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# : Elections in the Social Media Age. Free and fair – or a manipulation free-for-all?

## Public Evening Event

**Frauenkirche Dresden**

19 March 2019, 19:00 hrs

**As a part of the Dresden Forum for International Politics 2019**

**Participation or Polarisation?**

**Social media and societal peace**

**Conference languages**

German/English (simultaneous translation)

This event is co-financed by tax money based on the budget agreed upon by the members of the Saxon State Parliament.



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## THE TOPIC

Free and fair elections are a constitutive element of any modern democracy. But what does “free and fair” mean in the social media age? Social networks are changing the way we communicate, facilitating new forms of dialogue and political participation. However, they also offer a largely unprotected platform via which to exert influence, internally and externally, on elections. As a result, the boundaries between freedom of expression and excessive influencing of voter opinion are becoming more fluid. It takes just a few seconds to spread deliberate misinformation and half-truths—and this often happens anonymously, making fair and open discussion and analysis impossible.

What risks might this pose to democracies and peace within and between societies? How should state and society respond? What can we do to protect ourselves from manipulation while continuing to utilise the positive benefits of social media for political communication and information-sharing? And what might an ethically responsible social media strategy look like?

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## PROGRAMME

19.00 HRS      MUSICAL PRELUDE

19.10 HRS      WELCOME

**Reverend Sebastian Feydt**

Chair of the Managing Board, Frauenkirche Foundation, Dresden

**Dr Maria Flachsbarth**

Parliamentary State Secretary

Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation, Bonn

Member of the Board of Trustees of the

Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

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19.20 HRS      OPENING ADDRESS

**Michael Kretschmer**

Minister-President of the Free State of Saxony, Dresden

Deputy Chair of the Board of Trustees of the

Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

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19.30 HRS

KEYNOTE

**Laura Chinchilla**

Chair of the Kofi Annan Commission on  
Elections and Democracy in the Digital Age  
Vice-President of the Club of Madrid and  
Former President of Costa Rica

19.50 HRS

PANEL DISCUSSION

**Laura Chinchilla**

**Renate Nikolay**

Head of the Cabinet of Commissioner Vera Jourová  
European Commission, Brussels

**Nanjala Nyabola**

Writer and political analyst, Nairobi

20.45 HRS

MUSICAL FAREWELL

*Organist: **Samuel Kummer***