

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY IN THE MAKING WINTER SCHOOL 2026

**DIGNITY AMIDST DESPAIR:
MIGRATION CHALLENGING EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY**

PORTFOLIO



Dear participant,

This portfolio brings together all information necessary to complete the assignments for the winter school 'European Solidarity in the Making'. It will help you map your personal reflections and itinerary throughout the week. You will develop your thoughts in conversation with lecturers, community partners and fellow students to learn about other backgrounds and approaches from different perspectives.

The final evaluation of this Winter School consists of two assignments:

- **Presentation 'Our Roadmap to European migration solidarity':** In group, you will prepare a visual representation illustrating your take on the concepts and theories that are discussed throughout the week. You will present this during the final event on the final day of the winter school. As such, your group's 'Roadmap to European migration solidarity' will take shape for all to see.
- **Refugee story:** Individually, you will write a fictional story from the perspective of a refugee that you've met during the winter school practical experience. You describe a day in the life of this person, emphasizing both the difficulties and the strengths in the story.

To help you prepare for these two final assignments, your lecturers will provide you with guiding questions and dilemmas, capturing the focus of each course day. The answers to these questions will form the 'building blocks' that will help you create your 'Roadmap to European migration solidarity' and your fictional refugee story.

The portfolio should be submitted by Monday 16 February 2026, 12 pm. Submitting this portfolio is a requirement for obtaining the credits (3 ECTS) assigned to this winter school.

PART I – THEORETICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

During the morning sessions, your lecturers will provide you with insights in concepts, mechanisms and theoretical frameworks for European solidarity in the context of migration. Each course day is linked to a reflection question and dilemma, capturing the key elements of that day's lectures. You are asked to reflect on these questions and dilemmas, bringing together your own perspectives and experiences with the insights offered by the lecturers. The reading materials available on Blackboard may complement your personal reflections. We ask you to write out each answer respecting a word count of 350 to 500 words.

Your answers will form the 'building blocks' necessary to complete the final assignments.

Criteria for evaluation:

- The student expresses an individual opinion on the theoretical concepts offered in the lectures.
- The student links theoretical concepts and frameworks with personal experiences and contemporary societal trends.

COURSE I – THE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY

What should be a feasible common ground for European solidarity, given the cultural diversity of Europe, without being perceived as too cold and technocratic?

(warm vs. cold solidarity, within homogeneous vs. heterogeneous communities)

COURSE II – THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY

To what extent can Member States of the European Union make migrants' entitlement to social benefits conditional on sufficient integration?

(balanced conditionalities, unequal rights vs. uneven obligations?)

COURSE III – THE LEGITIMATIZATION OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY

What type of solidarity should underly EU-migration and asylum policy?

(pragmatism vs. value-oriented, solidarity at what level, with whom?)

COURSE IV – THE EUROPEAN APPROACH OF GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

How to strike the right balance between security imperatives of the EU and its Member States and the responsibility to protect refugees and immigrants?

(self-defense and security vs. support of the vulnerable and human rights?)

COURSE V – CREATIVE LEADERSHIP & SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

What role can civil society actors play in enhancing the arrival infrastructures despite potential policy limitations?

(gap in top-down support countered by bottom-up community support,
kind of interaction: inspiring innovations vs. criminalization of citizen action?)

TRIP TO BRUSSELS – VISIT TO POLICY MAKERS & INSTITUTIONS

Following the EU-elections in '24 and the installation of a new EU-Parliament and Commission (check composition [here](#)), what can be expected in terms of changes in EU migration policies in the coming years and what will be the implications for political decision-making, grassroots advocacy and academic research?

PART II – PRACTICE RELATED ASSIGNMENTS

A – PREPARATION VISIT COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

On Tuesday 3 February 2026, you will visit a community organisation active in refugee assistance work in Antwerp. In preparation for this experience, you search for information about this organisation and the target group it focusses on. In this section of the portfolio, you write down what you take with you from this preparatory work about the organisation.

What do you already know about the target group? Do you have any previous experience with this target group?

What are your expectations for this experience? What do you expect the community organisation to look like? Who do you expect to meet?

What do you want to learn from this experience? What are you interested in and where do you see an added value in the context of the winter school?

What struck you the most from this experience? Were your expectations met? Why (not)?

B – DESIGNING A ROADMAP TO EUROPEAN MIGRATION SOLIDARITY

In group, you will prepare a creative, visual representation illustrating your take on the concepts and theories that were discussed throughout the winter school. **The representation should take the shape of a ‘roadmap’, leading the reader through the concepts and theories from the lectures, offering a road to more solidarity towards migrants in Europe.** In this process, you make use of the ‘building blocks’ (your answers to the questions and dilemmas from Part I of this portfolio) that you’ve gathered throughout the week.

While preparing the roadmap, following questions may trigger and guide your collective reflection (we offer them as inspiration without wanting to limit your creative thinking on the subject matter). Bear in mind to make links where you can between the theoretical input from the lectures and the notes you made on the one hand, and the practice that you experienced on the other side.

How can Europe achieve a more humane approach?

- What can we learn from the perspectives of refugees when thinking about European solidarity? How do refugees describe or shape what we call solidarity?
- How do refugees contribute to a Europe of solidarity? What are the thresholds and the opportunities?
- What kind of solidarity do refugees need?

What approaches and practices may be translated politically into European democracy?

- How do policies and political institutions relate to the activities of community organisations? How are civil society initiatives supported or hampered by institutional policy?
- How can measures at (top-down) institutional level interact with (bottom-up) civil society initiatives? What role should each of them play and how may they strengthen each other?

Visualize your collective roadmap to be showcased at the final event of the winter school on Friday afternoon, 6 February 2026, when your group will give a short oral presentation explaining the journey you made to arrive at this outcome. As such, your group’s ‘Roadmap to European migration solidarity’ will take shape for all to see.

Criteria for evaluation:

- Integration of theoretical concepts and the practical experience
- Creativity & quality of the visual representation of the roadmap
- Quality of the oral presentation

Add a picture, link, ... of your group’s ‘Roadmap to European migration solidarity’ in this portfolio:

C – NARRATING THE STORY OF A REFUGEE

Write a fictional story (1000-1500 words) capturing a day in the life of one of the refugees you met during the winter school practical experience. Describe the daily struggles that this person encounters, and highlight the strengths and capabilities in their story.

In your story, you integrate the following questions:

- What does your protagonist do, think and feel in your story line?
- What does it take for your protagonist to feel like a European citizen, living as a refugee in Belgium?
- What are the struggles they are confronted with and what strengths can they rely on?
- How does your protagonist experience the European values of dignity and solidarity in their everyday life?

Criteria for evaluation:

- The student accurately writes from the lived perspective of someone else, expressing empathy and solidarity.
- The student adds depth to the story, paying attention to actions, thought, feelings, values and norms.
- The student links the story to their service-learning experience.
- The student shows critical reflection on a personal (questioning of the own reference framework) and societal (questioning existing structures and injustices) dimension.
- The student shows understanding of and appreciation for cultural diversity.