



REPORT

The workshop on *Media and Digital Resilience as Safeguards of Democracy* was moderated by **Assya Kavrakova (ECAS – European Citizen Action Service)** and organised by **ECAS**, the **European Parents Association**, and **Social Economy Europe**. It brought together key experts to examine how democratic systems can adapt to an increasingly complex digital environment.

Andris Gobins (EESC) and **Hana Lubakova (independent Belarusian journalist in exile)** together highlighted how access to information is both a structural and political challenge. Gobins emphasised that there is no “silver bullet” for guaranteeing access to information. Individual EU Member States are too limited to regulate global tech platforms effectively, making EU-level action essential. However, he stressed that regulation alone is insufficient without strong political and societal commitment to quality journalism. In a digital environment driven by emotional content, citizens’ ability to make informed decisions is increasingly weakened. He also pointed to the fragile economic model of journalism and the need for sustainable alternatives. Complementing this, Lubakova provided a concrete example of what happens when access to information is systematically restricted. In Belarus, independent media are suppressed while state-controlled narratives dominate, creating a highly curated information space. She introduced the concept of *digital marginalisation*, where not only dissent but also language, such as Belarusian, is sidelined in favour of dominant narratives. Algorithms can further reinforce this imbalance.

Together, their contributions illustrated a continuum: from structural challenges within democracies to extreme cases of information control in authoritarian contexts. In both cases, access to plural, reliable information emerges as a fundamental condition for democratic life.

Petko Georgiev (ProInfo) described today’s environment as an “information war,” where disinformation actors are proactive and technologically advanced, while democracies remain reactive. Fact-checking alone is insufficient, as false narratives often shape public perception before they can be corrected. He argued that EU regulation is necessary but largely defensive, especially given Europe’s dependence on non-European platforms. Democracies must adopt more proactive strategies, including creating compelling, emotionally engaging content. As he noted, “being right is not the same as being convincing.” Drawing on the *MediaResilience*

project, Georgiev highlighted innovative models from independent media such as Atlatzo and Partizan. He called for the development of independent democratic infrastructures and warned that rapid AI developments make adaptation urgent.

Arja Krauchenberg (European Parents' Association) focused on building resilience from an early age. She stressed that media literacy begins within families, where parents act as role models. Children develop resilience through guided exposure and clear boundaries. She addressed risks such as cyberbullying, digital addiction, and AI-driven content, alongside physical impacts like reduced eyesight. Initiatives such as the Hermes curriculum and CodeWeek.eu were presented as practical tools. Her key message was that resilience depends on prevention, education, and cooperation between families and schools.

Sylvain Le Bon (Startin'Blox) highlighted structural challenges in digital democracy. While many participation tools exist, they often remain fragmented and disconnected from decision-making processes. He emphasised the importance of civil society organisations as intermediaries and introduced the concept of *data spaces for democracy*. Through the Startin'Blox initiative, interoperable systems can connect citizen input with policymaking in a transparent and coherent way. Examples such as the Bordeaux region illustrated how such infrastructure can function in practice. His core message: democracy must be intentionally embedded into digital systems.

Nicolò Triacca (ECAS) addressed digital inclusion, emphasising that access alone is not enough, skills are essential. He noted that only slightly more than half of EU citizens possess basic digital skills, with persistent gender gaps in ICT. Presenting the **IDEU project**, he showed how participatory processes across six countries identified key priorities, particularly education and lifelong learning. Through problem mapping, idea selection, and policy formulation, citizens contributed directly to recommendations. Triacca stressed that without digital skills, individuals are excluded from democratic participation. At the same time, digital systems must become more accessible and user-friendly. He also highlighted the link between digital and green transitions, advocating for a more inclusive and sustainable approach.

Across all contributions, a shared understanding emerged:

- Democracy is under pressure in a rapidly evolving information environment.
- **Regulation is necessary but insufficient** without innovation and narrative strategies.
- **Disinformation operates proactively**, while democracies must become more strategic.
- **Education and digital skills**, as highlighted by the IDEU project, are foundational for long-term resilience.
- **Platforms and algorithms shape reality**, creating structural dependencies that Europe must address.
- **Democratic infrastructure**, including data spaces and independent media systems, must be strengthened.

The workshop demonstrated that safeguarding democracy in the digital age requires a holistic approach that combines regulation, education, infrastructure, and active societal engagement.

