



Elevating Citizens' Voices

Avenues for Participatory Democracy
at National, Regional and Local Levels

ENoP
EUROPEAN NETWORK OF
POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS



AER
Assembly of European Regions

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Foreword: Participation Creates Belonging

Let's face it – our democracies are under pressure. The political model of the EU and most of its member states, which is based on participation, balance, and consensus-building, is increasingly being challenged. These challenges come partly from actors outside the EU who represent authoritarian or totalitarian models of society. But they are also known to come from populist and extremist political forces within the Union. Scepticism about the functioning of democracy and open societies also comes from citizens who do not have a radical agenda themselves, but who feel insecure and frightened by the multitude of economic, social, and political challenges. These are legitimate doubts that politicians have to deal with.

In addition, democracy is complex – and the higher the level of government, the more complex it becomes. Even crisis management at the national level is often difficult to oversee. This is even truer at the international level. It is true that EU policies have a direct impact on the lives of most of their citizens. However, these

The more complex the political reality, the greater the need to involve citizens in the workings of our political system.

connections are often little-known and have no real pan-European public sphere in which to discuss them across national borders due to media and language differences.

The more complex the political reality, the greater the need to involve citizens in the workings of our political system – to enable

understanding and feedback from people not only through elections. Especially in a more volatile political environment, elected officials can benefit from receiving more authentic information about the needs of societal groups and making more targeted decisions based on this information.

The Conference on the Future of Europe has set significant objectives in this respect. Admittedly, it remains to be seen how durable the foundation for a structured consultation of citizens set by the conference will be. Expectations were high, as also shown by an opinion poll conducted by the Assembly of European Regions (AER) in 2021: citizens not only want to be listened to, but also want their feedback to feed into the policy-making process at EU level.

There are already well-functioning models of citizens' assemblies and comparable instruments of participatory democracy at national and especially at regional and local levels in the EU and some neighbouring countries. Regions and cities have a special role to play in providing information about democratic decision-making and opportunities to get involved in our democracy. For most people, the personal experience of politics does not begin in Brussels, but in their communities and do-

mestic landscapes, where they know actors personally and understand the political challenges best. Citizens' assemblies and other participatory models increase people's sense of belonging to a community.

This publication compares experiences with deliberative democracy at different levels of government and describes examples from selected countries and regions in Europe and beyond. It draws, in part, on findings from a Brussels conference in June 2022, to which the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) and the AER invited policymakers, academics, and civil society representatives. The aim is not to provide an all-encompassing overview of the topic, but to discuss the success factors of participatory models in the context of recent developments and to derive recommendations for implementation on the ground and for European policy.

The focus is on understanding models of participatory democracy as complementary to representative democracy, so that they become jointly effective in involving citizens in policy-making. Successful models typically also arouse the interest of citizens to become politically active themselves, be it in civil society organisations, in political parties, or by choosing a career in a governmental organisation.

Regional and local governments, in particular, need support in setting up participation models and more structured cooperation with civil society, as not all of them have the necessary resources. The recommendations formulated in this book therefore also address the ways in which broader support for regions and municipalities and their political platforms by the EU and national governments is desirable.

We would like to thank Maja Cimerman, who conceived and mainly wrote this book with us, and the ENoP and AER teams for their excellent cooperation.

We wish you good reading.

Denis Schrey

ENoP Coordinator

Christian Spahr

AER Secretary General

Introduction

If elected politicians and the public represent two different elements of representative democracy, the gap between them is where participatory and deliberative processes need to be navigated. Citizens are increasingly uninterested in and resentful of politics, and involving them in the workings of our political system is a way to address the division, mistrust, disinterest, and proliferation of false information which characterise modern democracy. Developing new forms of democratic engagement – which give citizens more influence and make decision-makers more accountable regarding public opinion – will not challenge representative democracy, but instead will make it stronger and more resilient.

Developing new forms of democratic engagement will not challenge representative democracy, but instead will make it stronger and more resilient.

Over the past decade, there has been a marked increase in the prevalence of representative deliberative practices across all levels of government. This trend was fuelled further by the European Union's Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), which took place from April 2021 to May 2022. The significance of establishing meaningful and ongoing dialogue between citizens and elected representatives at EU level – which is widely regarded as the most remote level of governance for people across Europe – cannot be overstated. Through the CoFoE, the EU aimed to bolster deliberative democracy at European level and foster a closer relationship with European citizens, thereby building a more citizen-focused Europe.

Although the CoFoE had several limitations, it confirmed that this was a seminal moment in the evolution of citizen participation in Europe and beyond. To shed light on this moment and to explore the landscape of deliberative and participatory democracy, ENoP and AER organised the Forum on New Forms of Democratic Engagement in June 2022. The forum took place at a neuralgic moment for transnational deliberative democracy and therefore contributed to shaping and discussing EU deliberative policies, strategies and approaches in Europe and in its international cooperation programmes.

During the Forum, one of the key lessons to be learned from the CoFoE was highlighted by an Italian MEP: ‘Although the CoFoE had a lot of potential and succeeded in having non-politicised citizens, civil societies, parliamentarians and other groups interacting in the same room on the future of Europe, the main flaw was that the rules of engagement were not clear for various reasons, and due to the delicate nature of this conference and the complex institutional setting. Unfortunately, this is not sustainable for the good functioning of deliberative processes as you need to be clear about the purpose of your participation.’

The report from the Forum and the conclusions formulated during the event are presented in the chapter “The Value of Partnership: The 2022 ENoP-AER Forum on New Forms of Democratic Engagement”. This publication itself is the outcome and extension of the ENoP and AER Forum, leaving aside the conversation surrounding CoFoE and showcasing avenues for participatory democracy at national, regional and local levels. The text features a selection of the participatory democracy cases presented at the Forum and seeks to expand upon the recommendations and insights that were generated during the event. Through this publication, we aim to provide a glimpse into the diverse landscape of innovative forms of democratic engagement, with the objective of rendering our democracy more representative, inclusive and democratic. The six case studies of citizens’ assemblies and other forms of deliberative democracy presented in this text do not purport to represent a comprehensive overview of the developments in this field. However, the diversity of these cases and the differences among them attest to the richness and excitement of the last decade in the realm of democratic engagement.

By presenting two national level cases, two regional level cases, and two local level cases, we hope to make this book relevant and useful to the widest variety of readers. On a national level, the two examples – the Citizens’ Assembly in Ireland and the Citizens’ Convention for Climate in France – show national governments using citizens’ assemblies to identify long-term solutions for problems of great societal importance and distress. Both of our regional cases come from Belgium, specifically the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Ostbelgien, and the Brussels-Capital Region. The Ostbelgien Citizens’ Dialogue and the Brussels Regional Parliament’s Deliberative Parliamentary Committees are keystone examples of deliberative democracy, showcasing how participatory processes are the most impactful when they exist in a dialogue with representative institutions. On a local level, we present the Citizens’ Council in Gütersloh, Germany because it shows how organising a citizens’ assembly does not always need to be a long and

demanding process. The Citizens' Offices in Morocco, on the other hand, highlight an example of an innovative democratic practice outside of the European context.

The guiding principles and recommendations formulated in the second part of this book aim to synthesise lessons learned from the case studies and hope to inform future developments in models of innovative participation. The chapter “Recommendations for Running New Forms of Democratic Engagement” should be studied by anyone thinking of or implementing a deliberative process. Additionally, the recommendations at the end of the chapter “The Value of Partnership: The 2022 ENoP-AER Forum on New Forms of Democratic Engagement” are written with EU and national decision-makers in mind, offering our perspective on how institutions at different levels of government should be supported in running new forms of democratic engagement.

Irish Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality



The Irish Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was established in 2019 with the purpose of examining and providing recommendations on various issues related to gender equality in Ireland. Comprised of 99 citizens selected to be representative of the Irish population, the assembly met over a series of months to deliberate and analyse a wide range of subjects, including the gender pay gap, gender quotas in politics, and gender-based violence.

Throughout the assembly's proceedings, a diverse array of experts and stakeholders were invited to present and provide testimony, including academics, advocates, and representatives from government and civil society organisations. The assembly's recommendations, which were subsequently presented to the Irish parliament, aimed to address the structural and societal factors that contribute to gender inequality in Ireland.

How the model stands out:

- By 2019, when the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was established, Ireland already had proof that involving the public in decision-making could lead to real and impactful change. Some of the most significant social and political changes in Ireland in recent years can be attributed to the use of deliberative processes. The 2015 referendum on the recognition of same-sex marriage was the result of recommendations made by the 2013-2014 Constitutional Convention. Similarly, the 2018 referendum on the repeal of the abortion ban was a consequence of the 2016-2018 Citizens' Assembly.
- To ensure the integrity of the deliberative process, several measures were put in place. Documents related to the proceedings, videos prepared for this purpose, and other relevant information were published and accessible online. To involve the general public and make the Assembly open for all, members of the public had the

opportunity to make submissions on the issues under consideration. Additionally, an independent group of experts was appointed to prepare an evaluation report that was published online.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

The Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was a successor of the 2013-14 Constitutional Convention and the 2016-2018 Citizens' Assembly. The Convention on the Constitution operated as a mixed assembly, with 33 national politicians working alongside 66 randomly selected citizens on eight topics related to the Constitution: marriage equality, the voting age, the electoral system, voting rights for citizens abroad, blasphemy, the length of the President's term of office, a clause in the constitution on the role of women, and steps to increase the participation of women in politics and public life. Additionally, the members of the Convention added two topics to the agenda: the reform of the lower house of the Parliament, and Economic, Social and Cultural rights. The 2016-2018 Citizens' Assembly was a citizens-only assembly, and its 99 members focused on five topics: abortion, climate change, the ageing population, fixed-term parliaments, and the administration of referenda in Ireland.

Like the two previous assemblies, the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was established by a resolution from the Parliament of the Republic of Ireland (Oireachtas) in July 2019. The mandate of the Citizens' Assembly was to make recommendations to the Parliament to advance gender equality.

Gender equality had already been a prevalent topic in the Constitutional Convention, which looked at how the Constitution defines the role of women at home and in politics. Specifically, the 2013-14 Convention was asked to consider amending Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

"The State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved." (Article 41.2 of the Constitution of Ireland)

Members of the Constitutional Convention recommended changing, modifying, or deleting the clause and subsequently the Parliament set up a Task Force on the matter and a referendum was planned. However, in 2018 the Parliament's Joint Committee on Justice and Equality proposed to postpone the referendum and prepare a public consultation process on the matter. Article 41.2 of the Constitution was one of the several issues that the Parliament asked the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality to discuss.

IRISH CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY IN PRACTICE

Structure

The resolution establishing the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality set out details regarding its operation. All Irish Assemblies to date have had a Chairperson who directs the proceedings. In the case of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, former Secretary General of the European Commission Dr Catherine Day was appointed by the Government to take on that role. The Chairperson is in charge of running the Assembly together with the Secretariat, which takes on administrative duties. Members of the Secretariat are civil servants seconded from other departments. An Expert Advisory Group, composed of specialists in equality, gender and deliberation, assisted the Chairperson and the Secretariat in developing the work programme, selecting speakers, and providing advice on the issues being discussed. Additionally, members of the Citizens' Assembly had access to a panel of five legal scholars who offered advice on the Constitution. To ensure regular communication between the organisers and citizens, six members of the Assembly were part of a Steering Group. The role of the Steering Group was to regularly report the thoughts and feelings of the members of the Assembly to the Chair, as well as provide feedback and suggestions on the running of the Assembly.

Agenda

Contrary to the two previous assemblies which both covered several topics, the 2020-2021 Citizens' Assembly focused only on gender equality. Despite this, the mandate of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was broad. The resolution establishing the Assembly asked its members to prepare recommendations on the following:

- gender discrimination
- equal opportunities in the workplace, politics and public life
- economic disparity and pay inequalities between genders
- parental care and other care work mostly performed by women

Additionally, in consultation with the Expert Advisory Group, the Chair decided to include domestic, sexual and gender-based violence as an additional topic because of its importance to gender equality.

In the resolution establishing the process, it is stated that the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality should bring forward proposals to:

- challenge the remaining barriers and social norms and attitudes that facilitate gender discrimination towards girls and boys, women and men;

- identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender inequalities, and reassess the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women;

- in particular, seek to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life;

- recognise the importance of early-years parental care and seek to facilitate greater work-life balance;

- examine the social responsibility of care and women and men's co-responsibility for care, especially within the family; and

- scrutinise the structural pay inequalities that result in women being disproportionately represented in low-pay sectors.

Participants

The Irish Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality had 100 members: the Chairperson and 99 randomly selected participants with voting power. An additional 99 substitute members were also recruited. Participants were selected by an independent polling company through a three-stage process. The first round of selection happened door-to-door in 60 randomly selected locations around Ireland to generate a list of interested candidates that fit the quotas set by the organisers of the Assembly. In the second round of selection, participants were screened via telephone for demographic data and other relevant criteria. During the final round, selected candidates confirmed their participation.

The recruited participants were representative of Irish society in terms of gender, age, social class, and region based on the Irish census data from 2016. Excluded through the screening process were:

- certain categories of politicians and political party members
- journalists and others working in the media
- those campaigning on aspects of gender equality
- those not eligible to vote in a referendum

Because participants were chosen from among those eligible to vote and because recruitment happened through a home address, people without citizenship or an address were excluded from participation. That meant certain groups of people such as migrants without citizenship and homeless individuals were not represented in the process.

On average, 80 members attended each meeting. For various reasons, 42 members had to be replaced by individuals from a group of substitutes and additionally recruited citizens. High turnover had been a feature of the previous two Assemblies, so it was partly anticipated here as well. Additionally, after the COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, there was a long pause before the next meeting and the sessions were moved online, and both of these changes also contributed to some members dropping out.

In the end, 38 participants attended all of the meetings and the final number of members of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was 97, as no new members were added after the December 2020 meeting.

Members who completed the process were offered a EUR 500 voucher as a gratuity for participating. Additionally, after the meetings were moved online because of the pandemic, members were reimbursed for expenses of up to EUR 250 for costs associated with buying or upgrading the technological equipment necessary for participating at the Assembly.

Schedule and format

It was initially decided that the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality would meet six times in a period of six months, with the first meeting happening in January 2020 and the voting session taking place in July 2020. However, after the first weekend meeting in February 2020, in-person sessions were no longer possible because of COVID-19 restrictions. To facilitate and test a move online, an interim online meeting was organised in June 2022 and all members of the Assembly were offered help with transferring to the online format. In October 2020, the first official online session was organised, and subsequent meetings took place on a monthly basis.

The move online impacted both the schedule and the structure of the meetings. Initially, the meetings were planned to be weekend-long. However, to limit screen fatigue, online sessions took place on Saturday only and lasted four hours. To facilitate shorter meeting times, presentations were pre-recorded and sent to the members in batches for them to watch in their free time. Before each meeting, members would be digitally sent several videos of up to 12 minutes in length. In addition, a document containing recommendations made by all the recorded speakers was delivered both by post and by email.

Other adaptations to the format were shorter presentations, more regular breaks, and the use of Zoom polls to check members' opinions. Smaller group discussions happened in Zoom breakout rooms. To promote socialising between members, Zoom calls were open for members to chat before the sessions began and during the lunch break. Additionally, the Chair organised several optional evening meetings where members could ask questions, give feedback, and contribute to the planning of the Assembly.

Schedule of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality:

Inaugural Meeting: **25 January 2020**

First Meeting: **15-16 February 2020**

Break in sessions after which all the meetings were moved online

Leadership Meeting: **17 October 2020**

First Work & Social Protection Meeting: **14 November 2020**

Second Work & Social Protection Meeting: **5 December 2020**

Care Meeting: **16 January 2021**

Meeting on Article 41 of the Constitution: **13 February 2021**

Meeting on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
& Care (Care Ballot Paper): **13 March 2021**

Voting Weekend: **17-18 April 2021**

For each session, a mix of experts, advocacy organisations, and people with significant personal experiences prepared presentations for the Assembly. Most of these presentations were sent to the members beforehand, although some were rewatched together or happened live. Discussions between members happened mostly in smaller groups that had a moderator present. At its first full meeting in February 2020, the Assembly adopted its Rules of Procedure which postulated openness, fairness, equality of voice, respect, collegiality, and efficiency as the guiding principles of the Assembly. These principles had to be followed in all deliberations. On a few occasions, the Chair received feedback that in some breakout groups there were members who were dominating the discussions, and she had to remind everyone of the guiding principles. In general, as per the feedback from participants and moderators, the unequal distribution of time was not a big issue, especially in the later meetings of the Assembly. During the February 2021 session, members

of the legal team were present and during the last two sessions, members of the Expert Advisory Group supported the Assembly in drafting the wording of the recommendations.

Outreach

Efforts to make the Assembly transparent, open, and inclusive are key parts of the Irish model. For that purpose, all materials related to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality were published online, the sessions were live streamed, and the

Key parts of the Irish Citizens' Assembly: Transparency, openness and inclusiveness.

public had the opportunity to observe the proceedings. Additionally, members of the public could express their views on the topic through a public consultation. During a two-month period at the beginning of 2020, everyone was invited to submit their views and recom-

mendations on gender equality. 246 submissions from 66 organisations and 180 individuals were collected through an online platform and analysed by a consultant academic before they were presented to the Assembly for their consideration.

Budget

The total cost of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was EUR 628 398 and was lower than expected due to most of the meetings happening online. Budget breakdown as well as all the major external contractors who were involved are listed on the Assembly's website. The costs were covered by the Irish Government.

Output of the process

The final meeting of the Assembly took place over two days on 17 and 18 April 2021, during which the Assembly voted on its recommendations on gender equality. Recommendations were collected in three ways throughout the Assembly:

- At the end of each meeting, each breakout group was asked to decide on 3-5 priority recommendations.
- Additional recommendations were formulated from notes of the breakout group discussions.
- Members could suggest new recommendations in various surveys by the Assembly.

Throughout this process, over 500 recommendations were collected which were then narrowed down to 45 through several rounds of surveys, feedback and dis-

cussions. The final voting happened using an online voting system specifically procured for the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality to ensure it was secure, confidential and accessible.

Members confirmed all 45 recommendations on the final ballot, voting on each one separately. The fact that all items on the ballot were confirmed is not surprising considering each recommendation had to be supported by the majority of the Assembly in order to be put on the final ballot. The recommendations covered a broad range of issues connected to gender equality and vary from specific ('Public funding to cultural, sports, arts and media organisations should be contingent on: (a) A quota of 30% representation of women, and of men, on their Governing bodies by 2025 and 40% by 2030.') to general ('Take account of gender equality issues in piloting a Universal Basic Income scheme.') The Assembly adopted the recommendation on Article 41.2 of the Constitution – which was one of the reasons for the Assembly's establishment – saying: 'Article 41.2 of the Constitution should be deleted and replaced with language that is not gender-specific and obliges the State to take reasonable measures to support care within the home and wider community.'

Additionally, because many members felt the recommendations were very exact and did not portray the general sentiment of the Assembly, they prepared an open letter which called on the Parliament to adopt ambitious – rather than incremental – steps which would deliver gender equality for Ireland. Members agreed to the final letter by Zoom poll with 95.6% in favour.

THE IMPACT OF THE IRISH CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY

Contrary to some of the other processes presented in this publication, the Irish Citizens' Assemblies have no official follow-up process prescribed or practised that would involve members of the Assembly. The Assembly has an advisory role to the Parliament which is required to refer the report to the relevant committees of both Houses. The committees should then report back to both Houses of the Parliament regarding the state of the recommendations. In response to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, the Parliament formed a Joint Committee on Gender Equality in December 2021.

One year on from the Joint Committee on Gender Equality being formed, it is still too early to evaluate the impact that citizens' recommendations have had on public

policy. The Committee recommended for the referendum on Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution to be held in 2023, but that is yet to be confirmed.

Regarding the improvement of the model, the independent evaluation group prepared several recommendations on the basis of regularly collected participant feedback and their observations of the Assembly. A summary of the recommendations is listed below.

Agenda setting: Focus on only one issue was a strength of this Assembly. However, the topic set should not be too detailed and should leave space for Assembly interpretation.

Institutionalisation: To ensure continuity and encourage specialisation, institutionalising or embedding citizens' assemblies within the Parliament should be considered.

Public input: The practice of an external expert summarising public input should be continued.

Recruitment: The recruitment process should be reformed to minimise turnover and more minority groups should be represented in the Assembly.

Member feedback: Optional meetings with the Chair to collect feedback from members should be continued.

Online meetings: A hybrid approach should be considered for future assemblies. However, online meetings should not replace in-person sessions.

Evaluation: Evaluations of future citizens' assemblies should consider tracking policy positions across the time period.

International good practices: International practices of running deliberative approaches should be closely followed and considered.

Since the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, two more citizens' assemblies have been organised in Ireland: the Dublin Citizens' Assembly and the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss. Some of the recommendations of the evaluation group were implemented in these two processes. For example, for the first time all residents were eligible to become members of the assembly, rather than only citizens. Additionally, the recruitment process was changed and, instead of door-to-door recruitment, written invitations were sent to randomly selected households and a representative group of members was formed in the second step of selection. These two measures led to greater quality and inclusivity of the random selection process.

FURTHER READING

Below are some resources with more information about the Irish Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality.

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The Citizens' Assembly (2019) *Oireachtas resolution establishing the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality*. Available at: <https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/previous-assemblies/2020-2021-citizens-assembly-on-gender-equality/news-publications/final-resolution-11th-july-2019.pdf> (Accessed 1 February 2023).

The Citizens' Assembly (2023). Available at: <https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/> (Accessed 1 February 2023).

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The Citizens' Assembly (2021) *Evaluation Report of the Irish Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality*. Available at: <https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/previous-assemblies/2020-2021-citizens-assembly-on-gender-equality/news-publications/publications/independent-researchers-report-on-the-process.pdf> (Accessed 1 February 2023).

Citizens' Convention for Climate in France



The Citizens' Convention for Climate (CCC) was a citizens' assembly established by the French government in 2019 to address the issue of climate change in France. It was tasked with developing proposals for how France could reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a more sustainable and low-carbon economy. The CCC was made up of randomly selected citizens chosen by lottery to represent the diversity of the French population. It held a series of meetings over the course of a year, during which it heard from experts and stakeholders, and gathered input from the public. The CCC's recommendations, which were released in 2020, included a range of measures such as reducing the country's reliance on fossil fuels, improving energy efficiency, and increasing the use of renewable energy sources. These recommendations were intended to serve as a roadmap for the French government as it works to address the challenge of climate change.

How This Case Stands Out:

- In many regards, the CCC was a monumental undertaking. Over a period of nine months, 159 randomly selected citizens – many with little or no scientific knowledge of climate change – were tasked with taking on the extremely complex and vast topic of the socially just reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Over the course of seven weekend sessions and two additional online meetings, citizen participants heard from more than 130 speakers, with many doing extra research and outreach in their private time. In the end, the results of the CCC were 149 proposals for just climate transition, presented in a 460-page report.
- A Legislative Committee was appointed as an advisory body to the CCC. Its role was to help the CCC to understand the legal feasibility of their proposals and help to rewrite citizens' suggestions in a way that they could be directly incorporated into legislation. Despite the limited capacities of the Legislative Committee, which meant that

they were not able to analyse all the proposals in detail, its legal support meant that the CCC's output had a level of technical and legal detail which is uncommon for deliberative processes.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

The CCC was organised as a direct consequence of the 2018 gilets jaunes (yellow vests) protests against the so-called 'eco tax'. Mass protests which took over France that autumn were based on opposition towards the proposed increase of the carbon tax on fuel. This proposed increase was seen as unfair towards the poor and contributing to the lack of economic opportunity and social mobility in the country.

In response to the political crisis, President Macron launched the Grand Débat National (Great National Debate) in January 2019. The debate was a mass two-month-long nationwide consultation open to all citizens willing to share their opinion on the themes of the debate: democracy and citizenship, fiscality and public spending, ecological transition, and the organisation of state and public services. The process was vaguely defined and the national debate was generally considered an unsuccessful attempt to transform citizens' anger into productive solutions.

Even before the disappointment over the Great National Debate spread, calls for giving citizens greater power in policy-making were becoming louder and several concrete mechanisms of direct democracy were being proposed by different groups. One of them was a plan to organise nationwide climate deliberations. The plan was developed and supported by some members of the gilets jaunes together with a number of experts and public intellectuals, and was presented to President Macron in early 2019. On 25 April, the President held a press conference where he announced the creation of the Citizens' Convention for Climate. The CCC was officially launched with a mission letter by Prime Minister Edouard Philippe on 2 July 2019.

The CCC was organised under the auspices of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, an independent consultative institution established by the French state. A Governance Committee was set up to support the organisation of the CCC and oversee its implementations. The two co-chairs of the Governance Committee, Thierry Pech and Laurence Tubiana – both representatives of think tanks focusing

on climate change – were nominated by the Prime Minister. The rest of the Governance Committee was composed of 13 representatives of various organisations: the Vice-President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council; three climate experts; three participatory democracy experts; four experts from the economic and social sector; and two people appointed by the Minister of Ecological and Inclusive Transition. Two additional seats were also allocated to citizen members of the CCC.

The role of the Governance Committee in organising the CCC was central. It was the guarantor of the independence, functionality and efficiency of the CCC. It was in charge of setting the agenda, defining the procedures of the CCC, organising expert support, and protecting the autonomy of the participants and the integrity of the proceedings. Additionally, a college of guarantors was appointed to provide an external perspective on the process and ensure the independence of the CCC.

*The plan was presented
to President Macron
in early 2019
who later supported
the launch of the
Citizens' Convention for
Climate together with
Prime Minister Philippe.*

CITIZENS' CONVENTION FOR CLIMATE IN PRACTICE

Agenda

The topic of the CCC was climate change. The exact question put in front of the participants was: 'How to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030, in a spirit of social justice?'

A couple of topics were excluded from discussions at the CCC. The carbon tax was a controversial topic at the time in France because of the protests, and when some of the experts started discussing the idea during the second session of the CCC, a couple of participants interrupted the proceedings and opposed this issue being 'dumped' on the citizens to solve. Consequently, the carbon tax topic was not returned to the agenda. Also off the table, though this time because of the organisers, was nuclear power.

The mandate of the CCC was to prepare a set of recommendations for the French government on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The govern-

The mandate of the Citizens' Convention for Climate was to prepare a set of recommendations for the French government on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

ment's promise was that those recommendations would be implemented 'without filter'. This was a symbolic commitment by the government, as there is no mechanism that would make recommendations by a citizens' assembly binding for the Government and under the French Constitution only the Parliament can vote on a law.

Participants

The members of the CCC are usually referred to as 'The 150', even though there were actually 159 citizens selected to represent the French public. The number of participants was supposed to be 150, however some people dropping out and some substitutes becoming members meant that the final official number of participants was 159. Of the total number of participants, 104 took part in all sessions.

The selection of participants was done by a private consulting and research agency, and supervised by the oversight bodies of the CCC. During the first round, around 255 000 phone numbers were randomly selected. A text message was sent to each phone number with an invitation to participate in the CCC. If the owner of the phone number accepted the invitation, they were called and asked to share their demographic information.

In the second round, the selection of individuals that confirmed participation took into account the demographic characteristics of French society, such as gender, age, socio-economic background, education level, location (urban, suburban, rural, and other), and province of residence. The organisers decided not to consider participants' pre-existing attitudes on climate change in the selection process.

Among the 4 100 individuals that accepted the first invitation and were eligible, 150 participants and 41 substitutes were selected. There were some exceptions to the two-step random selection process. Five people from the French overseas collectivities were selected among people studying in metropolitan France and two people in deep poverty were recruited through a non-profit organisation.

Citizens were compensated for participating and the organisers covered the costs associated with attending the CCC (transportation, accommodation and meals). The CCC also covered childcare costs and compensated individuals for the loss of professional income if the sessions took place during their regular work hours.

This helped to encourage people with children – especially single parents – and working people from lower socio-economic backgrounds to take part in the CCC.

Schedule and Format

The CCC had seven official sessions between October 2019 and June 2020. Initially, six sessions were planned but one more session was added at the request of the participants. All sessions happened at weekends with the meetings starting on Friday at 1 p.m. and ending on Sunday at 4 p.m. The process was stretched to nine months because of unexpected circumstances, with both the fourth and seventh sessions being delayed. The former could not take place because of the pension protests and the latter was delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Schedule of the CCC:

First session:	4 to 6 October 2019
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Second session:	25 to 27 October 2019
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Third session:	15 to 17 November 2019
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Fourth session:	10 to 12 January 2020
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Fifth session:	7 to 9 February 2020
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Sixth session:	6 to 8 March 2020
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Seventh session:	19 to 21 June 2020
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Up until the third session, participants were in the learning phase, with the focus of the meetings on introducing the process and informing citizens about the topic. Part of the third and all of the fourth and fifth sessions were devoted to discussing and formulating policy proposals in smaller groups. During the sixth and seventh sessions, proposals were debated and voted on in a plenary meeting. Additionally, three more unofficial sessions happened. Two virtual meetings took place between the sixth and seventh sessions, due to the coronavirus pandemic delaying the final session. Furthermore, another meeting happened in February 2021 to evaluate the implementation of the citizens' recommendations by the Government.

After the first session, participants were randomly assigned to five groups: housing, labour and production, transport, food, and consumption. Each group heard from experts, deliberated, and developed recommendations. The thematic groups were further split into smaller groups of around six people to ensure everyone could contribute to the debate. Most of the work during the CCC happened in thematic groups and subgroups.

During the third session, a cross-cutting issues group was created to focus on the financial and legal implications of the discussed proposals. The group was composed of members – some volunteers and some randomly chosen – from across all thematic areas. These members had to leave their home groups when the cross-cutting group was in session. The fact that some members had to temporarily leave the discussions in smaller groups disturbed the process and annoyed other participants, so the cross-cutting group was terminated at the end of the fourth session. Financial and legal issues were moved to plenary discussions.

Several consultancy firms with experience in deliberative processes were hired to design and moderate the sessions. Discussions in bigger groups were facilitated, although smaller groups were self-organised because of a lack of facilitators. There was also a digital dimension to the CCC: an internal online platform called Jenparle where participants could exchange ideas, access documents and reach the organisers.

Because of the complexity and scope of the topic, members of the CCC had extensive support available to equip them to deliberate on climate change. The Governance Committee organised elaborate information sessions during the first meeting and ensured that a range of experts and interest groups gave a presentation of their perspective and were available for questions throughout the CCC. Participants could request additional experts and individuals they wanted to hear from. Altogether, more than 130 speakers presented their opinions in front of the participants of the CCC. Additionally, fact-checkers from various research organisations were available throughout the sessions, and two advisory groups – the Expert Support Group and the Legislative Committee – were formed to offer technical and legal support to the participants.

The Expert Support Group was a group of experts responsible for helping the citizens understand the scientific and technical aspects of climate change, and for providing the CCC with the information and guidance it needed to develop its recommendations.

The Legislative Committee was composed of members of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, and public law experts. It was tasked with helping the members of the CCC to understand the legal and policy frameworks that would be relevant to the implementation of its recommendations, and transcribing citizen suggestions into legislative proposals.

Outreach

A lot of effort was put into engaging the wider public and increasing the popularity and recognition of the CCC. All plenary sessions were broadcast live online and after each session minutes of the meetings were published. The CCC had a strong social media presence with regular updates during the sessions and there was even live commentary by a Twitch influencer. In addition to a strong digital presence, observers and the media were able to attend sessions in person. Additionally, Decidim – a digital platform based on an open-source tool – was set up to allow non-selected citizens and any organisation to make proposals on any of the five topics of the CCC (housing, labour and production, transport, food, and consumption). Before each session, all proposals were collected, reviewed and sent to the participants. In addition to the digital platform, participants were encouraged to organise meetings, presentations and deliberations with citizens, politicians and other civil society actors in their communities between the sessions.

Decidim is an open-source platform for participatory democracy. It provides tools and features that enable communities and organisations to engage in participatory decision-making processes, such as online consultation, voting and collaborative policy development.

Budget

The original budget for the CCC was EUR 4.5 million and the final budget was EUR 5.4 million. The selection of participants cost EUR 280 000. The costs were covered by the French State through the Economic, Social and Environmental Council.

Output of the Process

The final output of the CCC was a document with recommendations sent to the Government after the last session. Proposals were prepared in smaller work groups within each of the thematic areas, except the cross-cutting issues that were discussed and prepared in plenary. The Expert Support Group offered extensive support and members of the Legislative Committee were the ones drafting the proposals and making sure recommended changes could be directly implemented, but the citizens had the final say on the wording. During the final vote in the plenary session, proposals were grouped into 44 blocks with each block containing one or more proposals. Citizens first voted to confirm the proposals in each of the blocks and then, in the second round of votes, voted on whether to propose that certain measures be confirmed in a referendum.

Through this process, 149 proposals were adopted with most of them receiving more than 85% support. A proposal to reduce the speed limit on motorways to 110 km/h was adopted with 59.7% of votes. More universally popular ideas were the ones to implement a carbon score on all consumer products and services (98.8% support) and to prohibit new land development where rehabilitation of already degraded areas is possible (99% support). The four-day working week proposal was rejected (35% support). The CCC recommended putting three of its proposals to a referendum: changing the preamble and article one of the constitution to include the preservation of the environment and biodiversity; and introducing the crime of ecocide into French law.

THE IMPACT OF THE CITIZENS' CONVENTION FOR CLIMATE

Despite president Macron's promise, the CCC's recommendations were not directly put to a referendum, translated into a government decree, or transposed 'without filter' into a legal proposal. After the recommendations had been presented, the Government started a painstaking process of drafting a bill on the basis of the CCC's output that would be submitted to the Parliament. From the onset, president Macron excluded

three of the 149 proposals: changes to the preamble of the constitution; a 4% tax on corporate dividends to fund climate initiatives; and a reduction of the speed limit. Throughout the process of drafting the bill, the citizen participants and their supporters claimed that the Government was not following their recommendations enough and the Government believed the CCC wanted too much.

In January 2021, the new climate bill, inspired by the work of the CCC, was introduced in the Parliament. The proposal was criticised for leaving out some of the CCC's recommendations and proposing a watered-down version of others. However, with the climate bill entering the parliamentary legislative procedure, a whole new process of negotiations and trade-offs started. There were more than 7 000 amendments on the CCC's proposal and many of their suggestions were significantly changed or fully dropped.

In July 2021, the Climate and Resilience Law was adopted in both houses of the French Parliament. While some of the original proposals were included in the bill, many more were weakened or altogether excluded. The referenda proposed by the CCC also did not happen, as they did not obtain the necessary parliamentary support.

The CCC led to a national debate on the process, with many challenging the legitimacy of citizens' assemblies, criticising its ambiguous political mandate, and questioning the influence of experts' opinions on citizens' views. To date, the CCC's influence on public policies has been perceived as minimal. In 2021, the citizen participants themselves rated the Government's commitment to implement the CCC's proposals as 3.3 out of 10.

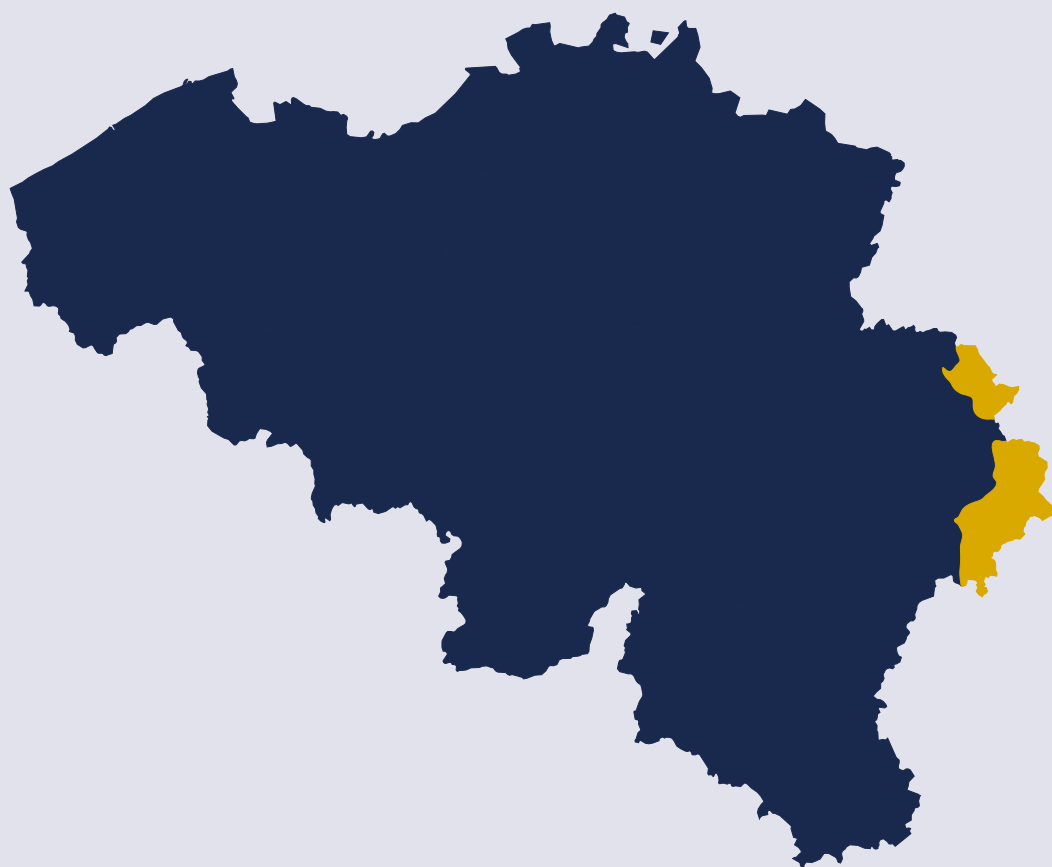
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Citizens' Dialogue in the Parliament of the German-Speaking Community of Belgium – Ostbelgien



The Citizens' Dialogue of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Ostbelgien, is a permanent deliberative institute complementing the existing elected Parliament. It is formed of a permanent deliberative body called the Citizens' Council, composed of randomly selected citizens with a mandate to initiate a Citizens' Assembly on any topic related to the powers of the Parliament.

The Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium has adopted one of the most ambitious models of citizen participation in the world. The Ostbelgien Model, as it is called, gives citizens the power to manage deliberative processes and embed them in political decision-making even after their recommendations are passed on to the Parliament and the Government.

How the Model Stands Out:

- At the centre of the Ostbelgien Model is a permanent representative body called the Citizens' Council. Members of the Citizens' Council are citizens with prior experience of deliberative processes who are given the power to set the agenda of ad hoc Citizens' Assemblies and monitor the political impact of deliberative processes.
- With fewer than 80,000 inhabitants, the German-speaking Community of Belgium is a small community. Its size is the reason some doubt the extent to which the model can be replicated and learnt from. However, this small community could also represent the perfect laboratory to test the model developed under David Van Reybrouck from the Belgium organisation G1000. All members of the German-speaking community in Belgium will very quickly have some sort of first-hand experience with Citizens' Assemblies and the Citizens' Council. This is certainly useful to embed the representative deliberative process in the political system and increase its legitimacy and power.

G1000 is a Belgian non-profit association that works on developing and supporting new forms of citizen participation with the goal of improving democracy. In 2011, G1000 ran a citizen-led public deliberation, bringing together 700 citizens to debate some of the key issues in Belgium.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

On 25 February 2019, the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium unanimously supported a decree establishing a permanent Citizens' Dialogue in the German-speaking Community. The order instituted a permanent body – the Citizens' Council – tasked with organising and overseeing Citizens' Assemblies, which are intermittently-established assemblies assigned to deliberate on a specific issue. With the decree, the Ostbelgien deliberation model was defined, which allowed for the appointment of the first Citizens' Council in September 2019.

The idea of a permanent deliberative body stemmed from prior positive experience with citizen consultation. In the autumn of 2017, the Parliament ran a pilot Citizens' Dialogue on the topic of childcare. Encouraging results and positive participant feedback led to the exploration of a permanent solution for involving citizens in the decision-making process of the Parliament. In the spring of 2018, they tasked G1000 with preparing a model for permanent citizen participation. G1000 brought together 13 notable Belgian and international experts – including academics, researchers, practitioners, and representatives of civil society organisations developing and implementing deliberative processes – to define a deliberative process that could be implemented in the German-speaking Community of Belgium. This resulted in the Citizens' Dialogue model that was voted on in February 2019.

Several political parties were involved in the efforts to make the Citizens' Dialogue permanent and all six parliamentary parties supported the decree. This unanimous support had much to do with extensive meetings that the G1000 experts had with all political parties in the Parliament.

CITIZENS' DIALOGUE IN PRACTICE

Institutions

The Ostbelgien Model is composed of two deliberative bodies dividing the power between them. The Citizens' Council is a permanent body of the Parliament with 24 randomly selected citizen members. The council has two mandates: it can initiate a Citizens' Assembly and it monitors the implementation of citizens' suggestions. The Citizens' Assembly is a non-permanent institution tasked with preparing recommendations for the Parliament on the topic selected by the council. The Citizens' Assembly has between 25 and 50 members who meet at least three times over the course of three months to deliberate and prepare recommendations.

The third element of the model is the Permanent Secretary who offers administrative and organisational support to the Citizens' Council and the Citizens' Assemblies. The Permanent Secretary is a member of the parliamentary staff, is assigned to the role by the Secretary-General of the Parliament, and is in charge of the daily management of the whole process.

Agenda Setting

The sole power to initiate a citizen deliberation lies with the Citizens' Council. Each year, the Council determines a minimum of one and a maximum of three topics that will be discussed at Citizens' Assemblies during the year. Ideas for topics are collected through an open call and can be submitted to the Citizens' Council by at least two of its members, a parliamentary group or the Government. The Government and each political group can submit a maximum of three proposals per calendar year. A theme can also be submitted by citizens that collect at least 100 signatures declaring support for the proposed topic.

During the first open call by the Citizens' Council, 23 proposals were submitted. The most popular suggestions were on the topics of healthcare, inclusive education, and poverty among the elderly population.

The Citizens' Council deliberates on the proposed topics, independently selects up to three and formulates the precise question to be submitted for discussion at a Citizens' Assembly. The Council generally makes decisions by consensus. If that is not possible, the decision can be confirmed by a two-third majority if at least two thirds of the members of the Council are present at the vote. For a topic to be considered it:

- cannot be against human rights;
- must be within the competencies of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community. However, there is the option – in special circumstances and with the approval of the Parliament's Bureau – for the Citizens' Council to select a topic that is not directly related to the competencies of the Parliament.

By the end of 2022, four Citizens' Assemblies had been organised on the following topics:

First Citizens' Assembly on the subject of care: "Care concerns us all! How can the conditions for staff and those affected be improved?" (March-September 2020)

- Second Citizens' Assembly on the topic of inclusive education: "Inclusion goes to school! What changes do we need in education to make inclusion a win for all?" (March-May 2021)
- Third Citizens' Assembly on the subject of housing: "Housing space for everyone! How can politics create sustainable and affordable housing for everyone?" (October 2021-February 2022)
- Fourth Citizens' Assembly on digital skills: "Digital Participation in Ostbelgien! How can politics ensure that all East Belgians have access to the digital world and can find their way around in it?" (September-November 2022)

The topic of the fifth Citizens' Assembly was decided by the Citizens' Council in December. It is likely there will also be a further Citizens' Assembly in 2023, on a topic proposed by the President of the Parliament (MPs, political groups and the Government have so far not made use of the power to propose a topic) regarding the Citizens' Dialogue itself. If it is held, that would be the last Citizens' Assembly before elections in 2024.

Participants

The Citizens' Council and Citizens' Assemblies are composed of citizen participants. The Council has 24 members who are appointed for up to a year and a half, and each Citizens' Assembly is composed of between 25 to 50 members. Members of the Citizens' Council are drawn from previous participants of Citizens' Assemblies, while members of the Assembly are selected by civic lottery. To be considered in the lottery, a person needs to:

- be a resident of the German-speaking region;
- be at least 16 years old;
- not hold an elected office and a number of positions defined in the decree establishing the model.

Each time a new Citizens' Assembly is confirmed, members of the Assembly need to be selected. The Citizens' Council decides on the exact number of participants and the Permanent Secretary is in charge of the selection process. The first step is a lottery in which 1000 individuals are selected who will be invited to express their willingness to participate in the Assembly. The Permanent Secretary then contacts the selected individuals by sending them a letter and asking them to confirm or decline their participation in written form. Among those who respond affirmatively, final participants are drawn at random in a way that selected citizens represent the general population in terms of gender, age, education, and place of residence (all nine municipalities should be represented).

Participation is voluntary and, according to the organisers, the acceptance rate has been decreasing, although it remains around 10%. This allows for the formation of a representative assembly, though younger participants have been especially difficult to recruit and at times under-represented. There have been efforts to make the Citizens' Dialogue more attractive for young people. For example, the Citizens' Dialogue now has social media accounts on several platforms and the staff is working with the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community to bring the process closer to the younger generations. Additionally, although nationality is not one of the selection criteria, data has shown that citizens of the German-speaking Community of Belgium with German citizenship are over-represented in the process.

Members of the Citizens' Council are randomly selected among previous participants of Citizens' Assemblies. In this case, the recruitment of younger people is an even bigger problem and membership is skewed towards older individuals.

The mandate of the members is 18 months, but to ensure the continuity of the Council and rotation of its membership, not all members take office at the same time. The decree establishing the Citizens' Dialogue states that every six months eight members (or one third of the Council) are replaced. Members elect a president among themselves who chairs the meetings. The president's mandate shall not exceed six months and the gender of two consecutive presidents should not be the same.

The first Citizens' Council, formed in 2019, could not be composed of members of previous Citizens' Assembly participants, so:

- one member was appointed by each of the groups represented in the Parliament;
- six members were randomly selected among the participants of the first Citizens' Dialogue on the subject of childcare held in 2017;
- other members were drawn by public lottery, similarly to how participants of Citizens' Assemblies are selected.

Citizen Deliberation

Citizens' Assemblies are formed by the Citizens' Council with a mandate to discuss a topic selected by the Council and to prepare policy recommendations. The number of members of the Assembly, as well as the date, duration, place, programme and budget of each of the Citizens' Assemblies are determined by the Citizens' Council. Participants of a Citizens' Assembly debate the topic for about three months and a minimum of three meetings. Before the deliberation starts, an information pack is sent to everyone involved, information sessions on the topic are organised, and the participants hear from experts and relevant interest groups. Deliberations among the participants are then led by a professional facilitator. The experts, stakeholders and facilitators are selected by the Citizens' Council. No politicians are involved in the work of the Citizens' Assembly until the recommendations are handed over to the Parliament.

**Schedule of the Citizens' Assembly on the topic of
digital participation:**

First Meeting: in the Parliament of the
German-speaking community
Saturday 24 September 2022
from 9 a.m. to around 4 p.m.

Second Meeting: in the "Triangel" room in Sankt Vith.
Saturday 8 October 2022
from 9 a.m. to around 4 p.m.

Third Meeting: in the Parliament of the
German-speaking community
Saturday 22 October 2022
from 9 a.m. to around 4 p.m.

Fourth Meeting: in the Parliament of the
German-speaking community
Saturday 29 October 2022
from 9 a.m. to around 4 p.m.

Coronavirus affected the implementation of some of the deliberative processes. The first Citizens' Assembly that was organised in 2020 took six months instead of three months to prepare recommendations. Similarly, meetings of the Assembly are expected to take place in person, but during the coronavirus pandemic some of the sessions took place online. The 2022 Citizens' Assembly on digital skills took place in person and the desire is to avoid online meetings in the future. On the recommendation of the moderator, the last couple of Assemblies have seen an online platform set up to facilitate the exchange of relevant documents and links, and to allow communication among participants and between participants and the Citizens' Dialogue staff outside of the sessions.

After the discussions are completed, the Citizens' Assembly formulates policy recommendations. Decisions made by consensus are preferable but if a consensus cannot be reached then a decision can be made with an 80% majority if at least 80% of the members of the Citizens' Assembly are present. Citizens who oppose the majority decision can prepare a position text explaining their vote, which is then added to the final report.

The first Citizens' Assembly on care was formed in March 2020 and presented recommendations to the Parliament and the Government in early October 2020.

Examples of specific recommendations are include decreasing the cost of training for care professionals and installing tablets next to patients' beds in hospitals and elderly- care facilities.

The Assembly's report included recommendations on recruiting more people in the care profession (3 recommendations), increasing self-determination, participation and quality of life of residents in care facilities (5 recommendations), using IT solutions for better care (3 recommendations), and improving working conditions and introducing other comprehensive measures (3 recommendations).

The Output of the Process

Adopted policy recommendations are presented to the Parliament and the Government by the Citizens' Assembly and referred to the relevant parliamentary committee. The recommendations are not legally binding, as the Belgian consti-

***The Parliament is required
to hear and debate
the outcome
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and prepare an opinion
regarding all recommendations
in collaboration with
competent ministers.***

tution does not give legislative power to citizens. However, the Parliament is required to hear and debate the outcome of the Citizens' Assembly, and prepare an opinion regarding all recommendations in collaboration with competent ministers. The Parliament needs to decide whether they will implement each of the recommendations. Thereafter, they need to justify their decision for rejected recommendations or describe the implementation plan for accepted recommendations.

This process happens during a couple of rounds of public discussion between the parliamentarians and the members of the Citizens' Assembly. At least three meetings with the decision-makers are foreseen after the Citizens' Assembly votes on their recommendations and officially hands them over to the Parliament:

- First public parliamentary committee meeting, where the members of the Citizens' Assembly present their recommendations to the Parliament and a representative of the Government.
- Second public parliamentary committee meeting, where the Parliament and the Government present the Assembly members their position on the recommendations and plan of implementation.
- Third public parliamentary committee meeting, a year later, where the Parliament and the Government present the report on the state of implementation of the recommendations.

These sessions happen in a parliamentary committee responsible for the topic discussed by the Citizens' Assembly and are – contrary to other committee meetings – open to the public and live-streamed. Minutes of the meetings and all documents produced in the process are also public.

This shows that the Ostbelgien Model places a lot of emphasis on making sure the work of the Citizens' Assembly is not finished after citizens prepare recommendations. To prevent a disconnect between the work of the citizens and the politicians, the members of the Assembly are involved in direct discussions with the decision-makers. In this way, citizens also take part in the process of formulating policy and its implementation, and can themselves be advocates for the recommendations formulated by the Citizens' Assembly.

Most often, the one-year period that the Government has to report on the state of implementation is not long enough to enact all citizen recommendations. After the third public parliamentary committee meeting, the implementation of recommendations is monitored by the Citizens' Council. The role of the Citizens' Council is to monitor the implementation as defined in the implementation report adopted by the Parliament. The Citizens' Council meets approximately once every month and can periodically inquire about the current status of implementation and, if necessary, organise follow-up meetings with the Government and the Parliament.

Impact

Since the implementation of the model, the Parliament has adopted several of the citizens' recommendations. For example, following the first Citizens' Assembly on healthcare, so-called "family councils" have been set up in nursing homes for the elderly to ensure family members of the residents are included in facility management. Additionally, through the process of Citizens' Dialogue, politicians have

adapted how they engage with the citizens' recommendations.

Instead of outright rejecting citizens' proposals that cannot be implemented for any variety of reasons, politicians rather look for alternative ways to solve the problem identified by the citizens.

Instead of outright rejecting citizens' proposals that cannot be implemented for any variety of reasons, politicians look for alternative ways to solve the problem identified by the citizens. One of the recommendations of the first Assembly was to change nursing qualification requirements. However, the system of educational qualifications is set at

national and European level and is therefore outside of the regional government's competencies. To answer the problem identified by the citizens, the Government created a new group of professionals in the healthcare sector with educational requirements that are different from the requirements for nurses.

To highlight as quote: "Instead of outright rejecting citizens' proposals that cannot be implemented for any variety of reasons, politicians rather look for alternative ways to solve the problem identified by the citizens."

Logistics

The Ostbelgien Model is financed by the Parliament of the German-speaking Community. Annually, the Citizens' Council adopts a budget which is then submitted to the Parliament's bureau for approval. The funds are used to cover the Permanent Secretary, citizens' compensations, organisational and logistical expenses, the fees for the experts and the facilitator, costs connected with conducting a civic lottery, and any other expense. The total budget for the year depends on the planned activities. The organisers estimate that running one Citizens' Assembly costs between EUR 60 000 and EUR 70 000.

The Permanent Secretary is in charge of the administrative support to the Citizens' Dialogue. However, in reality the workload often exceeds the capacities of

one person and other members of the Parliament's staff also support the process. No politicians are involved in Citizens' Assemblies. The job of a facilitator is outsourced to an external consultant.

EVALUATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE PROCESS

In June 2022, after three years of running the Citizens' Dialogue, the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium invited all previous members of Citizens' Assemblies, researchers and academics from the KU Leuven that have been monitoring and studying the Dialogue from the start, parliamentary staff, MPs, and other involved stakeholders to reflect on the process and propose some changes.

The amount of work needed to run the Citizens' Dialogue has been substantial for the relatively small Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Ostbelgien and their MPs who take on their positions in a non-professional capacity. In the beginning, the idea was to run two to three Citizens' Assemblies per year. However, one Assembly per year or three Assemblies every two years seems to be a more realistic goal. As members of the Citizens' Council are recruited from amongst previous members of Citizens' Assemblies, a smaller number of Assemblies meant that one third of members could not be replaced every six months. Therefore, it will be proposed that the decree be amended to state that one third of the members of the Citizens' Council will be replaced after each Citizens' Assembly.

Not all changes to the model require a change to the decree. To accommodate the need for greater support and involvement of the rest of the parliamentary staff, a Committee Secretary will be appointed beside the Permanent Secretary. The Committee Secretary will be composed of parliamentary staff working for parliamentary commissions, will offer citizens legal and procedural help, and will help the members of the Citizens' Dialogue to understand the competencies of the Parliament.

FURTHER READING

Below are some resources with more information about the Citizens' Dialogue in the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

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Deliberative Parliamentary Committees in the Brussels Regional Parliament



Just a couple of months after a permanent Citizens' Dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium was introduced, the Brussels Regional Parliament amended its rules of procedure to allow greater citizen involvement through deliberative committees.

The Deliberative Parliamentary Committee is an institutionalised mechanism of the Brussels Regional Parliament, codified in the internal rules of the Parliament with a mandate to put forward policy proposals identified through a process of deliberation and cooperation between parliamentarians and citizens. The idea was first proposed in 2017, however a lack of political will meant that the proposal was unsuccessful. The necessary changes to introduce Deliberative Committees were eventually adopted by the Brussels Regional Parliament after the elections in 2019. In 2021, the first Deliberative Committee was formed.

The Deliberative Parliamentary Committee is an institutionalised mechanism of the Brussels Regional Parliament, with a mandate to put forward policy proposals identified through a process of deliberation.

In an attempt to make the Brussels Regional Parliament more inclusive of citizens' voices, this new type of parliamentary committee was introduced. Each year, up to three Deliberative Parliamentary Committees are formed to bring together citizens and parliamentarians to discuss very specific issues facing the Brussels-Capital Region.

How the Model Stands Out:

- This is an institutionalised mechanism, meaning new Deliberative Committees can be organised if the topic is considered appropriate, within the Parliament's competencies, and the Parliament confirms the formation of the Committee. This can make the formation of new Deliberative Committees much easier and allows the Brussels Regional Parliament to build capacities for running such processes, while also increasing the visibility and recognition of the mechanism over time.
- Participants of a Deliberative Committee are a randomly selected group of citizens (three quarters of the participants) and members of the parliament (one quarter of the participants). The model is built on the participation of and dialogue between members of the parliament and citizens. Mixed committees ensure there is a continuity between the deliberative process and the political process following the recommendations of the Deliberative Committee.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

The proposal to introduce Deliberative Parliamentary Committees came from the Ecolo party (Écologistes Confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales), a Belgian French-speaking green political party. The original proposal was written by Ecolo MP Magali Plovie and was submitted for a vote in the Brussels Regional Parliament in 2017. However, at the time Ecolo was part of the opposition and the idea was not adopted. After the elections in 2019, Ecolo became part of the government and citizen participation was included in the coalition agreement. In this context, the idea re-emerged and a motion to amend the internal rules of the Parliament to introduce Deliberative Committees was passed in December 2019. The proposal was passed with 60 votes in favour and no votes against (25 MPs abstained and 4 were absent).

The model builds on previous experiments with deliberative democracy in Belgium, most notably the citizens' initiative G1000, but also globally, such as the citizens' panel in British Columbia on the reform of the electoral system, and the 2012 Irish Constitutional Convention. The experience from the latter especially helped to determine the desired ratio between politicians and citizen participants.

DELIBERATIVE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES IN PRACTICE

Initiating a Deliberative Committee

The establishment of a Deliberative Committee can be proposed either by 1 000 residents of the Brussels-Capital Region or by any MP. Citizens can start the process of collecting support for their initiative on the Parliament's online platform for citizen participation, or physically with the Parliament's Registry once they collect the first 100 signatures. Of the three Deliberative Committees organised by the Brussels Regional Parliament between 2021 and 2022, two were citizen-initiated and one was set up following a proposal from several political groups.

Each year, a maximum of three Deliberative Committees are organised. As per the Brussels Regional Parliament's website for deliberative processes, the rejection of a proposal should be an exceptional measure. If the proposed question is considered appropriate and within the Parliament's competencies, the proposal should only be rejected if the annual quota for Deliberative Committees has been reached or work on the subject is already ongoing, making it preferable to wait for the results of that work. Citizen suggestions that are not selected may only be reintroduced after 12 months.

Agenda Setting

A successful citizen or MP initiative is only a minimum condition, as the formation of a Deliberative Committee needs to be confirmed by the Parliament. If the proposal is considered valid, the Parliament's Extended Bureau votes on the establishment of a Deliberative Committee. If the vote is successful, the Bureau further defines the question for the Deliberative Committee and its scope of work. In case it rejects a proposal, it is obliged to publish a justification for the refusal. The proposing party is notified of the decision before the justification is published online.

The Committee's topic has to fulfil the following conditions:

1. the question to be discussed cannot have a "yes/no" response
2. it cannot violate human rights
3. it must be within the parliament's competencies

By the end of 2022, the Brussels Regional Parliament had held a Deliberative Parliamentary Committee on three topics. In 2023, two more Deliberative Committees are planned: one on noise pollution and one on a topic yet to be determined. There will then be a brief hiatus with deliberative processes ahead of elections in 2024, as per the internal rules of the Parliament.

The Three Deliberative Committees Organised by the End of 2022:

Topic: 5G in Brussels

Question: 5G (fifth generation of mobile networks) is coming to Belgium. How do we want 5G to be implemented in the Brussels-Capital Region, taking into account the environmental, health, economic, employment and technological aspects?

Duration: 29 April 2021 to 5 June 2021

Topic: Homelessness in Brussels

Question: The Brussels-Capital Region has at least 5 313 homeless and poorly-housed people. What measures do we want to take to permanently resolve this situation?

Duration: 24 June 2021 to 17 July 2021

Topic: Biodiversity in the City Considering the Different Functions of a City

Duration: 28 April 2022 to 31 May 2022

Participants

Each Deliberative Committee is composed of 15 parliamentarians and 45 citizens. Participating parliamentarians are members of the permanent parliamentary committee under which the topic of the deliberation falls. Of these, 12 are French speakers and three are Dutch speakers.

The 45 citizens are selected by means of a two-stage civic lottery. During the first stage, an invitation letter is sent to 10 000 randomly selected individuals who are at least 16 years old and who reside in the Brussels-Capital Region. Removed from

the lottery are elected representatives, members of the Government, and anyone with a potential conflict of interest. Those selected receive an invitation explaining the process and details about specific assistance offered, information about a free phone number for more details and support, and instructions on how to express their interest in taking part in the Deliberative Committee. Individuals who were selected and are under the age of 18 are invited to a special information session along with their parents or guardians. 7-12% of all invited individuals accept the invitation. During the second stage of selection, 45 participants of the Deliberative Committee are selected among the respondents to the first invitation.

Interpretation and translation options were being provided to participants who do not speak French or Dutch.

The final composition of selected citizens accounts for gender, age, educational level, language, and any other demographic characteristics relevant to the topic of deliberation (the support committee decides this separately for each Deliberative Committee).

Several measures are in place to ensure Deliberative Committees are representative and inclusive. The Committee members are reimbursed for each session, their travel expenses are covered, and free daycare is provided for children up to 12 years old. The invitation letter is in French and Dutch. Additionally, translations to the five other most spoken languages in the region (Arabic, English, German, Italian and Spanish) along with an audio recording in French and Dutch are available online. People who do not speak French or Dutch can attend Committee meetings with a person of their choosing who acts as their interpreter. That person is also remunerated in the same way as the participants. Special preparation meetings and support during the sessions are offered to all participants, and specific support is provided for young members of the Committee.

Schedule and Format

Once the participants have been selected, the Committee can start its work. The members meet several times over the course of about two months. The dates of each meeting are known well in advance to ensure participants can adjust their schedules accordingly. Most meetings happen at weekends. Deliberative Committee sessions are divided into three phases:

1. The informative phase
2. The deliberative phase
3. The recommendations phase

The purpose of the informative phase is to explain the work of the Committee and all stages of the process to both the selected citizens and the participating parliamentarians. Additionally, a full-day information session with experts and stakeholders is organised to ensure all participants have a sufficient grasp of the topic and are comfortable discussing it.

The deliberative phase happens in smaller groups of 5-10 participants, split by the topics of discussion and possible policy outcomes. Members of the groups rotate so that everyone meets and has a chance to debate with the other participants. Tables are moderated by external facilitators whose role is to ensure everyone participates in the deliberation. This phase is closed to the public. The results of the deliberative phase are proposals agreed upon in smaller groups and drawn up with the help of the Parliament staff.

During the recommendations phase, participants vote on each proposal. As Belgian law does not have a mechanism for citizens voting in a Parliamentary committee, a workaround was devised that respects the law but also ensures that not only MPs vote on the conclusions of the deliberative phase. Citizen members cast a secret ballot and the result is only consultative. MPs' votes are public, so they are held accountable in case they vote differently from the citizens. This is believed to encourage MPs not to strategize with their vote and change their decision at the last minute, both of which could undermine the deliberative process. For a proposal to become one of the official recommendations of the Deliberative Committee, it needs to be confirmed by a majority of the MPs.

An Example of the Schedule of Meetings for the Deliberative Committee on Biodiversity:

Initial contact and presentation of the process:

Thursday 28 April 2022 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Meeting with the experts and first exchanges between participants:

Saturday 30 April 2022 from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Deliberations in small groups and plenary meetings, drafting of proposed recommendations:

**Saturday 14 May 2022 from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
and Sunday 15 May 2022 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Discussion and adoption of the proposed recommendations:

Saturday 21 May 2022 from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Presentation of the Deliberative Committee's report:

Tuesday 31 May 2022 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Although the model was confirmed just a couple of months before the start of the global coronavirus pandemic, no meetings took place online. Deliberative Committees were scheduled during periods when in-person meetings were possible. This was done to ensure the quality of deliberations and to allow for the participation of people without internet access, appropriate technology or low digital literacy skills.

Output of the Process

The output of the Deliberative Committee is a report with recommendations for the Parliament and the Government. The report is debated in the parliamentary committee under which the topic of deliberation falls and in any other committee if deemed necessary. As the MP members of the Deliberative Committee are also members of the committee discussing the report, they are directly involved in the follow-up process and often become informal ambassadors for the Deliberative Committee's recommendations.

**You can access the recommendations of the first three
Deliberative Committees in English online.**

[Deliberative Committee recommendations on the topic of 5G](#)

[Deliberative Committee recommendations on the topic of homelessness](#)

[Deliberative Committee recommendations on the topic of biodiversity](#)

Within six months (or nine if the report is relevant for more than one parliamentary committee), the Parliament needs to have considered each recommendation and, in writing, have explained why it was accepted or rejected. The Government is obliged to do the same. After that period, the participants of the Deliberative Committee are again called for a meeting where they are updated on the progress of the recommendations. At the follow-up meeting with the members of the first Deliberative Committee on 5G, the Government estimated that they would integrate around 80% of the Committee's recommendations in the 5G deployment bill being prepared at the time.

Support and Logistics

To oversee the implementation of the process, each Deliberative Committee has an eight-member support committee composed of two topic experts, two Parliamentary administrative staff members, and four experts in participatory and deliberative democracy. The two topic experts are newly appointed for each Committee according to the topic of deliberation, but the parliamentary staff and experts on deliberation are named for two years and oversee more than one Committee.

One of the key roles of the support committee is to ensure that the citizens and MPs participating in the Deliberative Committee have access to the relevant information and perspectives.

This also means picking appropriate experts and witnesses and making sure they are available for the participants. The support committee is also responsible for the conduct of the debates and ensuring that everyone can participate. However, facilitation of the process is outsourced to a group of external experts whose contracts are renewed every two years. Daycare and any other specific assistance are also organised through external contractors.

In addition to the support committee, each Deliberative Committee also has a governance committee. This is made up of the chairman of the Deliberative Committee, two citizen members, and one facilitator of the deliberation. They meet at the end of each meeting, evaluating the process and making any necessary adjustments.

The process is funded by the internal budget of the Parliament. The cost of organising one Deliberative Committee has been estimated at around EUR 120 000.

EVALUATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE PROCESS

The Deliberative Committee mechanism implemented in the Brussels Regional Parliament is the first of its kind and still evolving. The support committee not only supports the implementation of the process, but also evaluates the implementation and recommends improvements for future Deliberative Committees. Additionally, there is an independent scientific committee composed of experts in participatory democracy, deliberation and inclusion. This committee prepared the first evaluation report of the mechanism in 2022, evaluating the challenges and successes of the model. The report was introduced to the Parliament, which is in charge of implementing any formal changes to its internal rules.

Just a couple of years after running the first Deliberative Committee, adjustments to the model have already been made and some are in the process of being implemented or considered by the Parliament. For example, experts that used to only be available for the first two days are now on site during all the sessions, available to support participants and answer any questions that arise in the latter stages of the process. It has also been decided that participants will be able to request to hear from additional specific experts that they feel might contribute to the deliberations.

A lot of attention has been given to preparing the parliamentarians for participation. The focus is to make sure that they do not just listen during the deliberations, as they are used to doing in their interactions with citizens, but also actively partici-

pate and make their reservations known in advance rather than proposing amendments in the final stages of the process. The problem with amendments has also been dealt with by adding time for the discussion of proposed amendments before voting on them. This has helped to ensure that the final recommendations are truly the result of a collaborative approach. Additionally, after the first Deliberative Committee produced a very large number of recommendations, a cap of 30 recommendations was introduced.

Currently, Deliberative Committees meet at weekends, sometimes for up to five consecutive weeks. The schedule is set to accommodate working people, however it can be intense and taxing for the participants, so the idea of a citizenship leave has been considered and discussed.

Citizenship leave refers to the right to paid leave for exercising citizens' rights, such as voting, serving on a jury, or participating in a deliberative process.

Currently, new Deliberative Committees have been confirmed on a rolling basis, however this will be changed and new Committees will be confirmed once or twice per year. This will allow the parliamentary staff to better prepare for the upcoming deliberative process. There is also a question about whether the number of Deliberative Committees should really be capped to a maximum of three per year. As the process is gaining recognition and more people are learning about the option of initiating a Deliberative Committee, many good suggestions might need to be rejected.

An independent evaluation of participants' opinions shows that Deliberative Committees are quite well-received. 68% of the participating citizens stated that their interest in politics increased after they took part in a Committee, 82% said they better understood the political system, and 95% would participate again if selected. 72% of citizens believed that having MPs as members of the Deliberative Committee was positive and 95% of the MPs who were members of the Committee believed that adding citizens to the process was very good. Several politicians who had initially been sceptical or even opposed Deliberative Committees have since become supporters.

FURTHER READING

Below are some resources with more information about Deliberative Parliamentary Committees in the Brussels Regional Parliament.

democratie.brussels (2023). Available at: <https://democratie.brussels/> (Accessed on 1 February 2023).

Le règlement = Rules of procedure of the parliament 1990. Available at: http://www.parlement.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/reglement_fr-1.pdf (Accessed on 1 February 2023).

Moskovic, J., Saintraint, F. and Redman, K. (2020) *'The Brussels Deliberative Committees Model'*, NewDEMOCRACY Research and Development Note. Available at: <https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/RD-Note-Brussels-Deliberative-Committees-Model.pdf> (Accessed on 1 February 2023).

OECD (2021) *'Eight ways to institutionalise deliberative democracy'*, OECD Public Governance Policy Papers, No. 12, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/4fcf1da5-en> (Accessed on 1 February 2023).

Citizens' Council in Gütersloh, Germany



In 2022, Gütersloh ran its first Citizens' Council, joining several municipalities in Austria and Germany running this model of citizen participation. At the centre of this representative and deliberative process is a small Citizens' Council that runs for a couple of days, followed by a Citizens' Cafe where the results of the citizens' deliberation are presented to and debated by the general public.

How the model stands out:

- The Citizens' Council in Gütersloh is based on the Vorarlberg model, which was designed to organise relatively inexpensive, short and organisationally easy deliberative processes. This allows decision-making bodies to engage with the public without using too many resources.
- The Citizens' Council has an advisory status in relation to the City Council. It can help politicians to understand the needs and desires of the population. However, all the power to adopt policies remains with the City Council.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

The proposal to organise a citizens' council was submitted to the Gütersloh City Council by a citizens' initiative called Demokratie Wagen! after years of campaigning for greater involvement of citizens in the work of the municipality. The proposal was adopted by a majority in the City Council in March 2020, tasking the city administration with organising the process. In the autumn of that year, local elections took place and the candidate who ended up becoming the mayor of Gütersloh – Norbert Morkes – ran on the promise of organising a citizens' council.

In 2021, the City Council confirmed that it was joining the LOSLAND project, which is an initiative working with 10 municipalities around Germany to develop tailor-made participation processes based on the idea of a Citizens' Council. Gütersloh, with

its 100 000 inhabitants, is the biggest municipality participating in the project, with the other municipalities being Ottersberg, Augustusburg, Coesfeld, Homberg (Efze), Leupoldsgrün, Lindau am Bodensee, Ludwigsfelde, Rietschen and Varel.

CITIZENS' COUNCIL IN PRACTICE

The Citizens' Council in Gütersloh was designed following the Vorarlberg model and the process was divided into four phases.

The Vorarlberg Citizens' Council is a model of representative deliberative process developed by the Austrian state of Vorarlberg. The idea is based on Jim Rough's Wisdom Council, which is a method used to develop and implement creative solutions to sensitive topics in smaller groups. The Vorarlberg model is a multi-stage participatory process which allows decision-making bodies to engage with citizens in a quick and inexpensive manner. Randomly selected citizens prepare solutions to social problems through two-day deliberations. Those solutions are then discussed in a public forum open to all, before being sent to the decision-making body for consideration. The model is used at local and regional levels in Austria, but is also spreading to other European countries.

The planning phase

To plan and set up a Citizens' Council, a 12-person steering committee was named. The committee was composed of politicians, city administration, and participation experts from the LOSLAND project. Besides setting up the logistics and dates for the process, they were also tasked with determining the agenda and selecting participants.

The topic of the Citizens' Council was predetermined by the LOSLAND project's focus on the future. The suggestion was that the 10 municipalities involved in the project should organise a Citizens' Council on the topic 'How do we create a future fit for our grandchildren?' The Gütersloh steering committee decided that the proposed question could be unclear to the citizens, so they reformulated it to:

'Gütersloh suitable for grandchildren: How and what can we share in Gütersloh in order to live more sustainably together?'

Participants of the Citizens' Council are randomly selected citizens representing the diversity of the municipality. Letters with invitations to participate in the process were sent to 780 randomly selected inhabitants of Gütersloh. 390 or 50% of those invited were representative of the age and gender of the general population of Gütersloh, while the other half was a cross-section of the population in terms of the district in which they lived, age, religion and place of birth. All permanent residents, regardless of citizenship, were considered.

Around 14% of invited citizens responded to the invitation and 65 of those people expressed interest. Among those responding positively, 27 members of the Citizens' Council were selected with the goal of achieving the greatest diversity and representation. The youngest participant was 16, the oldest participant was 74, and participants were from all 12 districts of Gütersloh and from diverse national and cultural backgrounds.

Citizens' Council

The main event of the process is a two-day closed Citizens' Council meeting attended by randomly selected citizens. The deliberations were moderated by two experts employing the Dynamic Facilitation method. It was a closed discussion, meaning that only the 27 citizen participants and the facilitators took part in the discussion or were present in the room. The topic of the Citizens' Council should not require expert knowledge and should be able to be discussed in one weekend.

The Dynamic Facilitation method encourages all participants to speak out, with the facilitator carefully listening, repeating how they understood what the speaker said, and then recording all contributions under one of the four categories: questions/challenges, solutions/ideas, concerns/objections and information/perceptions. Voicing criticism and disagreement is encouraged as it identifies concerns that should be discussed. The practitioners of the method believe that an open discussion with diverse viewpoints can eventually lead to identifying creative solutions supported by all the participants.

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Citizen participants were paid EUR 50 per session and the city of Gütersloh offered childcare and transportation to all the participants, as well as providing food and drinks during the weekend.

The output of the two-day deliberations was a set of suggestions agreed upon and prepared by the participants. The Citizens' Council in Gütersloh prepared recommendations on seven topics identified by the participants themselves:

- Long-term Citizens' Council
- Living well together
- Communication – knowledge – information
- Citizens' cooperative for renewable energy
- Nucleus of a new downtown
- Eco Park / Urban Garden
- Living together, sharing and helping

The recommendations within each topic varied. Some were vague, such as a recommendation within the 'Living together, sharing and helping' topic where it was listed what 'helping' means ('mutual support between generations, e.g. passing on skills such as cooking, playing together, doing shopping for each other or looking after small children') without specifying what should be implemented by the City Council and how. On the other hand, some recommendations were specific, for example 'use the Citizens' Council as a regular instrument' and 'rethink the concept of Berliner Platz and the Karstadt building in the city centre.'

The Schedule

Citizens' Council in the Council Chamber in City Hall:

**Saturday 17 September
and Sunday 18 September 2022**

Citizens' Forum in the Council Chamber in City Hall:

Wednesday 21 September 2022 at 5 p.m

Citizens' Forum

The Citizens' Council is followed by a Citizens' Forum which is open to all citizens. The Citizens' Forum is an opportunity to involve more people in the deliberative process through a more relaxed structure and atmosphere. During the Citizens' Forum, the results of the Council are presented and discussed with a wider audience of interested citizens who can add to the proposals. Alongside the Citizens' Forum, which happened in person on a weekday night, Gütersloh also organised an online presentation of the results of the Citizens' Council on a digital platform called Consul, allowing citizens to leave their comments and support suggestions online.

Consul is an open-source citizen participation tool for an open, transparent and democratic government. It allows citizens to make proposals or engage with their government in participatory processes.

Transfer

In the last step of the process, the steering committee meets in order to produce a report for the City Council. This report incorporates all of the suggestions received through the Citizens' Forum and the online platform together with the results of the Citizens' Council. The report is then handed over to the City Council at a regular Council Session. The members of the Citizens' Council are invited to attend the City Council session or they can follow the public live stream.

EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS

Evaluation of the process and comparison to other municipalities will be conducted within the LOSLAND project at a later stage. With the conclusions of the process only being handed over to the City Council in November 2022, it is still early to speculate about the impact of the Gütersloh Citizens' Council.

One of the shortcomings that the staff involved reported was relatively low involvement of the general public and low engagement on the digital platform. They attributed this to a lack of capacity to sufficiently promote the process in the media and on different social media platforms.

There is no follow-up process and no (official) obligation for the City Council to engage with the results of the process. Consequently, the steering committee alone has the responsibility of pushing forward any issues identified by the Citizens' Council. Some members of the steering committee are also politicians who are very much in favour of the Citizens' Council, so their enthusiasm together with the work of the city staff involved in the process might compensate for the lack of an official 'process after the process'. The steering committee has already been identifying members of the Citizens' Council that wanted to remain involved and is thinking of how to include them in the next steps.

As they are currently working on moving forward the results of the first Citizens' Council, the city of Gütersloh has not yet decided whether they will repeat the process or not.

FURTHER READING

Below are some resources with more information about the Citizens' Council in Gütersloh and the Vorarlberg model.

Buergerrat.net (2023) Bürgerrat Vorarlberg. Available at: <https://www.buergerrat.net/> (Accessed on 1 February 2023).

Losland (2023). Available at: <https://www.losland.org/> (Accessed on 1 February 2023).

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Citizens' Offices in Municipalities in Morocco



Created and implemented by the civil society organisation Innovative Development Initiatives (IDI) in 2019 in Morocco, the Citizens' Office project is a mechanism of encouraging participatory democracy at a municipal level. This is done by facilitating two-way communication between political decision-makers, social actors, civil society and citizens. Created within the municipalities, the Citizens' Office focuses on citizens and their interests in order to ensure concerted management of public affairs based on consultation, access to information, and user-friendly administration.

How the Model Stands Out:

- The Citizens' Office model is one of the more innovative ways to effectively exercise the decentralised nature of the Moroccan political system. With the Citizens' Office, the initiators hope to contribute to building trust between citizens and the municipal government. On the one hand, citizens might better understand the role of the municipality and see that politicians and public administrators are prepared to work with them. On the other hand, the municipality might see that citizens can be trusted and often know best what should be done in their community.
- The model was developed by a civil society organisation in cooperation with Moroccan municipalities. While that has its shortcomings – municipalities need to be recruited and there is no guaranteed funding for the project – it also means the initiative is spreading relatively quickly around Morocco and is more likely to survive even if a change in local government happens. This theory was confirmed during the election in 2021, when governments in all the cities with Citizens' Offices changed, but the Offices remained active.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

Citizens' Office is a project developed by IDI, a private social enterprise created to strengthen local democracy in Morocco. The aim of Citizens' Offices is to reinvigorate participatory democracy, improve communication between citizens and

The aim of Citizens' Offices is to reinvigorate participatory democracy, improve communication between citizens and municipalities, fight against administrative corruption, and ensure the transparency and efficiency of local governments.

municipalities, fight against administrative corruption, and ensure the transparency and efficiency of local governments.

In developing the idea, IDI was inspired by the Sustainable Development Goal 16¹, the work of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), and, importantly, Citizens' Offices implemented in Germany. The model itself was developed in collaboration with the Moroccan municipalities. Since 2019, IDI has conducted more than 20 workshops with local government representatives, defining the structure of

Citizens' Offices and their implementation. Workshops have also helped to identify and recruit the first adoptive municipalities.

The first municipality to set up a Citizens' Office was the Municipality of Tetouan in northern Morocco in March 2019. As of the end of 2022, eight Citizens' Offices are functioning.

CITIZENS' OFFICES IN PRACTICE

Setting Up a Citizens' Office

The legal foundation for setting up a Citizens' Office is provided in the law governing local authorities in Morocco, the right to information law from 2020, the law on the facilitation of administrative procedures, and the directives on participatory democracy in Morocco.

The decision to establish a Citizens' Office is within the jurisdiction of each municipality and needs to be confirmed by the municipal council with a regular majority. It is essen-

1 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

tial for the success of the project that appropriate funding is allocated from the start. The structure of the Citizens' Office and its missions are the same for all participating municipalities, but the implementation differs from one municipality to another.

Moroccan cities that already have a running Citizens' Office are Tetouan, M'diq, Martil, Chefchaouen, Ouazzane, Oued Laou, Fnideq, and Ksar el-Kebir. Each year, IDI organises the National Citizens' Office Forum, with the aim of presenting the project to the wider public and recruiting new municipalities.

Competencies of Citizens' Offices

The Citizens' Office provides political and administrative support to citizens by:

1. providing a mechanism for access to information

2. facilitating administrative procedures for citizens

3. enabling citizen participation

The Citizens' Office aims to be a one-stop shop for citizens, a place where citizens can seamlessly interact with their local government. It also wishes to be a space that breaks the one-way communication flow between the municipality and its citizens, and provides mechanisms for greater involvement of citizens in the work of the municipality. Citizens' Offices run a variety of initiatives aimed at engaging citizens, such as the citizen jury, meeting with the mayor, and municipal open days.

Citizen participation is enabled through Citizens' Offices in three ways that encourage greater public involvement in the work of local governments. Firstly, citizens can submit opinions and suggestions directly through the Citizens' Office regarding all issues related to the municipality and the municipality is required to provide an answer in 15 days. Once the municipality makes a decision regarding the suggestion, the citizen concerned is personally notified. Additionally, the Citizens' Office has the mission to provide better access to information for citizens. Consequently, all decisions regarding citizen proposals must be communicated and published at the headquarters of the municipality and on the common digital platform launched at the end of 2022. Secondly, the Office can facilitate consultations with citizens by distributing surveys on the work of the municipality and organising a consultation process on a specific topic. Feedback on the consultation process is submitted to the Citizens' Office, which is responsible for sharing the findings with the rest of the municipality. Finally,

Citizens' Offices offer citizens the opportunity to observe the work of elected officials and municipal officials. The citizen observation mechanism is built on the principle of citizen volunteerism, and allows the public to shadow the work of Citizens' Office

Citizens' Offices offer citizens the opportunity to observe the work of elected officials and municipal officials.

employees and observe various activities happening in the municipality.

Any individual that is at least 18 years old and is a resident of the municipality can use the services provided by the Citizens' Office and take part in the mechanism for participation

set up by the Office. Citizens learn about Citizens' Offices on the municipality's and IDI's websites and social media channels, through posters in the municipality, and in local media.

One of the activities organised by the Citizens' Office is also the training of trainers with the aim of educating civil society representatives so they can offer support to the public on questions of civic participation and strengthen their skills to better use the services of the Citizens' Office. Anyone can participate in these sessions, however they need to commit to training citizens on local democracy and the functioning of the Citizens' Office.

Impact of Citizens' Offices

Citizens' Offices are still in their early days, but the organisers report better involvement of citizens in the affairs of municipalities through Citizens' Offices. Confidence is gradually being established and administrative processes are becoming increasingly efficient.

The Citizens' Office makes local administration more transparent and sets up mechanisms for citizens' participation in the work of the municipality. Several suggestions submitted through Citizens' Offices in various forms have already been implemented. Some of the municipalities, because they received repeated requests on certain topics, decided to create bodies tasked with addressing the issue. Bodies that have been created are in charge of the following topics: young people and civil society, gender, economic actors, and school children.

A lot of proposals submitted through Citizens' Offices focused on better administrative communication and transparency at local and even national levels. These have led to national and local debates on access to information and the facilitation of administrative procedures, and have led to changes of local law on gender, the law on access to information, and the law on the facilitation of administration.

Budget

The budget needed to set up a fully functional Citizens' Office depends on the size of the municipality and the scale of the project. The operating budget covered by the municipality includes office space, equipment and employees working in the Office. Additionally, IDI trains elected officials, civil servants, and provides workshops for citizens from its own budget.

EVALUATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE MODEL

Several Citizens' Offices have implemented significant changes to their functioning while remaining true to their original structure. Following growing interest and use by citizens, some of the municipalities expanded the team running the Citizens' Office and devoted more staff members to the initiative. Also, as a result of working with two consulting companies – one local and one foreign – who performed an evaluation of the project, several new features were developed. Firstly, digitalisation has been integrated into the management of the missions of the Citizens' Office. Secondly, accessibility of the Offices has been evaluated and improved. Finally, a decision has been made that the Citizens' Offices should be located in a space not further than 100 metres from the town hall.

One of the most significant challenges still facing the Citizens' Offices is to ensure the project is not politicised by elected officials. Municipalities also need to ensure they offer sufficient training and continuous development for staff so that capacities for inclusion and participation are built. All of this is happening against the backdrop of limited municipal funds, where Citizens' Offices are competing with other municipal projects.

As more Citizens' Offices are opened around the country, their visibility increases not just locally but also nationally. Several national politicians support the project and have visited the Citizens' Offices in person. The initiative has even been presented at a meeting with the President of the House of Representatives of Parliament, and the organisers are working to introduce the Institute of Citizens' Offices into national legislation. That would mean the model would become one of the nationally-sanctioned processes of local democracy.

FURTHER READING

Website of the project: Bureau citoyen (2023). Available at: <https://www.bureaucitoyen.ma/> (Accessed on 1 February 2023).

Recommendations for Running New Forms of Democratic Engagement

In every society, people differ in their opinions, needs, expectations, as well as their positions on the questions affecting people living together. These differences of opinion on substantive matters are also held by politicians and state representatives. Even where freedom of expression is suppressed, there are different views and opinions on political issues as there is neither a general popular will nor a predetermined common good.

In many western democracies political parties formulate, bundle and represent different societal interests. Through the elections of representatives of political parties to assemblies, the political ideas and manifestos of parties are connected with the electorate's preferences and then translated into political priorities and choices of national, regional and local governments. However, trust in the political elites has been decreasing in many countries for a variety of reasons. To address this increasing mistrust, in recent decades governments (local and national) and political parties have experimented with new forms of citizen participation trying to engage with and connect citizens beyond elections within the representative political system.

When designed and implemented successfully, new forms of participatory and deliberative democracy embed citizens in democratic processes, increase the legitimacy of difficult political decisions, and can reinvigorate representative institutions. With parliaments and other decision-making bodies increasingly turning to deliberative processes to address the challenges threatening our democracies – for instance a lack of democratic legitimacy, and political polarisation – institutions and organisations such as the OECD and the Council of Europe have done tremendous work on identifying good practice standards and developing methodology to evaluate and replicate deliberative processes, tools and mechanisms.

New forms of participatory and deliberative democracy embed citizens in democratic processes, increase the legitimacy of difficult political decisions, and can reinvigorate representative institutions.

Different levels of governance, international organisations and European institutions are replicating existing models of democratic engagement or are in the process of developing new ones. It is important that they find out which elements of deliberative democracy could be implemented in their authorities and/or institutions, while also implementing new processes, all the while taking into consideration the basic principles of deliberative democracy. Below we offer six statements that should guide the implementation of any deliberative process.

1. Deliberative democracy complements representative democracy.

While deliberative processes bring citizens closer to political institutions, they cannot replace representative democratic institutions. On the contrary, they should be complementary.

In a majority of countries there is no legal path to enact policy proposals made by citizens' assemblies. The recommendations stemming from deliberative processes must be confirmed through the legislative procedure in place, for example by being subjected to a vote in the parliament or in a referendum. Furthermore, due to the deep-rooted political tradition and culture in Europe, the selection of political representatives is unlikely to change any time soon. Therefore, understanding the role of deliberative democracy is not to challenge but to complement representative democracy. This allows us to explore how deliberative processes can help to address the crisis of democracy.

Governments and public authorities must continuously seek new innovative solutions to foster greater involvement of citizens resulting in more democratic governance. Citizens' interests must be the foundation of the decisions made by all levels of government, as regular exploration of citizens' policy priorities can help public policy-making. However, political representatives must respect the legal procedures in place for decision-making processes. Similarly, citizens' councils do not automatically ensure the legitimacy of political projects in society. Realism on the part of both the parliament and the public is an indispensable prerequisite for the success of deliberative processes.

2. The parliament is a stakeholder in deliberative processes.

Politicians and the political advisers, civil servants, and experts surrounding them are often perceived as being out of touch with the citizens' and society's problems. Conversely, citizens' assemblies or councils are seen as representing 'ordinary' people and addressing public problems and priorities. In a political climate where such negative perceptions towards the political representatives exist, the expectations for deliberative processes can exceed the processes' capacities and jurisdiction, while also making it very costly for the parliament to override citizens' proposals.

This competition for legitimacy between deliberative processes and representative institutions can be mitigated with a very clear procedure delineating the power between a citizens' assembly and a parliament. Clarity about the political impact of citizen proposals can raise the credibility and increase the participation in deliberative processes. The fact that the legislative process does not end when citizen proposals are handed over to a parliament should be emphasised by creating a follow-up process. Such a process would allow participants of citizens' assemblies to stay informed and would clearly define the responsibilities of the parliament in regard to citizen recommendations.

3. Citizens should be empowered to participate in the deliberative process.

Citizens can participate in deliberative processes only if they have access to relevant and accurate information that shows different perspectives, including hearing from experts and other relevant stakeholders. Information should be given in a way that is understandable and accessible. Similarly, citizens should have direct contact with policy experts who can inform them about procedures, existing legislation and competencies, and help write policy proposals.

Citizens' councils thrive on the fact that they offer their participants a kind of protected, neutral space in which political decision-making can be experienced. To ensure that everyone can participate and voice their opinions freely, competent moderators are crucial to the process. Although a successful deliberative process needs to be structured and moderated, this should not strip participants of agency over the proceedings. Citizens should have influence over the agenda and the focus of deliberation, and should be able to request additional information and experts.

4. The integrity of the deliberative process should be ensured through transparency and fair representation.

All information concerning the process should be publicly available and easily accessible to the public. Anyone should be able to find information about the purpose, design, selection of participants, and results of the process. Alternative channels of communication should be used – from digital platforms built for this purpose to communicating in physical space and with people who do not have access to the internet or the necessary digital skills. Transparency should be limited only to protect the identity of the participants who do not wish to be exposed and to ensure a safe space for discussions. Smaller discussion groups do not need to be monitored, taped and/or transcribed and can provide a space where citizens can freely express their opinion.

Participants of the deliberative process should be selected according to a clear set of indicators ensuring diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities for all. If participation is only based on self-selection, it usually means that certain groups of people are either overrepresented, underrepresented or completely absent. All efforts should be made to ensure the process is accessible to everyone and participants are representative of all groups of society. Mechanisms and incentives for encouraging participation by vulnerable groups should be put in place, such as organising informative sessions on how to participate, providing multilingual support, reaching out into underrepresented communities, cooperating with a wide variety of NGOs, offering day care and providing adequate remuneration (if applicable). Participation should not be limited to people with citizenship.

5. Deliberative democracy is an ongoing process, not a one-time event.

Building trust between the citizens and the government, which is one of the main goals of participatory and deliberative processes, is a continuous process and should not be reduced to one-time events.

The model should either be established as a permanent structure, voted into law or codified in the internal rules of the institutions in a way that makes the replication of the process possible and sets clear conditions for it to take place.

Additionally, funding for the process should be integrated into the organising institution's budget. Institutionalisation of participatory and deliberative processes reduces the bureaucracy involved in running each process, builds institutional capacity, allows for continuous improvement of the model, and makes the process more publicly recognisable and less politically volatile.

6. Deliberative processes should regularly be evaluated.

The process should be constantly monitored, evaluated and improved upon. An internal permanent group of experts and professionals should be in charge of overseeing the process and coordinating any necessary improvements. A periodic independent review should be conducted. It is necessary to evaluate the work of the deliberative process regularly to illustrate its added value in terms of acceptance by the population, contribution to an increased level of trust in decision-making, and contribution to the quality and innovation of policy-making compared to parliaments which have no similar mechanisms.

**The Value of
Partnership:
The 2022
ENoP-AER Forum
on New Forms
of Democratic
Engagement**

The European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) and the Assembly of European Regions (AER) joined forces in order to complement each other's expertise on citizens' involvement in democratic processes and different levels of government.

For both organisations, the promotion of democracy and good governance is at the heart of their political priorities. As a network of regional authorities, AER and its members advocate for an enhancement of the EU architecture in a way that truly delivers the principles of subsidiarity, partnership and multi-level governance. As a network of political foundations affiliated to different political families across the democratic spectrum, ENoP and its members advocate for a dialogue-based democracy inside and outside of Europe. Similarly, they both create common ground and understanding between political and civil society actors in Europe and partner countries, with the goal of strengthening core democratic values and nurturing pluralistic and inclusive societies.

The cooperation between ENoP and AER consisted of three phases:

1. A joint forum on new forms of democratic engagement

2. A joint publication which is a compilation of case studies on best practices of citizen participation

3. A launch event which highlighted the findings of the publication and concrete policy recommendations derived from the previous two phases



Communication



communication

- **Great transparency** on the website (background materials, livestreamed sessions, expert's hearing, etc...)
- **Interviews** of steering committee's members and members of the CCC

70% of French people had heard about the CCC's proposals

62% of which approved these proposals

Influence on the public debate – bans on flights with train alternatives and adds for polluting goods)

ELABE 2020. ODOXA 2020



RECAPPING THE FORUM

The ENoP-AER Forum on New Forms of Democratic Engagement took place on 1 and 2 June 2022. It was a platform for displaying a number of examples of new forms of democratic engagement and exchanging good practices amongst experts in deliberative and participatory democracy. The presentation of best practice examples encompassed three levels of government – national, regional and local.

Deliberative democracy in Europe is increasingly gaining steam through instruments such as citizens' assemblies, citizens' councils and deliberative committees. The Forum was therefore an opportunity for speakers representing the three different levels of government to discuss the tools and mechanisms necessary to enhance deliberative democracy in Europe. The main goal of the discussion was to find the most effective approaches which are able to ensure that such mechanisms can complement the more traditional forms of democratic participation in the best way possible.

The Forum also provided the opportunity to introduce new digital tools that have emerged recently and somewhat guaranteed the continuation of democratic rights during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Marcin Gerwin, PhD (Specialist in Deliberative Democracy and Sustainability, Center for Blue Democracy) demonstrated the Poznan experiment of an online citizens' assembly, as well as the successful case of the Gdańsk citizens' assembly in 2016, where decisions with at least 80% support among its assembly's members were enacted in law. The latter turned out to be a success story and was followed by other citizens' assemblies both in Gdańsk and other Polish cities on issues such as pollution, civic engagement and LGBTQI+ rights.

Although acknowledging the different levels of flexibility that online formats offer, the Forum essentially agreed that the most fruitful and

Although online formats offer different levels of flexibility, the most fruitful and impactful discussions happen during in-person deliberations.

impactful discussions between citizens and governments happen during in-person deliberations and face-to-face interactions. Indeed, these forms of deliberation and interaction create the time, format and scene-setting necessary for the exchange of opinions and different perspectives to take place.

“A well-designed process leads to well-designed decisions and is beneficial for politicians” (Marcin Gerwin)

The contribution of Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, the Mayor of the City of Gdańsk, emphasised the importance of civic education as a long-term tool for a healthy democracy. A prerequisite for the successful deliberative and democratic participation of citizens is knowledge of the basics of policy-making and legislative processes. In order to achieve this, the key is to provide children from an early age with an education on their rights and duties as citizens-to-be.

MEP and AER Vice President Lukas Mandl mentioned inclusion as another crucial aspect which will ensure a successful participatory framework. Without the equal inclusion of all genders, generations of people, and marginalised groups, the process will ultimately not be holistic, nor will it offer long-lasting solutions.

MEP Brando Benifei underlined the importance of clearly defined goals and purposes of deliberative and participatory democratic processes. In his opinion, the example of the Conference on the Future of Europe demonstrates this, as its lack of clear rules of engagement made the Conference delicate and potentially unsustainable.

Ireland is considered by many to be one of the best models when it comes to deliberative democracy in Europe, although not without its own flaws. Professor David Farrell and ENoP Coordinator Denis Schrey agree and rightly warn not to use citizens’ assemblies to try to solve issues as an alternative to representative democracy which already has procedures and legislation in place to ensure a certain level of functionality. Participatory processes should be sensible and address issues of common public interest, because they require justification for the allocation of the necessary time and resources.

The tools necessary to properly design participatory processes are yet to be perfected. The toughest questions to answer are how to make assemblies truly representative and ensure that their conclusions have an impact. As stated by AER President Magnus Berntsson, citizens ultimately have to be willing to engage in democratic processes and governments have to be willing to encourage them. And for this to happen, concrete policies need to be put in place.

DERIVED RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on exchanges of best practices and lessons learned from national, regional and local citizens' assemblies and other forms of deliberative democracy across Europe. They were discussed in cooperation with leading experts during the ENoP-AER Forum on New Forms of Democratic Engagement held on 1 and 2 June 2022 in Brussels.

1. We call for the EU Institutions to develop an EU framework enabling the strengthening of the tools, mechanisms and processes of deliberative democracy in an integrated approach at national, regional and local levels while respecting the flexibility to organise such processes according to national and regional specificities and local political culture, taking into account the suggestions made in the recommendations above. A higher level of EU funding should be specifically channelled at introducing and innovating such practices in EU countries, regions and cities.

2. We believe the role of the Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy and its Community of Practice established by the European Commission should be further strengthened in order to reinforce coordination and experience-sharing among stakeholders, citizens on the ground, and other professionals involved in the development and implementation of tools and mechanisms on participatory and deliberative democracy at all levels of governance. Additionally, this Centre should play a key role in promoting the existing mechanisms at different levels of governance, as well as providing capacity-building sessions to political representatives, professionals and citizens. Furthermore, the Centre should monitor and evaluate the mechanisms in place, which is critical for their improvement, success and replication.

3. We call on the EU and national governments to reinforce the concept of citizen deliberation by developing national strategies and action plans that promote the implementation of new processes of deliberative democracy and the improvement of existing ones; by developing tools and mechanisms which enable a reinforcement of citizens' trust in institutions and political representatives. Citizens' recommendations should be integrated into the political agenda under the auspices of co-planning and co-management.

4. We advocate for a strengthened communication approach to increase awareness and better promote deliberative democracy initiatives among citizens. Real cooperation between citizens and political representatives is needed. If citizens' assemblies and other processes become merely a consultative project that plays only a symbolic role without any impact on policy, this will be detrimental to the objective of putting citizens at the centre of policy-making to build a sustainable European future.

Conclusion

Innovative forms of democratic engagement, such as citizens' assemblies, promise a more 'democratic' democracy. When organised as mini-publics, deliberative and participatory processes can bring together a diverse group of people from various social, cultural and political backgrounds, and can help to mitigate some of the negative aspects of elections, such as consistently low voter turnout among certain groups. Whereas division and distrust are overwhelmingly present in our current political climate, the diversity of opinions is valued and respected within deliberative processes and does not necessarily stifle agreement but can lead to solutions which have broad public support. Involving the public in innovative forms of participation can contribute to bridging the perceived gap between ordinary citizens and decision-makers in politics, and can lead to more informed policy decisions. Being unburdened by public appearance and short-sighted electoral cycles, citizens can help to effectively tackle a wide range of complex and controversial issues.

It remains to be seen to what extent deliberative democracy and innovative forms of democratic engagement can help to heal the divides within contemporary democracy.

Deliberative processes are based on debates and engagement in smaller groups, meaning that they can involve a limited number of citizens. In their microcosm, randomly selected representative citizens' assemblies, councils, conventions and the like are a prototype of inclusion and social cohesion. However, the extent to which they can have a spillover effect on wider society depends on how well the rest of society is informed on and involved in the process. Furthermore, the transparency of the process and good public outreach which ensures that all citizens – both participants and non-participants – understand the deliberative process is crucial for its legitimacy. Nevertheless, our research shows that communication activities and public relations are often an afterthought and perceived as a burden for governmental institutions with limited capacities. The instances documented in this publication, along with numerous additional cases from around the world, demonstrate a

Involving the public in innovative forms of participation can contribute to bridging the perceived gap between ordinary citizens and decision-makers in politics.

growing inclination among decision-makers at all levels of government to embrace novel models of citizen engagement and participation. The selected cases illustrate the diversity in the approaches to deliberative and participatory democracy at national, regional and local levels. Although there is no one ‘correct’ model, standards on what constitutes a successful participatory process should be set to ensure the long-term support of the public and the accountability of those running such mechanisms. We hope that the recommendations formulated in this book will contribute to the ongoing debate on guiding standards for participatory and deliberative processes.

The implementation of participatory processes often entails significant investment of resources and time, thus regular evaluations of their efficacy and impact are crucial. Such considerations should not deter governments from implementing participatory and deliberative models, but it should encourage them to strive for efficiency. The integration of well-designed participatory processes within the policy cycle – in a way that complements deliberative institutions – can enhance the trust in political participation and strengthen the legitimacy of democracy by elevating citizens’ voices.

ABOUT

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THE ORGANISATIONS

European Network of Political Foundations

The European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) serves as an umbrella network and information hub for political foundations on topics related to democracy and development cooperation. ENoP brings together over 50 political foundations from 23 European countries, active in Europe and with over 130 local offices in partner countries. Although independent in nature, ENoP is a cross-party network and its broad spectrum of affiliation corresponds to the political representation in the European Parliament. As such the Network reflects the political diversity of the European democratic landscape and gives ENoP a unique approach.

Assembly of European Regions

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is the political platform of regional governments in wider Europe, with direct membership of 140 public authorities from 30 countries. As the largest independent network of its kind, AER promotes the regions as key players in the European project, as well as democracy, good governance, and socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development. To this end, AER offers its members opportunities to participate in shaping European policy, visibility of their best practices at international level, development of answers to common challenges and issues for the future, as well as knowledge transfer, training and access to funding opportunities. It also runs its own programmes and projects in the interest of a wide range of social groups.

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