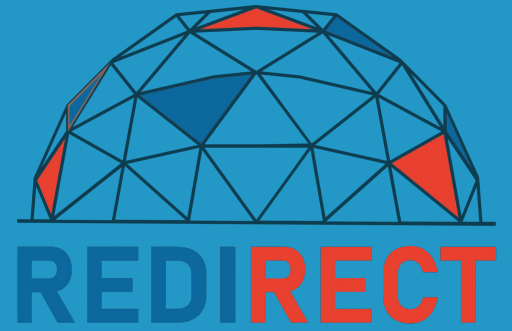




SECOND REDIRECT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

KRAKÓW,
3-4 JUNE 2024

CONSORTIUM MEETING

Report drafted by
UNIVERSITY OF SIENA

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SUMMARY



This report presents the outcomes of the second REDIRECT General Assembly, also framed in the project materials as the 2nd Annual Progress Meeting, held in Kraków on 3-4 June 2024 and hosted by Jagiellonian University at the Faculty of International and Political Studies.

The meeting represented a key moment in the development of REDIRECT. After the first year of activity, the project had moved beyond the initial phase of conceptual framing and organisational set-up. It was entering a more demanding stage in which theoretical work, survey design, experimental research, qualitative fieldwork, dissemination, stakeholder engagement and project management had to be brought into closer alignment.

The General Assembly was therefore not simply a progress update. It functioned as a coordination exercise for the whole consortium, allowing partners to assess what had already been achieved, clarify the next steps for each work package, and discuss how the different strands of the project should speak to one another.

A central objective was to connect the diagnosis of the representative disconnect with the empirical instruments needed to study it and with the strategies of reconnection and redirection that will be developed in the following phases of the project.

EVIDENCE BASE

The report draws on the Kraków programme, work package presentations, WP2 survey materials, WP8 workshop files, post-Kraków memo and follow-up taskforce materials.

BACKGROUND OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Kraków General Assembly took place at the end of REDIRECT's first year. It followed the earlier consortium meeting in Brussels and marked a shift from project architecture to implementation. During the first months, partners had worked on conceptual mapping, deliverable preparation, survey registries, ethics, data management and the initial definition of dissemination practices. The Kraków meeting brought these strands together and translated them into a more operational roadmap.

The location and timing of the meeting were significant. Hosted by Jagiellonian University, one of the project partners directly involved in the analysis of parliaments, party systems, youth and democratic imagination, the Assembly provided a space to connect theoretical debates on representation with concrete research planning. It also allowed the consortium to discuss the first reporting period and the practical implications of the amendment process and the updated project timeline.

The meeting combined plenary sessions, work package presentations, round tables, a hybrid discussion with members of the Scientific Advisory Board, and a workshop devoted to youth and politics. This structure reflected the evolving character of REDIRECT: a project that seeks not only to diagnose the representative disconnect, but also to produce data, experimental evidence, qualitative insights, policy-facing outputs and strategies for democratic renewal.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The main objective of the Kraków General Assembly was to consolidate the transition from conceptual preparation to coordinated empirical implementation. The consortium needed to ensure that work packages were not developing as isolated components, but as parts of a common research architecture.

- Consolidate the conceptual framework of representative disconnect and representative ecology.
- Align the empirical components of the project, including surveys, experiments, focus groups and interviews.
- Review the design of the mass and elite surveys, including questionnaire structure, item selection and quality controls.
- Coordinate the experimental, Delphi and qualitative research activities planned for the following months.
- Clarify dissemination, publication, stakeholder engagement and policy-impact strategies.
- Prepare the consortium for the first reporting period and the remaining 2024 deliverables.

Beyond these technical objectives, the meeting also aimed to reinforce a common project identity. As REDIRECT entered a phase of intensive data collection, stronger internal communication and clearer procedures became essential conditions for the quality of the research.

WORKING PRINCIPLE

The Assembly was designed to make theoretical, empirical and managerial decisions mutually visible across the consortium.

CONCEPTUALISING DISCONNECT

WP1 and the ecology of representation

The first major discussion focused on the conceptual foundations of the project. WP1, presented by Dario Castiglione, addressed the nature of representative democracy, historical development of the modern state, constitutional government, political parties, civil society, the public sphere and the institutional conditions that sustain democratic legitimacy.

Rather than treating disconnect as a simple failure of communication between citizens and representatives, the discussion encouraged the consortium to understand it as a deeper transformation in the ecology of representation. This means looking at the formal and informal institutions, practices, expectations and political roles that make representative democracy work.

Why the framework matters

The conceptual discussion was important because it provided a common vocabulary for the empirical work that followed. The project's surveys, experiments, focus groups and interviews all require a shared understanding of what is being measured and why it matters.

The Kraków discussion therefore helped connect REDIRECT's normative and historical concerns with its empirical agenda. It clarified that the project does not study disconnection only as dissatisfaction, distrust or non-participation, but as a systemic transformation in the relationship between citizens, representatives, institutions and intermediary actors.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The representative disconnect should be studied as a structural transformation of the broader ecology of representation, not merely as a gap in communication.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND SURVEY DESIGN

WP2 as empirical bridge

The Siena team presented the state of play of WP2, including the completed registry of datasets and survey items. This work mapped a large body of public opinion and elite surveys, identifying indicators of trust, satisfaction, representation, responsiveness and democratic attitudes across time and countries.

The registry was discussed not only as a deliverable, but also as a continuity guide for the REDIRECT survey component and as a possible future dashboard for the project website. It helped translate the conceptual map of disconnect into operational dimensions for comparative research.

Mass and elite surveys

The discussion then turned to the design of the mass and elite surveys. Partners reviewed the calendar for the questionnaires, mass survey dataset and elite survey dataset, as well as issues of sampling, quality checks, panel providers, elite contact collection, fieldwork management and the role of country experts.

A central point was the need to maintain a strong overlap between the citizen and elite questionnaires, while also allowing space for items on representative preferences, affective disconnect, insecurity, trust and responsiveness. This balance will be essential for the later comparative analysis of mass-elite congruence and representative expectations.

MAPPING THE DIMENSIONS OF DISCONNECT

The discussions on intermediation and governance focused on the role of parliaments, parties and party systems in sustaining or weakening the representative connection. The Jagiellonian team presented work on parliamentary disconnect, with particular attention to the weakening of parliamentary debate, the quality of discourse, othering, delegitimisation of political opponents and polarisation.

The pilot work on parliamentary debates was presented as a way to test coding strategies and clarify how discursive practices in parliament may reveal deeper patterns of vertical disconnect. The ARENA presentation on partisanship and party transformation added a broader systemic perspective. Parties were discussed as crucial linkage structures: they organise public competition, channel social demands, produce leadership and connect citizens to the institutions of government.

At the same time, the transformation of parties, declining internal democracy, personalisation, cartelisation, populist styles of politics and the erosion of political socialisation may all contribute to weakening representative democracy. The Kraków discussion therefore placed parties and parliaments at the centre of the diagnosis of democratic disconnection.

ANALYTICAL LINK

WP3 and WP4 connect citizens' perceptions of disconnect with institutional, parliamentary and party-system transformations.

EXPERIMENTS AND RECONNECTION STRATEGIES

The second day moved the discussion toward experiments, reconnection strategies and redirection. WP5 presented the design of survey experiments on responsiveness, trust, participation and citizens' evaluations of democracy. The work package aims to understand how citizens respond to different forms of representative responsiveness and how these responses are mediated by political trust, satisfaction, emotions and perceptions of efficacy.

Particular attention was given to the online vignette experiment, which distinguishes between representatives' willingness to help and their capacity to act. This design allows the project to separate symbolic responsiveness, actual responsiveness, reluctance and powerlessness. The discussion also addressed the forthcoming conjoint experiment, which will examine types and levels of responsiveness, legislator characteristics, trust in parliament, satisfaction with democracy and likelihood of voting.

WP6 presented the Delphi exercise designed to evaluate reconnection strategies. Reconnection strategies were defined as attempts to revive or improve conventional channels of intermediation, especially parties and parliaments. The three main families of strategies discussed were empowering citizens, revitalising political parties and making parliaments more representative.

REDIRECTION, YOUTH AND DEMOCRATIC IMAGINATION

WP7 and democratic innovation

WP7 shifted attention from reconnection to redirection. The presentation discussed democratic innovations, mini-publics and the challenge of linking citizens' assemblies and deliberative forums to the broader representative system.

Redirection was framed as a more ambitious process than reconnecting existing institutions. It requires rethinking the democratic architecture itself, including parliaments, citizens' forums, new channels of informal representation and the relationship between mini and mass publics.

WP8, youth and interviews

The WP8 sessions focused on youth focus groups in Brussels and Kraków and on the preparation of elite interviews with MPs and MEPs. The materials presented showed that the focus group work had already produced a target group definition, script, pilot work, several Brussels focus groups and a codebook.

The discussion highlighted methodological challenges: how to compare focus groups, combine coding, account for local specificity, and connect young citizens' to broader questions of representative disconnect. The elite interview workshop opened the way for a follow-up task force.

FOLLOW-UP

After Kraków, a WP8 task force was launched to refine the interview strategy, ethics materials, consent procedures and fieldwork protocol.

DISSEMINATION, IMPACT AND COORDINATION

The Kraków meeting also addressed dissemination, communication and project management. The Siena team presented the progress of WP9 and WP10, including the website, social media strategy, conference templates, stakeholder database and upcoming dissemination tools. A key message was that REDIRECT needed a more systematic and collective communication effort.

Partners were encouraged to link their activities to the project, share planned events in advance, use REDIRECT templates and involve junior researchers. The stakeholder database, based on primary and secondary sources, was presented as a resource for interviews, podcasts, Delphi recruitment and wider engagement.

The post-Kraków memo further emphasised the need to maximise policy impact, scientific impact and social impact. It encouraged the consortium to plan strategies ahead, identify realistic targets, monitor progress, pursue a multi-player communication strategy, work with stakeholders and engage with sister projects. The memo also identified possible outlets for blog posts and forums, the development of policy briefs, and the use of project-management tool.

FROM RESEARCH TO IMPACT

Dissemination was framed not as an additional task, but as a mechanism for connecting REDIRECT's research with policy, stakeholders and public debate.

POST-KRAKÓW FOLLOW-UP

The General Assembly produced a set of concrete follow-up actions. These actions show the practical value of the meeting: it consolidated the project's theoretical direction while also translating decisions into timelines, working groups and tools for implementation. The post-Kraków phase therefore became a bridge between first-year reflection and the more intensive data-collection phase planned for the following months.

TASK FORCES

Relaunch and coordinate task forces for survey work, WP8 interviews, data collection and expert recruitment.

DATA COLLECTION

Prepare the mass and elite surveys, survey experiments, Delphi exercise, focus groups and elite interviews.

STAKEHOLDERS

Use the stakeholder database for dissemination, Delphi recruitment, interviews, podcasts and policy engagement.

COORDINATION TOOLS

Implement EasyRedmine and reinforce internal communication, including junior monthly meetings.

PUBLICATION PLAN

Develop a clearer publication strategy, including scientific outputs, blogs, forums and policy briefs.

REPORTING

Align partner inputs, deliverables and administrative materials for the first reporting period and updated GANTT chart.

CONCLUSIONS



Overall, the Kraków General Assembly marked a transition from conceptual and organisational preparation to coordinated empirical implementation. The consortium clarified the conceptual architecture of the project, reviewed the design of the survey and experimental components, advanced the qualitative strategy, and identified the main management and dissemination priorities for the months ahead.

The meeting also produced concrete follow-up actions: the post-Kraków memo, the relaunch of taskforces for data collection, coordination around the elite survey, the development of junior monthly meetings, and planning for future dissemination, publication and stakeholder engagement.

In this sense, the Kraków Assembly consolidated REDIRECT as an integrated research agenda. It brought together diagnosis, measurement, reconnection and redirection into a shared framework for studying and addressing the representative disconnect.

The added value of the meeting was precisely this integration: it allowed partners to move from a collection of work packages toward a common project strategy, combining theoretical depth, empirical coordination, policy relevance and practical management.

CONTACT US



www.redirect.unisi.it



redirect@unisi.it



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