

AI PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS · 2026

From AI Awareness to Adaptive Politics

Concept Note & Programme Plan

Five private sessions · 90 minutes each

Athens, Greece

Held alongside the Athens Democracy Forum

29 September — 1 October 2026

Concept Note

Why this Caucus, this year

The 2026 Athens Democracy Forum will ask a deliberately uncomfortable question: why democracy, and how must it evolve to be fit for purpose in the 21st century? The Forum's premise is that democratic institutions were built for a different era — rigid where agility is needed, reactive where anticipation is required, and designed for slow deliberation in a world defined by exponential shocks. The challenge is no longer simply to defend democratic norms but to design democratic systems capable of learning, adapting, and delivering.

Few institutions sit closer to that challenge than parliaments. They are simultaneously the slowest part of democratic systems and the part voters hold most accountable for delivery. AI is now both a stress-test and an opportunity: it exposes where parliaments lag, and offers — if used well — a credible path to faster, better-evidenced, more responsive law-making.

Building on 2025

Last year's Caucus established the foundations: Leadership Through Complexity opened the conversation, Trust in the Age of AI surfaced the risks, and the closing workshop moved MPs from strategy to action — producing a legislative-intelligence companion designed by parliamentarians for parliamentarians.

The 2026 Caucus deepens that work. The frame shifts from "what is AI doing to politics?" to "how MPs and their institutions can use AI well?" The emphasis is on competencies, tools, and institutional change — the practical building blocks of an adaptive politician.

Three design principles

- **Trust.** Sessions are private and Chatham House by default. MPs speak candidly; partners hold the floor.
- **Practice.** Politicians bring their laptops with them and roll up their sleeves. Every session ends with something MPs can take home — a framework, a tool, a set of questions, or a commitment.
- **Continuity.** The Caucus continues, not concludes, the work. Outputs feed into 2027 planning and the partners' ongoing programme.

Who this is for

Sitting politicians and senior staff from across regions, with a mix of returnees from previous Caucuses and new participants. Group size is intentionally kept under 25 to protect the workshop format.

What participants leave with

- A personal leadership framework for governing under speed and complexity ([Switches and Dials](#) + the [Elbow Grease Framework](#)).
- Hands-on experience designing and stress-testing an AI agent for parliamentary work (including constituent services).

- A practical AI toolkit — Custom GPTs, Deep Research workflows, and a Generative AI Use Policy template they can adapt for their office.
- Working knowledge of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy [Guidelines for AI in Parliaments](#) and a roadmap for implementation in their own institution.
- A peer network of MPs grappling with the same questions, and a connection into the wider Athens Democracy Forum community.

Programme at a Glance

This year's Caucus moves MPs from awareness to capability. Where 2025 mapped the AI-and-politics landscape, 2026 equips MPs with the leadership behaviours, practical tools, and institutional frameworks they need to make their parliaments — and their own offices — AI-ready. Five sessions build on each other: a leadership frame for governing under speed and complexity; a grounded look at what an LLM actually is and what a parliamentary-ready one should look like; a working session that takes each MP from "I should figure this out" to a drafted AI policy for their office; hands-on practice using AI in the MP's daily work; and a structured engagement with the WFD Guidelines for AI in Parliaments. The whole sits inside the wider Athens Democracy Forum question — how does democracy stay fit for purpose when the technology around it is moving this fast?

The emphasis is interactive. Most of the time is spent doing, not listening. MPs work in pairs and small groups across every session and leave with artefacts they can actually use — a personal switches-and-dials leadership map, a draft brief for a parliament-ready LLM, a draft Generative AI Use Policy ready to roll out in their office, a working office AI toolkit, and a mapped roadmap for institutional adoption that feeds into the Caucus's continuing work between Athens 2026 and Athens 2027.

Session 1 — Leadership Competencies in the AI Era: Switches, Dials & the Elbow Grease Gap

Lead: Lisa Witter, Better Politics Foundation

Building on last year's *Leadership Through Complexity*, this session gives MPs a working framework for the leadership behaviours that hold under AI-driven speed — and then forces the question most leadership sessions skip: *how will you actually change?* Switches & Dials names the competencies: the non-negotiable switches that should always be on, like integrity and accountability, and the context-dependent dials that need constant tuning — feedback loops, slowing under pressure, scenario planning, communicating uncertainty, protecting bandwidth. The Elbow Grease Gap, drawn from Lisa Witter's recent work, explains why knowing your dials are stuck doesn't unstick them. Leaders spend roughly 80 per cent of their time on diagnosis and vision, and almost none on delivery. Our brains register naming the problem as solving it and reward strategic thinking while dismissing the operational work where change actually happens.

The two frameworks need each other. Switches & Dials without the Gap produces self-awareness and good intentions — the very trap the Gap diagnoses. The Gap without Switches & Dials delivers operational rigour with nothing to operationalise. Together, they close the loop: MPs identify the dial to retune, then build a concrete delivery commitment — who does what, with what authority, by when, and how they'll know. Each MP leaves with one switch to protect and one dial to move, specified concretely enough to report back on. The democratic stakes run throughout: when MPs lead well under speed, citizens get more responsive, more legitimate politics. When they don't, AI amplifies the gap between institutions and the people they serve.

Session 2 — The AI Factory: What does it take to create an LLM?

Lead: AI factory Athens, with hands-on LLM facilitation

Two-part working session that demystifies the engine room. First, a clear rundown of what an LLM actually is, what it takes to operate one in your country and your language — compute, data, infrastructure, cost, and who controls what — and what the realistic alternatives are: closed commercial models, open-weight models, smaller locally-hosted models, and sovereign or regional options. Second, MPs work in small groups to specify what an LLM ready for parliamentary use should look like: which capabilities are essential, which languages and corpora it needs to be grounded in, where data must reside, what guardrails are non-negotiable, who governs it, and who pays. The session closes with a draft "parliamentary LLM brief" each MP can take to their own institution.

Session 3 — Implementing the WFD Guidelines for AI in Parliaments

Lead: Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)

WFD presents the Guidelines for AI in Parliaments — 40 proposals across six sectors developed with more than twenty experts. MPs then work in regional pairs to map their own parliament against the framework: what exists, what is already in motion, what is missing. The session closes with each MP naming two or three concrete entry points they will champion in the next twelve months, and identifying a peer to call when implementation hits the inevitable obstacles. The closing frame: parliaments are the slowest part of democratic systems and the part voters hold most accountable for delivery — getting AI right inside them is, in the end, a democratic question.

Session 4 — From "I Should Figure This Out" to an AI-Ready Office

Lead: POPVOX Foundation

The most practical session of the Caucus, and the one most MPs say they need first. Each MP walks in with the vague sense that their office should have a position on AI, and walks out with a working draft of one. Using POPVOX's Generative AI Use Policy template, MPs draft a policy tailored to their own office: which tools are approved, what data goes in and stays out, who can use what for what, how staff are trained, and how mistakes are handled. We then take the first concrete setup step —

building a Custom GPT for the office, grounded in their own documents so it works for them on day one. Pair work, peer review, and a closing round where each MP commits to a rollout date.

Session 5 — AI in the MP's Daily Work

Lead: Team

The follow-on. With a policy in place and a working office GPT in hand, MPs turn to the work itself — how AI tools change, and can sharpen, the daily craft of being an MP. Hands-on practice with Deep Research for oversight preparation and policy position development, and with POPVOX's prompt library for mastering a new policy topic, drafting bill summaries, and finding legislative models from comparable parliaments. MPs bring a real, upcoming task into the room — a hearing, a constituent letter, a position they need to develop — and leave with that work substantively advanced and a workflow they can repeat.