

# Regional Seminar for a Thriving Civic Space

Crossborder cooperation event  
on Human Forum 2022

21. – 23. November 2022

Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

Reclaim  
Our Civil  
Space!

The “Reclaim Our Civil Space!” project benefits from a 1,8 million € grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Regional Cooperation.

# Regional Seminar for a Thriving Civic Space

Crossborder cooperation event is part of the human rights  
conference Human Forum 2022.

MONDAY 21.11.2022 | Cikker Hall – Historical Town Hall

13.00 – 13.30

**Human rights and democracy - the need for decisive action**

Speech by H.E. Zuzana Čaputová, President of the Slovak Republic: “Human Rights and Democracy - Key Elements of Prosperity and Stability of the Slovak Republic  
“(tbc)

13.30 – 14.30

**Human rights and democracy across Europe and the world – the level of their adherence and the challenges of the current time**

Speech by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic Rastislav Káčer: “Protection and promotion of human rights and democracy - the  
core of Slovakia's foreign policy values and our duty “

Speech by Vice-President of the European Commission Věra Jourová: “The European Union - Defence of the Rule of Law and Democratic Values at Home and  
Abroad - The Imperative of Today” (tbc)

Speech by U.S. Assistant Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, Uzra Zeya: “Summit for Democracy - Defence Against Authoritarianism,  
Fighting Corruption, and Jointly Enforcing Respect for Human Rights and Democracy “(tbc)

Moderator: Peter Burian - Ambassador with Special Mission for Human Rights of the MFaEA SR

14.30 – 15.00 coffee break

15.00 – 16.30

**I. panel discussion**

**Reinforcing the protection of human rights to uphold the general values of democracy**

The first panel will discuss the state of the international and regional human rights architecture and agenda in the light of Russia's aggression in Ukraine, which violates all basic norms of international humanitarian law. The panel will reflect on the impact of the rising global polarization of the international human rights system and the rules-based order. It will try to identify the main threats and challenges for the implementation of the human rights agenda and generate ideas and solutions to reverse this negative trend/identify the best platforms, mechanisms, and partnerships for the promotion of human rights and democracy domestically, in the EU and globally. It will address the role of free and independent media and freedom of speech for civil society and the private sector in these efforts.

Opening comments by Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights “Is the UN human rights architecture (still) working and delivering results? - the  
impact of global polarisation “(tbc)

**The Panellists:**

- Ilze Brands Kehris - UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights (tbc)
- Teresa Ribeiro - OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (tbc)
- Anna Brandt – Chairperson, The Intergovernmental Council of the IPCD, UNESCO (tbc)
- John Fischer - Director, Human Rights Watch, Geneva (tbc)
- Miriam Lexmann - Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (tbc)
- Vladimír Šucha – Representative of the European Commission in Slovakia (tbc)

Moderator: Andrej Stančík - State Secretary of the MFaEA SR

16.30 – 17.00 coffee break

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MONDAY 21.11.2022 | Cikker Hall – Historical Town Hall

17.00 – 18.30

II. panel discussion

## Practical experience and opportunities for the promotion of human rights and democracy in Slovakia

The second panel will discuss practical experiences, lessons learned and opportunities for more effective promotion of human rights, democracy, and transparency at local and regional level. How to build inclusive partnerships for human rights promotion - the role of civil society (especially women and youth), and private sector. What are the innovative tools that enable more effective policies to promote human rights and democracy at home and around the world? What is the role of education and independent media in these efforts. How to involve civil society and local communities. How to obtain more public support promoting human rights and democracy?

### Panellists:

- Mária Patakyová – former Ombudsman (2017-2022)
- Filip Vagač - Government Representative for the Development of Civic Society
- Zuzana Petková – Director of Stop Corruption Foundation
- Katarína Batková – Platform of Civic organisations for Democracy

Moderator: Pavol Demeš

18.30 – 18.45 short technical break

18.45 – 20.00

Gala evening

Speeches for the ninth annual international event  
HUMAN FORUM 2022 and the HUMAN FORUM award ceremony

Ján Nosko – mayor of Banská Bystrica  
Ján Lunter - head of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region

Brief photo presentation of HUMAN FORUM conferences from previous years  
with musical accompaniment.

Vladimír Hiadlovský – rector of Matej Bel University  
Branislav Kováčik – dean of The Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations MBU

Presentation of the Institute for Democracy at MBU and its current projects.  
Róbert Vancel, Jozef Michal Mintal

Peter Medved' – director of Ekopolis Foundation  
Maroš Chmelík – Director of Community Organization Centre

Human Forum 2022 Award Ceremony

Peter Burian - Ambassador with Special Mission for Human Rights of the MFaEA

Moderators: Csilla Droppová, Alexandra Bitušíková – Civic platform Nie v našom meste

20.00 social banquet

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TUESDAY 22.11.2022 | auditorium FPSaIR

9.30 – 11.30

III. panel discussion

## Regional collaboration on promoting human rights and democracy.

In the third panel, the deputy foreign ministers of the "Slavkov format" (Austria, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic) will discuss with the conference participants and students of the MBU about the importance of defending the values of human rights and democracy at home and in the region for prosperity, stability and security of the countries and the entire neighbourhood, with a particular focus on defence of common values in Ukraine after the Russian aggression, and helping the neighbour to rebuild and integrate into the European Union through targeted reforms with a particular emphasis on the Rule of Law, strengthening democratic institutions, fighting corruption and building a strong civil society (exchange of own best practices, experiences and lessons learned).

**Opening speech: prof. Peter Terem, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Vice-Rector, MBU: "The importance of cooperation in the regional international environment, especially in the current state of crisis"**

**Panellists: state secretaries of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic and Emine Dzhapparova - First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine**

**Closing speech by Prime Minister of SR Eduard Heger: "Slovakia in the next 30 years - the way forward: there is no viable alternative for Slovakia in terms of democracy and a strong respect for human rights as key pillars of independence, prosperity and stability"**

**Moderator: Martin Klus - former State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic**

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TUESDAY 22.11.2022 | auditorium FPSaIR

12.00 – 23.00

**Discussion in sections. Coordinated by the Institute for Democracy at MBU**

**Democracy advocates at the local level in Slovakia, Europe, and USA**  
Colloquium

The promotion of democracy and at regional, national, and international levels is based on trust in democratic institutions, but also on a culture of relationships and on the values, we live by in our communities. All these factors are currently in deep crisis, but there are people at local level who have not lost their values compass. Who are these people and what should they be doing in their communities in times of such crisis? How are they organised? Where do they look for allies and for support outside their own communities? Are there examples of communities and regions that have not strayed from democracy during crisis?

Guest speakers: Dag A. Fedøy - Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Andre Stoner - organization Faith, USA, Veronika Móra - Ökotárs Alapítvány Budapest, Beata Hirt - Community Foundation Zdravé Mesto in Banská Bystrica, Michal Kovács - European democracy youth network

Moderator: Peter Medved'  
Negotiating language English

**Existing instruments and possibilities of radicalisation prevention in Slovakia**  
Panel discussion

People in Slovakia have been long exposed to crises that divide society into camps. In addition, regional disparities in the quality of life, long-standing unsolved problems, an ossified formal education system and frustration with the political elite polarise and radicalise different age categories, giving an ideal opportunity for representatives of extremist ideologies to break through into the public space.

Does Slovakia have a clearly grasped strategy for de-radicalisation and ability for a preventive response to radicalisation in society? How can ideas at national level be translated into concrete actions at local level, and what role do NGOs play in this agenda?

Guest speakers: Adrienne Evans – United Action for Idaho, USA, Lukáš Zorád – PDCS (tbc), Maroš Chmelík – Community Organization Centre

Moderator: Tina Gažovičová  
Negotiating language English

**Freedom of the media and the safety of journalists**  
Workshop

Journalists highlighting serious misconduct by politicians, corruption scandals often reaching the highest levels of society, or investigative journalists diligently searching for facts often become inconvenient for those they expose. Is the security of these investigative journalists at a sufficient level? Are the legislative frameworks sufficient for their safety?

Guest speakers: Gabriella Sancisi – Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Lukáš Diko – Investigative Centre of Ján Kuciak (tbc)

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## Contact

Coordinators of Forum

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