

NARRATIVES AT THE CROSSROADS: MIGRATION, POLARISATION AND POLITICAL INCLUSION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Workshop

19 May 2026, Tallinn University, Narva mnt 29, Astra building, A-447

Across Europe, debates on migration have become increasingly charged, shaped by overlapping crises, heightened uncertainty, and rapidly shifting political landscapes. Narratives about migrants and migration no longer act merely as reflections of social concerns but have become active instruments in political competition, identity construction, and struggles over democratic inclusion. This event explores how migration narratives emerge, evolve, and become politicised and how they influence political behaviour, public attitudes, and the possibilities for belonging in diverse societies.

The workshop brings together scholars interested in understanding the dynamics of narrative formation and reception. How do political actors craft migration narratives to mobilise different segments of the population? How and why do some groups (including minorities and individuals with migration backgrounds) respond to these narratives differently? How do feelings of uncertainty, perceived threats, or experiences of exclusion shape openness to polarising messages? And what happens to democratic participation when migration becomes a central axis of conflict?

At the same time, the workshop seeks to highlight the heterogeneity within different actor groups, including migrant and minority populations, and the complex ways in which individuals navigate political communication in a polarised environment. We aim to discuss underexplored questions about political trust, pathways to inclusion, and the conditions that facilitate constructive engagement rather than alienation or radicalisation.

By combining theoretical, methodological, and comparative perspectives, the workshop aims to generate a deeper understanding of how migration narratives can both fracture and connect societies. A key objective is to identify strategies for fostering more inclusive public debate and strengthening democratic resilience in an era of uncertainty.

This is an in-person event. The working language is English.

For any questions, please write to maarja.vollmer@unine.ch.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Time	Session
09:30–10:00	Registration & welcome coffee
10:00–10:15	Welcome remarks
10:15–12:00	Opening session “Narratives of Migration in Times of Crisis” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maarja Vollmer (nccr – on the move / University of Neuchâtel) • Discussant: Prof. Andrew Geddes (European University Institute)
12:00–13:00	Lunch break
13:00–15:00	Panel 1: Narratives in Motion: How Politicisation Shapes Migration Debates and Policy Agendas During Uncertain Times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Naja Camisa (University of Luxembourg) • Sophia Burton (Migration Matters) • Dr. Mariana C. Duarte (The Institute of Public Goods and Policies (IPP) of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC))
15:00–15:20	Coffee break
15:20–17:20	Panel 2: Belonging in a Polarised Public Sphere: Inclusion, Trust and Political Behaviour Among Minority Populations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Nicole Martin (University of Manchester) • Dr. Ekaterina Rashkova (University of Utrecht) • Dr. Sebastian Umpierrez de Reguero (University of Tallinn) • Adriana Cassis (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies / University of Duisburg-Essen / University of Cologne)
17:20–17:30	Conclusions and closing remarks