



RECLAIM Breakfast Roundtable Closed-door meeting with policy-makers

Report from a policy roundtable hosted by TEPSA in Brussels, 18 October 2024



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In the framework of the Horizon Europe project [RECLAIM](#), on 18 October 2024 the Trans European Policy Studies Association ([TEPSA](#)) organised the event “*RECLAIM Breakfast Roundtable: Democracy through Policy Dialogue*”.

This **closed-door event aimed to facilitate a constructive and interactive dialogue between policy-makers and project researchers**. Designed to connect RECLAIM's academic findings with practical policy needs, the event fostered open, small-group roundtable discussions. As practitioners responsible for policy implementation, participants from the policy realm were able to share insights grounded in their hands-on experience with project researchers. The discussions, held under Chatham House rule, helped **refine the project's recommendations to ensure they are viable, impactful, and aligned with the needs of contemporary liberal democracies in Europe**.

A total of **33 participants** attended, including 16 policy-makers (50% men and 50% women) from **a range of national and EU institutions**, such as the European Commission, European Parliament, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Polish and Swedish Permanent Representations, the European External Action Service, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Greens/EFA political group, and more.

The event began with a networking breakfast, providing participants the opportunity to connect informally. This was followed by a project presentation from **Professor Maximilian Conrad**, RECLAIM coordinator at the University of Iceland, who shared key insights and outlined the event's objectives. Participants then engaged in small group discussions, focusing on the intersection between academic research and policy needs. The event concluded with a general brainstorming session, where attendees shared their reflections and ideas on the topics discussed.



Table 1: Citizenship education

Participants highlighted the need for education to counter disinformation with less cynical messaging and more critical thinking. Schools were identified as key players in addressing misinformation, but gaps in financing, technologies, and education systems across EU countries complicate this effort. A need emerged for common EU policies to help bridge these gaps, and to 'pre-bunk' disinformation without curbing freedom of expression. That knowledge can be trusted is a critical aspect in shaping how young people distinguish between facts and opinions.

Table 2: New technologies and external actors

The group focused on the rapid evolution of technologies and how concepts of disinformation can quickly become outdated. They discussed the role of foreign information manipulation as an umbrella concept, and the importance of reclaiming consensus in an increasingly fragmented public sphere. Supporting legitimate authorities in the publication of credible information and ensuring transparency on social media were seen as crucial to countering disinformation.

Table 3: Regulation and citizen engagement

Participants emphasised the need for a clear definition of disinformation in new regulations. Engaging citizens in the regulatory process was also considered important for legitimacy. One proposal was an EU-level program offering young people vouchers for newspaper subscriptions, combined with media literacy initiatives to help them navigate information and develop critical thinking skills.

Table 4: Migration and truth

Migration was discussed as a complex issue related to truth and disinformation. Participants advocated for educational modules to be included in school curricula, with EU support to streamline and incentivise such efforts. Non-governmental organisations were recognised as key actors in promoting accurate information, although some face credibility challenges. The group also suggested shifting the narrative from defence to the ownership of truth, with proactive EU investment in creating a more integrated framework for addressing disinformation.

The organisers collected anonymised feedback from the policy-makers present as to the relevance of the insights received during the event:

- **75%** strongly agreed and **25%** agreed that collaborating with academic researchers improves the quality of policy development.
- **75%** strongly agreed and **25%** agreed that the interaction with academic researchers was productive.

- **63%** strongly agreed and **37%** agreed that the recommendations were relevant to current policy challenges in their field.
- **63%** agreed and **37%** strongly agreed that they would consider integrating these recommendations into future policy discussions.
- **88%** strongly agreed and **13%** agreed that they are open to engaging with academic researchers in future policy initiatives.

The RECLAIM Breakfast Roundtable successfully contributed to **bridging the gap between academic findings and practical policy needs**. Informal discussions allowed for open dialogue on key issues like citizenship education, disinformation, technological challenges, and migration, offering valuable insights for translating research into actionable policy solutions. Positive feedback from participants highlights **the importance of such collaborations**. Moving forward, the RECLAIM consortium will refine its recommendations and continue engaging with policy-makers to ensure a lasting impact on shaping resilient and inclusive liberal democracies in Europe.