



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Press Invitation

Brussels, 13 September 2019

Press conference:

The German-speaking Community in Eastern Belgium launches permanent citizens' dialogue

In the past few years, trust in public decision-making has clearly waned. The permanent citizens' dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium aims to expand public participation in shaping policy, to enhance the understanding of the political decision-making process and hence to complement parliamentary democracy in the region.

After an initial citizens' dialogue on childcare in autumn 2017, the regional parliament decided to turn this one-off initiative into a more permanent structure, encouraged by the positive feedback from participants. At the parliament's request Belgian and international experts worked out a model for permanent public involvement known as the "East Belgian model".

The permanent dialogues' governing body, the Citizens' Council, will come together for the first time on 16 September, following the plenary session of the parliament, in which the connected Government Declaration will be presented. The plenary session will begin at 5 p.m. and is open to the public.

In this framework, the parliament invites press representatives to attend the presentation of the members of the Citizens' Council. The 24 members were chosen following a process whereby the Parliament randomly selected 1000 citizens, 115 of whom indicated their interest in taking part in the first Citizens' Council as part of the ongoing citizens' dialogue in the region.

Date: Monday 16 September 2019

Venue: Parliament of the German-speaking Community, Platz des Parlaments 1, B-4700 Eupen

Time: 7.30 p.m.

No interpretation is foreseen.

The Citizens' Council will be introduced in the course of a 30-minute press conference, during which the press will have the opportunity to put questions to the President of the German-speaking Community's Parliament and President of the European Committee of the Regions, **Karl-Heinz Lambertz**, to the permanent dialogue's coordinator, **Anna Stuers**, as well selected citizens. Afterwards, the members will start their closed meeting. Five minutes will be allotted to the press to take pictures of the Citizens' Council.

"From local to European: Putting citizens at the centre of the EU agenda": CoR book published

How best to engage citizens within the EU has been the focus of a series of debates organised by the CoR between April and June 2019, with contribution coming from experts from regional and local governments, think-tanks and EU institutions. The insights and best practices were collated in a book "**From local to European: Putting citizens at the centre of the EU agenda**". The publication comes shortly after the European Commission President-elect, Ursula von Leyen, announced a "push for European democracy".

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The European Committee of the Regions

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