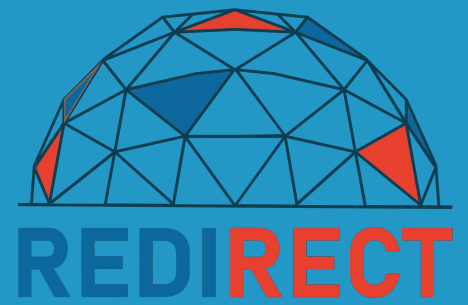




THIRD REDIRECT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

BRUSSELS,
15 MAY 2025

CONSORTIUM MEETING

Report drafted by
UNIVERSITY OF SIENA

MAY 2025

SUMMARY

This report presents the outcomes of the third REDIRECT General Assembly held at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel on 15 May 2025. The meeting brought together the consortium at a crucial stage of the project, when the first major empirical activities had been completed or were entering their most intensive phase, and when REDIRECT was preparing to move from diagnosis toward strategies of reconnection and democratic rectification.

The General Assembly was structured around three main objectives. First, it aimed to take stock of progress across work packages, with particular attention to milestones, deliverables, deadlines and data-gathering activities. Second, it provided space for a broader conceptual discussion on representation, deliberation, democratic innovation and the future of representative democracy, through interventions by invited speakers and project partners. Third, it prepared the ground for the stakeholder scenario-building event scheduled for the following day.

The meeting therefore functioned as a hinge between internal coordination and outward-facing engagement. It connected the consortium's empirical work on representative disconnect with wider debates on deliberative democracy, democratic innovation, university-based participation and the public role of research. It also clarified the next steps required to strengthen dissemination, publication strategy, reporting and stakeholder communication.

EVIDENCE BASE

The report draws on the General Meeting agenda, the UNISI state-of-play presentation, VUB updates, Mark Warren's Participedia slides, Emilie Frenkiel's Deliberative Universities presentation, and linked scenario-building material.

BACKGROUND OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The third REDIRECT General Assembly took place in a more mature phase of the project. By May 2025, the consortium had moved beyond its initial phase of conceptual framing and organisational set-up. The first milestones had been reached, all work packages were operating at full capacity, and the project had begun to produce publications, disseminative outputs and public-facing tools.

At the same time, the next phase required tighter coordination. Several deliverables were approaching completion, including work on rescaling and disconnect, MP interview protocols, the elite survey dataset, the conjoint questionnaire, the Delphi exercise, youth focus group transcripts and interview transcripts. The meeting therefore served both as a progress review and as a strategic planning moment.

The timing of the Assembly was also significant because it immediately preceded the REDIRECT Scenario Building Event on 16 May. This gave the consortium an opportunity to align internal priorities before engaging with stakeholders on possible futures of representative democracy. The meeting thus connected project management, scientific reflection and impact-oriented preparation.

PROJECT PHASE

The Assembly marked the transition from design and data collection toward analysis, publication, dissemination and policy impact.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The main objectives of the Third General Assembly were to consolidate the state of the project and prepare the consortium for the next cycle of research, reporting and dissemination. The meeting also aimed to strengthen the links between REDIRECT's empirical diagnosis of representative disconnect and broader debates on democratic innovation.

- Review the state of play of REDIRECT, including milestones, deliverables and deadlines.
- Align work packages around the project's empirical, dissemination and publication strategies.
- Discuss the survey component, elite survey fieldwork, codebook, data exploitation and future analyses.
- Connect REDIRECT with deliberative democracy and university-based democratic innovation.
- Prepare the consortium for the 16 May Scenario Building Event and stakeholder engagement.
- Clarify next reporting obligations, open-access publication practices and communication tools.

These objectives reflected the increasingly integrated nature of the project. REDIRECT had reached a point at which scientific work, administrative coordination and public engagement could no longer be treated separately.

STATE OF PLAY AND SURVEY COMPONENT

coordinator's overview

The first part of the General Assembly was dedicated to the state of play of the consortium.

The coordinator's presentation emphasised that REDIRECT had entered a new phase: work packages were fully active, first publications were emerging, and a more visible scientific and public profile was being developed.

The presentation also underlined two major challenges ahead: the need to interact more systematically with other projects and the need to reach a broader audience through more creative communication, including *The Loop* series, new online tools and the intelligent use of AI-supported dissemination.

WP2 and the empirical infrastructure

Particular attention was given to the REDIRECT survey component. WP2 had completed the registry of datasets and survey items, the report on long-term trends, the mass and MP survey questionnaires, and the mass survey dataset. The elite survey dataset remained on fieldwork and was described as a difficult but crucial task.

The discussion highlighted the importance of transforming the survey infrastructure into a collective resource. Although some data remained sensitive and embargoed, the codebook was presented as a tool to improve transparency, facilitate future citations and support the scientific exploitation of the survey material.

KEY TRANSITION

REDIRECT moved from producing survey infrastructure toward using that infrastructure for cross-work-package analysis and publications.

CONNECTING WORK PACKAGES

From data to interpretation

The General Assembly offered an opportunity to align different strands of REDIRECT's research agenda. The contextual analysis of representative disconnect was connected with work on rescaling, emergency politics, insecurity, affective polarisation, elite responsiveness, youth representation, deliberation and innovation.

This cross-work package discussion was important because REDIRECT's added value lies not only in producing separate empirical outputs, but in connecting them into a broader account of how representative democracy is being transformed across European levels.

VUB updates and WP8

The VUB team presented ongoing and forthcoming contributions to WP8, including youth focus groups and young politician interviews. The youth focus group dataset was approaching completion, while the MP interview protocols had been submitted and the wider REDIRECT interview dataset across eight countries was being prepared.

VUB also presented next steps for valorisation: joint codebook development, systematic coding, comparative analysis of youth focus groups and interviews, and possible future academic workshops. These points reinforced the link between qualitative fieldwork and REDIRECT's democratic imagination.

DISSEMINATION AND PUBLICATION STRATEGY

A major part of the meeting concerned dissemination, communication and publication strategy. The consortium discussed the launch of a REDIRECT series on ECPR's *The Loop*, conceived as a way to translate the project's conceptual and empirical insights into short, accessible contributions for a broader academic and policy audience.

Proposed themes included whether representative democracy should be abandoned, how the representative ecology can be understood, how representation scales across Europe, how youth and gender structure democratic support, how younger generations imagine democracy, and whether deliberation can bridge the crisis of representation. This discussion was connected to a wider reflection on communication formats, including infographics, policy briefs, keys and pills on disconnect and reconnect, and the restructuring of the project website through the collaboration with NOUS Media.

The publication plan was also discussed in formal terms. Partners were reminded of the need to ensure open access publication and to coordinate responsibilities according to contribution and institutional capacity. The Politics & Governance special issue was presented as a major collective output.

FROM RESEARCH TO IMPACT

The dissemination strategy was designed to connect scientific outputs with public debate, policy communication and stakeholder engagement.

REPRESENTATION, DELIBERATION AND DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

The General Assembly was enriched by external and partner presentations that connected REDIRECT's diagnosis of representative disconnect with broader debates on deliberation and democratic innovation. Mark Warren's presentation on Participedia introduced the platform as a global knowledge infrastructure for mapping, classifying and assessing democratic innovations.

Participedia was presented as a response to the proliferation of participatory and deliberative processes since the 1990s and to the need for systematic knowledge about what kinds of processes exist, why they develop, and under what conditions they work. It combines qualitative case descriptions with data categories on normative purposes, issue features, participatory design choices, modes of communication and participant selection.

This intervention resonated strongly with REDIRECT's interest in reconnecting citizens and institutions through new democratic practices, while also underlining the importance of comparative, open and publicly usable knowledge. The discussion with Pierangelo Isernia, drawing on EUComMeet, further situated REDIRECT within the field of European research on deliberation, participation and multilevel governance.

DELIBERATIVE UNIVERSITIES AND YOUNG CITIZENS

Student citizens' assemblies

In the afternoon, Emilie Frenkiel presented the Network of Deliberating Universities and Student Citizens' Assemblies. Her intervention shifted the focus toward the role of universities as spaces where deliberative practices can be tested, institutionalised and connected to pressing societal challenges.

Starting from the climate crisis and the difficulty of political systems in responding adequately to ecological transformation, the presentation explored the potential of citizens' assemblies, and especially student citizens' assemblies, as mechanisms for informed reflection, collective judgement and democratic learning.

Universities as democratic actors

Universities were presented as actors that can contribute to ecological and democratic transformation by training young citizens, conducting and sharing scientific research, reducing their own institutional impact, and supporting local and national actors in processes of change.

This discussion was especially relevant for REDIRECT because it connected deliberation to the project's broader concern with youth, representation and democratic repair. Student citizens' assemblies were presented as institutional experiments capable of cultivating democratic sensibilities and allowing young people to engage with complex policy dilemmas.

REDIRECT LINK

The presentation connected youth engagement, democratic learning and institutional experimentation - three themes central to REDIRECT's redirection agenda.

PREPARING THE SCENARIO BUILDING EVENT

The General Assembly also had a preparatory function for the Scenario Building Event scheduled for 16 May 2025. The consortium used the meeting to align around the method, objectives and expected outputs of the stakeholder workshop. This was important because the next-day event aimed to translate REDIRECT's research agenda into a participatory reflection with external actors on possible democratic futures.

The scenario-building format asked participants to identify key drivers of representative disconnect and to develop best-case, worst-case and most likely scenarios for the future of representative democracy. In this sense, the 15 May meeting prepared the intellectual and organisational ground for a more outward-facing exercise in democratic imagination.

The connection between the General Assembly and the workshop also illustrates one of REDIRECT's central ambitions: to combine rigorous diagnosis with strategies of reconnection and redirection. The consortium meeting clarified where the project stood internally; the stakeholder event tested how these reflections could be opened to a wider audience.

MEETING SEQUENCE

The 15 May General Assembly reviewed and aligned the consortium; the 16 May workshop opened REDIRECT's questions to stakeholders.

STRATEGIC COORDINATION AND NEXT STEPS

The final part of the General Assembly focused on strategic coordination. Partners discussed the next reporting period, the need to review the data management plan, and the internal documentation required for future reporting, including information on affiliated researchers, dissemination activities, work-package participation, person-months, work done in different WPs and financial statements.

REPORTING

Prepare internal documents for the next reporting period, including dissemination, PMs, work done and financial data.

OPEN ACCESS

RSecure open access publications whenever possible.

WEBSITE AND MEDIA

Develop the website, infographics, keys, pills and broader collaboration with NOUS Media.

DATA EXPLOITATION

Use mass and elite survey data to support publications, policy briefs and cross-work-package analyses.

SPECIAL ISSUE

Coordinate abstracts and submissions for the Politics & Governance collective output.

STAKEHOLDERS

Connect the scenario-building event, policy briefs, dissemination and sister-project engagement.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the Brussels General Assembly confirmed the consolidation of the REDIRECT consortium. It showed that the project had moved beyond its initial organisational phase and was now producing data, publications, public-facing outputs and stakeholder-oriented activities. At the same time, the meeting highlighted a series of challenges that will shape the next phase: coordinating multiple empirical streams, ensuring collective use of survey and interview data, strengthening dissemination, connecting with other projects and translating academic findings into recommendations for democratic repair.

The General Assembly therefore functioned as a hinge between diagnosis and action. It reviewed what REDIRECT had already achieved, clarified what still needed to be delivered, and opened a broader reflection on how the project can contribute to debates on representative democracy, deliberation and institutional renewal.

By combining internal coordination with intellectual exchange and preparation for stakeholder engagement, the meeting helped position REDIRECT for the next stage of its work: moving from the analysis of representative disconnect toward concrete strategies of reconnection and redirection.

FINAL MESSAGE

The Brussels meeting consolidated REDIRECT as an integrated research and impact agenda, linking empirical diagnosis with democratic innovation and stakeholder engagement.

CONTACT US



www.redirect.unisi.it



redirect@unisi.it



Funded by
the European Union



REDIRECT is funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme
(Call: HORIZON-CL2-2022-DEMOCRACY-01 – Democracy in Flux)
Grant Number: 101095142