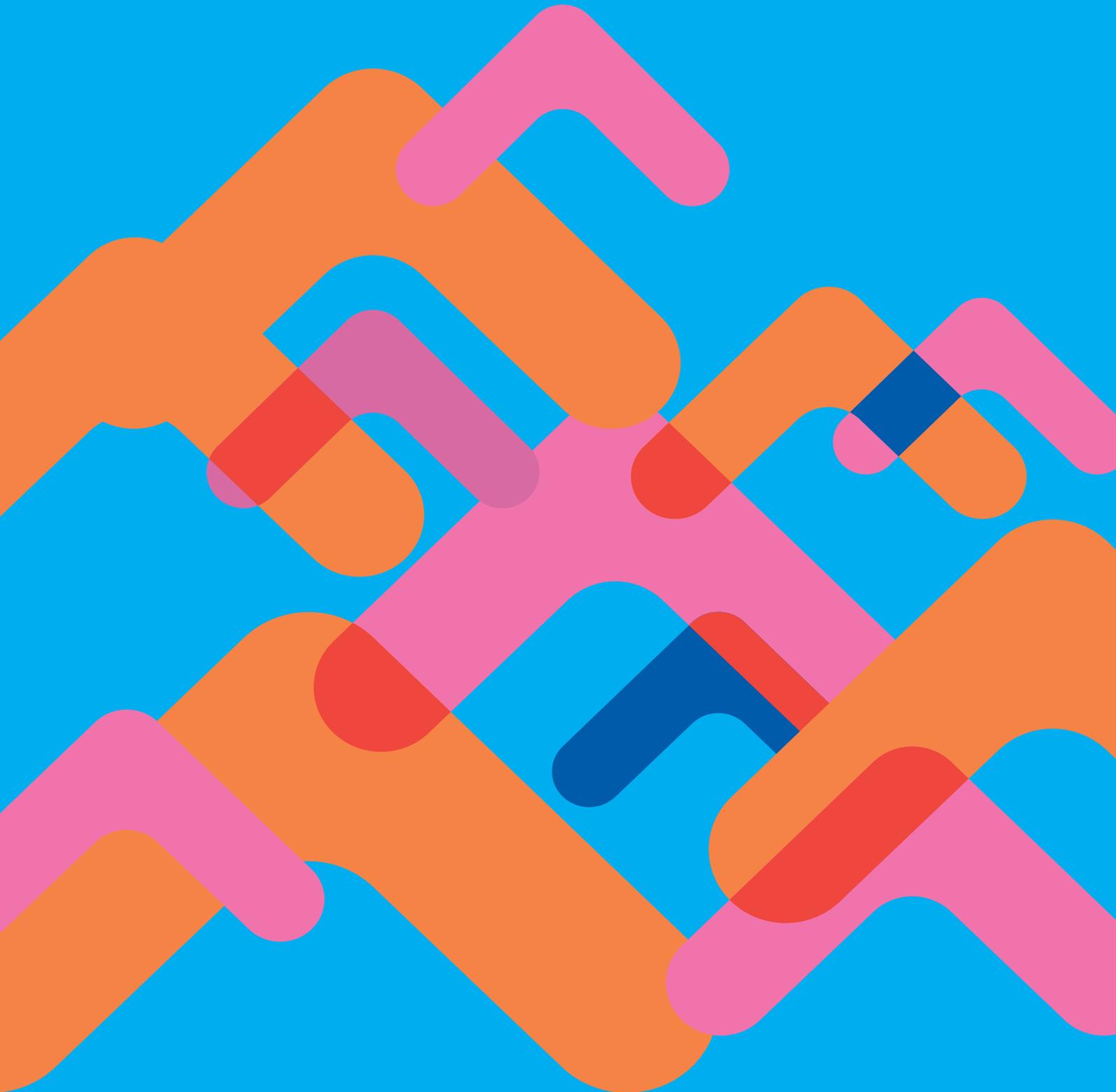


# European Capital of Democracy



# ONLINE ROUND TABLE PARTICIPANTS

18 SEPTEMBER 2020



“At this time of extraordinary difficulty and uncertainty, seeing this initiative taking shape and reaffirming the crucial role of our cities as strongholds and laboratories of democracy is reassuring and promising.”

**DUBRAVKA ŠUICA**

*Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, European Commission*



“Democracy, with its clear reference to its origin in ancient Greece and particularly in Athens, is very often an ideal that requires effort from everyone in order to become reality and to thrive. Because the fruit of democracy only blossoms when measure and moderation appear, when there is respect not only for our own freedom but also for the freedom of others.”

**KOSTAS BAKOYANNIS**

*Mayor of Athens, Greece*



“The European Capital of Democracy is the opposite of empty phrases. Citizens will be empowered, new forms of participation will be tried and tested, and courageous politicians willing to engage with civil society will be rewarded.”

**HELFRIED CARL**

*Managing Partner, The Innovation in Politics Institute and Co-Founder of the European Capital of Democracy Initiative*



“Cities have always been centres of democracy. But today they face the challenge of a growing gap between the residential population and the enfranchised population, which leads to problems regarding the democratic legitimacy of political decisions. Cities are therefore particularly called upon to facilitate the participation of all residents, by means of democratic innovations. Democracy is not a point of arrival but a process in which cities need to continually develop. Vienna is a good model in this regard, because it develops formats that enable all of the city’s inhabitants to actively participate in shaping the place where they live. Strengthening this will be a key objective of innovative, democratic cities in the future.”

**JÜRGEN CZERNOHORSZKY**

*Executive City Councillor for Education, Integration, Youth and Personnel of Vienna, Austria*



**European  
Capital of  
Democracy**



Democracy is not something given to us for good. It is not something obvious. It is a right that we must fight for and guard every day. We need to care for, nurture and strive for democracy. But also celebrate it. That is why initiatives such as the European Capital of Democracy Initiative initiated by Vienna are so important. I wholeheartedly support this project.

**ALEKSANDRA DULKIEWICZ**

*Mayor of Gdansk, Poland*



“In our Europe, democracy is not a concept, but participation and policies that improve quality of life. The key to achieving this goal is to highlight best practice and efforts in the fields of policy, education, culture, social inclusion and innovation.”

**YORDANKA FANDAKOVA**

*Mayor of Sofia, Bulgaria*



“Democracy was born in ancient Greek cities. The cities of today are still places where the real problems of real people are actually solved, regardless of the high-level ideology of national politics. I truly believe that this approach can bring about desirable change in our society.”

**ZDENĚK HŘIB**

*Lord Mayor of Prague, Czech Republic*



“I hope that cities are not only strongholds but also reformers of democracy. Both rural and urban populations have gone through a disillusionment process with neoliberalism and the old forms of representational democracy. This is largely the result of the financial crisis in 2008. To find a way out of the current crisis of democracy, we need to invest in citizens’ engagement. It is much easier to engage citizens in the political process at the local level, so cities can play a major role here. And, as we know, urban populations are more diverse, have more information available to them and have direct, more personal experiences regarding globalisation.”

**GERGELY KARÁCSONY**

*Lord Mayor of Budapest, Hungary*



I believe that it is time for a new solidarity. New European Solidarity. We have to give our democracies new meaning and together take them to a better place. Therefore, I am certain that the European Capital of Democracy initiative is a path leading its way to the regaining trust in democracy – indeed, the best form of government.

**RAFAŁ TRZASKOWSKI**

*Mayor of Warsaw, Poland*



**European  
Capital of  
Democracy**



“I am a big believer in engaging people in the development of cities and the places where they live. Authentic and transparent local politics may help to restore trust in democracy.”

**MATÚŠ VALLO**

*Mayor of Bratislava, Slovakia*



“As a true advocate of cities becoming more inclusive, more responsive to people’s needs, more open and more transparent, I welcome and support the European Capital of Democracy initiative, a much-needed one for young democracies such as Albania’s, but not only for them.”

**ERION VELIAJ**

*Mayor of Tirana, Albania*



**European  
Capital of  
Democracy**