

## Smidge Newsletter

April 2026

After three years of research, collaboration and dialogue across Europe, the **SMIDGE Project (Social Media Narratives: Addressing Extremism in Middle Age)** has officially come to a close. What began as an ambitious effort to understand how online extremism, misinformation and conspiracy narratives affect middle-aged adults has now resulted in a rich set of findings, tools and resources that will continue to inform policy, education and public debate well beyond the project's lifetime.



### A Powerful Closing Moment: The Final Conference

Our journey concluded with the international conference **"The Invisible Middle: Understanding Online Extremism in Middle-Aged Adults in Europe,"** held in Brussels in January 2026. Bringing together policymakers, researchers, journalists, civil society actors and security experts, the event showcased SMIDGE's key findings and outputs - from media literacy tools to policy recommendations. Participants engaged in lively discussions on platform accountability, digital resilience, and the role of media and storytelling in shaping democratic discourse. The conference also served as a platform for exchange with sister Horizon Europe projects, strengthening collaboration and ensuring that SMIDGE's impact will continue through shared efforts.

### Roundtables and Policy Dialogue

Throughout the project, SMIDGE placed strong emphasis on dialogue with practitioners and decision-makers. Dedicated roundtables held in **Kosovo** and **Brussels** created space for journalists and security professionals to reflect on project findings and explore how they could be applied in real-world contexts. In February 2026, SMIDGE's influence extended to the UK Parliament environment through a high-level **Westminster stakeholder event**, where project results, including the MOOC, counter-narratives and policy tools, were presented to policymakers and institutional stakeholders. This event marked an important step toward translating research into policy and practice.

### Middle Rage – Social Media and the War on Democracy

One of SMIDGE's most powerful outputs is its documentary, **Middle Rage – Social Media and the War on Democracy**, which explores how social media narratives shape emotions, beliefs and political engagement among middle-aged adults. Combining research insights with personal stories and expert perspectives, the film provides a compelling and accessible way to understand the project's core themes. The documentary is now available for all audiences.

### From Evidence to Action: Policy briefs, guidelines and training resources

A key priority for SMIDGE has been ensuring that its research leads to practical change. To support this, the consortium developed **five policy frameworks and guidelines**, tailored to different stakeholder groups including policymakers, platforms, journalists, law enforcement and the general public. These provide concrete recommendations on addressing misinformation and strengthening digital resilience.

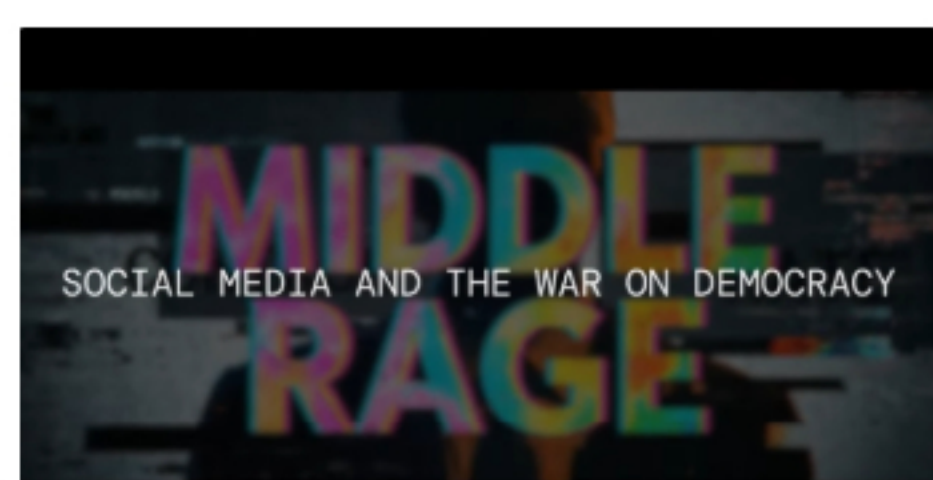
In addition, the project launched a **MOOC, practitioners' toolkit, counter narratives campaign** including a series of **visual memes** designed to challenge harmful narratives and promote critical thinking in accessible and engaging formats.

### A Lasting Legacy

While the project has formally ended, its results remain openly available. The **SMIDGE website**, documentary, policy resources, counter-narratives, database platform, training materials and recordings will continue to serve educators, policymakers, journalists and researchers across Europe and beyond.

Most importantly, SMIDGE has helped shift attention toward a group that has often been overlooked: middle-aged adults - not as passive recipients of information, but as active participants in our digital societies.

We would like to thank all our partners, stakeholders, speakers and followers who supported SMIDGE over the past three years. Your engagement has been essential in ensuring that this work continues to make a difference.



**Documentary**  
Middle Rage – Social Media and the War on Democracy: documentary on social media's impact on democracy, focusing on middle-aged audiences.

[Learn More](#)



**Counter-Narratives**  
A collection of evidence-based visual materials designed to challenge extremist narratives and promote critical thinking in online environments.

[Learn More](#)



**SMIDGE Database**  
An open-access platform providing curated research data, resources and analysis on online extremism and misinformation affecting middle-aged adults.

[Learn More](#)



**MOOC**  
Free online courses developed to help journalists, educators and citizens understand and counter online extremism, misinformation and conspiracy narratives.

[Learn More](#)



**Policy Briefs**  
Practical guidelines offering tailored recommendations for policymakers, platforms, media and practitioners to address misinformation and extremism.

[Learn More](#)



**SmidgeCast**  
SMIDGE Project podcast exploring online extremism, disinformation, media literacy, and the experiences of middle-aged audiences in Europe.

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