



Mr President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my capacity as Speaker of the Parliament of Liechtenstein I'd like to thank the hosts from Madrid for the organization of this important meeting. Liechtenstein is a democracy with widely developed direct-democratic means. At present we have to note that numerous currents in the development of democracy are hitting us with increasing speed. This is why I'd like to share with you our perspective on the current developments within our otherwise very stable society.

Not so long ago, it was quite easy to maintain an overview of the media landscape. The weight of opinions reflected was also relatively clear: It was roughly in line with the most important currents in society. This also meant that readers, viewers, and listeners were likewise proportional to this weight. The distribution of content involved costs. This made it difficult for new ideas, or views situated far from the mainstream, to gain relevance.

Not even the internet as such changed this distribution of power. The current situation did only arise when social media and messenger services became widespread. Today, we are facing a fact: It has never been easier for a thought or an idea, to be heard or to exert influence.

The distribution of information has become free of costs. "Content is king" has become a catchphrase. But the power of this content is driven less by its quality, truth, or scientific validity, but to a large extent by its entertainment value. We have begun to rely on terms like "edutainment" and "infotainment" to describe a wide range of new communication formats. And it is precisely here that the new players have caught the institutions of democracy off guard.

Politics has developed a different language. Populists understood how to incorporate current trends into rhetoric that goes down easily and releases emotions. They have often been able to do this with more success than would be in the interest of a sustainably functioning state.

The quickest way to gain followers is through oversimplified communication. And here again, the winners are those whose messages tend to appeal to the gut rather than the head.

Please don't misunderstand me: In a democracy, we want everyone to be heard. It's everyone's right to seek supporters for their views. And so I'm not trying to fix the problem by imposing restrictions on anyone whose success is rooted in simple language combined with simple solutions. At least not as long as they adhere to what the vast majority of us consider to be lawful and decent. Instead, I would call for us politicians – who try to convey more balanced positions – to communicate with a new sense of clarity, even more in these difficult times.

I'm convinced that somewhere between our accustomed diplomatic formulations and populism, there is space for a language that maintains high standards and can be understood significantly more widely. Because we are used to being held accountable for our decisions, our solutions will probably never be as simple as those of political infotainers. But with clear messages focusing on actual benefits, we can massively improve public understanding of solutions. If all information in a democracy is presented in an understandable and accessible way, people will make good decisions.

Let us work on this. I thank you.

Albert Frick, Speaker of Parliament of the Landtag of Liechtenstein

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