



# PRIORITY AREAS FOR A GREENER, INCLUSIVE AND MORE RESILIENT EUROPE:

A REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF WORKSHOPS WITH THE  
PARTICIPATION OF POLISH STAKEHOLDERS

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# CONTEXT

Europe is currently experiencing profound social transformations driven by macro forces such as the green and digital transitions, demographic changes, and geopolitical events affecting European societies. If these structural challenges are not addressed effectively, we risk widening existing inequalities, creating new digital divides, undermining public trust in scientific and policy solutions, and potentially destabilizing democratic institutions.

To tackle these complex issues, it is essential to foster interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers and policymakers. Additionally, there is a pressing need to generate evidence-based knowledge and innovative solutions that prioritize fairness and inclusiveness, emphasizing resilience as the capacity of individuals and institutions to adapt constructively to change.

Social sciences, arts, and humanities, which offer critical insights into human behavior, cultural, social, political and economic dynamics, and ethical considerations, are key for crafting policies that are not only effective but also equitable, socially acceptable, culturally sensitive and inclusive, thereby enhancing public trust and engagement.

The Polish National Science Centre (NCN) and the Research Council of Norway (RCN) have developed a dedicated joint project *Science & Society: bilateral initiative in social sciences, arts and humanities* under the Fund for Bilateral Relations within the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 to tighten cooperation between scientists and the non-academic sector, allow knowledge to be transferred and used in decision-making processes, and strengthen the capacity for civic engagement. Several activities aiming at strengthening cooperation and exchanging experiences and best practices between the National Science Centre and the Research Council of Norway have been identified.

# INTRODUCTION

Mapping the potential for Polish-Norwegian cooperation in the thematic priorities for the EEA and Norway Grants 2021-2028 has been one of the areas of cooperation identified within the *Science and Society Initiative* by NCN and RCN. Three key thematic priorities for the EEA and Norway Grants 2021-2028 are: **(a) European green transition; (b) Democracy, rule of law, and human rights; (c) Social inclusion and resilience.**

The priorities align with the strategic objectives outlined in the Social Transformations and Resilience Partnership under the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027. This partnership aims to create a transformative research and innovation (R&I) program between social sciences and humanities to build resilience, ensure fairness and inclusiveness, and foster social cohesion amidst changes in climate, technology, demography, and unexpected shocks. The preparation of the partnership is being coordinated by the EC DG Employment.

Representatives of both initiatives decided to joint effort to ensure information exchange between the partnership and EEA & Norway Grants and create synergies between the activities of the European Commission and the Grants. A workshop with the aim of bringing together researchers, policymakers and other non-academic stakeholders was planned to collaboratively explore critical issues, priorities and gaps in knowledge across three thematic areas.

# ***WORKSHOP CONNECTING RESEARCH AND POLICY FOR A GREENER, INCLUSIVE AND MORE RESILIENT EUROPE***

The workshop *Connecting research and policy for a greener, inclusive and more resilient Europe* took place in **Warsaw on 1 April 2025** at the Institute of Fundamental Technological Research, Polish Academy of Sciences involving researchers from 15 research performing organizations and other stakeholders from 8 non-governmental organizations, 1 private company, 5 sectoral ministries and 3 research funding agencies.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP**

1. **Identify strong research lines:** The workshop will aim to pinpoint robust lines of research and highlight promising areas of inquiry that can effectively contribute to the thematic areas of green transition, democracy, rule of law and human rights, as well as social inclusion and resilience.
2. **Address research gaps:** A key objective will be to identify critical gaps in current research that need to be addressed to support effective policymaking. By highlighting these gaps, the workshop aims to lay the groundwork for future research initiatives that are both relevant and impactful.
3. **Foster interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration:** The workshop will promote interdisciplinary dialogue among researchers from social sciences and humanities, and other stakeholders including policymakers, social partners, civil society, industry and business experts.

## **KEY THEMES FOR DISCUSSION**

Participants were divided into three parallel subgroups and engage respectively in discussions around three critical themes:

1. **The European green transition:** Understanding how to ensure equitable outcomes in the context of climate policies and their social impacts.

**Moderator and author of the report: Maksymilian Bielecki, SWPS University**

The green transition, one of the thematic priorities identified by the EEA and Norway Grants and STR, is critical as it necessitates major adjustments to employment, lifestyle, attitudes and cultural

practices. This transition calls for innovative research and policy frameworks to mitigate the climate change and ensure that adaptation policies are fair and inclusive of all sectors, regions, and demographics. It also requires active citizen participation, fostering common ethical values and building trust in the legitimacy of democratic institutions and scientific expertise. Developing skills, including STEM literacy and soft-skills through life-long learning is paramount for fostering “sustainability natives” and adapting to evolving labour markets.

2. **Democracy, rule of law and human rights:** Exploring the relationship between social transformations and the strengthening of democratic institutions, human rights and rule of law.

**Moderator and author of the report: Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk, Institute of Fundamental Technological Research, Polish Academy of Sciences**

Advancing social cohesion and trust in political institutions are crucial for upholding democracy, rule of law, and human rights. This objective encompasses enhancing citizen participation, improving transparency, and ensuring that governance mechanisms are inclusive and equitable. Research on the potential of social policies to reduce inequalities is essential. Fostering transversal skills, such as critical and systems thinking is vital in the face of information overload and the spread of misinformation and disinformation both online and offline.

3. **Social inclusion and resilience:** Examining strategies to foster resilience among individuals and institutions in the face of social transformations.

**Moderator and author of the report: Agnieszka Chrzęszcz, AGH University**

The focus on social inclusion and resilience emphasizes the need for robust social protection systems and essential services. This involves rethinking policies to support disadvantaged groups, ensuring income security, and promoting lifelong learning and skill development to adapt to demographic shifts and technological advancements. Evidence based policies that enhance resilience and reduce inequalities are crucial not only for social inclusion, but also for the European green transition and the maintenance of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The workshop has served as a platform for:

1. Drawing on insights from various research disciplines and knowledge and experience from non-academic stakeholders to identify priorities in current research.
2. Formulating collaborative strategies to bridge identified gaps in knowledge.
3. Establishing a network among researchers and other stakeholders.

# **PRIORITY AREA 1**

# **THE EUROPEAN GREEN TRANSITION**

## SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP COURSE

The workshop brought together researchers, policymakers, business representatives, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Industry officials, and NCN representatives to explore critical issues in green transformation. Following an introductory session and icebreaker activities, participants identified future visions which were subsequently clustered into three main domains: political-technological level, social level, and individual level. Using the Journey of Progress methodology, participants were divided into three groups, each focusing on one domain. After the break, each group developed detailed pathways for their assigned area, creating comprehensive maps of vision elements, necessary changes, and specific actions required for implementation. The workshop utilized a structured approach where participants first individually outlined their ideas on cards and then collaboratively arranged these into coherent pathways. This process enabled the identification of key challenges and potential solutions across all levels of green transformation. The final session involved presenting group findings to all participants and synthesizing overarching conclusions about research priorities and policy implications.

## CONCLUSIONS FROM THE WORKSHOP

The workshop revealed that effective green transformation requires coordinated action across political, social, and individual levels. Key findings include:

- 1) the need for integrated climate, energy, social, and economic policies based on scientific research and resilient to changing political conditions,
- 2) importance of empowered local communities as agents of change,
- 3) necessity of transforming individual consciousness through holistic education,
- 4) critical role of transdisciplinary approaches and better facilitation of knowledge transfer from basic research and stronger collaboration with NGOs,
- 5) opening up research in the area of green transformation to ensure broader societal impact and acceptance.

## IDENTIFIED RESEARCH PRIORITIES

### I. Political Level: Creating Long-term Climate Policies That Withstand Political Changes

The political dimension of green transformation presents a significant challenge: developing climate policies that remain consistent and effective despite changes in government or political leadership. Environmental policies often fluctuate with political shifts, undermining long-term progress and creating uncertainty for businesses, communities, and other stakeholders invested in sustainable development.

#### VISION

##### **Administrative-Political Vision:**

A governance system where pro-climate policies are consistently implemented by successive governments regardless of political orientation, emphasizing meritocratic approaches that prioritize expertise over political affiliation and establishing climate policy as a fundamental state responsibility that transcends electoral cycles.

##### **Social Norms Vision:**

A society with uniform expectations regarding pro-climate policy across the political spectrum, where climate issues are removed from partisan politics, creating common ground for action based on shared values rather than political identity.

##### **Economic Vision:**

A sustainable low-emission economy supported by long-term transformation strategies spanning at least a ten-year perspective, providing stable financial foundations and regulatory certainty for green economic development that remains consistent regardless of political changes.

#### CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY

##### Social Norms Changes:

##### **Transformation of Social Awareness**

Creating a shared understanding of climate benefits that transcends political divides by

emphasizing universal concerns like health impacts on vulnerable populations and protection of valued local ecosystems, thereby removing climate action from partisan debate and establishing it as a common societal goal.

##### **Changing Media Perception**

Developing consistent messaging about climate benefits across media outlets regardless of political orientation to counteract the current fragmentation that reinforces political divides on climate issues and normalize environmental action across the ideological spectrum.

##### Administrative-Political Changes:

##### **Legal and Institutional Frameworks**

Integrating mechanisms into Poland's legal system that establish continuity of climate policies, including permanent monitoring systems and consolidated legislation, creating structural safeguards that make climate commitments resistant to political cycles and provide stable frameworks for long-term planning.

##### **Infrastructure Transformation**

Advancing public transportation systems and limiting emissions in urban areas to create physical infrastructure changes that generate momentum for supportive policies, making reversal difficult regardless of political shifts while delivering tangible quality-of-life improvements.

### **Economic Changes:**

#### **Financial and Market Mechanisms**

Developing comprehensive programs encouraging investment in low-emission technologies through financial incentives, restructured taxation, and circular economy promotion, creating economic dynamics that favor green transition regardless of political rhetoric and ensuring long-term market signals that transcend electoral terms.

### **ACTIONS (WHAT)**

#### **Educational and Awareness Actions:**

Targeted information campaigns demonstrating climate benefits for different demographic groups, with educational materials emphasizing health impacts and community forums for discussing local environmental priorities,

designed to build broad-based support that crosses political divides.

#### **Legal and Regulatory Actions:**

Consolidation of climate legislation into coherent packages with cross-party input, simplification of green investment procedures, and establishment of legally binding climate targets with independent monitoring mechanisms, creating frameworks that institutionalize climate action beyond political cycles.

#### **Specific Initiatives:**

Implementation of comprehensive programs including heating system modernization, accessible public transportation, ecological incentive systems, and advantageous tax structures for green investments, demonstrating concrete benefits that generate public support while creating institutional path dependencies that favor policy continuity.

## 2. Social Level: Building Engaged and Empowered Civil Society

The social dimension of green transformation presents a fundamental challenge: building an engaged and empowered civil society that actively participates in environmental change processes. This challenge recognizes that top-down approaches alone are insufficient; effective and sustainable transformation requires grassroots involvement, local ownership, and institutional frameworks that enable community action.

### VISION

#### **Human-Environment Integration:**

A society that recognizes the fundamental interdependence between human systems and ecological processes, fostering ecological ethics that guide decision-making at all levels and developing a collective understanding of nature's intrinsic value beyond purely utilitarian perspectives.

#### **Multi-Stakeholder Participation:**

Governance models and decision-making processes that actively involve diverse stakeholders—including policymakers, businesses, civil society organizations, and local communities—in collaborative frameworks that balance expertise with democratic inclusivity and ensure representation of varied perspectives.

#### **Empowered Local Communities:**

Local communities functioning as proactive agents of environmental change rather than passive recipients of policies, with decentralized decision-making structures, enhanced social capital for collective action, and community ownership of green transformation initiatives that reflect local priorities and conditions.

### CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY

#### **Building Knowledge and Social Awareness**

##### **Reconceptualizing Human-Environment Relationships**

A fundamental shift in understanding humans as integral parts of natural systems rather than separate entities, recognizing reciprocal effects between climate and human activity, which creates a foundation for more balanced and sustainable interactions with the environment.

##### **Infrastructure and Education Development**

Transformation of physical infrastructure toward ecological solutions complemented by comprehensive environmental education from early childhood, making sustainable choices more intuitive and accessible while cultivating environmental literacy that shapes lifelong values and understanding.

##### **Knowledge Democratization**

Creation of accessible knowledge systems including social libraries and simplified scientific communication, addressing current information asymmetries that limit public engagement and enabling broader participation in environmental decision-making through shared understanding.

## **Stimulating Local Community Activities**

### **Local Empowerment and Decision-Making**

Development of sustainable local entrepreneurship coupled with increased community decision-making power in environmental matters, creating economic stakes in environmental stewardship and ensuring those most affected by decisions have meaningful input in shaping policies and initiatives.

### **Communication and Collaboration Networks**

Restructuring information flows to include bottom-up channels and strengthening cooperation between communities, scientific institutions, and other stakeholders, leveraging local knowledge that might otherwise be missed by centralized systems and creating learning networks that accelerate progress through shared experiences.

### **Institutional and Administrative Changes**

#### **Procedural and Conceptual Transformation**

Creating space for experimentation in implementing green solutions while simplifying administrative procedures and translating complex environmental concepts into accessible language, reducing barriers to community action and enabling innovation through trial and error rather than risk-averse approaches.

#### **Participatory Governance and Decentralization**

Developing context-sensitive approaches to environmental challenges through participatory

goal-setting and strategy development, recognizing that externally imposed targets often lack local relevance and that co-created objectives generate stronger commitment and ownership among stakeholders.

### **ACTIONS (WHAT)**

#### **Knowledge and Awareness Actions:**

Demonstration of measurable benefits through case studies, organization of targeted educational activities for different community segments, and development of "science to the people" initiatives enabling direct experience with environmental phenomena, all designed to make abstract concepts tangible and relevant to everyday life.

#### **Local Community Activation Actions:**

Programs identifying and supporting local environmental leaders, frameworks for community participation in innovation implementation, and mechanisms for localizing green transformation benefits for specific communities, creating vehicles for meaningful engagement that respond to local contexts and interests.

#### **Institutional and Administrative Actions:**

Development of legal frameworks emphasizing qualitative outcomes alongside quantitative indicators, creation of structures promoting cross-sectoral environmental cooperation, and establishment of funding mechanisms supporting NGO participation in research and environmental projects, building institutional architecture that enables rather than hinders community-led initiatives.

### 3. Individual Level: Transforming Consciousness and Education

The individual dimension of green transformation presents a critical challenge: fostering fundamental changes in personal consciousness and behavior patterns that underpin sustainable societies. The workshop identified that technological and policy solutions alone are insufficient without corresponding shifts in how individuals perceive their relationship with the environment and translate knowledge into action.

#### VISION

##### **Fulfilled Individual with Environmental Integration:**

A new model of individual wellbeing that recognizes the fundamental integration between human life and natural environment, where personal fulfillment and security incorporate environmental health, and where life satisfaction derives from sustainable lifestyle choices that balance material needs with ecological boundaries.

##### **Conscious Citizenship and Consumption:**

Citizens and consumers who make informed choices based on ecological considerations, having moved beyond conceptualizing themselves as separate from nature, actively participating in community-level environmental initiatives, and incorporating environmental values into their personal identity and everyday decisions.

##### **Holistic Education System:**

Educational frameworks that replace compartmentalized thinking with transdisciplinary approaches highlighting interconnections between knowledge domains, foster critical thinking about human-environment relationships, and integrate ecological principles across subjects through teaching methodologies that emphasize systems thinking and practical application.

#### CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY

##### **Changes in Education:**

##### **Humanities and Media Transformation**

Redefining humanities education and media discourse to challenge human-nature separation paradigms and increase trust in educational institutions, addressing fundamental worldviews that shape environmental relationships while countering misinformation through more accurate, contextualized coverage of ecological issues.

##### **Educational Paradigm and Structure Reform**

Transforming the purpose and methods of formal and informal education through new subject organization and textbook content restructuring, moving away from artificial disciplinary boundaries that prevent understanding complex ecological systems toward integrated approaches that better reflect real-world interconnections.

##### **Changes in Knowledge-Behavior Relationship:**

##### **Emotional and Motivational Engagement**

Acknowledging the crucial links between emotions and environmental behavior while creating motivation based on concrete benefits, recognizing that purely cognitive approaches often fail to drive action and that highlighting tangible outcomes makes sustainable choices more compelling for diverse audiences.

## **Perspective Development and Integration**

Building capacity to understand different viewpoints on environmental issues while recognizing that climate change requires both emotional and intellectual engagement, facilitating dialogue across ideological divides and addressing cognitive and affective dimensions for more comprehensive behavioral change.

### **Changes in Role and Functioning of Science:**

#### **Scientific Communication and Implementation**

Transforming how science is perceived and communicated in society, encouraging scientists to engage more effectively with different social groups, and strengthening implementation pathways for research findings to accelerate positive environmental change.

#### **Knowledge Transfer and Collaboration Enhancement**

Establishing two-way knowledge exchanges between experts and communities, better facilitating transfer from basic research (TRL1) to higher technology readiness levels, and strengthening collaboration between scientific institutions and NGOs, making research more accessible, participatory, and responsive to societal needs.

## **ACTIONS (WHAT)**

### **Educational Transformation Actions:**

Transition from management to values-based educational approaches highlighting connections between knowledge domains, reform educator compensation systems using successful models like Finland's, and implement interdisciplinary teaching units focused on environmental themes, creating learning experiences that connect theory with observation.

### **Knowledge-Action Bridge Actions:**

Utilize successful models like the Krakow smog alarm campaign, ensure tangible benefits (both monetary and non-material) as motivation for change, and develop tailored communication for different audience groups, creating feedback systems that demonstrate individual impact and peer learning networks for sustainable practices.

### **Scientific Practice and Communication Actions:**

Develop specialized approaches for engaging diverse audiences including climate skeptics, create new dialogue formats between communities and experts, establish research-implementation continuity mechanisms, and implement funding schemes supporting NGO participation in research, with platforms showcasing practical applications and citizen science initiatives that engage communities directly.

# **PRIORITY AREA 2**

# **DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW, AND**

# **HUMAN RIGHTS**

## **SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP COURSE**

The workshop gathered researchers, policymakers, representatives from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, NCN, and NGOs. It began with energizers and an ice-breaker to introduce the agenda and goals. Participants identified four areas for developing the Journey of Progress Cards methodology: (1) education for democracy, focusing on equipping citizens with civic competence, skills and responsibility; (2) institutions, aimed at restoring trust in independent, fair, and democratic structures; (3) the digital agenda, addressing the societal impact of technologies like AI and the need for regulation and digital literacy; and (4) gender, equality, and anti-discrimination, promoting inclusivity amidst growing backlash. Each group developed a shared vision, identified required changes, enabling conditions (what), and strategies for implementation (how). The session ended with presentations, a Q&A, and

a discussion on the value of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation. The workshop created a dynamic space for cross-sectoral dialogue, fostering collaboration between academia, public institutions, and civil society around key democratic challenges.

## **CONCLUSIONS FROM THE WORKSHOP**

The workshop underscored the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing contemporary challenges to democracy, rule of law and civic society. Participants highlighted the need to strengthen civic education, rebuild public trust in the judiciary and the other public institutions, ensure responsible and people-centred digital governance, and uphold principles of equality in the face of growing resistance. The discussions confirmed the value of interdisciplinary dialogue in shaping shared perspectives and developing practical, forward-looking strategies.

## IDENTIFIED RESEARCH PRIORITIES

### I. Education for democracy

is a comprehensive area of activities aimed at developing civic competences and shaping informed, active participation in public life. It encompasses both early education, aimed at wide model of life long learning (incl. children, youth and adults), as well as in-depth legal education to understand the functioning of the rule of law. A key element is the promotion of the attitude of an informed citizen - an active participant in democracy, who not only takes part in elections, but also gets involved in society and is able to critically assess reality. An important aspect is also the communication and popularisation of expert knowledge, especially in the context of contemporary crises of democracy, which allows citizens to better understand complex social and political processes. Education for democracy should be inclusive and accessible to all, irrespective of social status or background, with the aim not only of imparting knowledge but also of strengthening citizens' agency and sense of responsibility.

#### VISION

**Knowledge-based society with competence, critical thinking, open to dialogue, based on local stories, fact-based stories and local ready to engage**

The vision articulated in this pathway presents a future in which society is composed of individuals equipped with essential civic competencies, including the ability to think critically, act responsibly, engage in meaningful dialogue, and participate actively in democratic life. This vision emphasizes the importance of knowledge that is both theoretical and practical as well as deeply embedded in local contexts—recognizing that lived experience and place-based wisdom are as valuable as formal education. Such a society would be grounded in mutual understanding and collaboration, where people are not only prepared to participate in public life, but also feel confident and empowered to do so. Individuals are envisioned as ready to act, with skills in reflection, interpretation, and practical problem-solving. Importantly, this vision assumes that people do not operate in isolation; they are part of communities where shared values, trust, and engagement create the conditions for a thriving democratic culture. A key element of this vision is the ability to navigate complexity and

ambiguity with curiosity and openness, rather than fear or retreat.

#### CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY

To make this vision a reality, deep systemic and cultural changes are required—particularly in how knowledge is understood, produced, and shared. One of the fundamental changes involves transforming existing mental models that prioritize abstract, decontextualized information over local, experiential knowledge. There is a need to shift away from traditional top-down education paradigms and toward learning processes that value practical engagement, emotional intelligence, and contextual awareness. This also involves elevating the status of lifelong learning—not as an optional or remedial activity, but as a core principle of citizenship. Lifelong learning must be reimagined as a collective cultural norm, embedded in everyday social and institutional practices. Additionally, the change requires reinforcing the legitimacy of local perspectives, particularly those rooted in community history, social dynamics, and real-world problem-solving. It is through such embedded learning that individuals can develop the resilience, adaptability, and ethical awareness necessary to

contribute meaningfully to democratic societies.

## **ACTION (WHAT)**

To enable the desired change, several strategic interventions must be introduced across educational, civic, and policy domains. First, there is a need to create environments that are both inclusive and motivating—spaces where individuals feel psychologically safe, intellectually stimulated, and socially connected. These environments should promote autonomy, reflection, mutual respect and cooperation, moving away from competitive, individualistic models toward more collaborative and dialogic approaches.

Second, education must be rooted in practice, drawing from real-life experiences and involving iterative processes of reflection, dialogue, and meaning-making. This includes integrating phenomenon-based learning, case studies, community-based projects, and participatory action research into formal and informal education settings. Third, systemic structures—such as curriculum frameworks, evaluation tools, funding mechanisms, and institutional mandates—must be aligned to support these goals. Without systemic support, even the most promising grassroots efforts remain fragile and unsustainable. Therefore, it is essential to embed these values into policy, ensuring long-term coherence and impact. Finally, the framework should encourage recognition of diverse forms of knowledge incl. “learning by doing approach” and learning outcomes—including emotional intelligence, intercultural competence, and civic imagination—which are often undervalued in mainstream education systems.

## **HOW**

The pathway forward involves a combination of policy innovation, capacity-building, and practical experimentation. To begin with, it is important to design learning formats that are flexible, accessible, and responsive to different social realities. These should include interactive workshops, deliberative forums, storytelling sessions, and digital platforms that allow people to co-create knowledge and share experiences. Such formats should be designed with a clear emphasis on inclusion, ensuring participation from groups that are often overlooked—such as youth, older adults, ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees or people from rural areas. A parallel focus should be placed on developing tools and methodologies that foster collaboration, critical thinking, empathy, and imagination. These might include scenario planning exercises, values-based dialogues, community mapping, and systems thinking toolkits. Facilitators, educators, and local leaders must be equipped with training and support to use these tools effectively. Another key strategy involves creating spaces for intergenerational exchange and shared reflection, where different perspectives and life experiences can intersect and inform one another. This helps build not only knowledge but also solidarity, reducing social fragmentation, strengthening social cohesion and enhancing democratic trust. Lastly, efforts should be made to foster self-awareness among citizens—encouraging people to reflect on their roles in society, their assumptions, and the broader systems they are part of. Participatory processes, including those used in policy co-creation or public deliberation, can offer meaningful opportunities for such reflection and being also a tool of building sense of agency. All of these actions must be coordinated within a broader ecosystem of support, involving partnerships across sectors—public institutions, civil society, academia, and local communities—to ensure that the vision does not remain aspirational, but becomes a lived and shared reality.

## 2. The Institutions area

focuses on strengthening, rebuilding and protecting key elements of the structure of a democratic state under the rule of law. Particular attention is paid here to the need to rebuild social trust in public institutions including the judiciary and to ensure their stability and security of functioning. There is a clear need to renew and reassert faith in the security of democratic institutions, which points to growing public concerns about their weakening or loss of independence. Also at the centre of the reflection is the problem of the rollback of the protection of human rights - a signal that threats to institutions are not just organisational or political issues, but have a real impact on citizens' rights and freedoms. At the same time, the need to protect the constitution, as the basic document guaranteeing institutional order, separation of powers, human rights and democratic standards, is emphasised. A key challenge and at the same time a goal is to restore the institutional authority. Only institutions perceived as independent, fair and acting in the interests of citizens are able to perform their functions - both control and service - effectively.

### VISION

The institutions are efficient, they are a public service, the people inside have a role according to mission, responsibility, effectiveness and causality. Institutions are depoliticised.

The envisioned future is one in which public institutions are widely recognized as fair, reliable, and aligned with the public good. In this scenario, institutions are not perceived as abstract, bureaucratic bodies but as approachable, transparent, and accountable entities that deliver services with competence and respect for citizens' dignity. Such institutions are rooted in their mission and purpose, not only in their formal mandates but in values such as justice, equity, and accessibility. Their work is not only procedurally correct but also ethically guided and socially legitimate. Moreover, the work of public institutions should be of the highest substantive quality as well. Individuals feel confident approaching institutions, believing they will be treated fairly, listened to, and provided with effective support. Institutions operate with self-awareness, acknowledging their societal role and the responsibility that comes with their authority. Citizens experience public services as trustworthy and effective; they feel seen and valued, and not merely managed by systems. Importantly, truth, fact-based debate, and dialogue are valued

within these institutions, reinforcing democratic principles. This vision reflects an ambitious but necessary transformation: from institutions perceived as distant and rigid to institutions that embody fairness and act in alignment with the evolving needs of society.

### CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY

Realizing this vision requires deep, multidimensional change. It is not enough to improve individual services or launch isolated initiatives; a transformation in how institutions operate, communicate, and relate to the public is essential. Key changes include:

**Cultural Shift Within Institutions:** A move toward greater self-awareness among institutional staff, including a deepened understanding of their role in society and the impact of their work on public trust. This includes confronting biases, improving responsiveness, and reinforcing a culture of public service.

**Justice System Reform:** Reforms are particularly necessary in the judiciary and prosecutorial sectors. These include strengthening the impartiality, independence, and effectiveness of legal institutions. The system must be more transparent and accessible, especially for vulnerable and underrepresented groups.

**Better Coordination:** Many institutions operate in silos. There is a need for enhanced internal and cross-sectoral coordination, ensuring that efforts are not duplicated, procedures are coherent, and services are seamlessly delivered.

**Communication Redesign:** Institutions must communicate more clearly and accessibly, translating legal, administrative, or policy language into formats that people can understand and trust. This reduces the distance between institutions and citizens, empowering people to engage.

**Institutional Security and Independence:** Institutions must be protected from political or financial manipulation, ensuring their autonomy and capacity to act consistently with their mission. The system must strengthen the separation of powers (legislative, executive and judiciary) Financial stability and institutional integrity are essential pillars of long-term reform.

**Citizen-Centric Mentality:** Institutions must move away from being system-centric to becoming citizen-centric—prioritizing human needs, local realities, and diversity of experiences. Their legitimacy depends on being responsive, fair, and representative.

## **ACTION (WHAT)**

**Strategic Interventions to Enable Change:** To bring about the necessary changes, several foundational interventions are proposed. These actions serve as building blocks for structural reform and civic trust-building:

**Citizen Participation in Evaluation and Oversight:** Create opportunities for citizens to actively participate in evaluating institutions, such as through participatory audits, satisfaction surveys, and social accountability platforms. This feedback loop should be institutionalized, not occasional. A systemic

measure, with a real impact on how institutions actually operate, could be a solution.

**Development of Inclusive Civic Education:** Institutional functioning must become a key component of civic education at all levels—including in schools, community programs, and lifelong learning initiatives. Citizens need to understand their rights and how to navigate public systems.

**Promotion of Fact-Based Debate and Dialogue:** In public discourse, institutions must encourage evidence-informed dialogue, particularly around contentious or sensitive issues. Fact-based conversations should be the foundation for democratic policymaking and public trust.

**Systematic Identification of Areas for Improvement:** Develop robust diagnostics to identify inefficiencies, injustices, or access barriers within institutions. This includes mapping problem areas in courts, administrative bodies, or service provision.

**Research and Model Testing:** Invest in research and innovation to develop and test new models of institutional functioning—models that are adaptive, collaborative, and human-centred.

**Creating Spaces for Multistakeholder Exchange:** Institutions should host or co-organize deliberative spaces, like roundtables, civic panels, or multi-stakeholder forums, where different perspectives come together to discuss improvements and co-design solutions.

## **HOW**

To translate these interventions into reality, a coordinated strategy of capacity-building, systems reform, and innovation must be applied. The following approaches form the backbone of the implementation phase:

**Strengthening Financial and Structural Foundations:** Ensure that institutions have

access to adequate, stable, and transparent funding mechanisms. Financial autonomy is essential to prevent undue influence and enable long-term planning.

**Training and Support for Institutional Staff:** Develop and implement professional development programmes focused on self-awareness, empathy, ethics, and communication. Institutional culture is shaped by the people inside it—supporting them is critical.

**Embedding Co-Creation in Institutional Practices:** Move beyond consultation and toward co-creation of services and policies with citizens. Institutions should involve users not only in giving feedback but in shaping new solutions and monitoring their effectiveness.

**Adopting Inclusive Communication Strategies:** Create user-friendly, multilingual, and accessible communication formats, both online and offline, to ensure broad public engagement and understanding.

**Building in Accountability Mechanisms:** Establish mechanisms for monitoring progress, assessing institutional performance, and enforcing accountability when failures occur. Transparency must be tied to real consequences and reform pathways.

**Ensuring Legal and Procedural Clarity:** Laws, procedures, and rights must be clearly explained and consistently applied, reducing discretion and arbitrary treatment. Institutions need internal systems for maintaining clarity and upholding standards.

### 3. The digital agenda

is an area encompassing the challenges, opportunities and risks associated with the dynamic development of digital technologies, in particular artificial intelligence, online platforms and social media. These issues have a direct impact on the functioning of democracy, the quality of public debate, information security and social cohesion. One of the key topics is the regulation of online platforms, with a particular focus on the limits of freedom of expression. This points to the need to strike a balance between freedom of expression and the responsibility of platforms to spread disinformation, hate speech or manipulation. Alongside regulation, it is equally important to build social resilience - both at the level of individuals and communities - in the face of social media threats. This requires strengthening digital competences, information awareness and the ability to deal with emotional content, which often shapes citizens' decision-making processes ('the role of emotions in decision-making'). The digital agenda also includes a reflection on the place of technology - including AI and digital media - in social life. On the one hand, technology can be a tool for strengthening civic engagement ('AI as an opportunity and a threat, e.g. content generation'), while on the other hand, it involves the need to critically analyse its impact on democratic values, especially in the context of the younger generation ('transmission of values, social anti-patterns, including youth'). Also on the agenda are global tensions regarding regulatory models ('freedom vs. regulation - US vs. EU model') and the need to strengthen social competences in response to digital challenges such as disinformation, anonymity, or low trust in authority.

#### VISION

The vision that emerges from this process is of a digitally transformed society where technology serves the public good, and where citizens, institutions, and platforms operate within a framework of accountability, inclusivity, and ethical standards. In this future, digital tools are not only efficient, but also transparent and fair; platforms do not exploit attention or data but act as stewards of democratic discourse. Technology is developed and used not in isolation, but in alignment with shared values, public deliberation, and human rights. Citizens are not passive consumers of tech, but informed users and active participants in shaping digital environments.

#### CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY

Achieving this vision requires several deep shifts:

**Reimagining platform governance:** Digital platforms must move from self-regulation to public accountability. This includes introducing

mechanisms for oversight and ethical alignment, especially regarding content moderation, algorithmic transparency, data use and tagging of AI-generated content.

**Shifting from private dominance to public frameworks:** There is a need to strengthen public regulation of digital technologies, especially when private actors dominate access to infrastructure, data, and communication channels.

**Redefining norms of participation and control:** Citizens should gain more control over their digital presence and data. Consent must become meaningful, and algorithmic decision-making must be understandable and challengeable.

**Building institutional competence:** Public institutions must catch up technologically to effectively regulate, implement, and communicate around tech policy. They must have not only legal tools but technical expertise to match the speed of innovation.

## ACTION (WHAT)

To support this transformation, several strategic priorities emerge:

### **Regulatory clarity and enforcement:**

Establish and enforce clear, democratically agreed rules for tech platforms, AI systems, and data processors — including in sectors like justice, advertising, and public services.

### **Ethical guidelines for AI and automation:**

Develop frameworks that govern ethical development and deployment of AI, especially in high-risk areas (e.g., predictive policing, healthcare, social services).

### **Publicly funded alternatives and infrastructure:**

Invest in public or civic-tech alternatives that offer trustworthy digital services (e.g. open-source platforms, publicly owned data repositories).

### **Transparency obligations for digital actors:**

Platforms should be obliged to disclose algorithmic logic, moderation policies, and data practices, particularly where automated systems affect people's rights.

### **Education and empowerment for users:**

Citizens should be informed, not manipulated—this means scaling up digital literacy, algorithm awareness, and user rights education.

**Spaces for deliberation:** Introduce citizen assemblies and roundtables on digital

transformation, involving diverse stakeholders to guide tech policy and ethical choices.

## HOW

To deliver on these priorities, several implementation methods are needed:

### **Interdisciplinary regulation and agile governance:**

Develop cross-sectoral bodies that combine legal, technological, and ethical expertise to monitor and guide digital transformation.

### **Self-awareness and accountability among tech workers:**

Promote ethical awareness among those designing, developing, and deploying tech systems, including public servants and private sector developers.

### **Improved public procurement standards:**

Governments should adopt procurement criteria that prioritize ethical, inclusive, and privacy-respecting technologies, avoiding black-box systems.

### **Financial and legal support for oversight mechanisms:**

Ensure funding and independence for regulators, ombuds institutions, and watchdog organizations focused on digital rights.

### **Responsive public communication:**

Equip institutions with the tools to communicate clearly and credibly about digital reforms and rights, combating confusion and building trust.

## 4. The area of gender, equality and anti-discrimination

focuses on the challenges of realising gender equality, diversity and inclusivity amidst growing opposition to these values. The slogans visible on the board indicate the need for in-depth reflection on contemporary tensions around equality policies and strategies for their further development. At the centre is the concept of 'gender' - as a category analysing the social and cultural determinants of gender roles and their impact on the lives of individuals and groups. The question of the future of gender approaches arises: 'Gender difference or a world without gender?', reflecting the debate on the deconstruction of the binary division and the need to recognise the spectrum of gender identities. The opposition to the idea of equality and inclusivity, expressed with the slogan 'DEI without backlash' (DEI = Diversity, Equity, Inclusion), is also an important thread. This is a reference to the increasing phenomena of so-called 'backlash' - defensive reactions, criticism or even attacks on anti-discrimination and equality initiatives. This points to the need to develop effective strategies to counter and respond to anti-equality movements that undermine the sense and need for action in this area.

### VISION

**Society perceives equality as a value.  
MEGA: Make Equality Great Again**

The vision sets out a future in which equality is not only upheld as a fundamental value but actively fostered as a cornerstone of democratic society. It envisions a civic culture rooted in openness, long-term thinking, and shared responsibility, where individuals are equipped and encouraged to engage meaningfully in shaping the future. Equality is understood here not merely as formal parity, but as a lived reality—reflected in equal opportunities to participate, contribute, and influence collective outcomes. The vision calls for a renewed commitment to inclusive citizenship, critical reflection, and the creation of conditions that support social cohesion and democratic resilience.

### CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY

Achieving this vision requires a profound transformation of societal structures, particularly in how participation is organized and whose voices are recognized. Central to this change is the redefinition of roles and hierarchies, enabling a redistribution of power that promotes transparency, accountability, and shared agency. It is essential to establish

inclusive platforms that facilitate the involvement of diverse social groups—especially those traditionally marginalized or underrepresented—in shaping public discourse and policy. This transformation necessitates a shift from symbolic participation to substantive co-creation, fostering collective responsibility and acknowledging varied forms of knowledge and experience.

### ACTION (WHAT)

Several foundational elements must be in place to support the desired transformation. These include the creation of inclusive, safe, and accessible spaces that embed the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into their design and operation. Particular emphasis should be placed on the development of targeted programmes for educators, especially within the realm of civic and European education, to strengthen democratic competencies. Furthermore, the deployment of participatory tools and methodologies—tailored to reflect the complexity of social realities—will be critical to ensuring that all individuals have the means and confidence to engage meaningfully in democratic processes.

## HOW

The implementation of this pathway requires structured, coordinated action across multiple levels of society. Emphasis should be placed on fostering collaboration rather than isolated efforts, thereby enhancing collective impact and trust. Facilitators, educators, and community leaders must be equipped with the necessary skills to lead inclusive, respectful, and constructive dialogue. Additionally,

participatory formats should be designed to be engaging, diverse, and responsive to different needs and contexts. The use of inclusive language, the promotion of pluralistic narratives, and the embedding of participatory practices within institutional and educational frameworks are all essential strategies to support long-term, sustainable democratic engagement.

# **PRIORITY AREA 3**

# **SOCIAL INCLUSION AND RESILIENCE**

## **SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP COURSE**

Following the introductory session the participants gathered to address the topics given in a series of group activities. After a short ice breaking task, when they practiced both polarization and tackled common discussion points, the cohort was spontaneously divided into smaller groups. In a brainstorming activity they identified a broad variety of issues and discussed them to develop a joint understanding of the challenges. The ideas were initially and non-conclusively clustered as many issues overlapped.

After a short break four final areas were selected by voting. Methodology of Journey of Progress was introduced in detail and 4 groups were formed to reflect four main domains of intervention. The structure of the activity enabled individuals to design their own development path, stemming from the vision, through changes, measures and approaches. Then the proposals were discussed and arranged in groups into coherent action plans. Finally, the group work was presented during the final session to all participants so that the overview of the key points was transparent to the larger audience.

The workshop brought together a diverse group of participants, including scientists, representatives from NGOs and government institutions, and research funding agencies. This interdisciplinary gathering created a unique opportunity to explore shared perspectives on social inclusion and resilience, with a focus on how research can better serve society through collaborative, intergenerational approaches.

The workshop concluded with a plenary session, where all groups presented their proposals. This final exchange ensured that the outcomes were made visible to all participants, allowing for transparency, shared reflection,

and cross-group feedback. The diversity of backgrounds enabled participants to reflect on resilience not only from a scientific standpoint, but also in terms of its broader societal perspectives.

## **CONCLUSIONS FROM THE WORKSHOP**

All of the workshop's proposed visions were unified by a common, overarching value: the recognition and valorization of diversity as a guiding principle for future research. Diversity—across generations, disciplines, and societal roles—was seen not as a challenge, but as an essential asset in addressing complex social issues.

The workshop clearly demonstrated the need for an interdisciplinary research approach, as many of the identified challenges sit at the intersection of multiple domains—for example, the relationship between the labour market and technology, or between education and migration. These intersections highlight the limitations of siloed thinking and the importance of cross-sector collaboration.

The role of local government institutions was also underscored as central to the further development and implementation of inclusive and resilient solutions. Their proximity to communities and ability to coordinate across sectors makes them key actors in translating research into effective action.

Finally, participants noted the difficulty of neatly aligning each vision with one single area of intervention that would aim at strengthening social resilience. The complexity and horizontal nature of the challenges called for more flexible, interconnected, and layered approaches. Rather than linear solutions, the outcomes suggested the value of adaptive, cross-cutting strategies that reflect the multidimensional realities of social inclusion and resilience.

## **IDENTIFIED RESEARCH PRIORITIES**

### **I. Age, demography, youth and senior: to make the needs of various demographic groups a common goal.**

#### **VISION I**

Civil society that is integrated within generations, without age-based exclusions, pooling from the potential of people of different ages. Older persons take active role in the public, participate in the labour market, have access to health services while younger persons have access to education system and development opportunities

#### **CHANGE NEEDED AND WHY**

Participants emphasized the need for a shared understanding among all stakeholders to support the transformation of labour markets and healthcare systems in ways that are inclusive of all age groups. Recognizing the common needs across generations, while actively countering cultural ageism, was seen as essential for creating a more resilient and equitable society.

The change also calls for strengthening intergenerational partnerships, promoting active participation in social life across the lifespan. This includes fostering opportunities for connection and collaboration between younger and older persons, grounded in mutual respect and recognition of diverse contributions.

Participants noted the importance of reframing public narratives about ageing, shifting from deficit-based concepts such as the “silver tsunami” toward a positive vision of age-friendly ecosystems. These reframing challenges the narrow cost–benefit logic often applied to both children and older adults, instead emphasizing their role as integral members of society.

Moreover, the workshop highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of how innovation affects well-being across different age groups, and how these impacts should inform the design of inclusive social systems.

Finally, lifelong learning was underscored as a cornerstone of the transformation—supporting people through extended, varied careers and helping them remain engaged, adaptable, and fulfilled throughout all stages of life.

#### **ACTION (WHAT)**

##### **Enhancing Understanding of Needs Across the Life Course**

Participants highlighted the importance of developing programmes that foster a deeper understanding of individuals’ needs at different stages of life, alongside initiatives aimed at improving public awareness of demographic processes and their societal implications. Strengthening societal knowledge in this area was seen as essential for building informed responses to demographic change.

A key element of this transformation involves encouraging greater openness among employers to intergenerational diversity and ensuring the availability of tailored training programmes. These measures were identified as crucial for improving the overall quality of work and enhancing inclusion across age groups within the labour market.

##### **Education as a Driver of Intergenerational Exchange**

Participants stressed the value of education as a foundation for fostering intergenerational cooperation and knowledge exchange. They

highlighted the importance of promoting intermentoring initiatives through school development, educational exchanges, community meetings, and sector-specific events—particularly within the scientific and research communities.

These efforts were seen as essential not only for building mutual understanding between generations, but also for preserving and transferring skills unique to older adults, such as resilience, storytelling, and lived experience. Participants also called for training opportunities aimed at empowering older persons, positioning them as active contributors rather than passive recipients within social systems.

### **Physical Spaces for All Generations**

Participants emphasized the importance of designing physical environments that cater to multiple generations. There was consensus that accessible, inclusive spaces—ranging from community centers and universities to co-working hubs—play a crucial role in encouraging interaction, mutual learning, and collaboration across age groups. These spaces should foster both informal exchanges and structured programs, helping bridge generational divides and enabling lifelong learning.

### **Infrastructure as Support: Boosting Professional Mobility and Access**

Reliable infrastructure, especially in the realm of public transportation and digital connectivity, was identified as a critical enabler of professional activity for all age groups. Better transport links improve access to educational and professional opportunities, particularly for young people entering the workforce and older individuals transitioning to new roles or contributing in advisory capacities. Investment in infrastructure was seen as a foundation for

inclusive economic participation and intergenerational cooperation.

### **Supporting Research on Age and Intergenerational Collaboration**

There is a growing need for dedicated support of research programs that focus on aging, generational diversity, and the dynamics of intergenerational collaboration. Participants advocated for funding bodies to introduce priorities and incentives that encourage cross-generational research teams and projects. This not only strengthens the relevance of research outcomes but also fosters mentorship and continuity within academic and professional fields.

### **Promoting “Science for Society” Programs and Training**

The participants highlighted the importance of initiatives that bring scientific knowledge into public life. “Science for Society” programs and trainings help bridge the gap between academia and the general public, making scientific insights more accessible and applicable. There was a strong call to support such programs across all age groups, enabling older and younger individuals to engage meaningfully with science and innovation as both contributors and beneficiaries.

### **In-Depth Analysis of Structural Support and Youth Inclusion**

A comprehensive, systemic analysis is needed to understand how the labor market, scientific institutions, government policies, and communication channels support or hinder intergenerational inclusion. Participants stressed the importance of actively including younger people in support systems, not just as recipients but as co-designers. Identifying existing gaps and opportunities through robust data collection and policy analysis will be key to creating equitable and future-proof support structures.

## **VISION 2**

State and governmental institutions open, friendly and accessible for all, enable participation of the individuals regardless their age or ability

### **CHANGE NEEDED AND WHY**

Public institutions support the active participation of all. Institutions should be designed and operated in ways that encourage engagement from all members of society, including those who are often underrepresented. This means removing physical, procedural, and social barriers to participation and embedding inclusive practices into everyday operations.

Tailor government services to the needs of different age groups: participants highlighted the importance of age-sensitive public services. Institutions must recognize the specific needs of various age groups—from youth to older adults—and design programs and services that are responsive, relevant, and accessible across the lifespan.

Beyond structural reforms, cultural change is needed. Public institutions should play an active role in promoting positive attitudes toward age and diversity, countering stereotypes, and fostering respect across generations and communities.

Participants identified the need to redefine the balance between secure income and incentives to work. Current models often create disincentives or insecurity for different groups. A more flexible and inclusive approach to economic participation is necessary, one that values contributions beyond traditional employment models.

There is a significant gap in the tools available to evaluate the long-term and cross-sector consequences of public policies. Participants called for the development of better frameworks and indicators to assess how

different populations are affected, particularly in terms of equity, accessibility, and well-being.

A shift is needed in how individuals are perceived and treated by institutions: individuals as subjects, not suspects, of social rights. Participants emphasized that individuals must be regarded as rights-holders, not as potential abusers of the system. Restoring this trust-based relationship is essential for democratic legitimacy and social cohesion.

Policies and services must be shaped with direct input from those they affect and integrate the perspective of individuals and target groups. This requires a consistent and structured effort to include the voices of individuals and target groups in policy design, implementation, and evaluation. Co-creation should become a standard practice in public administration.

### **ACTION (WHAT)**

#### **Local Needs Analysis as a Foundation for Funding Allocation**

Effective planning and distribution of public funds must be grounded in thorough, localized needs assessments. Tailoring funding strategies to the unique demographic and socio-economic realities of different regions ensures that resources are directed where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact across age groups.

#### **Customized Services for All Age Groups**

There is a critical need to design and deliver services that are responsive to the diverse needs of people at different life stages. This includes daily care, healthcare, rehabilitation, and broader support for quality of life and work. An age-inclusive approach to service delivery enhances dignity, independence, and social participation across the lifespan.

#### **Incentives for Employers Promoting Age Diversity**

The integration of multiple generations in the workplace brings significant benefits, including increased innovation, mentorship, and knowledge transfer. To encourage age-diverse teams, employers should be supported through policy incentives such as tax benefits, funding for intergenerational training programs, and recognition schemes that highlight inclusive practices.

### **Stakeholder Inclusion in Decision-Making**

Policies and programs are most effective when they reflect the voices of those they aim to serve. It is vital to actively involve stakeholders from all ages and needs groups in the decision-making process. This participatory approach ensures that services are relevant, equitable, and more widely supported by the communities they affect.

### **Coordinated Sectoral Policies and One-Stop Social Services**

To improve accessibility and efficiency, sectoral policies (e.g., healthcare, employment, education) must be aligned under a coordinated framework. The creation of one-stop shops for social services can reduce fragmentation and make it easier for individuals of all ages to access comprehensive support in a streamlined manner.

### **Accessible Architecture and Design**

The built environment plays a major role in enabling participation and mobility. Urban planning, public buildings, and service centers must adhere to principles of universal design, ensuring they are accessible and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. Inclusive architecture is a foundation for full social and economic inclusion.

### **Promoting a Common Language of Communication**

Effective communication is central to intergenerational cooperation and service delivery. Using a common language—both literally and figuratively—can reduce misunderstandings and build trust. This includes using clear, inclusive language in public messaging, as well as fostering dialogue that bridges generational perspectives.

## **2. Polarisation, conspiracy theories, education and social innovations**

Society that is understood as an ecosystem, drawing strength from diversity and capable of transforming conflict into constructive energy for proactive engagement and collective action. Such a society is characterized by its commitment to open dialogue and active listening, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

The vision of a shared social identity that shapes institutional practices and media narratives, fostering cohesion without suppressing difference. Individuals are encouraged and supported to step outside of

their social bubbles, engaging in meaningful, cross-group dialogue that strengthens mutual understanding and social resilience.

## **VISION I**

Holistic model of social education should be grounded in cooperation rather than competition, moving beyond frameworks centred on investment and individual gain. In this radically shared world, differences in opinion are acknowledged, yet it is recognised that we all engage with the same world.

## **CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY**

Participants called for a transformation in the way communication occurs between individuals, communities, governments, and global institutions to reduce polarisation. The shift must move toward de-polarising, inclusive, and respectful dialogue, with emphasis on listening, empathy, and acknowledgment of complexity. This change is critical for rebuilding trust and fostering a shared understanding of collective challenges.

The vision includes a strong emphasis on public education that nurtures common values, intergenerational learning, and civic dialogue. Educational systems should empower individuals not just with knowledge, but with the skills to engage in meaningful conversations across differences. Teaching about shared human experiences and values can build the foundation for a more cohesive and resilient society.

A radical democratisation of knowledge sources, including universities and research institutions, is necessary to break down barriers to participation. The workshop emphasized opening up these spaces to non-traditional learners, underrepresented groups, and community actors—ensuring that knowledge is not only produced by a select few, but by and for the broader public.

Participants advocated for the creation of institutional and community spaces where different perspectives can meet on equal footing to engage in what was described as "truth negotiation." These spaces must exist at every level of society—from local dialogues to national media platforms—and function as inclusive arenas where individuals feel seen, heard, and valued, regardless of their background or beliefs.

## **ACTION (WHAT)**

### **Understand Both Sides of the Generational Continuum**

To address polarisation meaningfully, it is essential to recognize and explore the full spectrum of generational perspectives. Participants emphasized the need for a deeper understanding of the values, fears, and expectations held by different age groups. This understanding can serve as a basis for designing communication strategies and policies that resonate across generational lines.

### **Map and Engage Stakeholders**

A nuanced stakeholder analysis is key to identifying who is affected by and involved in perpetuating or addressing polarisation. The workshop called for the development of more inclusive engagement processes that incorporate diverse voices—particularly those that are often excluded or overlooked—into conversations about public trust, misinformation, and social cohesion.

### **Create Opportunities for Dialogue**

Enabling open, structured dialogue between generations and social groups was identified as a vital strategy to counteract division. Participants advocated for both formal and informal platforms—such as moderated discussions, educational initiatives, and

intergenerational forums—where differing views can be expressed safely, and common ground can be found.

### **Shift the Tone of Political Discourse**

A reframing of political discourse is needed to reduce polarising rhetoric and foster intergenerational solidarity. The workshop highlighted the importance of promoting narratives that emphasize shared challenges and collective solutions, rather than reinforcing generational or ideological divides. Policymakers, media, and civil society all have a role to play in shaping a more constructive and unifying public conversation.

### **Address the Impact of Social Media**

Social media platforms were recognized as both a source of connection and a driver of division.

## **VISION 2**

Creation of innovation-friendly ecosystem in real social challenges.

### **CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY**

Participants emphasized the importance of cultural elements that normalize learning through trial, error, and discovery. Supporting innovation means fostering environments—in education, work, and public life—where curiosity is rewarded, failure is accepted as part of the process, and experimentation is seen as essential to social progress.

A truly innovative ecosystem must recognize that people think, act, and work in different ways. The workshop called for greater openness to diverse cognitive styles, professional approaches, and personal experiences. Valuing this diversity is key to generating creative, inclusive, and context-sensitive solutions to complex challenges.

Participants discussed the need to confront misinformation and conspiracy theories online through digital literacy campaigns, transparent platform regulations, and content moderation practices that protect public discourse while respecting freedom of expression.

### **Promote Open Access to Research**

The availability and accessibility of trustworthy information are central to combating disinformation. The workshop emphasized the role of open-access research journals in making scientific knowledge widely available, especially for topics related to public health, governance, and societal trends. Transparent, peer-reviewed research can help rebuild public trust and reduce the appeal of conspiracy-driven narratives.

Participants advocated for changes in the way policy solutions are developed, moving toward models that are more flexible, iterative, and responsive to real-world dynamics. Policies should be co-created with stakeholders, tested in real-life settings, and refined over time to remain relevant and impactful. This approach requires breaking down rigid bureaucratic structures and encouraging collaboration across sectors.

### **ACTION (WHAT)**

#### **Establish Mechanisms to Support Innovators and Validate Prototyping**

Effective innovation requires structures that support experimentation, including funding mechanisms, mentoring, and access to safe testing environments. Participants highlighted the importance of validating early-stage ideas through prototyping, allowing innovators to learn, adapt, and refine their approaches in real-world settings without facing disproportionate risk.

### **Engage Stable Institutions in Long-Term Innovation Support**

The sustainability of innovation efforts depends on the involvement of stable, long-term institutions. Universities, public agencies, and established organizations must actively support and anchor innovation processes, ensuring continuity, knowledge transfer, and integration into existing systems.

### **Implement Measures to Disseminate Innovation Broadly**

Participants stressed the need for effective dissemination strategies to scale impactful innovations beyond their original contexts. This

includes sharing best practices, creating open access platforms, and building networks that connect innovators across sectors, regions, and disciplines.

### **Promote the Development of Advanced Social Skills**

Innovation is not only technical—it is deeply social. The workshop underscored the importance of fostering highly developed social competencies, such as empathy, communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. These skills are critical for collaboration, particularly in diverse and intergenerational teams.

## **3. Labour market**

### **VISION I**

Citizens contribute meaningfully through high-quality work, generating significant added value on the labour market that is inclusive, gender-balanced and minimally polarised, where all individuals can participate and thrive regardless of background or identity.

### **CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY**

The state should play a proactive role in designing and implementing educational policies that prepare individuals for emerging job opportunities. This includes aligning curricula with future-oriented skills, fostering digital and green competencies, and strengthening career guidance systems to better match education pathways with labour market demands.

Access to training and upskilling opportunities must be supported through public funding, especially for vulnerable groups and those transitioning between jobs. Financial support mechanisms should make lifelong learning accessible, reducing inequality and boosting adaptability in a rapidly changing labour market.

Participants stressed the need for regulatory changes that support mobility across sectors. This involves removing bureaucratic and institutional barriers that prevent workers from transitioning between industries, as well as creating mechanisms that recognize prior experience and transferable skills.

To optimize high-quality work, policies should incentivize the reallocation of employees from low-productivity sectors and organizations (e.g., agriculture, self-employment) to activities generating higher value added. This redirection would support economic modernization and ensure a better match between labour potential and societal needs.

### **ACTION (WHAT)**

#### **Promote Lifelong Learning and a Culture of Willingness to Educate**

Lifelong learning must become a societal norm, supported by both employers and public institutions. Companies should take responsibility for educating their employees, while individuals are encouraged to view

learning as an ongoing part of their professional journey.

### **Ensure Informed Decision-Making by Employers and Policymakers**

Decisions that shape the labour market must be grounded in data, research, and context-specific knowledge. Employers and policymakers should collaborate with experts and stakeholders to design adaptive, inclusive, and forward-looking employment strategies.

### **Support Everyday Kindness and Micro-Level Engagement**

Participants highlighted the need for a culture of everyday social engagement, where small acts of kindness and mutual support are recognized as vital elements of a cohesive, non-polarised workforce. These micro-level interactions foster trust, reduce social tension, and build community resilience.

### **Encourage Solution-Oriented Learning and Experimentation in the Workplace**

Employers should actively seek knowledge and test new solutions, creating spaces for trial and error. Innovation in workplace practices—including team structures, workflows, and learning tools—should be supported and evaluated continuously.

### **Advance Informed and Flexible Policy Design**

Policymakers must implement laws and policies that are evidence-based, forward-thinking, and responsive to evolving work models. This includes creating regulatory environments that support job flexibility, work-life balance, and inclusive growth.

### **Build a Better System of Microcredentials**

To support diverse career paths, participants recommended a more robust and accessible system of microcredentials. These should be

recognised across sectors and geographies, providing individuals with portable qualifications that reflect real, applicable skills.

### **Foster Multi-Profession Flexibility Across the Life Course**

The labour market must support career shifts and skill evolution across the lifespan. This flexibility enables individuals to engage in multiple professions, respond to new opportunities, and remain active participants in the workforce at any stage of life.

### **Develop Efficient Systems for Skill Recognition and Portability**

Participants stressed the need for transparent and transferable systems to recognise formal and informal skills. These systems should enable workers to move easily across roles and sectors, reducing entry barriers and enhancing mobility.

### **Address Digital Transformation with Sovereignty and Equity**

The responsible integration of AI and digital tools into workspaces—particularly in civil services—requires clear rules, ethical standards, and digital upskilling. Sovereignty in AI development and use was seen as essential to ensure that technologies serve human and societal goals. The need to identify and address risks related to digital transformation such as surveillance technologies, hiring algorithms that threaten social inclusion, increase inequalities and violate human rights (e.g. right to privacy, equal treatment).

### **Implement Knowledge-Based Expert Systems**

Organisations, especially in the public sector, should invest in expert systems that harness knowledge and support better decision-making. These systems must be inclusive, transparent, and accessible to a wide range of users.

## **VISION 2**

Equality of men and women on a labor market in the aspects of wage, employment and unpaid labour

### **CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY**

Achieving gender equality requires a fundamental shift in social norms related to caregiving. Care responsibilities—whether for children, older adults, or dependents—must no longer be seen as the primary domain of women. Awareness campaigns, inclusive parental leave policies, and education initiatives can help normalize shared care responsibilities.

Targeted measures should be introduced to support women's participation and advancement in the workforce. This includes access to affordable childcare, mentoring and leadership programmes, return-to-work initiatives, and flexible working arrangements that account for caregiving needs.

Active and ongoing anti-discrimination efforts are essential to address both overt and systemic gender bias in employment. These programmes should be implemented in both public and private sectors and include training, reporting mechanisms, and inclusive hiring practices.

Participants emphasized the importance of implementing the EU Pay Transparency Directive to identify and address unjustified wage gaps. Transparent wage structures empower employees, promote fairness, and encourage employers to evaluate and adjust pay practices.

### **ACTION (WHAT)**

#### **Improve Accessibility and Inclusivity of Job Opportunities**

Creating a more equitable labour market involves removing barriers to job access, particularly for women facing compounded disadvantages (e.g., age, disability, or migration background). Inclusive recruitment strategies, equitable job design, and supportive workplace environments are essential.

#### **Counteract Gender-Based Job Segregation**

Participants called for active efforts to challenge the masculine/feminine division of professions, which limits both individual career choices and labour market efficiency. This includes promoting gender diversity in education pathways, training programmes, and role models across all sectors.

## 4. Migration, multicultural society and integration

Society that is open, inclusive, and friendly, embracing diversity as a strength, alongside a state that is wise—efficient, just, evidence-based, and adaptable.

### VISION I

The educational system that actively fosters integration and recognises linguistic and cultural diversity as core societal values.

### CHANGE NEEDED AND WHY

Participants stressed the importance of a broad cultural shift where linguistic and cultural diversity is valued across all sectors. Public institutions, employers, and civil society actors must acknowledge and harness these competencies, not only as tools of integration but as critical resources for innovation, cooperation, and social resilience.

### ACTION (WHAT)

#### **Introduce Curricula and Educational Programmes that Reflect Linguistic Diversity**

To embed diversity into the fabric of society, educational systems must offer space for multiple languages and cultures. Curricula should include not only foreign languages, but

also regional and minority languages, fostering early appreciation for pluralism and intercultural communication.

#### **Certify, Map, and Measure Linguistic Skills**

Participants proposed systems to certify and recognise multilingual abilities, including informal and community-based language learning. Mapping and measuring these skills at the local and national levels would allow institutions and employers to better utilise this often-overlooked resource.

#### **Provide Accessible Language Training for All**

Finally, the vision calls for broad access to language training—both for newcomers and for members of the host society. Language learning should be treated as a mutual and continuous process, facilitated through inclusive, accessible programmes in formal, informal, and workplace settings.

## **VISION II**

The political system that treats ethno-cultural diversity as a normal regular component of social life, but at the same time makes sure that it is not an aspect that generates social inequality.

### **CHANGES NEEDED AND WHY**

Including the context of ethno-cultural diversity (and migration) in all political programmes referring to contemporary societal challenges.

## **ACTION (WHAT)**

Enable consultation of political frameworks in majority as well as minority groups.

Ensure unbiased rational media coverage of various aspects of ethno-cultural diversity.

Ensure an intersectional approach to public policies, which involves understanding that various intersecting aspects of social position (e.g., gender, ethnicity, religion), matter at the micro level.