



Bridging Gaps Conference is a joint initiative of students of the Hertie School of Governance, Berlin and Willy Brandt School of Public Policy, Erfurt that brings together students across Germany to discuss and deliberate on public policy issues and themes relevant in the 21st century.

The first edition of Bridging Gaps was held at Willy Brandt School of Public Policy, University of Erfurt in November 2015 under the theme of "Migration and Integration Policy in Germany - Policy Challenges and Opportunities" and attracted over 60 participants. The second edition, with over 70 participants, took place at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin in November 2016 under the theme of "Data Security in Germany- Policy Challenges and Opportunities."

This year's edition of the conference is being held from 10-11th November 2017 at KIZ-Gebäude, University of Erfurt under the theme of "Threats to Liberal Democracies". It is graciously funded by Leibniz funded Research Network 'External Democracy Promotion' (EDP), Friends and Fellows Program of the Hertie Stiftung, Hertie Student Association (HSA) and the High Representative Student Council of the University of Erfurt (StuRa).





Threats to Liberal Democracies

By the end of the 20th century, Europe reached a level of relative stability after decades of conflict and division. A key element that sustained this political stability was the spread and strengthening of liberal democracy across the continent. Representative governments, separation of powers, multi-party systems, free and open elections and equal protection of civil rights, human rights, and political freedoms are just a few of the components that defined and maintained these liberal democracies.

Recently, however, Europe has seen growing threats to its liberal democratic character. The rise of populism and anti-establishment leaders, increased threats of terrorism, heightened sophistication of online radicalization, and the proliferation of fake news through social media jeopardize these political structures across the continent.

Bridging Gaps 2017 aims to confront each of these threats head on. Future policy makers can exchange ideas among like-minded peers.

Current governments have struggled to adequately respond to disillusioned constituents that have identified with alternative political streams. Only with a thorough understanding of the various elements threatening to erode Europe's liberal democratic character can we hope to adequately develop policy to combat these forces.



Conference Agenda

Friday, 10 November – Saturday, 11 November 2017

KIZ Building, Campus, University of Erfurt

Friday, November 10, 2017		
16:30 – 17:45	Arrival and Registrations	
17:45 – 18:00	Welcome Note & Ceremonial Opening	Prof. Dr. Heike Grimm Director, Willy Brandt School of Public Policy
18:00 – 18:30	Keynote Speech	Mr. Simon Vaut Political Advisor and Speech Writer, Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt)
18:30 – 20:00	Reception	
20:00	Dinner & Social Activities (Optional)	At own expense

Saturday, November 11, 2017		
9:00 – 10:15	Arrival and Registration	Coffee & Tea
10:15 – 10:30	Opening Address	Bridging Gaps Team
10:30-12:00	Panel Discussion and Q&A	Challengers of Liberal Democracy: Anti-Democratic Movements and Populism <i>Dr. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Hertie School of Governance</i> <i>Mr. Tyson Barker, Aspen Institute</i> <i>Dr. Hasnain Bokhari, Willy Brandt School of Public Policy</i>
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch Break	Hörsaal 7
13:00 – 15:00	Workshop Round 1	Parallel Sessions
15:00 – 15:30	Break	Coffee & Tea
15:30 – 17:30	Workshop Round 2	Parallel Sessions
17:30-17:45	Closing Remarks	Bridging Gaps Team
17:45	Dinner & Social Activities (Optional)	At own expense

Workshop Sessions
Saturday, November 11, 2017

Workshop # 1	
TTIP, Economic Populism and Threats to the Liberal World Economic Order	
Speaker	<i>Dr. Matthias Bauer</i> Senior Economist European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE)
Description	In this workshop, we want to step behind the rhetorical fog created by anti-globalisation and anti-free trade headlines. The presentation will introduce key principles of classical liberalism in the light of the concept of robust political economy, major characteristics of anti-TTIP campaign activities in Germany and the EU and prospects for a liberal world economic order. The presentation will be followed by an open discussion among the workshop's participants.
Workshop # 2	
State Capture and Democratic Backsliding	
Speaker	<i>Dr. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi</i> Chair of European Research Centre for Anticorruption and State-Building (ERCAS) and Professor of Democracy Studies Hertie School of Governance
Description	After the euphoria of democratic transformations at the end of last century, the new one brings increasingly more challenges to new democracies, while the positive evolution of autocracies seems to have stopped. One of the most concerning features is the state capture of new democracies by a new generation of strongmen, from Turkey's Erdogan to Venezuela's Maduro. While democratically elected, they advance through a mixed strategy of constitutional manipulation, abuse of majority rule and a rhetoric drawing on nationalism and existential fears. The end result, however, is the shrinking of freedom of expression, the repression of dissent and civil society more generally and the growth of illiberal democracy around the world. The questions that we will address are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do the new strongmen manipulate economic resources to advance capture? - Why does the judicial power not resist this infringement of the executives and what can be done to reinforce it? - Why do democratic constituencies seem so weak, so partisan and so willing to tolerate democratic infringements to defend themselves against what they perceive as threats to their identity and well being? What do people understand by democratic values these days? - What can the international community do more or better to defend democracy, from Hungary to Egypt?

Workshop # 3	
No Hate Speech Movement- Culture Goes Europe	
Speaker	<i>Mr. Zafar Saydaliev</i> Managing Director Culture Goes Europe
Description	Mr. Saydaliev will deliver a two-part workshop on the No Hate Speech movement and projects in the field of anti-discrimination and xenophobia which are being implemented and planned in his organization Culture Goes Europe (CGE). The workshop session will discuss the impact of non-profit organizations on society and countering the populist movements, with several examples of CGE as an NGO in Erfurt/Germany working in this field.
Workshop # 4	
Gap. Which Gap? —Bridging the Knowledge Gap about Economic Inequality	
Speaker	<i>Ms. Licia Bobzien and Mr. Lucas Jerg</i> PhD Candidates Hertie School of Governance
Description	<p>The debate on income or wealth inequality within and across societies gained ever greater importance over the last few years—mainly driven by rising income differences within most OECD countries. In the public, the discussion about inequality is narrowed down to pecuniary differences. The broader discussion on which forms of inequalities cumulate (dis)advantages and shape societies is oftentimes neglected.</p> <p>To widen the discussion on inequality, this workshop will give a brief overview of research on (i) income and wealth inequality, (ii) perceptual aspects of inequality, and (iii) forms of inequality beyond income, i.e. labour market status or life satisfaction.</p> <p>After discussing approaches to measure these different kinds of inequality, we will try to link the aforementioned dimensions of inequality. Afterwards, we will jointly discuss and (normatively) assess policy proposals addressing issues and consequences of inequality</p>