



Agenda Setting Workshop (WP7)

Event Summary

On June 18th 2025, We-ID held its first closed online expert meeting to initiate its research and policy dialogue activities. This high-level Agenda Setting Workshop brought together experts from academia, civil society, and policymaking to discuss key developments related to migration, identity, social cohesion, and democratic resilience in Europe. The aim of this format was to achieve a discussion of the thematic framework of the future stakeholder dialogue and support the research process with actual needs and approaches of the professionals (policymakers, civil society experts and workers, researchers and administrations). Indeed, the insights generated during this event will help align We-ID's research and stakeholder engagement with the most pressing current debates and emerging needs across Europe.

To support a dynamic and focused exchange, participants received two guiding questions in advance:

- Which current social, political, or economic developments do you consider most relevant for shaping migration, integration, and the sense of belonging in Europe?
- What do you see as the main challenges to democratic resilience in Europe today—particularly in light of rising disruptive populist politics and increasing global competition for skilled workers?

The meeting opened with a welcome by Principal Investigator Claudia Neu (University of Goettingen, Germany), followed by a short introduction to the We-ID project. Participants then joined two successive breakout sessions to discuss the guiding questions in small groups of 3–4, each moderated by a We-ID project partner. The workshop concluded with a plenary session where participants shared key takeaways from the breakout discussions.

The event welcomed a diverse group of contributors, including representatives from We-ID sister projects, previous and ongoing Horizon projects, and our policy officer, Alberto Domini. Their input reinforced We-ID's commitment to bridging research, policy, and civil society through inclusive and forward-looking dialogue. The contributions will directly inform the project's research, outreach, and policy agenda over the next three years.



Funded by
the European Union

Prior to the workshop, We-ID's first Stakeholder Advisory Board meeting took place, bringing together members from civil society, policy, and business sectors. Following a presentation of the project by the PI, board members offered their first impressions, raised key questions, and contributed actively to the Agenda Setting Workshop discussions. Their ongoing guidance will be essential for ensuring that We-ID's work remains relevant and impactful.

Main topics discussed and thematic priorities of the participants:

1. *Local Cultures & Regional Identities*

- Local cultural and regional contexts heavily influence perceptions of migration.
- Tension between local, national, and EU-level migration policy frameworks can complicate their work on the ground.

2. *Conflict, Security & Migration*

- Ongoing wars and the perception of migration as “weaponized” shape public opinion.
- Current conflicts (e.g. Ukraine, Middle East) polarize both host and migrant communities.
- Historical memory and the explanations for wars in neighboring countries, in border regions or among different ethnic groups do not always coincide.

3. *Disinformation, Narratives & Perceptions*

- Media (and especially social media) plays a major role in spreading disinformation.
- Binary, black-and-white thinking and conspiracy narratives need urgent attention.
- Narratives play a crucial role in shaping public perception and policy on migration. Anti-immigration narratives are often based on fears of the “foreigner” (“you don’t know who’s coming”), exaggerations, misinformation and simplifications.
- Populist frame: migration as a threat.

4. *Fairness, Justice & Trust in Institutions*

- Unequal treatment of migrants by country of origin or skill level creates perceived injustices.
- Erosion of trust in political institutions, especially among younger people.
- Constant political changes create uncertainty and reduce trust in institutions.

5. *Democratic Participation & Workplaces*

- Migrants' limited access to democratic participation seen as both a cause and effect of exclusion.
- Workplaces can be sites for learning democracy (“democracy begins on the shop floor”).
- This is made more difficult by the cutting of funding for language courses, for example.

6. *Labor Market Competition & Bureaucratic Barriers*

- Host countries often fail to attract/retain skilled migrants due to unaligned policies and red tape.
- It is not uncommon for states/municipalities to assume “ideal migrants” who integrate spontaneously and willingly into their workplace and place of residence.
- National interests often block EU-level coordination on migration policy.

7. *Rural vs. Urban Contexts*

- Urban–rural divide and intra-urban segregation are key spatial aspects.
- Rural areas feel “left behind” and are more vulnerable to disruptive politics.



8. Cultural & Creative Sectors

- Culture and creative industries are key tools for social cohesion and inclusive narratives.
- Lack of a broader integrative narrative on belonging and solidarity is a major gap.

9. Youth & Populism

- Youth, traditionally seen as more open, are increasingly influenced by populist narratives.
- Need to understand the shifting attitudes and agency of young people in democratic life.

Possible policy and advocacy areas for the future:

- Empowerment via Employment: Use workplaces as platforms for democratic education and migrant inclusion.
- Narrative Building: Develop inclusive, pan-European narratives of belonging, beyond integration checklists.
- Media Strategy: Invest in preemptive counter-narratives, especially via social and local media.
- Bottom-up Participation: Shift from top-down policies to inclusive, participatory approaches.
- Target Rural Areas: Strengthen integrative efforts in depopulated or politically neglected regions.
- Gender-sensitive Integration: Address the specific experiences of migrant women in labor, housing, and civic life.
- Coordinate EU Competencies: Enhance cooperation between EU and national levels to streamline migration governance.

Emerging Thematic Agendas for WE-ID:

1. Integration Through Belonging
Not just policies but narratives: How do different communities (migrants and hosts) experience and express belonging? Could we strengthen a EU-Identity?
2. The Role of Workplaces in Democracy
Workspaces as arenas for civic engagement, identity formation, and rights education.
3. Disinformation & Democratic Resilience
Defensive democracy is in a dilemma. Research and counteract the influence of disinformation, especially in vulnerable regions.
4. Local Context Matters
Policies need to adapt to specific urban, suburban, and rural realities — one-size-fits-all won't work.
5. Younger Generations & New Exclusions
Understand the changing attitudes of youth toward migration, populism, and democracy.
6. Country-of-Origin Influence
Explore how home countries influence migrants' identity and political engagement in host societies.

