



D8.1 List of Stakeholders, EU Projects and Engagement Activities Report

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Abstract	This deliverable presents the stakeholder mapping, prioritisation and engagement activities carried out throughout the SMIDGE project. It describes the framework used to identify and categorise relevant stakeholders and outlines the main engagement actions, including webinars, conferences, policy events and collaborations with EU projects and networks. The report demonstrates how continuous interaction with policymakers, researchers, civil society, media and professional communities supported the dissemination, validation, and exploitation of SMIDGE results.
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Executive Summary

This deliverable provides a comprehensive account of stakeholder identification, mapping, engagement, and collaboration activities undertaken throughout the SMIDGE project. In line with the project's Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) approach and dissemination obligations defined in the Grant Agreement, stakeholder engagement was implemented as a continuous, structured and evidence-informed process aimed at ensuring that project outputs would inform policy, practice, education and public debate.

Across the 36-month implementation period, the consortium established a living stakeholder database comprising over 1,500 organisations and individuals spanning academia, EU institutions, civil society organisations, media professionals, educators, members of European Parliament and technology-related actors. Engagement activities included advisory consultations, webinars, academic conferences, policy roundtables, co-creation workshops, journalist briefings and a final international conference in Brussels.

Rather than limiting dissemination to end-of-project communication, SMIDGE embedded stakeholder interaction throughout the research cycle. This approach supported iterative feedback, strengthened policy relevance, and enhanced the societal impact of project outputs, including counter-narrative materials, digital literacy tools and policy recommendations.

Revision Notes

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List of Acronyms/abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
AoIR	Association of Internet Researchers
ARENAS	Analysis of and Responses to Extremist Narratives
ECP	European Congress of Psychology
EARLI	European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction
EDMO	European Digital Media Observatory
ENCODE	Emotions in EU Politics & Democratic Resilience
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable
FERMI	Fake News Risk Mitigator
GEMS	Games as a Multi-layered Security Threat
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GNET	Global Network on Extremism and Technology
KCSS	Kosovar Centre for Security Studies
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
OppAttune	Countering Oppositional Political Extremism through Attuned Dialogue
PAVE	Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism
PLEDGE	Politics of Grievance and Democratic Governance
RRI	Responsible Research and Innovation
SJDM	Society of Judgment and Decision Making

UCLan	University of Central Lancashire
UCPH	University of Copenhagen
UMIL	University of Milan

Table 1: List of acronyms/abbreviations

Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation
Counter-narratives	Evidence-based communication materials designed to challenge and mitigate extremist or misleading narratives.
Digital resilience	The capacity of individuals and communities to critically evaluate digital content and resist manipulative or extremist narratives.
Stakeholder mapping	The systematic identification and categorisation of actors relevant to project objectives.
Stakeholder registry	The structured database developed to track contacts, engagement levels and interaction history.
Synergies / Clustering	Strategic collaboration with related EU-funded projects to maximise impact and avoid duplication.

Table 2: Glossary of terms

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Deliverable

This report provides a comprehensive account of stakeholder mapping and engagement activities implemented throughout the lifetime of the SMIDGE project. The deliverable fulfills the requirement to document how the consortium identified relevant actors, engaged them systematically, and ensured that project findings were communicated to and co-developed with stakeholders capable of influencing policy, practice and public discourse.

Stakeholder engagement in SMIDGE was conceived not only as a dissemination function but also as a mechanism for co-creation, consultation and impact generation. Consequently, the approach extended beyond traditional communication activities to include structured dialogue, collaborative

events, and sustained partnerships. The stakeholder mapping presented in this report reflects a targeted and evolving selection of actors relevant to the project's objectives and engagement opportunities and does not aim to provide an exhaustive overview of all stakeholders active in the field.

This document therefore outlines:

- the overall engagement strategy and methodology,
- the stakeholder database and categorisation framework,
- the mapping of relevant EU projects and networks,
- a structured report of engagement activities,
- governance and coordination mechanisms,
- observed outcomes and impacts,
- lessons learned and recommendations for future initiatives.

2. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The engagement strategy was built around the recognition that online extremism and misinformation are systemic challenges that cannot be addressed solely through academic research. Effective countermeasures require collaboration between researchers, educators, policymakers, journalists, civil society actors and practitioners.

For this reason, the consortium adopted a three-tiered strategy.

First, stakeholders were systematically identified according to their potential influence on policy or public discourse. This included EU institutions, ministries, regulators and advisory bodies capable of translating findings into legislative or strategic action.

Second, actors with operational or implementation capacity were targeted. These included teachers, media literacy organisations, fact-checking networks and NGOs working directly with communities.

Third, knowledge multipliers were engaged, particularly journalists, media outlets and conference organisers capable of amplifying research findings to wider audiences.

This layered approach ensured that engagement activities addressed both upstream policy influence and downstream community impact.

3. Stakeholder Mapping and Database Development

In the first year of the project, Inclusive Europe established a shared stakeholder registry titled "Relevant Stakeholders Log" to streamline outreach and dissemination efforts. The shared spreadsheet database was hosted on a shared drive and structured to enable collaborative updating by all partners.

Each partner maintained a dedicated tab and was responsible for identifying stakeholders within their national and thematic networks. Another specialised European & International tab kept all relevant potential stakeholders on EU and international level. The database captured:

- stakeholder type (e.g. civil society, EU agency, think tank, media etc.)
- name and affiliation
- expertise area
- contact details (email)
- level of impact and interest (H / M / L)
- decision-making authority (Y / N)
- notes on interactions and follow-ups

The database served multiple operational functions. It supported targeted invitations to events, facilitated dissemination of project outputs, enabled identification of suitable speakers or collaborators, and ensured that engagement efforts were coordinated across partners. Partners were encouraged to populate this list regularly to assist in dissemination and event planning. Partners primarily focused on the European/International tab throughout the project. The INEU tab contains 32 stakeholders based in Belgium. By the end of the project, the registry contained over 1,532 valid contacts spanning EU, national and local levels. The breadth of this dataset provided a strong foundation for sustained outreach and exploitation beyond project completion.

During the distribution of the first SMIDGE press release, potential stakeholders were not only informed about the project's objectives but were also explicitly invited to indicate whether they would be interested in establishing closer and more structured communication with the consortium. The intention was to identify a core group of external organisations willing to engage beyond general dissemination activities and to act as strategic partners in amplifying and validating project outputs. Stakeholders who expressed interest in closer collaboration were subsequently prioritised for targeted engagement throughout the project lifecycle. This included early invitations to events, preferential outreach when identifying expert speakers for webinars and conferences, and direct communication regarding the dissemination of outputs. These organisations were approached first when seeking support for dissemination of the MOOC, policy briefs and counter-narratives within their respective networks.

Among the stakeholders who positively responded and maintained continuous engagement were the European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS), the Media & Learning Association, the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), and Lie Detectors. Each of these organisations operates in domains closely aligned with SMIDGE's thematic focus.

Throughout the project, the consortium maintained regular communication with these actors via email exchanges, bilateral discussions and event participation. Their engagement contributed to enhanced visibility of SMIDGE outputs within specialised communities, increased credibility through association with established networks and facilitated access to practitioner and policy audiences beyond the consortium's immediate reach. In several instances, these organisations supported dissemination by sharing SMIDGE materials through their channels or expressing willingness to explore integration of project resources into their training and awareness-raising activities.

4. Stakeholder Categories and Prioritisation Framework

To guide engagement efforts effectively, stakeholders were categorised according to institutional type and potential relevance to project objectives. A simple prioritisation framework was adopted, combining assessments of expected impact and level of interest. Stakeholders were prioritised based on their institutional influence on policy processes and their level of interest in project results. This categorisation enabled the consortium to identify the primary roles different stakeholder groups could play in policy uptake, knowledge validation, dissemination and implementation of project outputs.

Category	Typical actors	Relevance to SMIDGE
EU institutions & agencies	DGs, observatories, regulators	Policy uptake and regulatory influence
Public authorities	Ministries, municipalities	Implementation of recommendations
Academia	Universities, research centres	Knowledge production and validation
Civil society & NGOs	Advocacy groups, fact-checkers	Community outreach and capacity building
Media	Journalists, editors, outlets	Public communication and amplification
Technology sector	Platforms, digital service providers	Platform governance and moderation
Education sector	Schools, educators, trainers	Digital literacy implementation
EU projects & networks	Horizon projects, clusters	Synergies and joint dissemination

Table 3 Stakeholder categorisation framework

Beyond institutional categorisation, a simple prioritisation framework was applied, combining two key dimensions: (1) institutional influence on policy or professional practice, and (2) level of interest in SMIDGE results. This influence–interest assessment informed the tailoring of engagement formats, frequency of communication and allocation of dissemination resources.

Influence / Interest Level	Typical stakeholder groups	Engagement approach
High Influence – High Interest	EU institutions, selected public authorities, major media outlets, strategic civil society networks, sister Horizon projects	Bilateral meetings, high-level events, targeted follow-up, exploitation discussions
High Influence – Medium Interest	Regulatory bodies, platform representatives, institutional policymakers	Policy briefs, strategic invitations, structured updates
Medium Influence – High Interest	Academia, educators, media literacy NGOs, fact-checkers	Webinars, training materials, MOOC access, collaborative dissemination



Influence / Interest Level	Typical stakeholder groups	Engagement approach
Medium / Low Influence – Medium Interest	General civil society actors, local practitioners	Newsletter distribution, social media, open events

Table 4 Stakeholder Influence-Interest Assessment

5. Overview of Identified Stakeholders

The final stakeholder base demonstrated strong diversity across sectors. This broad composition ensured that SMIDGE outputs were communicated across complementary audiences capable of influencing both policy and public discourse. The distribution shows that academia and civil society organisations represented the largest share of stakeholders, reflecting the project’s strong engagement with research and practitioner communities, while also maintaining balanced representation from policy, media, education and private sector actors.

Sector	Estimated share
Academia & research	30%
Civil society/NGOs	25%
Media & journalism	15%
Public authorities/EU bodies	15%
Education sector	10%
Private/technology sector	5%

Table 5 Stakeholder distribution

6. Mapping of Relevant EU Projects and Networks

Beyond individual stakeholders, the SMIDGE consortium proactively identified and engaged with a broad set of EU-funded research projects and expert networks addressing related challenges such as online extremism, misinformation, conspiracy theories and democratic resilience. This mapping was integral to the project’s dissemination and exploitation strategy and was documented on the SMIDGE sister-projects page to showcase thematic alignment and collaboration potential.

Projects and networks were initially discovered through regular monitoring of digital research ecosystems, social media channels and knowledge-sharing platforms, where emerging initiatives and outputs were frequently observed and shared. SMIDGE communication channels (LinkedIn, X and Bluesky) were used not only to disseminate own outputs, but also to amplify and engage with related projects’ activities by reposting, commenting and establishing two-way visibility. This enabled the consortium to build familiarity with complementary research agendas and identify synergies early in the implementation cycle.



6.1 Sister Projects and Related Initiatives

Early in the project, collaboration was established with sister projects ARENAS and OppAttune to foster synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. Mutual promotion, shared events and knowledge exchange were implemented through coordinated communication, joint webinars and cross-referencing on project websites.

- ARENAS (Analysis of and Responses to Extremist Narratives), a multi-partner project examining extremist narratives influencing European political and social dynamics, with the aim of informing policy recommendations and resistance strategies.
- OppAttune (Countering Oppositional Political Extremism through Attuned Dialogue), which tracks the evolution of extremist ideologies and develops models and interventions to support attuned democratic dialogue across diverse publics.

In addition to these, SMIDGE recognised and maintained awareness of other EU-funded projects, global research platforms and expert networks such as:

- GEMS (Games as a Multi-layered Security Threat), exploring extremist content within gaming environments and bringing interdisciplinary perspectives to digital radicalisation.
- FERMI (Fake News Risk Mitigator), focused on fighting fake news through multi-disciplinary approaches in social science and technological development.
- PLEDGE (Politics of Grievance and Democratic Governance), which investigates emotional drivers of political engagement and their implications for democratic dialogue and resilience.
- ENCODE (Emotions in EU Politics & Democratic Resilience), exploring and decoding the role of emotions in political discourse and their impact on democratic processes
- DEMINE (Dealing with Conflicts Related to Migration: Negotiating Social Cohesion through Communication), aiming to unravel the intricate dynamics between media, interpersonal communication, and migration-related conflicts.
- DELIAH (Democratic Literacy and Humour), which examines the multifaceted role of humour in artistic forms, cultural spaces, and online and offline fora, identifying how humour can either support or undermine democratic participation and processes in Europe
- CONNOR, a Nordic network fostering academic collaboration on conspiracy theory research.
- European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), which brings together fact-checkers, media literacy experts and researchers to analyse and counter online disinformation.
- Information Tracer, a narrative-mapping technology used by researchers and journalists to understand nuanced online narratives.

- The Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET), the research arm of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, which investigates how technology is used in extremist mobilisation and dissemination.
- EU DisinfoLab and Vera.ai, which provide research and technological insight into disinformation analysis and verification tools.
- Agenda, a communications agency that helps organisations use strategic insight and influence to build impact and effectively reach the people that matter.
- Lie Detectors, a Europe-wide journalist-led non-profit that works to help teenagers, pre-teens and teachers tell news facts from news fakes.

6.2 Mechanisms of Engagement and Knowledge Exchange

SMIDGE engaged with these projects and networks through a mix of strategic actions:

- Social media interaction and visibility: Multiple sister projects and networks were initially identified on LinkedIn, X and other platforms, where SMIDGE followed their updates, reposted relevant content and established early visibility for bilateral awareness. This informal engagement often preceded more direct contact, creating familiarity that eased later collaboration.
- Joint participation in events and webinars: Representatives from related projects participated as guests or speakers in SMIDGE webinars and panels, providing comparative insights and contributing to knowledge exchange.
- Cross-promotion of outputs: Where relevant, SMIDGE posts highlighted publications, events and research tools from sister projects and networks, increasing mutual reach and visibility across European research and policy audiences.
- Academic outreach: In academic and policy forums where SMIDGE presented, references were made to complementary work by related initiatives, and email contacts were established to pursue future dialogue or joint dissemination.

By adopting an active monitoring and engagement approach, SMIDGE ensured that it was not operating in isolation but was embedded within a dynamic ecosystem of research and practice addressing online extremism and related phenomena.

7. Engagement Activities Report

Stakeholder engagement constituted a central pillar of the SMIDGE dissemination and exploitation strategy. Activities were designed not only to communicate findings but to actively involve relevant actors in dialogue, validation and uptake of project outputs. Engagement formats ranged from advisory consultations and policy roundtables to webinars, academic dissemination, media outreach and high-level institutional events. Each activity targeted specific stakeholder groups and aimed to facilitate concrete pathways for adoption of SMIDGE results within professional and policy contexts.

7.1 Advisory and Ethics Consultations

Throughout the project, meetings with SMIDGE Advisory and Ethics Board members were organised alongside each General Assembly gathering (UK, Denmark, Kosovo, Belgium) to ensure structured interaction with external experts. These consultations served as formal checkpoints at which interim findings, methodological approaches and dissemination plans were presented for review.

The sessions provided critical feedback that informed ethical safeguards, methodological refinements and dissemination priorities. By embedding external expertise within decision-making processes, the consortium strengthened the credibility, accountability and societal relevance of project activities in line with Responsible Research and Innovation principles.

7.2 Regional Policy Engagement

Panel Discussion at Kosovo Peace and Democracy Summit (September 2023)

Led by Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), SMIDGE contributed to a high-level panel titled “Truth vs. Disinformation: Combating Malign Foreign Influence in the Western Balkans.”

The event brought together 57 stakeholders including journalists, policymakers, civil society actors and security professionals from across the region. SMIDGE researchers presented project objectives, shared preliminary findings and introduced forthcoming educational and counter-narrative resources.

This participation positioned SMIDGE as a regional knowledge partner and facilitated new contacts with media organisations and NGOs, several of whom subsequently engaged in roundtable and dissemination activities.

EU Accession Exchange Forum (Kyiv, October 2025)

A project representative from KCSS participated in the 4th EU Accession Exchange Forum, contributing to discussions on security, resilience and hybrid threats in the Western Balkans. The forum provided opportunities to present SMIDGE insights to international policy actors and connect with institutions working on democratic governance and stability.

7.3 Webinar Series (2024–2025)

A structured five-part webinar series hosted by KCSS constituted one of SMIDGE’s principal transnational stakeholder engagement mechanisms. The online format enabled broad geographic participation and low-threshold access for researchers, policymakers, civil society practitioners, educators, journalists and security professionals across Europe and the Western Balkans. Across the series, webinars attracted more than 75 participants.

Each session combined expert presentations with moderated discussion and live Q&A to encourage interaction, knowledge exchange and direct dialogue between research and practice communities. Beyond dissemination of findings, the webinars aimed to validate emerging results, gather practitioner perspectives, and stimulate concrete uptake of SMIDGE outputs such as policy briefs,

counter-narrative resources and training materials. All webinars were recorded and subsequently published on the project's YouTube channel and website, ensuring continued accessibility, extended outreach and long-term exploitation potential beyond the live sessions.

Webinar 1 – Understanding and Countering FarRight Extremism in the EU and the Balkans (March 2024)

The first webinar focused on the evolution of far-right extremism in the EU and the Western Balkans and its increasing exploitation of digital spaces.

The session convened academics, security practitioners, civil society actors and public administration representatives to examine recruitment strategies, online mobilisation tactics and prevention mechanisms. Contributions from leading researchers in extremism studies and SMIDGE partners enabled an interdisciplinary dialogue linking structural drivers, such as economic insecurity, social polarisation and political disenchantment, to online narrative dynamics.

The webinar served to introduce SMIDGE objectives and forthcoming outputs to regional practitioners, validate research assumptions through practitioner feedback and establish connections with media and civil society organisations.

Outcomes included requests for follow-up materials and invitations to collaborate on policy briefs and regional workshops, demonstrating immediate interest in applying SMIDGE insights to practice.

Webinar 2 – Tackling Religious Radicalisation among Middle-Aged Adults in the Digital Era (June 2024)

The second webinar addressed religious radicalisation processes among middle-aged populations. The session brought together scholars in security studies, religious radicalisation and conflict transformation, alongside educators and practitioners working directly with affected communities. One of the speakers shared insights based on experience gained through their previous Horizon projects PAVE and DRIVE.

Discussions explored personal crises, mid-life transitions and socio-economic disenfranchisement as vulnerability factors, as well as the role of social media algorithms, echo chambers and conspiracy theories in reinforcing extremist beliefs.

The webinar supported the tailoring of counter-narrative approaches to specific demographic needs, informed the design of culturally sensitive communication materials and strengthened links with educators and community organisations.

Participants highlighted the need for targeted training and expressed interest in integrating SMIDGE learning resources into educational and prevention initiatives.

Webinar 3 – Extremist Narratives in Play: Gaming and Digital Spaces as Radicalization Arenas (November 2024)

The third webinar examined how extremist narratives infiltrate gaming communities and online interactive platforms. The session brought together researchers, youth specialists, educators and representatives from the GEMS Project, enabling cross-project exchange on digital radicalisation risks.

Presentations addressed mechanisms such as anonymity, algorithmic recommendation systems, grievance-based identity formation and migration from gaming platforms to encrypted communication spaces. The discussion highlighted the need for cooperation between gaming companies, policymakers and educators to implement preventive measures and safety-by-design approaches.

From an engagement perspective, this session extended SMIDGE's stakeholder base to youth and digital-culture practitioners, fostered collaboration with relevant EU projects and generated interest in adapting SMIDGE resources for younger audiences.

Webinar 4 – The Nexus Between Disinformation, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (January 2025)

The fourth webinar explored how manipulative narratives, misinformation and extremist propaganda spread through algorithm-driven platforms and private messaging applications, particularly among middle-aged adults.

Experts examined recommendation systems, conspiracy-driven content and encrypted messaging channels as key vectors of radicalisation. Practical countermeasures, including media literacy programmes, regulatory approaches and digital resilience strategies, were discussed.

Insights from this session directly informed the development of SMIDGE's educational outputs and media literacy tools. Participants emphasised the need for actionable training resources, reinforcing the relevance of the project's MOOC and counter-narrative materials for practitioner use.

Webinar 5 – Radicalisation and Extremist Narratives – Quo Vadis? (June 2025)

The fifth webinar was organised as an additional activity beyond the four webinars originally foreseen in the dissemination plan. It was introduced to strengthen collaboration with sister projects and to consolidate knowledge exchange at EU level.

Guest speakers from ARENAS Project and OppAttune Project presented complementary research and tools addressing extremist narratives, algorithmic amplification and everyday radicalisation. Discussions focused on shared frameworks, methodological alignment and opportunities for joint exploitation of results.

The session fostered interdisciplinary dialogue between researchers, policymakers and practitioners and resulted in commitments to maintain cross-project cooperation through follow-up workshops and shared dissemination activities. It reinforced SMIDGE's integration within the broader EU research ecosystem and enhanced prospects for sustainable uptake of outputs beyond project completion.

7.4 Academic and Research Community Engagement

University of Copenhagen SMIDGE Seminar (May 2024)

A two-day seminar hosted by University of Copenhagen convened scholars researching extremism, conspiracy cultures and digital participation. Presentations addressed narrative hybridisation,

online fandom communities and extremist rhetoric. Professor Tina Askanius, partner in OppAttune gave the keynote on far-right memes in a Swedish context.

As part of the seminar programme, a pre-seminar virtual keynote session was delivered by renowned extremism researcher, Julia Ebner, who shared insights into patterns of radicalisation across different ideological contexts and emerging global trends in extremist mobilisation. The online format allowed participation from additional international stakeholders who were unable to attend in person, thereby expanding the reach of the event and strengthening connections with the wider research community. The event was also attended by law enforcement and NGOs working with anti-radicalisation.

The event supported scientific validation of SMIDGE findings, facilitated expert feedback with researchers and practitioners and fostered opportunities for future research collaborations.

Conference Presentations

SMIDGE results were disseminated through participation in several high-level international academic conferences.

Representatives of the project presented at major European and international platforms, including the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) SIG 20 & 26 Conference 2024, the 19th European Congress of Psychology (ECP 2025), the Psychonomic Society Annual Meeting, and the Society of Judgment and Decision Making (SJDM) Conference. These events brought together leading scholars in cognitive science, psychology and decision-making, allowing SMIDGE to engage with specialist research audiences and expand its scientific stakeholder network.

In the field of internet and digital culture research, the findings were presented at the 2024 European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) in Slovenia, Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) in Chicago, and Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) Conference in the United Kingdom. In 2025, SMIDGE results were presented at NordMedia in Denmark. These internationally recognised forums convene scholars investigating internet governance, digital participation and online cultures, offering valuable opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue and visibility among researchers examining digital extremism and online narratives.

From a policy-oriented perspective, SMIDGE was represented at the Policy & Internet Conference 2024 (University of Sydney), a prominent platform connecting academics, policymakers and practitioners concerned with internet governance and regulatory frameworks. Presentations at this venue facilitated engagement with stakeholders working on digital policy, platform regulation and information integrity.

In the context of extremism research and prevention, SMIDGE results were presented at international conference Conceptualising, Understanding, and Preventing Mixed Forms of Extremism (CUPMFE) at Liverpool University in 2024, and at the Nordic Conference on Violent Extremism (NCVE) at Aarhus University, Denmark, in 2025.

Across these conferences, SMIDGE engaged directly with diverse academic and policy stakeholders through presentations, Q&A sessions and networking discussions. Participation enabled exchange of feedback, strengthened connections with potential collaborators, and enhanced awareness of project outputs among influential research communities.



7.5 Media Engagement

Broadcasting and Media Interviews

Researchers provided expert commentary through national broadcasters and international media outlets, extending the visibility of SMIDGE findings beyond academic and policy audiences. Researchers from University of Copenhagen participated in interviews on DR's *Genstart* and *Udsyn* podcast, discussing contemporary culture wars, conspiracy theories and polarisation, Zetlands podcast and The Wild Minds of Science Podcast on online conspiracy theories, and on Tjekdet, Politiken, Journalisten and several other national news outlets where project insights were applied to analysing the influence of social media on elections and democratic processes.

At national and international level, project findings were further disseminated through interviews with major media outlets such as BBC Radio, LBC News and ETC.se, Swedish online newspaper. A researcher from De Montfort University contributed to coverage in [The New World](#), [The Guardian](#) and the [Japanese media platform Nikkei](#), where SMIDGE research informed broader discussions on online extremism, misinformation and democratic resilience.

These appearances positioned SMIDGE researchers as trusted expert sources and significantly broadened public awareness of the project's evidence-based findings.

Social Media and Digital Outreach

To complement traditional media engagement, SMIDGE adopted a proactive digital dissemination strategy through YouTube, X, LinkedIn and other social platforms. Recorded interviews and expert conversations were produced and promoted in accessible audiovisual formats to reach practitioners and general audiences.

These included an interview with MEP Brando Benifei addressing the intersection of disinformation and artificial intelligence, as well as interviews with researchers and practitioners specialising in media literacy, digital cultures and online narratives.

7.6 Youth Workshop in Gjakova

This workshop engaged university students in Kosovo. Participants were introduced to SMIDGE research and trained to identify manipulative online narratives. The interactive format supported critical thinking and local capacity building. Feedback indicated increased awareness and willingness to act as peer educators.

7.7 Roundtables

Journalist Roundtable in Brussels

Organised by Inclusive Europe and De Montfort University, this roundtable targeted around 20 journalists reporting on extremism and disinformation. The objective was to translate SMIDGE findings into newsroom practice.



Participants discussed ethical reporting, algorithmic challenges and effective counter-narrative framing. Several attendees requested follow-up materials, which were subsequently provided, demonstrating direct uptake potential.

Kosovo Roundtable with Security Professionals (Prishtina, November 2024)

KCSS further convened a dedicated roundtable with over 20 participants representing security institutions, researchers and civil society practitioners. Discussions focused on disinformation ecosystems, extremist narratives and hybrid threats affecting Kosovo and neighbouring countries.

SMIDGE findings were used to inform the dialogue and participants expressed interest in applying the project's counter-narrative and training materials within local prevention and education initiatives.

7.8 Council of Europe No Hate Speech Week

Participation in this multi-stakeholder forum allowed SMIDGE to present results to equality bodies, civil society and public institutions. The co-hosted workshop facilitated collaborative mapping of hate narratives and development of counter-strategies, aligning closely with project objectives.

7.9 High-Level Policy and Exploitation Events

European Parliament Workshop (July 2025)

Inclusive Europe participated in a policy workshop hosted at the European Parliament, titled "*AI as a Tool to Promote Democracy*." The session brought together approximately 40 policymakers, institutional representatives and practitioners working at the intersection of digital governance and democratic innovation. Participation enabled direct networking with decision-makers and provided an opportunity to introduce SMIDGE findings and tools to stakeholders engaged in shaping EU policy debates on technology, democracy and information integrity.

Research for Breakfast – University of Copenhagen (October 2024)

As part of the University of Copenhagen's "Research for Breakfast" series, a SMIDGE representative presented project insights during a high-level dialogue titled "Between Meme-Culture and Shitstorms: Conspiracy Theories and Online Harassment of Public Personas." The session convened representatives from media organisations, political parties, public institutions, municipalities and private communication actors, alongside a Danish government minister.

The event combined research presentation with policy dialogue and a co-creation session, during which preliminary SMIDGE findings were discussed and participants collaboratively identified strategies to address online conspiracy narratives and harassment of public figures. The session strengthened engagement with national policymakers and communication professionals and demonstrated the practical relevance of SMIDGE research in institutional settings.

Final International Conference (Brussels, January 2026)

The closing conference, titled “The Invisible Middle: Understanding Online Extremism in Middle-Aged Adults in Europe,” was held on 29 January 2026 in Brussels and convened 53 participants selected from around 1,500 invited stakeholders. Representation included EU policymakers, institutional representatives, journalists, researchers, security experts, civil society leaders and digital governance practitioners, ensuring a balanced cross-sector dialogue.

The programme combined presentations of empirical SMIDGE findings with legal, technological, media and policy perspectives. Dedicated panels brought together representatives from EU institutions, sister Horizon projects and civil society organisations, facilitating structured exchange on prevention strategies, digital literacy tools and regulatory approaches. The conference also showcased key project outputs, including the MOOC platform, documentary and counter-narrative resources, positioning them for institutional uptake.

Beyond dissemination, the event functioned as the project’s primary exploitation platform. It enabled direct interaction between researchers and decision-makers, fostered clustering with related EU-funded initiatives, and created opportunities for follow-up collaboration at national and European levels. Numerous participants expressed interest in continued cooperation and in integrating SMIDGE outputs into policy discussions, training activities and educational initiatives, indicating strong potential for sustained impact beyond the project’s lifetime.

Westminster Policy & Stakeholder Exploitation Event (London, February 2026)

A high-level event in Westminster will bring together members of the UK Parliament, representatives of UK and EU institutions, policymakers, media professionals, civil society organisations, fact-checkers and technology stakeholders in February 2026.

The session focuses specifically on uptake of SMIDGE outputs, including the MOOC, counter-narratives, documentary and database platform. By targeting decision-makers and professional communities, the event aims to translate research findings into actionable policy and practice.

7.10 Synergies with Other Projects

Collaboration and clustering with related EU-funded research initiatives formed an important component of SMIDGE’s stakeholder engagement and dissemination strategy. In line with Horizon Europe’s emphasis on maximising impact through cooperation and knowledge-sharing, the consortium actively sought to establish synergies with projects addressing complementary themes, including extremist narratives, political polarisation, digital radicalisation, emotional drivers of belief formation and community resilience.

These synergies were operationalised through joint participation in webinars, seminars, conferences and public events, as well as through informal exchanges, cross-promotion of outputs and mutual visibility across communication channels.

Several projects contributed directly to SMIDGE activities as guest speakers or participants. During the first SMIDGE webinar, representatives from the PAVE and Drive projects presented their research on ethno-political radicalisation and community resilience, providing comparative insights that enriched discussions on regional and societal drivers of extremism. The third webinar featured contributions from the GEMS project, which shared findings on gaming environments and their potential role in radicalisation processes, thereby complementing SMIDGE’s analysis of digital and hybrid spaces.

The fifth webinar, organised as an additional session beyond the original dissemination plan, further strengthened cross-project dialogue by inviting speakers from the sister projects ARENAS and OppAttune. These experts presented their respective methodological approaches and tools and engaged in structured discussion with SMIDGE researchers, facilitating mutual learning and identifying opportunities for longer-term cooperation and joint exploitation of results.

Beyond webinars, collaboration extended to other dissemination and academic exchange formats. Researchers from OppAttune contributed to SMIDGE seminars and participated in the project documentary, offering expertise on psychological drivers of extremism and polarisation. In addition, a joint PhD workshop titled “*Digital Reactionary Movements*” was co-organised by SMIDGE and OppAttune at Malmö University in 2025. The workshop brought together eight doctoral researchers and senior scholars for in-depth discussion and feedback sessions on emerging research related to far-right movements, anti-democratic politics and online extremism. This event strengthened early-career researcher engagement, fostered cross-project academic collaboration, and created a space for critical dialogue on digital radicalisation trends.

OppAttune is also a collaborator and co-editor of the special issue on *Mainstreaming Extremism* for the Journal of Popular Communication to be published in the spring of 2026 bringing together new research in the field. Representatives from ARENAS, OppAttune and ENCODE were also speakers at the SMIDGE Final Conference (Panel III: Common Challenges and Best Practices from Related Projects), sharing their perspectives on extremist narratives, emotional mobilisation and democratic engagement. Furthermore, members of the DELIAH and DEMINE projects attended the SMIDGE Conference in Brussels, supporting networking and future collaboration.

Thematically, these projects address closely related dimensions of the issues explored by SMIDGE. ARENAS examines the circulation and remediation of extremist narratives across Europe; OppAttune focuses on dialogue-based responses to political extremism; ENCODE investigates the emotional mechanisms that drive political beliefs and polarisation; GEMS analyses risks within gaming ecosystems; while PAVE and Drive explore ethno-political radicalisation and community resilience. DEMINE and DELIAH contribute further perspectives on democratic participation, online harms and prevention strategies.

Through these sustained exchanges, SMIDGE positioned itself within a broader European ecosystem of research and practice. This clustering approach strengthened dissemination channels, enabled methodological cross-fertilisation, and enhanced opportunities for joint exploitation and long-term uptake of project outputs beyond the lifetime of the consortium.

Project / Network	Thematic focus	Type of engagement with SMIDGE	Outcome / added value
ARENAS	Circulation and remediation of extremist narratives	Guest speakers in webinars and panels; participation in project events	Comparative methodologies shared; strengthened cross-project collaboration and joint exploitation opportunities
OppAttune	Dialogue-based responses to political	Guest speakers in webinars; participation in	Psychological perspectives integrated; enriched

Project / Network	Thematic focus	Type of engagement with SMIDGE	Outcome / added value
	extremism and polarisation	seminars; joint PhD workshop and documentary	interpretation of behavioural drivers; knowledge exchange
ENCODE	Emotional drivers of political beliefs and polarisation	Panel participation and networking at events	Conceptual alignment on affective and cognitive mechanisms influencing narratives
GEMS	Radicalisation risks in gaming environments	Speaker in third webinar	Extended SMIDGE analysis to gaming ecosystems and youth digital spaces
PAVE	Ethno-political radicalisation and resilience	Speaker in first webinar	Regional insights and comparative prevention approaches shared
Drive	Social exclusion and its impact on radicalisation	Speaker in first webinar	Contextual expertise on the role of social exclusion, far-right radicalisation
DEMINE	Democratic participation and online harms	Participation in Final Conference	Networking and identification of complementarities for future collaboration
DELIAH	Democratic engagement and information disorders	Participation in Final Conference	Knowledge exchange and exploration of dissemination synergies

Table 6 Project Synergies

7.11 Strategic Liaison

SMIDGE has also collaborated with the Connor Network in Denmark and Hamlett Films for the production of specialized counter-narrative content. These networks enhance the project's visibility and ensure that findings reach diverse geographic and professional regions.

8. Governance and Coordination of Stakeholder Engagement

INEU led WP8, taking responsibility for the planning and monitoring of all dissemination and engagement activities. All partners were required to contribute to the stakeholder log and participate in outreach events. Regular reporting ensured alignment across work packages. The shared database functioned as a lightweight customer-relationship-management tool, enabling systematic tracking of contacts and interactions.

SMIDGE manages stakeholder data responsibly in line with FAIR principles and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Only publicly available professional contact information was used, invitations included clear opt-out mechanisms, and personal data were stored securely. This ensured ethical and lawful engagement practices.

9. Impact and Lessons Learned

Engagement activities generated tangible benefits for the project. Stakeholders provided feedback that informed the refinement of outputs, including educational materials and policy recommendations. Media collaborations increased public visibility. Cross-project partnerships strengthened European coordination. Importantly, several stakeholders expressed interest in continued cooperation beyond project completion, indicating the sustainability of networks established.

The experience highlighted several lessons. Early establishment of a shared stakeholder registry proved essential for coordination. Webinars and hybrid events enabled efficient transnational participation. Collaboration with journalists significantly amplified impact.

However, engagement with large technology platforms proved more challenging, reflecting structural barriers to accessing corporate actors. Future initiatives may benefit from earlier targeted outreach and formalised industry partnerships.