

## Round Table - Populism and the future of democracy

*Chairman:*

**Paulo RANGEL MEP**, *Vice-Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, EIN Chairman*

*Guest Speaker:*

**Jaime MAYOR OREJA**, *President of "Valores y Sociedad" foundation and former Vice-Chairman of the EPP Group in the EP responsible for EIN*

*Panellists:*

**Jan OLBRYCHT MEP**, *EPP Group Vice-Coordinator - Committee on Budgets*

**Peter UCEN**, *Senior Expert*

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Today it is the loss of values and reference which causes the rise of populism and extremism in our Western societies. Regardless of the form they take in different States, the response must first tackle the current society crisis caused by the rise of nihilism and relativism.

- Populism can be defined by 4 notions:
  - ✓ Populist tell people what they want to hear, not what they should be told;
  - ✓ Manipulating people;
  - ✓ Simplification;
  - ✓ Irresponsible promises;

One should note though that not all extremists are populists and not all populists' extremists.

- The tendency to explain the expansion of populism in Europe as a "protest vote" or an anti-austerity reaction and the assumption that populism will fade away once conditions in Europe return to "normal" are erroneous.
- The growing distance between the political mainstream and the mass of the population is now being filled by Europe's populist parties.
- Anti-systemic and populist proposals derive from a moral contest between the people and the elites and because of the lack of leadership. They are expressions of the exhaustion of traditional, mainstream political parties in Europe. It is important therefore to improve the quality of the political world. Politics should be seen as a service, politicians as trustful.
- Politicians should lead people not just follow the news. Populist seem to be the only persons believing in something.
- The rising erosion of trust in governments, institutions, parties and politicians is generating a crisis of democracy.
- The rise of relatively new forms of political participation driven by developments in social media and technology in the 21st century produced a decline in party membership and growing political disengagement of European electorates.
- Democracy is the only possible political system, but it is necessary to regenerate it: we must do more to engage citizens starting within our political family, in order to reconnect with the voters.
- The expanding influence of the media in political life promoting their own agendas may also compromise democracy: The "sensationalisation" of news takes precedence over content; helps produce a less informed electorate, more susceptible to political manipulation and causes a depletion of political debates.
- Politicians should comply in explaining and giving answers. We need a culture of involvement.