

## CONCEPT NOTE

### **Title: Between Convictions and Psychiatric Labels: Beliefs, Polarisation and Mental Health in a Changing Europe**

Wednesday, May 6, 2026, from 11:00 to 11:40 AM CET (Central European Time)

When people argue that rising immigration is part of a deliberate plan by political elites to reshape society and replace existing populations, it can be difficult to make sense of this belief. Those who hold this view may feel they are simply seeing patterns that others miss, and their certainty can grow stronger when they find others who confirm it.

So, what kind of belief are we dealing with? Is it an extreme political belief, shaped by the social world around us? Or does it share features with the kind of thinking that clinicians sometimes encounter, beliefs so fixed and distressing that, in the context of serious mental health difficulties, they might be understood as part of a clinical picture?

Strongly held beliefs and clinical presentations can look surprisingly similar: resistant to change even in the face of evidence, and bound up with fear, identity, or a need to make sense of a confusing world. What often makes the difference is that extreme beliefs are shared, circulating in communities and public debate, while more clinical forms of thinking tend to be idiosyncratic.

At a time of polarisation, misinformation, and rapid social change, beliefs do not emerge in a vacuum. They are shaped by social identity and the wider climate, which is why the line between shared convictions and clinical presentations can sometimes seem blurred.

In this 40-minute webinar, Professor Richard Bentall and Dr Almudena Trucharte will explore these cases through an interview-style conversation, linked to the IN-MIND project (Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action), opening a compassionate conversation about the grey area in between.

#### **SPEAKERS**

Professor Richard Bentall, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom

Dr Almudena Trucharte, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom

#### **MODERATOR**

Dr Jaisalmer de Frutos Lucas, Policy Manager, European Public Health Alliance