influencing institutional trust in Poland. The TRUEDEM panel at ECPR 2024 provided critical insights into trust in democratic institutions, contributing to discussions on how governments, institutions, and media shape political confidence in an era of democratic uncertainty.



### Electoral Volatility Index: Reliability Assessment and Dynamics in Europe

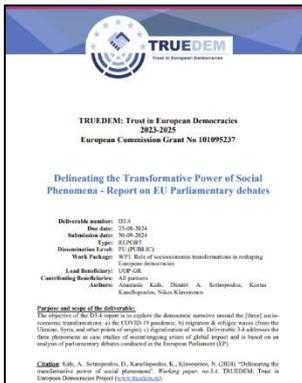


[The Electoral Volatility Index Report](#), under the authorship of TRUEDEM-Italy team, provides an in-depth analysis of shifts in electoral support for political parties and coalitions across European democracies, focusing on the causes and consequences of electoral instability. The report assesses different volatility measures, including Pedersen’s Index, and explores alternative models to better capture the nuances of party system transformations and voter realignment.

Electoral volatility is analyzed through multiple dimensions, including party system fragmentation, political trust, voter dealignment, institutional performance. The study finds that volatility has been increasing, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, where political landscapes remain more fluid. This trend reflects declining partisan loyalty, the rise of new political movements, and broader societal shifts impacting electoral behaviour

The report also examines the role of governance quality, economic conditions, and institutional trust in shaping electoral stability, highlighting that democratic resilience depends on citizens’ confidence in political institutions and representative systems. The findings contribute to a broader discussion on the deinstitutionalization of party systems and the challenges of maintaining political stability and voter engagement in contemporary democracies. By offering a comparative perspective, the study provides valuable insights into how democratic systems can navigate growing electoral unpredictability while strengthening trust in electoral processes and governance.

## Delineating the Transformative Power of Social Phenomena - Report on EU Parliamentary debates



The TRUEDEM report "[Delineating the Transformative Power of Social Phenomena](#)" explores how trust dynamics shape European Parliament debates on three major socio-economic transformations: the COVID-19 pandemic, migration and refugee waves, and the digitalization of work. Through a qualitative content analysis of parliamentary debates from 2016 to 2024, the report investigates how Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) conceptualize and frame trust in their discussions, focusing on institutional trust, public trust, and trust among EU member states.

The report highlights that trust and distrust played a defining role in migration debates, with Western European nations advocating for solidarity and shared responsibility, while Central and Eastern European countries prioritized national sovereignty and border security. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, discussions centered on trust in scientific advice, government interventions, and vaccine distribution, with concerns over misinformation and varying levels of trust in EU institutions surfacing throughout the debates. Regarding the digitalization of work, MEPs addressed trust in regulatory frameworks governing artificial intelligence, concerns over data privacy, and the protection of workers' rights in an evolving labor market.

The study finds that trust remains a critical factor in shaping policy decisions and cooperation within the EU, with political party affiliation, ideological leanings, and national interests influencing perceptions of trustworthiness. The report underscores the need for greater transparency, accountability, and communication strategies to build institutional trust, particularly in moments of crisis and socio-political transformation. By analyzing the evolving discourse within the European Parliament, the study provides valuable insights into how trust is constructed, challenged, and leveraged in political decision-making.

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### TRUEDEM Trust in European Democracies

Cross-country comparative comprehensive investigation of public perceptions of trust and trustworthiness (2023-2025)

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