

From local to European:

Putting citizens at the centre of the EU agenda



This compendium was compiled following a series of seminars held between April and June 2019 in the European Committee of the Regions.

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Karl-Heinz Lambertz
President of the European Committee of the Regions

Foreword

The surge in populism across Europe is a reminder of the fragility of trust in politics today. Reconnecting with those who feel disengaged with the EU and politics in general needs a collaborative and concerted effort from every level of government, civil society and academia. It requires reform to increase transparency, strengthen democracy and deliver results on every street. To achieve this Europe needs not only sound financial investment and political unity, but new channels of dialogue that ensures the EU listens and responds to the wishes of its citizens.

As part of the efforts to engage citizens with the EU, its institutions and governments – including our Committee – have held countless citizens debates in different forms across Europe. What is crucial is that citizens' dialogues are not simply a knee-jerk response to populism, a mere campaigning tool in the build up to elections, or simply a listening exercise. They need to shape the EU and become a permanent part of the EU's architecture, complementing other existing channels of engagement.

Together with the President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Luca Jahier, we are calling for a permanent structured dialogue with citizens that ensures their views directly inform EU decision-making and public policy. This democratic renewal needs all levels of government together with civil society, to coordinate their efforts and

work collectively. It needs a formalised model that can be replicated across Europe, which collates citizens' views locally in its regions and cities.

Citizens' consultations are not a magic bullet solution that will completely eradicate the disconnect felt in every corner of Europe, but will contribute to increasing civic empowerment. It will reinforce a sense of ownership in the European Union, whilst strengthening transparency and democracy. To bring Europe closer to citizens, it also requires overhauling the way EU laws are made so that every level of government – EU, national and sub-national – are active partners so EU policies make a real difference to the lives of every citizen.

I welcome the European Commission's President-elect, Ursula von der Leyen, "push for democracy" and her commitment to involving citizens as set out in her political guidelines, presented to the European Parliament on 16 July 2019. The European Committee of the Regions and its members will continue to support the effort by the EU institutions and actively contribute to the "Conference on the Future of Europe" in 2020-2022.

This compendium – which collates examples, views and academic comments on how best to engage citizens within the current European framework – contributes to the objective of bringing citizens closer to the European Union.



In recent years, governments and parliaments at all levels have involved citizens more frequently in participatory decision-making to improve quality, transparency and ownership of policies at local, national and European level. EU member states and institutions as well as cities and regions have held thousands of citizens' dialogues and consultations on the future of Europe and are ready to continue this exercise to make the European Union more democratic and transparent. This publication brings together reflections on how this could happen in the years to come.

The "Leaders Agenda" adopted by the informal European Council in Sibiu on 9 May 2019 and the "Political Guidelines" of the European Commission President-elect, Ursula von der Leyen, presented on 16 July 2019 in the European Parliament put citizens' involvement in EU policy-making at centre stage. Ms. von der Leyen suggested a two-years' "Conference on the Future of Europe" to begin in 2020, which would "bring together citizens (...), young people, civil society and EU institutions as equal partners" with a "clear objective, agreed between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission" and the possibility to suggest "legislative action if appropriate".

Citizens' dialogues and consultations at local, national and European level

Citizens' dialogues on Europe and its future have become a tool used in parallel by several EU institutions and member states. Started on the occasion on the European Year of Citizens (2013), President Juncker made such dialogues an obligation for all members of the **European Commission** as of 2014. While 53 dialogues were held in 2015 and 73 in 2016, figures went up to 317 in 2017, and 818 in 2018 to reach over 1 200 events by the time of the European Council on 9 May 2019 in Sibiu. Almost 260 000 citizens participated in these dialogues while another 1.4 million were counted as viewers of live streams. In May 2018, the European Commission launched an online survey, the 12 questions of which had been agreed by a focus group of 100 citizens. Some 85 000 replies to that survey had been received by April 2019. Results fed into the Commission's

^{1 &}quot;A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe". Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024, presented by candidate for President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, 16 July 2019, p 19.

preparations for the Summit in Sibiu, which was accompanied by a Young Citizens' Dialogue on 8 May 2019.

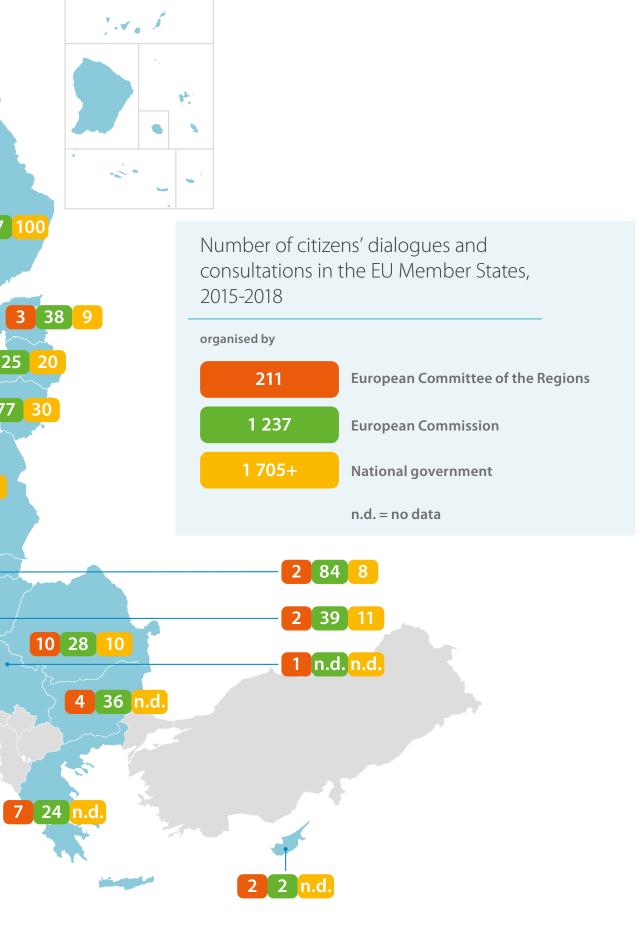
In September 2017, the French President Macron invited **member states** to hold citizens' consultations on the future of Europe, an initiative which 26 of the 27 heads of states and governments agreed upon informally at the informal European Council on 23 February 2018. Such consultations (or 'dialogues' in some countries) were started on 17 April by President Macron in Epinal. By the end of October 2018, more than 1 700 such events had been held across the EU28, of which almost 1 100 took place in France. The European Council on 13/14 December discussed about the results of the citizens' consultations or dialogues. The joint report² adopted by the Council states that the "success of the dialogues organised in the different member states is also reflected in calls for continued engagement. Encouraging action and debate on EU issues at grassroots level is perceived as particularly important by citizens. In fact, the citizens' consultation initiative does follow in the path of other practices, already well established in several member states, that aim to foster dialogue about the EU at grassroots level."³

Since March 2016, the **European Committee of the Regions** (CoR) has been active in the "Reflecting on Europe/Future of Europe" campaign, providing a platform for regions, cities and their citizens to engage in the debate on the future of Europe. Over 210 local events have been organised in 117 regions and 182 cities, involving 198 CoR Members, reaching 21 500 participants in local events and collecting over 23 000 replies to a dedicated online survey and mobile phone application. Results of the CoR dialogues fed into the CoR Opinion on the future of Europe adopted on 9 October 2018. The opinion included the proposal to make citizens' dialogues a permanent and structured format built on inter-institutional cooperation and combined with a feedback mechanism. Currently, the CoR is preparing an opinion on the future of citizens' dialogues and consultations, which could be adopted in May 2020.

² Council of the European Union (2018): Citizens' consultations-Joint Report (14535/18, 3 December 2018): http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14535-2018-INIT/en/pdf

³ Ibid, p. 8





Reflections about a "permanent mechanism" for European citizens' consultations

In December 2018, the concept of a "permanent structured dialogue mechanism" was proposed for discussion by the presidents of the CoR and EESC, which can be found among the annexes of this publication. In addition, the call for a reinforced link between the EU and its citizens was reaffirmed by the Declaration adopted at the 8th European Summit of Regions and Cities in Bucharest in March 2019. For the CoR, a permanent structured dialogue with citizens is one of the key principles for the next years, which was also confirmed by the CoR Resolution adopted in June 2019. It suggests the "creation of a permanent mechanism for citizens' dialogue in order to strengthen the legitimacy and the democratic foundations on which the EU is built".

To prepare for this new model, the CoR organised a series of seminars between April and June 2019 with experts from regional and local governments, think-tanks and colleagues from the EU institutions, the outcome of which fed into this compendium. The experts participating in these seminars were convinced that coordination on citizens' dialogues and consultations among the EU institutions and bodies should be enhanced during the 2019-2024 period. This, they said, would require political leadership, resources, qualified people, as well as a "cultural change" favouring experimentation with deliberative democracy tools as developed at local level. In their views, knowledge at EU level should be pooled and possible support from EU funds for citizens' participation should be coordinated, e.g. in the context of the structural funds now featuring "a Europe closer to the citizens" as one of five new priorities for the period 2021-2027, the new "Horizon Europe" programme and its priority on "democracy", the European Commission's activities of both, their Joint Research Centre on the "future of government 2030+" project and similar works of the European Political Strategy Centre.

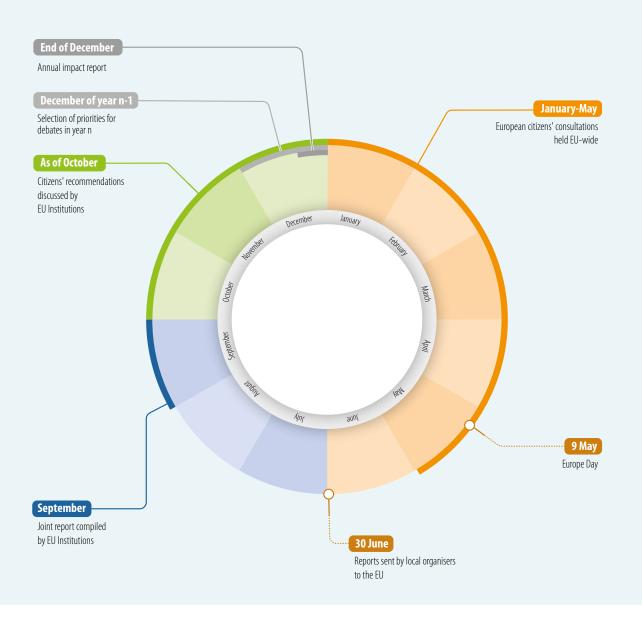
For a coherent approach towards citizens' dialogues and consultations at European level, the following areas would require particular attention:

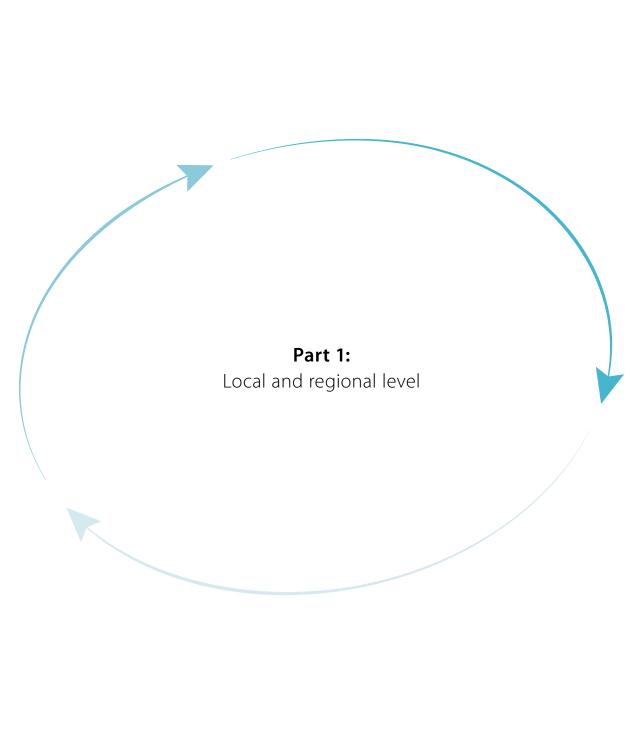
- Selection of citizens: Participation of citizens should aim to ensure a certain level of representativeness of the given city or region and transparency of the selection process. Whenever possible, random selection of citizens should be applied, and physical presence during consultations could possibly be combined with online elements.
- Selection of topics: It is recommended to define specific topics for discussions each year, which would be linked, for example, to the annual priorities of the EU and/or the aforementioned "Conference on the Future of Europe".
- Impact on EU policy-making: Each consultation held should lead to a report to be shared with the EU institutions, which would then compile all reports received and share a summary report of the key messages, with a view to informing the decision-making process at EU level.
- Inter-institutional approach: Ideally, the EU institutions would work together with member states, regions and cities "under one flag" thus applying a shared methodology, timeframe and communication approach.

The CoR would like to thank the authors and institutions involved in this publication, which can be found, together with other material, under this web address: www.cor.europa.eu/future.eu.

Questions and comments are welcome and can be sent to: eulocal@cor.europa.eu

Model of an annual cycle of European citizens' consultations







The special role of the Regional Parliaments in implementing Active Subsidiarity and a Structured Dialogue: a new way of working

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She has a track record of building and strengthening successful dialogue with Italian political stakeholders, both nationally and regionally, in a demanding work environment requiring a high degree of insight, tact, negotiation skills and optimism. She has extensive experience in advocating and ensuring that the interests of the Italian regional parliaments are represented on EU issues. She assists the Italian members of regional parliaments at the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and cultivates and manages a wide professional network, encouraging collaboration and synergies between stakeholders.

Abstract

EU regional parliaments can play a special role in the new active subsidiarity approach suggested by the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and Doing Less More Efficiently. In order for this new role to be played, EU institutions need to find common guidelines and structured approaches and a new way of working needs to be put in place to allow European regional legislative assemblies to have a real say in EU legislation.

Introduction

The Italian Conference of the Regional Parliaments (Conference) has closely followed the broad reflection on the future of Europe since it was launched in November 2016 by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, continuing through the work done by the European Committee of the Regions with the "Reflecting on Europe" debates, and within the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and Doing Less More Efficiently.

What mainly emerged from the aforementioned activities is that a new way of working was needed in order to bridge the gap between the EU and Europeans. Relevant institutions at all levels in Europe need to find common guidelines and structured approaches to create a permanent dialogue with

citizens to reinforce the legitimacy and the democratic basis on which the European Union lies.

Active subsidiarity is not a prerogative of European institutions alone, but of all institutions of multilevel governance engaged in rebuilding the European Union, starting from its territories.

1. Who?

Regional parliaments are completely different from all other regional and local authorities, mainly because of their legislative powers and because they are directly elected by the citizens of the region.

Moreover, because of their position, they know the territory and its issues so well that they can play a privileged role in engaging citizens, groups of citizens and all kinds of regional stakeholders.

Furthermore, once the European legislative proposals become laws, they have a crucial responsibility for transposing, implementing and enforcing them.

Due to these particular characteristics, in order for the EU to be more democratic and its policies more widely shared, the regional legislative assemblies must be upgraded and become supporting actors in the European political cycle from the very beginning and by using ad hoc tools.

Regional Parliaments perfectly know their social foundations, their communities, the different social and economic categories, with whom they have consolidated relations on European issues. They are the place of interchange through which local and regional concerns are brought to the European level and vice versa.

In Italy, the work programme of the European Commission (CWP) is the principal document guiding the work of the Conference and its regional parliaments in the European decision making process. Starting from the CWP, every year the Conference approves a document that highlights the new EU initiatives considered to be of the greatest interest and their rationale. The approved document is presented in a hearing with the Senate's Commission for European

policies. The Commission report always takes note of the topics of interest relating to regional parliaments. This is an analytical activity that precedes and facilitates the "European session" carried out within each regional parliament.

2. What?

The European session in the regional parliament is the moment of synthesis and political reflection on the work done by a region (transposition and implementation of EU law), and on the work still necessary to guarantee an examination of the new European initiatives ensuring that a region's interests are respected.

Regional parliaments are the right size and place to balance the power and to reconcile representative and participatory democracy.

Following the analysis of the Commission Work Programme, the regional parliaments focus on legislative priorities to pursue in the forthcoming year.

The interests of the region and the involvement of citizens are guaranteed by involving both the parliamentary commissions and the stakeholders, depending on the subjects and the interests implicated. The competent parliamentary commissions organise hearings of territorial representatives from civil society, economic (transport, work, commerce, industry, agriculture) or even social categories (migrants, education, job incentives) and local politics to take their opinions on the European proposal and share them with the responsible institutions.

Once the stakeholders' positions have been heard, the competent commission(s) can decide to investigate further or conclude that enough information is available to draft a position document, which will then be submitted for approval by the plenary assembly. The execution of active subsidiarity is guaranteed by the entire process that relies on the territories to get closer to the citizens, while also strengthening the European Union. Moreover, every approved opinion always contains a subsidiarity and proportionality analysis of the Commission's proposal.

3. So what?

The Italian Conference of the Regional Parliaments mainly acts as a system. This means that there is the Conference on one side, the one pushing institutions of all levels for the rights and prerogatives of the regional parliaments to be recognised, and the regional parliaments on the other side, participating in the results and feeding back to the Conference with their work.

The Conference made an agreement with the Commission for European Policies of the Italian Senate to meet at least once a year, just after the publication of the Commission Work Programme, to share the initiatives of common interest. These initiatives are not just those in which subsidiarity concerns, strictly speaking, arise, but all the initiatives that potentially affect regions.

Later in the year, when the legislative proposal is published, the regional parliaments work on it both individually and by networking with the Conference and the Senate's Commissions, with all players maintaining their independence and, at the same time, sharing knowledge and concerns. After that, once a regional parliament approves a reasoned opinion, it is sent to the Commission for European Policies, which usually takes into consideration and quotes the regional parliament's contributions. The reasoned opinions are also sent to the national government, the two chambers of the national parliament, the European Commission, and to the European Committee of the Regions and its REGPEX network. The presence of more than one channel of participation in the European decision-making process guarantees better possibilities for impact and more chances to exchange opinions.

4. Lessons learned

With regard to institutional strengthening, the Conference has played a major role over the years in consolidating the presence of regional parliaments in the European decision-making process. In fact, from the very beginning, actually singing a little out of time with the chorus, the Conference acted in the belief that the approach to subsidiarity had to be not just legal but also political. This belief was shared

with the Commission for European Policies of the Senate and was a reason to boost the collaboration.

Starting from the CoR's 2015 mandate, the Conference was allowed a presence – by national law – in the European Committee of the Regions through representation of members of regional parliaments that are appointed by the Conference plenary assembly.

Over time, this presence has proven to be particularly fruitful, as it allowed the whole system, and not just the members of the CoR, to take advantage of networking, position documents, participate in debates, and to change the vision of Europe and the way of working.

The European Union is a complicated system: together with the EU Institutions – broadly speaking – Europe has 41 national parliamentary chambers, 74 regional parliaments, 281 regions and 80 000 municipalities. This means that only a serious commitment from all institutions of multilevel governance to a new way of working that allows all stakeholders to participate has the power to reverse the common misinterpretation of subsidiarity. A fair interpretation of subsidiarity would indeed be that the lower level empowers the higher – as the motto of the EU says: united in diversity.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

The weakness of the open and citizen-centred consultations organised by the European Commission is the difficulty of choosing the relative importance of the different voices that emerge and channelling them into the European decision-making process. In fact, without appropriate intervention by representative institutions, there is a high risk of failure and waste of resources, which could be better used to build a structured dialogue with the institutional levels that are the closest to citizens. Who will respond to an open consultation from the Commission on a very technical proposal? The average citizen? Big lobbyists? And what will be the result? Who will decide

what weight to give to the responses? This is more of a top-down than a bottom-up vision, particularly because no follow-up and feedback are given.

Our experience shows that citizens do not want top-down decisions. The best way to involve citizens in a conscious way is through the representative institutions closest to them. The EU needs to invest more in the participatory process in the pre-legislative phase. The European Committee of the Regions could have an even greater coordinating role among European and regional/local levels. Nevertheless, in doing this it has to build stronger relations with its different kinds of inhabitants. Even before the Commission publishes its work programme, the European Committee of the Regions has to be able to know from territories, and from regions with legislative powers in particular, which pieces of legislation they need from Europe, which ones they do not need, and which ones they are still struggling to apply. Collecting and synthesising this information would increase the relevance of the CoR to other European institutions. It could be advantageous for the CoR to establish a permanent mechanism for a structured dialogue with regional legislative assemblies.

Conclusions

The European legislature that has just begun should set the creation, in collaboration with the institutions of multilevel governance (regional parliaments included), of a permanent and structured dialogue with stakeholders, civil society and local representatives, all working within an EU inter-institutional working group as one of its objectives.

Inside the multilevel governance system, regional parliaments are the right size and have the right knowledge to predict the needs of their territories. They support actors in the EU political cycle and have to be involved from an early stage of the EU legislative process.

The European Committee of the Regions can play a leading role reinforcing its links with regional parliaments, structuring meetings, information exchange and hearings, working together on the main files of the Commission Work Programme that have regional impact.

Finally, it is necessary work to correct another flaw in the system: the lack of feedback with respect to contributions. The shared perception among regional parliaments is that the work they do is mostly useless, because European institutions do not take it into consideration and do not even give proper feedback. It will be a great step forward if we improve this aspect, because it will have positive effects on the quality and quantity of participation.





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Abstract

In order to counter disenchantment with politics, the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium has introduced a permanent citizens' dialogue. This is based on the principles of: stability (there are two permanent bodies); representativeness (the members of the public who participate are selected by drawing lots, and in so doing, stratification criteria are taken into account in order to obtain a cross-section of society); and quality (high quality moderation of the deliberation process, information for members of the public and exchanges with politicians). The dialogue has its own legal basis, budget and staff. The concept is based on the "East Belgium model" developed by an international team of experts.

Introduction

In the last few years, trust in public decision-making has clearly waned. The permanent citizens' dialogue in East Belgium is on the one hand aimed at expanding public participation in shaping policy in the German-speaking Community of Belgium (henceforth referred to as "the German-speaking Community", or "East Belgium") and placing it on a permanent basis.

Secondly, by involving members of the public more, the idea is also to promote an understanding of the political decision-making process. This is tied in with the hope that people's trust in public decision-making will be strengthened and thus their confidence in democratic institutions too

After an initial citizens' dialogue on childcare in autumn 2017, the German-speaking Community's parliament decided to turn this one-off initiative into something more permanent, encouraged by the positive feedback from participants.

At the parliament's request, the "G1000" (a group experienced in organising processes involving the public) and the *Stiftung für zukünftige Generationen* (Foundation for Future Generations) organised a meeting of eminent Belgian and international experts to work out a model for permanent public involvement, after discussions with representatives of the parliamentary groups. This model became known as the "East Belgian model".

The parliament worked out a legal basis on the basis of this model, and in February 2019 passed a decree introducing permanent citizens' dialogue in the German-speaking Community. This also provided for dedicated funding and staff.

The first Citizens' Council (Bürgerrat - the body that organises the whole process and sets the topics for discussion) was appointed on 16 September 2019. The first Citizens' Assembly (Bürgerversammlung - the body that debates the substance of the topics and issues policy recommendations thereon) will meet in early 2020.

1. Who?

The Citizens' Assembly, which discusses a given topic, will be made up of 25 to 50 people selected at random by drawing lots. The exact number of participants will be decided upon by the Citizens' Council

The Citizens' Council, on the other hand, will be mainly comprised of members of the public who have already taken part in a Citizens' Assembly and therefore know how the citizens' dialogue works.

However, when the first Citizens' Council is appointed, no Citizens' Assembly will have yet been held, so the first council will be partly made up of representatives of the political parties represented in parliament, partly of participants in the 2017 citizens' forum on childcare, and partly of members of the public selected by lots.

Every 6 months a third of the Citizens' Council will be replaced by new representatives in order to prevent a strong "concentration of power" or politicisation from building up. In this way the burden on the public is also limited. Citizens' Assemblies will in any case be dissolved after the topics concerned have been processed.

Both the participants in the Citizens' Council and those in the Citizens' Assembly are selected by lots. Here, selection by lots is combined with self-selection and stratification criteria.

Anyone who is 16 or over and whose place of residence is in the German-speaking Community may be selected. People who hold certain public offices or functions are excluded. The basis is the population register for the nine German-speaking municipalities.

The selection by lots is carried out by the Permanent Secretary who, by law and taking into account the General Data Protection Regulation, has the right to gather the relevant data. The selection by lots is carried out under the supervision of a judge.

For the composition of the Citizens' Council, 1 000 people are selected purely by lots in the first phase. Those selected receive a letter asking whether or not they wish to participate. At the same time, additional information is requested on gender, age, place of origin and socio-economic background in order to obtain a cross-section of society.

Lastly, from those that reply in the affirmative, taking into consideration the above-mentioned criteria, the definitive members of the Citizens'

Council are selected by lots (replacement candidates are also selected). The names of those willing to participate, but not selected, are then put into the hat for the selection of Citizens' Assembly members. Members of subsequent Citizens' Assemblies are selected each time by lots from newly compiled population registers. The new members of the Citizens' Council are in each case selected by lots from the members of the previous Citizens' Assembly.

2. What?

The citizens' dialogue involves the following participants:

- The Citizens' Assembly: this discusses the topics and issues policy recommendations. It is made up of 25 to 50 people selected by lots;
- The Citizens' Council: this organises the Citizens' Assembly and supervises implementation of the Assembly's recommendations by the politicians. It is made up of 24 members of the public who have previously participated in a Citizens' Assembly;
- The Permanent Secretary: this is a staff member from the parliament's administration. He/she is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the citizens' dialogue. The tasks of the Permanent Secretary involve financial administration, logistics, public relations, selection procedures by lots, enlistment of moderators, selection of information and experts and the preparations for, and follow-up to, Citizens' Assemblies;
- The Parliament and government of Belgium's German-speaking Community.

As for the choice of subjects for the Citizens' Assemblies, every member of the public in the German-speaking Community can propose a topic for discussion. So that these proposals are representative of a large proportion of the population, they must be supported, i.e. signed, by at least 100 members of the public. In addition, the parliamentary groupings, government and members of the Citizens' Council can themselves submit proposals. Topics should as a rule have a direct bearing on the circumstances of the German-speaking Community. The Citizens' Council decides on the precise arrangements for the submission of proposals for topics (e.g.

using a form) and on which topic out of those proposed will in the end be discussed by the Citizens' Assembly.

As soon as the topic is determined, the Assembly will be convened and prepared for by the Council and the Permanent Secretary. In order to make decisions in full knowledge of the facts, an information pack is compiled, experts and stakeholders are heard and the subject is discussed in depth. The whole process is guided by a competent moderator.

3. So what?

After the discussions are over, the Citizens' Assembly formulates policy recommendations (ideally by consensus). The recommendations are discussed in an open meeting of the relevant parliamentary committee. The members of parliament and relevant minister then draw up an opinion and submit this to a further open meeting. They then introduce the measures necessary for implementing the recommendations to which they have agreed.

The Citizens' Council monitors implementation and can regularly enquire about progress.

One year later - at the latest - members of parliament, the relevant minister and the Citizens' Assembly members meet again to discuss progress in implementing the recommendations. The meeting is once again an open one.

The Citizens' Council decides about further Citizens' Assemblies and the corresponding timing.

As the permanent citizens' dialogue in East Belgium has just started up and no Citizens' Assemblies/follow-up have yet taken place, there are no results as yet.

4. Lessons learned

The permanent citizens' dialogue in East Belgium has just started up, so there is nothing to assess as yet. The first Citizens' Council met on 16

September 2019 and the first Citizens' Assembly will meet in early 2020.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

Essentially, three principles are anchored in the permanent citizens' dialogue: firstly the stability of the dialogue; secondly the representativeness of the Citizens' Assembly; and thirdly the quality of the process of deliberations.

The stability of the dialogue is secured above all by the fact that, parallel to the Citizens' Assemblies which meet occasionally on specific subjects, there is a permanent Citizens' Council and Permanent Secretary that not only prepare for the assemblies, but also and in particular keep an eye on implementation of the recommendations.

Representativeness is achieved by selecting the participating members of the public at random. People are selected by drawing lots, and certain criteria are taken into account, such as age, gender, place of residence and socio-economic background (profession, level of education, fam-

ily composition, etc.) to ensure there is a good cross-section of the population.

The quality of the deliberations process is above all secured by employing qualified moderators, providing attractive information for members of the public and ensuring transparent and constructive exchanges with members of parliament and ministers.

Conclusions

The permanent citizens' dialogue in East Belgium has just started up, so there is nothing to assess as yet. The first Citizens' Council met on 16 September 2019 and the first Citizens' Assembly will meet in early 2020.

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Doreen Grove leads the Scottish Government's involvement in the Open Government Partnership at both national and international level. In Scotland, Open Government supports the reform of public services, the renewal of democracy, promotes openness, transparency and the use of innovative participative processes to help transform how people interact with public services. Doreen moved into the Scottish Government Strategy Unit during the extraordinary times building up to the Independence Referendum, which as an archaeologist and historian, seemed a really interesting way to observe history at first hand. The change has provided her with a broad perspective on the world in which we live and the systems that affect us over time.

Abstract

Powers over part of the Welfare budget were devolved to Scotland in 2016, in order to design a Social Security system that meet people's needs we used (and tested) a range of participative techniques to involve end users directly in the development of the benefits, the organisation and the system to deliver them. This included recruiting an Experience Panel of 2 400 and running a Deliberative Assembly to design a Social Security Charter.

Introduction

Scotland has an ambitious programme of reform, which manifests itself in both how government works and in what we deliver. Since 2007 we have been working towards a single set of outcomes, the National Performance Framework: refreshed and aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2018 they set the direction, a clear purpose and set of values. Since 2016 Scotland has also been a member of the Open Government Partnership, to bring focus to how we do government.

The Scottish Approach recognises that having an effective rights-based system requires collaboration between spheres of government, people across public service, stakeholders and means having an effective framework for citizens participation. When in 2016 new powers were devolved to Scotland for parts of the welfare budget we took a participative approach

to designing the new Social Security systems; it built on the public's views gathered in a national conversation Fairer Scotland to have a kinder, more responsive Social Security system.

1. Who?

Scottish Government set out guiding principles for developing the social security in Scotland that would put the user experience first, so that the new system and structures would be designed with people who have experience of using the current system.

This approach has evolved, but has included establishing a bank of more than 2 400 experienced users; all people with direct, personal experience of the relevant benefits were recruited for the Experience Panel. They are a diverse group from all over Scotland; the principal criteria for recruitment, in this instance, was their experiences of the benefits that the Scottish Government will take over, either directly or as parents/guardians, appointees or carers.

The panel was recruited by phone, post and online; following accessibility guidance and with advice from inclusive communications experts to produce the invitations and forms. The materials were also developed and tested with people with direct experience of the benefits system.

- We have made sure that it is free to register (online, Freepost and Freephone).
- We have a British Sign Language (BSL) line, textphone, SMS available and interpretation services available for people who call us in another language.
- We had alternative formats available on request (e.g. Easy Read).
- We are committed to learning from this, and continually improving.

Demographics of the panel:

- Over 80% have one or more disabilities or long term health conditions.
- Half have caring responsibilities (for disabled adults/ children or someone in old age).

- Slightly more women than men, and just under half are 45-59 years old.
- 2% say they are from ethnic minorities (not including 120 participants in separate focus groups).
- 9% say they are lesbian, gay or bisexual, and fewer than 10 respondents identified as transgender.

In 2019 the Experience Panel was sufficiently diverse to enable the 36 lived experience members of the Social Security Charter deliberative assembly to be selected from its number, to match the geographic, demographic and experience criteria set for that exercise.

2. What?

Experience Panel members were asked to get involved a large programme of research to inform key decisions in the design of Social Security in Scotland. They were also asked to stay involved for 4 years; are unpaid but expenses are reimbursed.

There have been a range of activities and topics to suit different members, dealing with the social security system in general and more specific activities on specific benefits. The first task was to contribute to the research About Your Benefits & You. It involved a survey of panel members and 40+ focus group sessions around Scotland. 1 144 people responded to the initial survey and over 250 panel members came along to focus groups.

Panel members have also been involved in detailed user research in cross cutting areas like fraud messaging, debt, error control, short term assistance, inclusive communication, unacceptable actions. As well as being involved in design for specific disability benefits, carer's allowance, winter heating assistance and supporting detailed testing of all forthcoming benefits.

Social Security Charter

The work of the Experience Panel fed into the design of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018. One requirement of that Act was for there to be a Charter for Social Security in Scotland to be co-designed with people with experi-

ence of social security and relevant stakeholder organisations.

The charter was designed and agreed by a deliberative assembly made up of people with experience of social security including:

- 34 people from the Experience Panel who worked in a series of deliberative workshops.
- 26 people who took part in focus groups and interviews.
- 462 Social Security Experience Panel members responded to a survey.

A wide group of stakeholders also feed into the Charter:

- Meaning professionals who represent the interests of and work on behalf of social security clients.
- Social Security Scotland staff.

3. So what?

The process has informed the political journey of the Social Security system, giving credibility and broader support for the proposals of Scottish Ministers than might otherwise have been expected. The participation of citizens and end users will result in Scotland having an improved Social Security system; it has also been a test of our ability to involve citizens effectively. That experience will feed into a Participation Framework we are developing to support the routine involvement of stakeholders, end users and citizens in our work

All findings from work with the Experience Panels are being used to inform the design and delivery of social security in Scotland, to build a rights based social security system that works for the people of Scotland when they need it. They have directly influenced the design of individual benefits and of the new Social Security Agency; with the research with panel members enabling us to learn from their experiences of the current system. All reports and visual summaries can be

found at: www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-experience-panels-index-of-publications

Security Scotland Charter was published in January 2019 and now is an official part of what informs the development of the new Social Security Agency, a Social Security Commissioner will be appointed to ensure the rights within the Charter are applied. The insights from this work inform the development of staff training and the systems.

Feedback from Experience Panel members

"I want to come and tell my story. I want to be listened to and contribute to a system that believes in people."

"I want to give my experience. It was very negative and I don't want other people to go through it."

Feedback from Deliberative Assembly

"This whole experience has markedly increased my confidence – for the first time in a long time I feel I have been able to make a worthwhile contribution."

"The one good thing about the process is that it's been done in a true co-productive way, at no time did I feel that what I was saying was not being taken seriously and not been used to advance the process."

4. Lessons learned

The case study provided here is very specific. Below are some reflections from the Social Security experience.

Benefits

- Credibility and legitimacy for Ministers.
- Users of the system help design the system.
- Builds trust and sense of ownership.
- People feel listened to and cared for.
- Policy makers and service designers spend time with citizens and are far more likely to get it right first time.

Challenges

- Maintaining interest.
- Not overpromising and disappointing.
- Balancing transparency and protecting the participants.
- Reporting back to the participants.
- Providing adequate time and resource.
- Handling more challenging people.
- Ethics and power design is vital to share power and information so all participants have a shared understanding.

Important lessons From Scotland

- This case study illustrates how governments can begin to systematise citizen participation to make more effective policy and delivery.
- Political buy-in is vital for progress and to deliver impact.
- In task for Social Security was specifically to bring in a diverse group of people with lived experience so the criteria for selection was based on that need. However, the selection method will depend on the purpose and question citizens are being asked to respond to; increasingly we are using randomised selection from the population to set agendas, understand citizens' priorities and "take the temperature" of the public on complex issues.
- In all circumstances high quality design and deliberative facilitation are vital without them you will not get the right mode, tone, or outputs.
- Those skills are not the norm for public servants, so building the expertise both inside public services and in organisations who deliver this work will be worth the investment (also training public servants to be smart commissioners).
- How you communicate is important (for instance, we used white envelopes because people on benefits in the UK are often afraid to open brown ones); be sensitive to local culture and practice, select a location and host carefully that could mean a neutral body from civil society or a more local institution or government.
- You may not get it right all the time learn for next time, make learning systematic.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

The relevance of the EU institutions and the understanding of their day-to-day work for individual citizens has been called into question in a number of areas of Europe. To counter this and to better connect the work to people the EU could seek to build a system for citizen engagement to deliver the views of people following a regular cycle to inform the political and institutional programmes. If the system is sufficiently robust and responsive the topics covered can be selected both locally and centrally. But it is perhaps more important for the topic to be relevant so that citizens can see why they would invest their time.

How could citizens be selected for an EU Citizens' Consultation?

Randomly selecting citizens is the most reliable way of getting a society-wide view and building wider trust in the system. Deliberative Assemblies can be used to set the agenda during the development of policies, to test ideas for policy innovation, to set priorities (including for spend) or to deal with specific complex, intractable issues such as migration, climate change, taxes or the use of surveillance technology.

Capacity to deliver assemblies could be built and networked across the EU, so that the learning from local events feeds effectively into central decision making and vice versa. Aggregating the views from across the EU, with powerful feedback loops, will enable better connection between the levels of governments in Europe.

How should the results of EU Citizens' Consultation feed into the European decision-making process?

For this to work as a system it will be necessary to establish a central team, with the capability to drive, innovate, collate and report on the work of the participative system to meet the timetable of the EU institutions and works with the political cycle. Political buy-in is vital, along with

a commitment to listen to the results and act upon the outcome of the participation.

Transparency of the process and an open platform to provide evidence, information and data for participants as well as promoting the results will be an essential component.

Conclusions

Establishing effective participative democracy helps build trusted governments and institutions, and does not diminish representative democracy. For the EU to have an effective system it will require a structure that can operate and respond both locally and centrally. In this way the participation system can begin to support deliberative engagement on a range of issues. Currently there is no institutional home for this work; the benefit of that is that it could be built from the bottom upwards – it will take time and is resource intensive so articulating the benefits of up-front investment in the skills and capacity will be important.

With investment, commitment and energy the EU could develop a system that would be an exemplar for governments and institutions around the world for including citizens in their work.







Dialogue on Europe

Christian Matheis, Alexandros Parassidis

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Christian Matheis graduated in political sciences and has been working in international and European affairs for ten years – formerly at Baden-Württemberg's Ministry for Sciences, Research and Arts and currently at its State Ministry. Since 2017, the departments for Europe, civic involvement and civil society at the State Ministry and the Ministry of Justice and European Affairs have been organising a "Dialogue for Europe".

Alexandros Parassidis is a lawyer working for the State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg, Germany. He works at the department of State Counsellor for Civil Society and Civic Participation. He also chairs the public procurement body of the State of Baden-Württemberg.

Abstract

The Baden-Württemberg government has launched a Dialogue on Europe to take part in the debate on the future of the EU. The aim was to engage with the public, and also with experts, on the future of the EU, and from these foundations a new model of Europe has emerged. One distinctive feature of this dialogue was the method used – the "random citizen".

Introduction

The Ministry of State, as the administrative authority of the prime minister, and the Ministry of Justice and European Affairs, launched a Dialogue on Europe to participate in the debate on the future of the EU after the Brexit referendum. The aim was to engage with the public, and also with experts from politics, science, business and society, on the future of the EU, and from these foundations a new model of Europe has emerged (see link end of text). Internally, it will provide a direction for our European policy; externally, it will point out what the state government stands for in European policy.

The year-long process was implemented with the help of an agency, coordinated by the aforementioned ministries, and cost around EUR 300 000. Different types of dialogue were undertaken, divided into three pillars: "Expert Forum with subject-specific forums", "Citizens' Dialogues", and "Public Events". The process was also accom-

panied by an online consultation, discussion events and the submission of position papers.

The aforementioned "Expert Forum" reviewed the issues raised in the other dialogue formats. The chair of the Expert Forum was Guido Wolf, Minister for Justice and European Affairs and member of the Land parliament (Landtag of Baden-Würtemberg), and the deputy chair was State Secretary Volker Ratzmann from the Ministry of State; it was made up of 19 prominent figures from academia, business, trade unions, churches, culture, politics and the media. The work of this forum was complemented by five subject-specific forums on innovation, youth, local communities, security and the environment.

The contribution below focuses on the Citizens' Dialogues, which formed the second pillar of the Dialogue on Europe. Six Citizens' Dialogues were held in medium-sized towns and cities spread evenly across Baden-Württemberg (Bad-Mergentheim, Tuttlingen, Ravensburg, Rastatt, Stuttgart and Freiburg, with the latter attended by Jean-Claude Juncker). They were accompanied by public events, including a launch event, policy speeches, school events and local debates. The activities were supported on the website www.europadialog-bw.de, where people could make written submissions and take part in an online survey (more than 500 responses).

1. Who?

Six Citizens' Dialogues were held by the State Secretary for Civic Participation and Civil Society, Gisela Erler. Randomly selected members of the public were given the opportunity to express their ideas for Europe and discuss them with political representatives.

One distinctive feature of this dialogue on Europe was the method used – the "random citizen". Members of the public were selected at random from the population registers of the towns and cities involved, using standardised software used by the municipalities for population administration. The selection process was based as closely as possible on a cross-section of

the population in terms of age, origin and gender. Past experience shows that younger people are less likely to accept such invitations, and so twice as many addresses were selected for the 16-25 age group.

The people selected were sent an invitation letter jointly from Ms. Erler and the mayor of the town or city in question, which included a detailed summary of the project and how the results would be used. 1 000 people were invited, and we achieved a registration rate of around 5%; the personal element of the invitations was very positively received ("It's nice to be asked for my opinion").

The participants were asked to complete the sentences "When I hear 'EU', I think of...", and "What my EU needs in the future is...". This made it possible to get a picture of individual attitudes and personal expectations at the start of the process. The topics for discussion were not predetermined, but were developed by the participants. In general, six to eight issues were identified, and round table discussions were held to establish public opinion on European policy related topics. One exception to this procedure was the Citizens' Dialogue with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, where the procedure described above was followed by a dialogue process to prepare six questions for Mr. Juncker, as part of a large public event with more than 600 quests.

Based on the numerous submissions from the public, ideas for shaping Europe were developed in terms of the categories of feasibility and responsibility. The random selection procedure brought a very wide variety of viewpoints to the procedure. The Citizens' Dialogues were used to gather proposals from the public, and thus to develop recommendations for the mission statement.

2. What?

For the overall process, we designed the three pillars described above. The topics were selected in different ways in each pillar. For all the formats, summary reports were drawn up and published directly on the homepage after the meetings; they remained publicly available throughout the pro-

cess. The work of the Expert Forum was complemented by five subject-specific forums on innovation, youth, local communities, security and the environment. The five topics for the subject-specific forums were set by the Land government.

The topics for the Citizens' Dialogues were developed by the participants themselves, and the results were passed on to the Expert Forum. The topics selected related in particular to democracy and identity, Europe in the world, digitalisation, security, migration and border management, economy and the single market, climate and environmental protection, biodiversity and agriculture, and educational opportunities.

The ideas developed in the subject-specific forums and in the Citizens' Dialogues were prioritised, discussed and examined for feasibility in the Expert Forum. This produced propositions for the mission statement, which were then further refined as the process went on. Prioritisation was necessary, as the outcome of the process fed into a mission statement. That mission statement was discussed and adopted by Baden-Württembergs' government, and now serves as a compass for the Land government in European policy. The activities of the Dialogue on Europe were supported on the website www. europadialog-bw.de, which made it possible to include written submissions in the process.

3. So what?

The information gathered was prioritised by the Expert Forum, which then produced a report summarising, but not evaluating, it. On the basis of that report, the *Land* government produced a mission statement setting out the direction that, in the *Land* government's view, the EU should take in the future. Under 10 vivid headings, it makes recommendations for both the EU and the *Land* levels based on the outcome of the process as a whole.

The mission statement was drawn up by the ministries involved and agreed with the ministries of the *Land* government, discussed and debated in the *Land* Parliament's Committee on

European Affairs and in plenary, and adopted by the Cabinet of Baden-Württemberg.

The results of the Citizens' Dialogue fed into the mission statement via the Expert Forum and the political decision-making level. However, as there were so many submissions, some of which contradicted each other, not all opinions could be taken fully into account. They were prioritised based on the frequency and weighting of the statements made by citizens.

All those involved in the process were subsequently sent the mission statement and asked to evaluate it. Following the Cabinet decision, recommendations for action were developed for the *Land* administration, which will be reviewed for the first time in 2020, at which point the *Land* government will have to report internally on the extent to which it has been able to implement the proposals in the mission statement. It is worth noting that the process would have been less effective had it not coincided with the European elections.

The European mission statement was presented to the general public and delivered to the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, to Baden-Württemberg's MEPs, to the German Federal Government, to the Baden-Württemberg Parliament and to our partner regions in the "Four Motors for Europe" network.

4. Lessons learned

The Dialogue on Europe raised the awareness of participants – and, thanks to PR efforts, the general public – about the upcoming European elections. There was a considerable risk that the openness of the theme could have led to discussions that were too general to be implementable. This was particularly true given that the overarching theme of "Europe", or "European Union", as the only specification for the discussions, is very remote from what people talk about in daily life.

We were surprised by people's very positive attitudes towards the EU, in terms of their problem-solving skills for future issues and their specific expertise on EU-related topics, much of which

related to their own professions and practical life experience. This detailed knowledge and real-life experience made a significant contribution to the success of the process. A purely government-based process would presumably not have revealed the same kind of diversity of opinions on people's direct daily experience with the EU.

The second major success factor was the fact that the citizens were confident that their input would be heard and discussed and would feed into the process of developing the mission statement. The Baden-Württemberg government has had good experiences with its concept of "being heard" as a flagship policy initiative for full public participation, including as part of the Dialogue on Europe. One very important point was that participants knew right from the outset how the process would work, and that, in parts of the process, the topics were chosen by the citizens.

This gave people confidence that the government was making every effort to take citizens' views on Europe seriously. As mentioned above, the timing can be seen as a key variable in the "current political relevance" and "visibility for citizens" dimensions.

The random selection of participants meant that we could reach people who would normally have little or no involvement in political discussions. This effect was significantly boosted by the personal letter from the State Secretary and the mayor. A 5% response rate from 1 000 invitations may not seem very high, but it is actually a positive result given that the dialogues were held on summer Saturdays in medium-sized towns and cities.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

The random selection procedure brought a very wide variety of viewpoints to the procedure. The only way the Committee of the Regions could implement a similarly designed procedure would be

for the regions involved to select the participants locally. There are a variety of approaches to selection for such processes in the European regions, which, depending on resources, could be predicated on "involving all socio-economic strata" and "being as representative as possible, through random selection". For example, Baden-Württemberg now has a framework contract with a service provider that can recruit participants throughout the Land by phone, in the same way as representative telephone surveys.

Allowing the citizens to select the topics themselves maximises trust in the process. It is essential for the results to be incorporated into the policy decisions of the European legislative process. It is advisable for the overarching theme to be selected by the citizens themselves. This could be supported by providing information on legislation that the Commission is planning to propose. Of course, it would also be possible for the citizens to select topics based on the Commission's annual work programme.

As it is not possible to carry out participatory procedures in the regions for every EU legislative act, the question of authority to make that selection will be key. If it is not practical for topics to be selected by a European Citizens' Assembly, one possibility might be a minimum quorum of regions. Thinking out of the box, this minimum quorum could launch the relevant processes. The suggested link to legal acts affecting cities and regions is not really necessary. It might be worth considering the following alternatives: the Commission could launch voluntary participation procedures on "significant" acts or controversial subjects.

Conclusions

We strongly support the idea of establishing a structured annual European Citizens' Assembly, and the associated objective of increasing public involvement in European decision-making processes. In our view, this will play a key role in strengthening the subsidiarity-based structure of the European Union. It would give EU citizens an additional formal way of influencing and discussing policy.

The Commission/Council simply taking note of the report drafted in the proposed structured European Citizens' Assembly is, in our view, the bare minimum necessary to improve public involvement. Rather, the Commission should provide concrete responses to the reports, clearly indicating why proposals will or will not be implemented.

The State Government of Baden-Württemberg's Guiding Principles on Europe (2019): https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/dateien/PDF/190315_Europaleitbild_English.pdf





Entrusting citizens with their city's budget: the participatory budget in Paris

Ari Brodach

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Ari Brodach began his career in 2002, in a consultancy firm specialising in sustainable development policies. He became director for sustainable development for the City of Lille in 2006, where he designed and implemented a number of processes and tools for involving the public in decision-making. In 2011 he was appointed as director of sustainable development for the training centre for local civil servants (CNFPT), and has supervised the introduction of sustainable development into nationwide training programmes. Mr. Brodach has headed the team coordinating the Participatory Budget in Paris since 2015. It is one of the largest participatory budgets in the world, with EUR 100 million allocated to citizens' projects every year. 220 000 people were involved in the budget in 2018.

Abstract

Since 2014, the inhabitants of Paris, regardless of age or nationality, have been able to decide on how to use 5% of the annual investment budget. At EUR 500 million over six years, or EUR 45 per inhabitant per year, it is the largest amount earmarked for such a scheme. In Paris, citizen participation is changing the relationship between people and their institutions in that it transforms the way the administration functions.

Introduction

After being elected in March 2014, the Mayor of Paris decided to launch a participatory budget for the city: every year its residents decide on how to use 5% of the investment budget, i.e. EUR 500 million over six years. In order for this innovative step the city is taking to turn into action, there needs to be proactive political and hierarchical support and an impetus for structural change in the administration, human and technical resources need to be harnessed and a structure needs to be in place that is dedicated to citizen participation, particularly to engage people who are farthest removed from public life. After five editions, 792 projects that had been proposed by citizens have been elected. These votes have translated into more than 1 500 achievements: re-vegetation, pedestrianisation, renovation of public facilities, help to develop the circular economy, assistance to homeless people, and more. The projects that have been carried out deal with

the challenges of everyday quality of life as well as social or environmental objectives that go far beyond the scale of the city. In 2018 over 200 000 people, or 10% of the population, took part in the participatory budget vote.

1. Who?

The Paris participatory budget is open to all residents regardless of age or nationality. Specifically, this means that all inhabitants can propose investment projects and choose the ones that are most relevant to them by voting. In this way the participatory budget expands the concept of citizenship beyond traditional elections by opening it up to people under 18 years of age and to foreign residents. The Mayor of Paris and Pauline Véron, deputy mayor responsible for civic participation, also wanted the participatory budget to go beyond the traditional circles of participation: for residents who are farthest removed from traditional participatory bodies, such as neighbourhood councils, to feel involved and engaged and to be able to participate easily.

To meet these challenges, it is not enough to just set rules: people must also be mobilised, as close as possible to where they live, to explain the procedure and enable everyone to get involved. The City of Paris therefore decided to grant EUR 100 000 of subsidies every year to associations as part of a call for projects to support residents of poorer neighbourhoods in developing their projects and in their election campaigns to boost their chances of being selected. In addition, of the 100 million available to Parisians annually under the participatory budget, EUR 30 million have been earmarked for poorer neighbourhoods. Finally, voting stations have been set up in public spaces to encourage dialoque as close to the general public as possible.

More than just a way of selecting participants, it was the ongoing quest for citizen mobilisation that was the impetus for this public policy.

2. What?

The Paris participatory budget is broken down into 21 measures: one for each "arrondissement" and one on the municipal level. All of these participatory budgets are organised simultaneously, in three annual phases:

- Project submissions: in January Parisians submit their proposals (title, description, cost assessment) on an online platform. Over 150 public meetings are organised to support them.
- Co-construction: in March the proposals that relate to similar places or themes are grouped together. As far as possible, the people who proposed them are invited to meet to merge them together. Around a hundred co-construction workshops are organised.
- Project studies: in order to be accepted, proposals must contribute to the public interest, fall within the remit of the City of Paris and represent investment spending without generating excessive administrative expenditure. If they meet the criteria, the relevant directorates study their technical feasibility from March until June. Finally, in each arrondissement, multiparty committees determine the list of projects to be put to the vote on the basis of technical feasibility. Every year, approximately 40% of the submitted proposals are retained for voting in September. For all the others, a message explaining the reasons for refusal is addressed to the people who proposed the projects and published online.
- Voting: Over 120 voting stations are set up all around the city. Priority is given to setting up stations in public areas, places with high footfall (entrances to schools, food markets, sports or cultural events, etc.) It is also possible to vote online on a dedicated platform. Digital voting accounts for 40% of the votes.

In parallel, a participatory budget is organised in schools and colleges (EUR 10 million) and one is dedicated to social housing (EUR 1 million).

After the vote, the implementation of the winning projects starts and takes place in parallel with the participatory process described above.

3. So what?

The participatory budget must help respond to "the discrediting of politics by enabling citizens to take back ownership of the city's issues through a form of civic co-production" (Anne Hidalgo, 2014). The scheme therefore had an influence on how public action is accomplished on the whole. We can see a number of notable effects:

- General "decompartmentalisation": projects are submitted by citizens on themes that often fall within the remits of several directorates and sectoral officials. It is an opportunity for cross-cutting work which, being structured around an objective of practical implementation, can be taken on more easily by various stakeholders.
- A new approach: unlike the multiannual investment plans, the participatory budget makes it possible to understand public policies, year after year, through a set of micro-projects moving closer to the idea of urban cohesion. This directly influences project management, going from a 6-year planning approach to a 3-month reactive approach (voting in September, implementation starting from January).
- 1 500 implemented projects: the success of the participatory process depends largely on the City's ability to deliver results. A system of piloting, launching and monitoring the implementation of the selected projects was rapidly put in place. The aim is to be able to publish the timetables, progress and achievements concerning 3 000 operations which stem from the 792 winning projects on the website of the participatory budget and through publications issued by the City of Paris, particularly on social networks. Another challenge is to make these achievements known publicly. In the end, the idea is to develop a "narrative of evidence" to help restore credibility to politics.

4. Lessons learned

We can learn several lessons from our experience:

- The success of these approaches **hinges on the physical and the digital**. At each stage, we propose both digital tools (project delivery, co-construction or e-voting) and physical tools (public meetings, co-construction workshops, social support via a call for projects and physical voting stations). Meeting in real life is still the first catalyst for effective civic participation.
- Support at the highest level is essential to stimulate and support internal change: citizen participation involves changing the way organisations operate, particularly in terms of breaking down barriers to support, assistance and organisation.

- Incremental implementation: the participatory budget was not designed a priori but tested in order to be improved. Establishment of priority areas (EUR 30 million reserved for poorer neighbourhoods), introduction of a participatory budget for schools and colleges (EUR 10 million) and development of ways of implementing projects were gradually introduced. These annual developments based on a participatory analysis of its strengths and weaknesses have made it possible to increase the sense of ownership.
- I Keep the red tape inside the administration: in order to involve as many residents as possible, it is essential to spare them from the regulatory, technical or financial constraints that the city has to deal with when studying potential projects. A title, a short description and an estimate of the cost are all that Parisians have to provide. It is up to the public bodies to transform this data into operational elements that constitute a feasible project that remains faithful to the citizens' intentions.
- The credibility of the scheme is based on the implementation and use of the elected projects.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

The establishment of participatory bodies appears to be a sufficient, but not essential, condition for consultation of citizens. Mechanisms such as participatory budgets show that people can, on the basis of operational and civic proposals, identify more political orientations promoted by the inhabitants. In Paris, new forms of solidarity policies were voted on, the objectives of preserving air quality were reinforced and circular economy practices were encouraged by proposals and votes. **Strategic planning can also be fostered by concrete projects**.

Before participants are selected, the City hopes to respond to the issue of **fair access to citizen participation**: the tools to build up the capacity of citizens that is used in community support, organising events to present achievements or installing voting

stations in public areas in order to reach inhabitants would seem essential for mobilising them.

Having triggered this mobilisation, the City is bound to it. The success of citizen participation depends on compliance with **a clear contract**, set as soon as the scheme has begun and revised regularly with those involved, the results of which are tangible and accessible.

Finally, civic participation entails controversies, which the institution will have to deal with in order to build as broad a consensus as possible. Most importantly, it can allow for new forms of democratic expression to be tried out in order to more accurately aggregate a set of individual preferences into a collective choice. Consensus conferences, citizen juries drawn by lot and systems of voting by score or value are innovative methods to enhance the democratic nature of decisions, which can also be trialled in Europe-wide consultations.

Conclusions

The success of citizen consultations requires a clear contract and participatory process, which may be developed in cooperation with those involved. They will be implemented with as much transparency and interaction as possible. Before these consultations begin, a stage of capacity-building, particularly by means of training, makes it possible to forge a common culture around the problem being addressed.

At the same time, it can be observed that citizen mobilisation is all the more representative and effective at local level: European consultations could be co-authored with local stakeholders and reflect their conclusions. Similarly, citizens' choices made on other scales show more concrete strategic collective preferences, which nevertheless form a set of indicators that can be useful to feed through a bottom-up process of consultation at European level.





Innovations in democracy: Where do we go from here?

Anthony Zacharzewski

President of The Democratic Society, Brussels, Edinburgh, Manchester

Anthony Zacharzewski set up the Democratic Society with four friends in 2006 and has worked for it full time since 2010. Demsoc works to create more participatory government and greater democratic engagement. It is based in Belgium, with offices in the UK, Italy and Germany. Anthony is regularly involved as an external expert on democracy working with local, national and global organisations and networks including the OECD, the UNDP, the European Committee of the Regions, the Council of Europe and the Club of Venice. Before working for Demsoc, Anthony was a senior civil servant in the UK government, and the head of policy for the city of Brighton and Hove.

Introduction

Citizens' assemblies¹ are relatively well-researched democratic instruments,² and are increasingly being added in a more formal way into governance structures. Recently, the Eastern Belgium German-speaking community, as well as some Polish cities have added citizens' assembly elements to their way of working. These are sometimes given the power to decide, if a decision is taken by a large enough majority. Citizens' assemblies have been used on some of the most sensitive and complex issues, such as nuclear waste (South Australia) and abortion (Ireland).

The interesting development in recent months, however, has been the extension of citizen assembly models into the issue of climate change. Despite citizens' assemblies having tackled abstract issues such as equality or the future of Europe, and broad policy issues such as health and social care, climate change remains a particularly challenging issue of focus for a citizens' assembly because the topic and its solutions are inherently international and respect neither organisational nor governmental boundaries.

Recent calls for such citizens' assemblies on climate change have come from the Extinction Re-

¹ To avoid any ambiguity, when I use the term citizen assemblies, I mean democratic engagement events that seek to reach conclusions or decisions through deliberative deep discussion among a group of citizens from a specific geographical area or group, selected at random but representative of the population as a whole, on a specific topic.

² See, for instance, The People's Verdict (Claudia Chwalisz, 2017 https://claudiachwalisz.com/2017/06/20/the-peoples-verdict-adding-informed-citizen-voices-to-public-decision-making/)

bellion movement, which started in the UK, as well as from individual local governments, the French government, and the UK Parliament.

This shows the maturity of the model and the trust that is placed in it both by bottom-up social movements and the institutions of the State. This comes, I suspect, from the perceived success of the model in Ireland, where it brought about a radical shift on abortion law, ratified by referendum, in a process that was widely praised for its deliberative quality. The extension to climate change is not surprising, and reflects the sense that, in the words of Professor David Runciman at the University of Cambridge, the challenge of 21st-century democracy is the taking climate change from a technocratic to a democratic issue.³

To achieve the climate change goals that even the Paris agenda calls for, let alone the far more ambitious goals being pushed by groups such as Extinction Rebellion, will require significant, disruptive changes to citizens' lives. This is in the best of cases, and one might hope that people will be persuaded of the benefits of taking action to preserve the climate, even if the impact on them seems negative. However, in such a huge field, trade-offs are numerous. We would not be human if we did not find ourselves convinced that the person down the street, or on the other side of the world, is better placed to take the hit.

1. Who?

The first local government-sponsored citizen climate change assembly in the UK was held in the London Borough of Camden a few weeks ago. Designed and run by UK citizen assembly experts, the Involve Foundation, this event brought a group of people together for a single weekend's discussion on how they and Camden

council could make a positive difference to climate change.⁴

This was a relatively short and informal process, compared to some citizens' assembly processes that can last across several weekends. However, it provided interesting insight into the multiple levels at which people need to think when discussing climate change and climate action.

The Council split the conversation into three key levels: my council, in my neighbourhood, at home. This ensured that the recommendations were focused on levels where local action was possible, but even within that frame there was reference to and desire for policies and actions at different scales.

2. What?

Camden council is, understandably, focusing on what is in its immediate span of control, looking to support social action on climate change and increase the level of action and ambition within the council. This is the absolutely right thing to do, from the council's perspective, but from the outside, I am left wondering how those aspects of policy that are set at higher levels than local government can be affected as well. The council could write to the Government or to the European Commission, or even to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), but they would be just one voice amongst many, passing on the voices of the citizens in the patch rather than trying to include them as part of a bigger conversation.

This is particularly true when multiple citizens' assembly processes are considering climate change at different levels in more or less the same time period. We know of at least four UK local authorities who are trying to undertake a citizens' assembly on climate change, as well as a national process that has just been launched by the UK Parliament. The French government will soon be undertaking a process in parallel to

³ https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/07/20/democracy-is-the-planets-biggest-enemy-climate-change/

⁴ Full disclosure: members of my team from The Democratic Society AISBL supported the facilitation of this event.

the British one. All in all, there will be an enormous amount of discussion and deliberation on climate change issues going on around Europe between now and the end of the year.

That's good news for the climate, we can hope, but how can we make sure that this splintered effort is better coordinated, better connected, and delivers a better outcome?

3. How can the European Citizens' Consultation mechanism be inspired by your experience?

I would argue that there are several areas for better collaboration and cooperation between the different levels of government and across them, which could be supported by institutions such as the European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission.

The first is providing and increasing awareness of reliable information on the background to the issue and the policies that are currently undertaken. This starts with policies. Good quality information on current policies and actions is needed if participants are to come up with new ideas rather than reinventing old ones. The European Committee of the Regions and European Commission could support these processes with high quality information, not just on methods and policies but by ensuring the information they provide is not just at a European or national level, but in formats that can be localised to where an assembly is taking place, so people can understand both the impact of climate change and what is being done to address it by European, national, and local governments in their immediate area. Some of this localised data and approach is used on issues such as regional funding, and a good recent example comes from the European Parliament's "Citizens' App". With data being available for temperature rises, flood risks, and other consequences of climate change, an app or a website could produce at least some sense of the local challenge – whilst providing the same approach across Europe.

We also need to consider how the outputs of these events can be joined up with the policy-making conversation at European level, and how the European level conversation can be localised. The Commission's Citizen Dialogue approach, bringing senior officials or politicians to local towns and cities to discuss with citizens, could be a starting point, although it needs significant further development.

Conclusions

The most important element is linking the events with consequences, to demonstrate a golden thread linking the democratic process to a change of policy, making clear that the output of exercises of democratic deliberation is valuable and demonstrating positive results. Without this connection, it is an easy criticism, and in tune with the current suspicion of politics, to describe these processes as a "democracy wash", from which no substantive policy change results – beyond what politicians have already decided behind the scenes.

We should also use the fact that multiple levels are talking about the same issue at the same time to create experiments in networking democratic exercises to reach the European scale. Back in 2015, the French democratic innovation agency *Missions Publiques*, designed a global multicentre international deliberation exercise on the environment,⁵ and my own organisation, in a policy paper on Horizon Europe suggested a distributed citizens' assembly using multiple table discussions across Europe to prioritise different research missions.⁶ Either or both of these models could be developed further in the context of climate change, to standardise and build connections between what is already going on.

Local, national, and European governments also have an important role to play in supporting the infrastructure for that European conversation. In

⁵ http://climateandenergy.wwviews.org

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/citizen-participation-in-fp9-a-model-for-mission-and-work-programme-engagement_2018_en_0.pdf

the UK alone during the autumn of 2019, there will be live processes going on in Scotland on Scotland's future, in multiple local authorities on climate change and other issues, for the UK Parliament on climate change, for a Citizen Convention on UK Democracy, and potentially for a cross-party group of Members of Parliament on Brexit. There is a risk that the relatively new and scattered infrastructure for deliberative democracy - the facilitators, process designers, and others who make these sorts of events run – will be overwhelmed by demand as these conversations pick up, and these are only the conversations that my organisation has discussed with colleagues - there will certainly be many more in the planning stages.

During 2019 and 2020, we at The Democratic Society will be working with ten cities and four regions across Europe to develop a flexible but consistent approach to citizen engagement around climate change, involving deliberative democracy but also going beyond it, to try to answer Professor Runciman's challenge quoted above.

We will be seeking to harness the sudden burst of democratic energy around climate change without being dragged along by it. It provides an excellent opportunity to develop a more open and comprehensive infrastructure for democratic participation, if backed with consistent support from funders, governments, and others. Climate change is accelerating the progress of deliberate democracy from standalone projects into system change, but those of us in civil society working on democratic participation, and those in policy roles seeking to set new agendas, will need to work together to realise the democratic benefits.





What citizens know and think about European cohesion policy - feedback from 60 local dialogues

Angelika Poth-Mögele

Executive Director European Affairs at the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

Angelika Poth-Mögele is the Executive Director European Affairs at the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). She has a PhD in political science and over 25 years of work experience in representing local and regional governments' interests at European level (for different organisations and different levels of government). Ms. Poth-Mögele joined CEMR in 2004 where she is responsible for the EU policy and research team. The work is structured along two pillars: 1) Lobbying EU policy and legislation and 2) Knowledge sharing, including research and studies. Policy areas covered: governance, democracy and citizenship; economic, social and territorial cohesion; environment, climate and energy; public services, digitalisation and employment.

Abstract

What do citizens know about initiatives in their city or region that are funded by the European Union? To increase the visibility and discuss the added value of EU cohesion policy, 60 local dialogues were organised in 8 countries. People showed great interest, provided the events were organised in an innovative or creative and interactive way, allowing to address their issues and communicating the sense of solidarity.

Introduction

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the European umbrella organisation gathering 60 national associations from 41 countries that represent local and regional governments. CEMR was founded in 1951 to promote and strengthen local self-government in the European context.

In 2017, the European Commission, DG REGIO, approached CEMR as the most representative European association of local and regional governments to organise 60 local and regional dialogues on cohesion policy in eight net contributing countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden. The objective was to increase the visibility of EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), by demonstrating the added value of cohesion policy through concrete projects implemented at local and regional levels in these eight EU Member States.

1. Who?

60 local dialogues were organised by CEMR member associations and the volunteering cities, and each of them applied a different approach. Reaching out to citizens was a challenge and required increased communication efforts to promote the events. CEMR prepared guidelines for local and regional dialogues on cohesion policy, illustrating several communication channels to be used. Thanks to these additional efforts. the number of participants from civil society and from the general public increased (29% before July 2018; 52% in autumn 2018). Exploring different venues was also successful: some events were organised in a space that was easily accessible (e.g. a café, a film bar (Krems, AT), a city festival (Leipzig, DE), a stand at the Brussels Canal run (Brussels, BE); or a theatre (Roeselare, BE); some were organised with schools or universities to focus on the younger generation (Eisenstadt, AT; Gothenburg, SE; Perugia, IT, Greifswald, DE, etc.); others were organised in conjunction with other events, e.g. a pop-up Europa initiative (Turnhout, BE). Invitations to the events were published in local newspapers, on the cities' websites and information was shared via local and social media. Local and regional politicians, relevant civic society organisations and local businesses were targeted and invited to participate actively in the events.

Categories of participants:

- 1 338 local and regional government representatives
- 157 national representatives
- 101 representatives from EU institutions
 (46 representatives from the European Commission)
- 2 243 representatives from civil society and citizens
- 332 project beneficiaries
- 46 media representatives

2. What?

The main objective of the dialogues was to increase the visibility and discuss the added value of the EU's cohesion policy; raising final beneficiaries' and citizens' awareness of what the EU delivers for them, and engage them in a two-way discussion about future investment priorities in their municipalities and regions.

The events mainly reported on concrete initiatives that had been implemented in the city and / or region that were funded by the EU Structural and Investment Funds. The topics covered issues such as training and qualification, support to enterprises, infrastructure, cross-border cooperation, etc.

Outcomes / key messages:

- Citizens are interested in exchanges with their municipalities and regions on EU co-funded projects that benefit the place where they live.
- Additional means (budget and capacity support) are needed to communicate on cohesion policy-funded projects.
- Cities and regions, and their national associations, can be a bridge between citizens and the EU, which is too often viewed as too far away from people's day-to-day issues.
- Cohesion policy is better understood by citizens where it effectively targets the specific needs of their territory.
- Cohesion policy-funded projects can also contribute to citizens' awareness of European solidarity.
- Reaching out to citizens is challenging. It requires innovative and "out of the box" approaches and cooperation with other stakeholders such as civil society organisations or schools and universities.
- The events that effectively reached citizens were those organised outside of working hours, in a festive or cultural context. The example of bike tours or runs passing EU-funded buildings are good examples of reaching out to citizens while addressing concrete projects financed by cohesion policy.

3. So what?

The objective of organising the events – increasing the visibility of European cohesion policy – was achieved:

- 60 physical dialogues in 8 countries with a total of 4 217 participants
- 64 videos on YouTube Channel
- 3 121 Pictures on Flickr account
- 198 articles in the media and 109 press releases before and after the dialogues
- 8 on-line debates for German-speaking citizens on the Platform Debating Europe/DE, collecting 317 comments from German citizens
- 100 880 views on webpages from partners
- 1 million views of project videos across the channels
- More than 4 million impressions on social media channels (Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube)

4. Lessons learned

The role of the **moderator** is key to ensure there is a real dialogue among the audience and with the public. For this reason, CEMR provided a template for the moderators for dialogues in Germany to ensure they were briefed on the strategies to keep speakers' interventions short and save time for exchanges with the audience. Having a moderator from the press helped to raise the profile of the dialogue in the media (e.g. article in the *Toute l'Europe* media for the Orleans dialogue, etc.).

More **informal venues** turned out to be successful in attracting the general public in addition to technical experts on cohesion policy. Some dialogues have been organised in cafés (Graz, Krems, Klagenfurt, etc), some in schools or universities (Eisenstadt, Monselice, Pescara, etc.), cultural centres or theatres (Brussels, Greifswald, Karlsruhe) business premises (Aalborg) or buildings undergoing renovation (e.g. Modena). The dialogue was organised as a boat trip at Trier, on the Motorvessel Princess Marie-Astrid where the Schengen treaties were signed, and as a bus tour in Austria and Stuttgart. There was also

a bike tour in the city of Turnhout to visit several EU-funded projects in the surroundings.

Some dialogues have taken a **very innovative format**: in particular the Austrian one-week project tours on a van, where the partner encountered a variety of projects in many Austrian regions and the street consultation at the Brussels Canal Run, including an exercise of graphic recording, as well as the boat trip in Trier. Also the dialogue in Cologne opened with a five-minute theatre performance.

Several dialogues took place late in the afternoon in Eisenstadt, Graz, etc., or at the weekend in Leipzig and Brussels, to make them more accessible to citizens. The use of Sli.do also supported the dynamics of the dialogues in Karlsruhe, Toulouse, Cologne and Stockholm.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

There should be both: open access to the consultations, but also a structured selection on the basis of available and acknowledged selection procedures. Also the selection of the topics could be both, top-down and bottom-up; the organisers and the participants should suggest topics to be addressed within a pre-defined area. According to our experience, it is better to concentrate on one specific topic, but to address it in all its dimensions and facets (e.g. cohesion policy: economic, social, territorial development). The results or feedback from the Citizens' Consultations should be taken into account when the European institutions handle issues that have an impact on the citizens. This would allow the gap between "Europe" and the citizens to be bridged, and show that "Europe" cares about them.

As a result of the dialogues, CEMR has assessed several possibilities for how the dialogues could be organised:

 ESPON recommended organising roving EU local dialogues, suggesting that MEPs and high-level Commission officials should go and directly visit citizens to

- discuss needs and perceptions of local and territorial development and possible action by the EU.
- Continuation of local dialogues led by CEMR, possibly in cooperation with European NGO umbrella organisations, based on the lessons learnt. New dimensions could be added e.g. meetings or exchanges between the partners of the project to share practices, difficulties and solutions, enhancing European-level cooperation between associations on local dialogues.
- Joining existing initiatives, for instance communication and awareness raising initiatives led by the representations of the European Commission in Member States or by the Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs).
- An EU-wide campaign could suggest a common day (or week/or month?) to organise dialogue events (e.g. 9 May, Europe day).

Conclusions

Key take-away messages

- Citizens become more aware of cohesion funding opportunities available to their city or region.
- Concrete projects show the positive impact of cohesion policy at local and regional level.
- People want more exchanges on what the EU finances in their municipality or region.

- Communication on cohesion policy could be co-created with citizens and associations in order to ensure a positive impact.
- The dialogues brought together people with different backgrounds and thus the participants felt supported in having a platform to address their concerns in their regions.
- Regional and local views should be better taken into account when defining investment priorities at local level.
- Cohesion policy creates solidarity among countries, regions and people, especially for the youngest.
- The EU, Member States and Regions should invest more in citizens' awareness-raising.
- Cohesion policy is an investment policy creating innovation, competitiveness and sustainable growth in Europe. Private companies accessing structural funds showed they could not have succeeded in developing their businesses without them.
- Cohesion funds remain important for all regions; cohesion policy fosters innovation, competitiveness and sustainable growth in Europe by supporting common goals at European level that could not be achieved via national resources alone.

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Smart talking – EUROCITIES citizen panel pilot project

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Nicola Vatthauer is Director for events, planning and statutory affairs for EUROCITIES, the network of major European cities. She has over 20 years of experience in pan-European communications strategy and delivery, and is an expert in Europe-wide campaigns, events and cross-sector engagement. Her job is to ensure that the wide variety of sectors covered by EUROCITIES' work is communicated coherently to European institutions, stakeholders and media. She has recently been working on the EUROCITIES democracy campaign "cities4Europe – Europe for citizens" and the citizen panels pilot project on the future of Europe. Nicola has a master's degree in sociology.

Abstract

As part of its "Cities4Europe - Europe for citizens" campaign in 2018, EUROCITIES ran 18 citizens consultations in 18 of its member cities.

Recognising the necessity and urgency of changing the way politics is done in Europe, a year ahead of the European Parliament elections, EUROCITIES launched Cities4Europe to bridge the gap between people and policymakers, and to explore new ways of involving citizens in decision making.

At a time when Europe is striving to retain its legitimacy and relevance in the face of growing disillusionment and Euroscepticism, cities can provide a critical link with citizens

With Cities4Europe, EUROCITIES wanted to involve citizens in a dialogue about our future, to inspire all levels of government to build societies where people come first, and to impact the way decisions are taken in Europe by organising local citizen discussion panels on the future of Europe.

Cities4Europe and the citizen panels aimed to launch a process that promotes societies where people come first, power is shared between people and public authorities, and trust is strengthened.

Introduction

All through 2018, EUROCITIES worked intensively on citizen engagement, including through our "Cities4Europe - Europe for citizens" campaign. Following the success of our campaign with over 90 of the largest cities in Europe participating and committing to engaging with citizens, we launched a pilot project on citizens panels on the future of Europe. Supported by the European Commission,

and in the context of their online consultation that inspired the subjects for the citizen panels, we ran 18 consultations in cities from Oulu to Nicosia, and from Glasgow to Lublin.

With a view to the upcoming European elections in May 2019, the consultations, which ran from November 2018 to February 2019, delivered recommendations on the future of Europe that were taken forward and presented to prospective Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and Commission representatives at the EUROCITIES mayors summit on 21 March. Our members ran the consultations at very short notice, with no extra financial support, managing to reach out to a broad cross-section of their citizens.

1. Who?

Citizen panels were organised in 18 cities in 12 Member States, with a fair balance of countries from the north, south, east and west of Europe: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom.

In terms of population size, there was a wide range, from Amiens and Heraklion with 130 000 to 150 000 inhabitants to large cities like Lille Metropole, Munich and Hamburg with more than one million.

A total of 1 265 citizens took part in the panels, which ranged in size from 14 to 285 people.

Our members were free to choose the topic(s) for the panels and the best way to reach out to their citizens. Depending on the local context, whether consultations or discussions had previously been organised, the location of the event, etc., members used different channels to connect with citizens.

Each city was responsible for recruiting citizens for its panel, to be representative of the city's diverse population in terms of age, gender, socio-economic background, neighbourhood, long-term citizens/newcomers. Most cities used social media, email and conventional communications channels and sites to reach their target audience. Some received help from Europe Di-

rect Information Centres (EDICs) or other partners, associations and networks. Some cities selected participants from the entire population, while others chose to engage particular groups, such as young people or people with disadvantaged backgrounds.

None of the cities used the lottery system.

2. What?

To prepare for its citizen panel, each city followed a process which we co-developed with the cities.

Each city:

- Received an information pack containing 35 fact sheets on topics relevant to the future of Europe and a general document on the European Union. Available in all relevant languages, these materials were provided by the European Commission.
- Selected the topic(s) it wanted to focus on from those identified by the European Commission in its online questionnaire on the future of Europe: cohesion policy, migration, environment, education, security, social rights, health, technology, economic development and agriculture.
- Added EUROCITIES position papers and reports related to its chosen topic into its main information pack, along with research studies and local expert opinions.
- Identified local experts for its panel discussion from academia, civil society, trade unions, business and journalists, as well as a moderator. We and the European Commission also provided an expert for each panel.
- Informed the citizens selected to take part in the panel at least one month before the event and provided them with the information pack.
- Invited the citizens selected to complete the European Commission's online questionnaire on the future of Europe.

Each citizen panel followed a similar format:

- An opening debate was held on the chosen topic(s) involving the selected experts and citizens.
- Citizens were divided into smaller groups to focus on particular aspects of the chosen topic(s) and develop three concrete proposals on how to improve the situation in their city that could also be transferred to other cities. These were then 'translated' by the cit-

izens into recommendations on how the European institutions could address the problems identified.

In the plenary, citizens voted for the panel's top three recommendations to be taken forward to the EUROCITIES mayors summit in Brussels. Some of the citizens participating in the panel were invited to attend the summit and contribute to the debate directly.

3. So what?

Our 18 citizen panels came up with 60 recommendations to the EU. These recommendations ranged from introducing a fairer, EU-wide harmonised minimum wage system, to ensuring personal data protection or developing an EU info app for food and raising awareness through a European Week of Taste.

Mayors from the participating cities, as well as citizen representatives, spoke about the outcomes and recommendations at the second EUROCITIES mayors summit in Brussels in March 2019, in front of over 60 city leaders, MEPs and representatives of the European Commission.

EUROCITIES has ensured that the call for closer engagement with citizens at all levels of government is included in our manifesto 'The city leaders agenda for Europe', which states that we call for "a renewed focus on citizen engagement at EU level, based on the experiences of participative democracy in cities, to encourage the co-creation of solutions to common European challenges in a citizen-oriented future for Europe."

If we want to increase the interest in citizens' consultations, we believe that the outcomes of the consultations should be discussed in all relevant decision making bodies, whether at local level in the city council, at regional and national level, or of course at European level in the plenaries of the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament. We also see a need for the European Commission to open up to debates and engagement, e.g. via digital platforms.

In October 2019, EUROCITIES organises a conference on citizen engagement at local level. By 2020, we aim to have adopted ten principles on citizen engagement. These, together with our Declaration

on citizen engagement, will form the basis for our actions and initiatives on citizens' participation.

4. Lessons learned

Obviously, not all citizen panels our members organised were equally successful, but all of them contributed to lessons that we can draw from the different events

- The key to a meaningful citizen panel or consultation is outreach beyond the usual suspects, trying to engage with parts of the population that are less inclined to get involved in European or even city politics. This can be achieved through carefully selecting the location for the debate, by looking for partners that can ensure better outreach to minorities and by providing extra support and assistance for groups of people that might find it difficult to express themselves or find the time to participate.
- Participants need to be provided with information ahead of the debates. Fact sheets, articles and statistics all help people get a better overview of the topic and help them prepare for the discussions.
- Buy-in and support from the local political level is essential. People need to see that politicians really mean to take the results of the panels into consideration. Both in the preparation phase and in the follow-up, the political level needs to be credibly involved.
- An absolutely essential aspect is the follow-up in terms of actions from the local to the European level, as well as clearly explaining to participants what will happen with the outcome of the debates. The follow-up needs to give feedback to participants on what has become of the recommendations they worked on, what worked, and also what was not taken up and why.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

Any European institution organising citizens' consultations should always involve other levels of government, in particular the local level, as well as civil

society organisations and grassroots movements that are active in the subject of debate at local level.

While it is important to create a European context, the link to what is relevant for citizens in their everyday lives should never be ignored. And while a possible range of topics for debate should be suggested from the top down, it is of pivotal importance to give the local organising level the freedom to select what is most relevant for their local context.

For all these reasons, we believe that EUROCI-TIES, as the network of the major European cities, can provide a critical link between the European institutions and its citizens.

Conclusions

The citizen panel pilot project has not only engaged citizens in generating a raft of tangible proposals across a very broad range of issues, for the EU to take careful note of and consider adopting, but has also taught participating cities some important lessons about how best to engage citizens.

These cities have three main recommendations.

 focus citizens' attention sharply on specific, concrete issues rather than more abstract concepts such as 'the future of Europe';

- make part of the EU budget available for citizen-led initiatives: using a participatory budgeting approach allows people to identify, discuss and prioritise how EU public money is spent;
- use an e-participation digital platform to directly involve citizens in EU related decision making.

If cities make the most of these recommendations and insist that EU institutions engage with citizens on European issues, this can become a much-needed process for EU politics to reconnect and regain people's trust.

EUROCITIES (March 2019) 'Engaging with citizens', Brussels, online:, http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/2019_Citizen_panel_recommendations_final__2_pdf

EUROCITIES (March 2019) 'The city leaders agenda for Europe', Brussels, online: http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/EUROCITIES_-_city_leaders_agenda_for_Europe_-_March_2019-A4.pdf





Augmenting citizen participation with artificial intelligence

Wietse Van Ransbeeck

Co-founder and CEO of CitizenLab, Brussels

Wietse Van Ransbeeck is the co-founder and CEO of CitizenLab, an e-democracy platform that allows governments to give their citizens a direct say on topics that matter to them. Today, the platform is used by more than 100 local governments around the world, including big cities such as Vancouver, the Hague and Brussels, but also by much smaller municipalities.

Wietse recently featured in the Law & Policy category of the Forbes 30 Under 30 Europe list for his work on bringing local democracies into the digital age. He holds a Masters' Degree in Business Engineering from Solvay Brussels School, and a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from Waseda University.

Abstract

Artificial intelligence applied to citizen participation is showing huge potential for local democracies. Digital participation platforms have the power to empower citizens and increase trust in government. Artificial intelligence is also making it possible to process large amounts of contributions, thus helping governments to gather reliable insights and shape better policies.

Introduction

Today, local democracies are facing two main issues: a lack of trust from citizens, and difficulties speaking to those citizens. When trying to reach out to citizens through town halls or paper consultations, local governments hit barriers: these consultation methods are costly, time-consuming, and not representative of their population.

CitizenLab was founded in late 2015 by two students frustrated with this situation. It aims to solve these issues by providing governments with a digital platform to easily consult their citizens. The platform also has an automated analysis feature, powered by artificial intelligence, which helps governments process contributions easily and efficiently. By involving citizens in the decision-making process, local governments can improve trust, transparency, and efficiency. Today, the e-democracy platform is used by more than 100 local governments around the world.

1. Who?

The strength of citizen participation platforms is precisely that they do not necessitate any kind of citizen qualification or selection. Citizen platforms like CitizenLab can be set up by any local government that wishes to consult citizens on a large scale. For most platforms, the aim is to get the largest possible number of participants – which means that the challenge lies in spreading awareness rather than in selection.

Of course, most platforms still want to operate some kind of selection: when setting up platforms where citizens can vote for local projects and allocate local funds, they expect the participants to be local residents. This selection generally operates quite naturally, for non-citizens have little to gain by participating. Some municipalities have also chosen to add an extra layer of verification, adding authentication tools such as ItsMe or FranceConnect to verify the participants' identity.

Citizens can access these platforms at any time, from anywhere, and from any device, which breaks down the traditional barriers to participation. The platforms allow different participation methods: voting, surveys, idea gathering, citizen initiatives or participatory budgets. Citizens are not only invited to weigh in on local projects their municipality is working on, but can also initiate their own proposals and set the political agenda. This bottom-up approach is a strong incentive for citizens to participate.

2. What?

Citizen participation platforms should focus on two key aspects of participation: gathering citizen input of course, but also processing this input and turning it into actionable insights.

Throughout the consultation phase, citizens can contribute to the platform in different ways. Depending on the project set up by the city, they can vote, distribute budgets, respond to surveys or propose their own ideas. Platform administrators can then respond in real time and share the ideas with other departments throughout the administration. This ensures a constant dialogue between citizens

and their local governments and encourages transparency, which in turn increases trust levels and support for policy decisions.

Unfortunately, too many citizen participation projects stop there. Analysing the high volumes of citizen input collected on these platforms is extremely time-consuming and requires skills that administrations often do not have, which prevents governments from uncovering valuable learnings. Setting up a digital participation platform is therefore not enough: it is also necessary to make data analysis more accessible so that civil servants can tap into collective intelligence and make better-informed decisions.

In response to this issue, CitizenLab has developed its own machine learning technology. Automated analysis is done using natural text processing (NLP) techniques. Algorithms identify the main topics, group similar ideas together into clusters and place them on a map, making it easy to understand what the citizens' priorities are and how they differ across demographic or geographical groups. This feature benefits both governments and citizens: by increasing efficiency, artificial intelligence frees up time for administrations to meaningfully engage with citizens. It also gives them a better understanding of what citizens want, which in turn leads to better-informed decisions.

3. So what?

Citizen participation supported by artificial intelligence can yield very powerful results. CitizenLab works with over 100 local governments, and a growing number of our clients are using automated analysis to tap into the collective intelligence of their citizens. City officials can see at a glance how proposals are being received, what topics citizens are discussing on the platform, or how priorities vary across different groups. In a consultation regarding traffic in the city, it could for instance be that families in one neighbourhood want more public transport options, while residents of neighbouring areas would rather focus on improving the roads.

The solution has been used by cities such as Leuven and Vancouver, but also by citizen movements

like Youth4Climate, an independent youth group advocating for youth climate actions. In all three cases, administrators collected high volumes of citizen contributions and needed help processing them into digestible, actionable insights to inform decision-making. In the case of the Youth4Climate platform, the analysis feature helped the organisers process 1 700 contributions and turn them into 15 concrete priorities for the climate, which were then put to a vote in order to determine their order of importance. Once the voting phase closes, the priorities will be handed over to politicians and hopefully be actioned.

On a smaller scale, the platform also has an impact on the way citizens interact with their governments. In the Belgian municipality of Marche en Famenne, the platform dedicated to the renewal of the town square was seen by more than a quarter of the town's inhabitants; in total, just over 1 in 10 inhabitants headed to the platform to vote. This strong engagement created a new link between the city and its citizens, and emboldened the administration to launch more citizen participation projects. In early 2019, a participatory budget was set up, in which citizens could put forward their own ideas.

4. Lessons learned

We have seen that successful participation projects combine both top-down and bottom-up participation. Giving citizens the opportunity to share their own ideas and set the council's agenda has a positive impact on participation rates and the trust they have for the process.

Another key success factor is transparency about the way ideas are handled and processed. Cities and governments launching a consultation process must ensure they are ready to deliver timely feedback to contributors: regular feedback on the ideas, clear criteria for idea selection and precise project phases help citizens get behind the project and embed the project into a city's workflow. They must also communicate clear

guidelines, timeframes and objectives to help establish trust with citizens.

Internal buy-in is another important aspect of citizen participation projects. The best of platforms will fail if it is not supported internally, and if feedback from citizens is not shared and acted on within the administration. It can be difficult to get city to respond to citizens' input, and to act on these ideas. It is therefore important to start changing mindsets and to encourage administrations to be more open and agile and to collaborate more.

We have also learned that private companies with governments should not try to re-invent the wheel: working with over 100 local governments, we have seen that participatory processes are often similar in nature and that local governments usually face the same challenges. Simply sharing expertise amongst these local governments can help participatory practices and learn from the best case studies.

Finally, it has been extremely interesting to see the sector develop alongside the tool. Citizens and civil servants alike have grown more aware of issues around data protection, and participation projects are now often being challenged with questions around data privacy. A citizen participation platform launching today has to think about these issues.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

What our experience shows is that appetite for citizen participation is growing across Europe, and the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism can greatly benefit from this. Citizens want to be given a say, and given the chance to do so they will gladly weigh in on policy decisions. We have noticed that participation projects work best when they take place within a clear framework, with clear timeframes and rules for the debate. It would therefore be beneficial for the European Citizens' Consultation to com-

municate about the project phases and let participants know how they can contribute, how their ideas will be processed and what they can expect from the initiative. Regularly communicating about the results and giving feedback on the ideas expressed on the platform also helps increase citizen engagement.

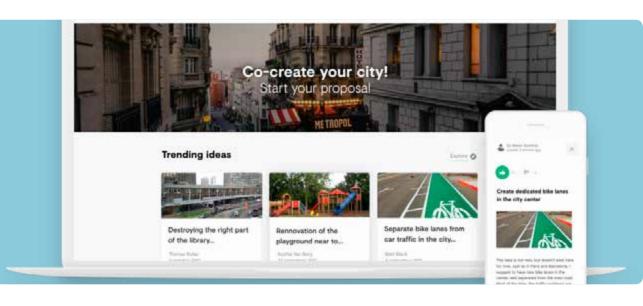
We have found that the most efficient set-up is a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Defining two or three key topics along with criteria for eligible ideas helps frame the debate and keep it constructive. Citizens should then be offered the opportunity to submit their own ideas, support projects coming from other participants, and start discussions on the platform. Failing to set any rules or topics means contributions can sometimes spread too wide, making it difficult to find common patterns and to find actionable insights within the comments.

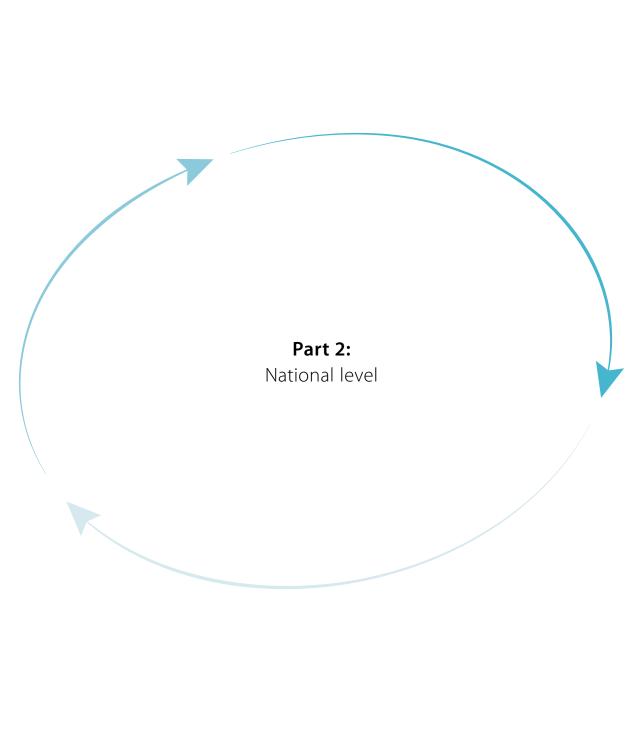
The second point is that consultation mechanisms have a lot to gain by integrating artificial intelligence. Digital innovations have knocked down barriers and opened the debate up to a larger number of citizens, but this is for nothing if contributions are not thoroughly analysed and processed by administrations. Investing in automated analysis will help the European Citizens' Consultation Initiative save time, uncover valuable lessons and make it a lot easier to share the results internally.

Conclusions

Citizen participation platforms have the potential to greatly increase both the legitimacy and the efficiency of local governments. However, one should not be done without the other: when citizen participation is developed and encouraged by a government or institution, it is important to ensure administrations have the means to process this input and implement the projects that come out of it. It is therefore important to invest both in citizen participation platforms or tools, and in internal innovation.

Giving citizens a say in policy decisions has a hugely beneficial impact. Widespread participation can be a way for governments to tap into collective intelligence and improve decision-making. It has also been shown that increased participation has a positive impact on the trust that citizens have in the government, in their willingness to engage and even on tax compliance. At a time when trust is eroding and dialogue between citizens and their governments is becoming increasingly difficult, it is vital to promote dialogue and mutual respect.







Diversity and deliberation:
why is random selection
a promising path for citizens'
participation in
the European Union?

Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul

Former deputy SG for the Citizens' Consultations on Europe in France, and head of the Citizens' Conferences division of the *Mission Grand Débat*

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Abstract

In the past 15 months, many interesting experiences of participatory democracy have been gathered in France and at European level, as part of both the Citizens' Consultations on Europe and the *Grand Débat*. Among these large-scale experiments, those based on panels of randomly selected citizens have been particularly successful and promising. They have provided a huge amount of added value: inclusiveness, diversity and a deliberation process that led to an amicable dialogue and a true "collective citizen intelligence".

Introduction

Both the initiative for the Citizens' Consultations on Europe and that for the *Grand Débat* came from French President Emmanuel Macron, in two different contexts. The first came from the need to involve citizens in the discussions on the future of the European Union at an important time in its history, with the prospect of Brexit and the new legislature. The second was prompted by the yellow vests' protest, which highlighted the need for a wide-ranging, inclusive, peaceful and participatory national debate on major themes for the future of the country.

These two participatory endeavors were of course very rich and varied. Based on common principles and the shared goal of discussing a report presented at the December 2018 European Council, the Citizens' Consultations on Europe

took place in 27 countries according to a variety of models

The *Grand Débat* was held in France from January to April 2019, led by two ministers and a *Collège des Garants* and organized by a dedicated taskforce (the *Mission Grand Débat*). It made use of six different and complementary formats, including a web platform that received almost 2 million contributions from citizens.

These large-scale experiments prompted the use of random selection on a larger basis than is usually the case and confirmed that this methodology has the potential to provide a useful – even indispensable – participatory complement to the functioning of our representative democracies, which are in need of revitalisation.

1. Who?

Three of these experiments deserve particular attention: firstly a transnational citizens' panel held in Brussels in May 2018, secondly a French citizens' panel that took place at the end of the Citizens' Consultations in France, and finally 21 Regional Citizens' Conferences that were one of the formats for France's *Grand Débat*.

All were based on the random selection of participants (100 for the May 2018 panel in Brussels, 50 for the panel in Paris during the Citizens' Consultations on Europe, and 1 400 for the *Grand Débat* Citizens' Conferences) by polling institutes using different techniques. The one used for the *Grand Débat* was particularly interesting because it was designed to be inclusive: citizens were contacted by phone on a random basis, which meant that even those not registered on electoral lists could be reached.

In all three cases, random selection resulted in citizens' panels that were representative of the diversity in society, with a mix of age, gender, socio-professional and geographical criteria. While more time would have made it possible to further refine the makeup of the panels, overall their diversity (various nationalities and profiles in Brussels and a diversity of backgrounds in

all three cases) was obvious, bringing in people who were not usually involved in public affairs and giving an incomparable level of dynamism to the dialogue.

2. What?

The Brussels citizens' panel was convened to launch the European Citizens' Consultations process. Hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee, its task was to draft the online questionnaire that the European Commission subsequently published for the entire EU population. The Paris panel was organised by the association Particip-Action and the European Commission Representation in France, with the help of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to draft one contribution to the Citizens' Consultations in France. The Citizens' Conferences were a key element of the *Grand Débat*, producing 21 summaries and one overall synthesis that were taken into account in the analysis of the results.

The 21 *Grand Débat* conferences were divided into three categories: 13 were held in the regions of mainland France, seven overseas, and one at national level specifically for young people. They took place simultaneously over two weekends (15-16 and 22-23 March) and followed the same protocol, from coming up with a joint diagnosis to presenting collective proposals, alternating between group and plenary work, with the help of facilitators. They concentrated on the four broad themes of the *Grand Débat* (ecological transition, democracy and citizenship, taxes and public spending, and organisation of the State and public services).

All of these processes were designed with the help of (or directly organised by, in the case of the Paris panel) participatory democracy experts, and the discussion methodologies were prepared through a long development process involving, in the case of the *Grand Débat*, the illustrious members of the *Collège des Garants*, who were in charge of ensuring compliance with the key principles of the debate.

3. So what?

The impact of the European Citizens' panel was quite efficient, since the questionnaire drafted by the citizens was automatically put online by the European Commission, in the version prepared by the panel. The Paris panel was one of the 1 100 contributions to the Citizens' Consultations in France, but the quality of the output from its three days of discussion was noticed, and the citizens' opinions proved to be very useful and were often quoted when drafting the final report (N.B.: another randomly selected panel took place in the Bourgogne region during the Citizens' Consultations in France that also produced some very interesting results).

Finally, the overall synthesis produced for the Citizens' Conferences was incorporated into the analysis of the results.1 In comparison with the large-scale analysis of the contributions received on the web platform, by e-mail or at local meetings (some of which also took very interesting and participatory forms), the results that came out of the conferences were particularly useful in two ways. First, the group and plenary discussions were organised such that it was possible to track not only the proposals themselves but also the arguments and collective deliberations that led to them. Second, the fact that the same methodology was used for all the conferences in the various regions also gave weight to the results.

4. Lessons learned

All of these experiments could of course have benefited from more time and visibility and could be improved in "version 2.0". However, they brought enormous added value to both the Citizens' Consultations and the *Grand Débat*, which can be summed up under the key words

of diversity and inclusiveness on the one hand, and dialogue and deliberation on the other.

Diversity and inclusiveness

Even though it is possible to refuse to participate in the experiment, random selection clearly makes it possible to reach a different audience from more spontaneous and voluntary forms of public debate.

Two indicators drawn from the evaluation filled in by participants in the *Grand Débat* Citizens' Conferences are particularly interesting in this respect: 60% of those present said they had never participated in a public meeting before and between 80% and 95% of them had not contributed to the other elements of the *Grand Débat*.

The five criteria used to form the panels also ensured that people from different backgrounds and education levels were included. Some panels were better balanced than others, but overall the group of 1 400 citizens was very diverse, as was recognised and valued by the participants.

Similarly, the Brussels panel in May 2018 brought to European issues people who said they had never participated in any kind of European event. Some people said they had never travelled outside their countries.

Dialogue and deliberation

The added value of the Citizens' Conferences of the *Grand Débat* was clearly the desire to create and organise conditions conducive to peaceful dialogue, collective work and deliberation. This dimension was of course present in other elements of the *Grand Débat*, in particular the local initiative meetings, some of which were also designed and run by specialists in participatory democracy.

The particularity of the Citizens' Conferences, however, was that they were designed with the specific aim of bringing out a "collective civic intelligence" rather than individual expressions. In particular, the use of A3 boards at the tables,

¹ All the results/summaries from the Grand Débat can be found at https://granddebat.fr/

indicating the working instructions and leading the participants to discuss among themselves their points of convergence and the elements that were being debated, to identify the focal points of their proposals etc., created a framework that encouraged dialogue and listening. It also helped the participants to understand both the complexity involved in – and the satisfaction that can result from – identifying joint solutions. The presence of a facilitator at each table also helped to guide the participants from expressing individual views towards building a proposal based on collective deliberations.

When the results of the *Grand Débat* were analysed, policy-makers found that the synthesis of the Citizens' Conferences provided interesting material that highlighted not only proposals, but specifically collective ones, along with the content of the arguments and debates that had produced them. It was very rich, and complemented the input gathered from, for example, the web platform.

When asked to evaluate their experience with the Citizens' Conferences, participants (80% of whom said they were satisfied with the experience and asked for more of this kind of civic engagement) primarily highlighted the opportunity to express themselves, the quality of the dialogue between citizens and the rich human experience.² The two citizens' panels (Brussels and Paris)³ were also evaluated very positively by the participants, who rated the respectful dialogue between diverse people particularly highly, diversity being considered as a key element in increasing the benefit gained from the discussions.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

European affairs are usually seen as being even more distant from the citizens than national politics. It is indeed usually even more difficult to engage with people who are not already interested: experience shows that those who spontaneously come to public events on Europe are either convinced pro-Europeans or anti-Europeans. We also know that such events generally tend to attract relatively young or old/retired people. Random selection is therefore the way to be sure of reaching people who are not the "usual suspects".

When used at European level, it adds a transnational dimension to the dialogue that is of course a challenge but is completely manageable, as was proven by the Brussels citizens' panel where participants managed to exchange views both in plenary meetings and in workshops.

A Czech participant coming out of one of these workshops said that she had never realised how much Italian citizens had felt abandoned by Europe on the issue of migration. It was a very telling moment. It showed that direct, well organised and peaceful dialogue among citizens is, beyond intergovernmental quarrels and interinstitutional politics, what the European Union is about, and is the only way forward for a sustainable European democracy.

² An evaluation was undertaken on the basis of a questionnaire filled out by almost all the participants, prepared and analysed by the two consultants on participatory processes that supported the Citizens' Conferences: Missions Publiques and Res Publica.

³ The two panels benefited from an evaluation carried out independently by the Bertelsmann Foundation. https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/224-2018_BST_Evaluationsberich_Citizens_Panel_final.pdf

https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/240-2018_BST_Panel_citoyen_national-Rapport_d_analyse__ID388_EN.pdf

Conclusions

A more regular mechanism for a Europe-wide Citizens' Consultation could of course take a different shape, with one key element in mind: the most important "moment", and one that is often not considered of these processes, is the junction between participatory and representative democracy. What is the impact of the work done by the citizens? Who will respond, how, and with what kind of feedback? These are definitely questions that need to be answered from the start.

However, in every participatory process – and even more so at European level, where the elitist bias is even stronger – the question of *who* participates in these citizens' moments is just as essential if these instruments are to have any kind of credibility. Many forms of participation have their advantages: web participation through emerging civic tech instruments, especially those that allow direct multilingual dialogue, certainly needs to be developed, as it allows Europe-wide, large-scale mobilisation. In fact, the combination of several participation methods is often the best guarantee that the combined results will be reliable.

However, creating a framework to allow direct, peaceful and human-centred dialogues and discussions between citizens with diverse backgrounds and expectations remains at the heart of the European Union project and should be a key goal for any kind of participatory mech-

anism. Diverse and randomly selected citizens' panels allowing the emergence of a collective citizens' intelligence – the EU motto "united in diversity" in tangible form – are certainly a path to be further explored in the formation of a more solid and sustainable European democracy.





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Abstract

This is a high-level overview of the process and rationale behind EM Ireland's activity within the (European Citizens' Consultations) ECC framework, under the banner of Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe. The process behind these events used bespoke organic dialogue, regional engagement and transparency as tools towards an outcome that truly reflected national sentiment. This outcome, a high-level report, will be used to inform policy development in the future.

Introduction

Since 1954, European Movement Ireland has worked to strengthen the connection between all sectors of Irish society and Europe. Our founding principal was to "keep the Irish public informed about current European affairs and to encourage an informed and constructive contribution from Irish society towards the development of Europe." This is a core philosophy behind our public engagement on the future of Europe.

The Irish are passionate Europeans, with 93% supporting our membership of the EU in a recent survey commissioned by EM Ireland. However, attitudes can be fluid, as shown by our initial rejection of the Nice and Lisbon Treaties. Ensuring we feel like active participants in the European project is crucial to continued support. With the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, EM Ireland carried out a series of Citizens' Dialogues across the country during the first half of 2018, to develop a grassroots-driven map of where we want our journey with the EU to go.

1. Who?

There can be a perception that Irish institutions and political culture can be Dublin-centric, to this end we made the decision to travel into Ireland's regional communities for our events. One of our goals was to hear as many disparate voices as possible; this directly shaped our approach to recruiting participants.

Logically, the ideal makeup is an independently selected fully representative group, chosen at random. This was effectively used for the Constitutional Convention, held between 2012 and 2014. However, our regional approach precluded using that model. In practical terms, the population spread outside Dublin meant achieving a representative sample size for each event would have been too difficult. Instead, we opened the events to the public. This approach had both benefits and drawbacks; while a self-selecting audience is by design more engaged with the EU, it is unlikely to reflect the views of the middle ground.

As much as possible, we reached as deeply as we could into local communities to publicise our events. We advertised through local schools and universities, civil society organisations, sports clubs, churches, chambers of commerce, business communities, libraries, etc., as well as through local newspapers, local radio and locally targeted social media posts.

In overall terms, the benefits of a self-selected audience outweighed any imbalance in our participants. Our approach showed how EU-level issues filter down to people on both a national and regional level and gave a voice to populations who anecdotally reported feeling unheard at an EU level. Finally, by opening the process up to the general public, we ensured a level of transparency that gave significant credibility to the project.

2. What?

The goal for the Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe was to develop a report that accurately reflected the attitudes, opinions and needs of people living in Ireland and for Ireland's relationship with the EU in the future

Each event followed a set structure. After an opening remark on behalf of EM Ireland, the Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, spoke about the origins of the European Citizens' Consultations, the Future of Europe project and Ireland's Citizens' Dialogues.

Our approach blended the world-cafe and round table formats, balancing participative, open conversation and structured dialogue. Participants sat around a series of tables. Each table had up to ten participants, with as much of a gender and age mix as possible. A trained facilitator and note taker sat at each table and led participants through five questions on Ireland's priorities for the EU. They were asked about their vision for a prosperous and competitive Union, a safe and secure Union, a sustainable Union, a socially responsible Union and the EU's role in shaping globalisation. EM Ireland provided unbiased data about each topic, so that all participants had access to a base level of information if they wanted it.

Tables were given a brief period to discuss each question, at the end of which the note taker would submit the table's agreed position to sli.do¹. After the five questions had been discussed, each table was invited to explain their priorities to the whole room, followed by a short open mic session. Participants led and shaped the conversation throughout.

A lecturer in the School of European Studies at University College Cork travelled to each event as rapporteur. He used digital recorders, carried out faceto-face interviews, collected information submitted to sli.do (either by note takers or participants) and all social media content to develop a comprehensive, independent report that was an accurate reflection of people's views.

3. So what?

Throughout the Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe, EM Ireland made a promise – if you talk to us, you will be heard. We made it clear that the report we developed through this process would be submitted

to the Government and would be the backbone of their submission to the European Council meeting on the Future of Europe in Sibiu in May 2019. Crucially, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade were vocal in their support (and directly provided funding), and Minister McEntee took part and heard people's concerns directly.

The report we developed was objective, comprehensive and illuminating. It provided a vivid overview of both a broader national vision and specific regional needs and wants. Regionality is a crucial takeaway from these Dialogues, and while they followed a predictable pattern (fisheries reform being a priority in Ireland's North West region on the Atlantic coast; common agricultural policy (CAP) reform and support for sustainable agriculture being a priority in the heavily agricultural East Midlands, etc.). On other issues, there was consensus nationally – participants called for more support for reaching our carbon goals, on infrastructure issues, on education, etc.

Feedback to participants was carried out in a range of ways – each event trended nationally on Twitter, and the EM Ireland team were active in engaging there. In May 2018, a National Dialogue on the Future of Europe was held in Dublin to discuss the outcomes of the series of Citizens' Dialogues. Finally, the report we developed from the events was edited and published as a record of people's views².

In terms of how these events support policy development, this is envisaged to be an ongoing process. The Government has committed to using these to inform policy going forward, and the ongoing high-level engagement from the Government reinforces this commitment.

4. Lessons learned

From our perspective, for similar events best practice must ensure that outcomes are citizens-led. While there are benefits to lecture-style formats, Ireland's Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe worked because they were grassroots-driven and reflected public opinion, rather than government policy. Institutional buy-in was crucial too – there would have been no point had the results remained sitting on a

shelf. If you tell participants that they will be listened to, then they must be seen to be listened to.

The project was widely hailed as a success, with participants, academics, and stakeholders from the political sphere and civil society recognising the approach taken as very useful in terms of engagement. A huge element of this was the people that took part: The self-selecting audience were enthusiastic, vocal and constructive. Facilitators were well informed and ensured that conversation flowed without influencing any outcomes. Stakeholders supported and promoted the events as far as possible. Crucially, EM Ireland staff ensured that each event was carried out to the highest standard.

In feedback, there was enthusiasm about augmenting facilitated discussion with the use of sli.do. This extra level brought dynamism to the event, where participants could take part in their own discussion, see the outcome of others, and use that to reflect on their own ideas.

The main factor that had a negative affect was a disparity in knowledge about the role of the EU; this can be attributed to our self-selecting audience and the lack of an EU political sphere and in-depth discussion about EU issues across the country. The disconnect between those who had a good knowledge of the EU and those who had less of an understanding stymied conversation. We were clear though – no idea could be categorised as "incorrect" – our aim was to reflect people's views rather than judge them. However, the analysis of participants' understanding of the EU was an important outcome in itself.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

EM Ireland researched different models before settling on the format for our Citizens' Dialogues. It was clear during this research that there is no one correct model. Factors such as population size, whether the event is formal or informal, whether an event is part of a series or a one-off, expected audience demograph-

² https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/eu/futureofeurope/Report-on-the-Citizens-Dialogues-on-the-future-of-Europe.pdf

ic, etc., are important considerations. The EU and its citizens are a broad church, and we must resist a one-size-fits-all approach. Smaller focus groups might be suitable in some situations, while theatre style Q&A formats might suit others. Sometimes an online forum might be best.

No matter the format, the goal should be the same – an accurate reflection of people's attitudes, opinions and vision. Buy-in from policy makers is important too – acknowledging that the ECCs are a direct response to the rise of Eurosceptic populism, the EU must commit to hearing its citizens no matter the forum. As a natural extension of this, topics that are discussed should reflect the priorities of both citizens and policy makers. In our case EM Ireland, as a civil society organisation, was a natural interlocutor between government and citizenry. We were well placed to set topics that reflected both sets of stakeholders.

We used a self-selecting model. Others use a randomly drawn list of participants. No matter the structure, the credibility relies on a citizen being able to pick up a report at the end and recognise themselves in what has been said. This should be the guiding principle in audience selection.

The ECC model is unusual, it lies somewhere in the minds of citizens as a philosophical discursive process and is an exercise in direct democracy. In truth, it is both and neither, and how it informs policy should be understood through that lens. Policy decisions cannot be made in a vacuum; the benefit of using

ECCs to inform policy is that they are a grassroots, regional, organic reflection of public opinion on issues outside of any national or EU election cycle.

Conclusions

European Citizens' Consultations are organically responsive to their audience, the region, the Member State, and the organisation carrying it out. They serve a dual purpose – they are a valuable show of hands on what people want to see from the EU, and an important tool where organisations like EM Ireland can build engagement with the EU and with their stakeholders.

How the next Commission engages with this idea is crucial – formal support can institutionalise this programme, institutionalise how policy makers respond to them, and institutionalise the perception that the EU responds to people's needs.

Something that is clear is that the European Citizens' Consultations should continue. People want to be heard, and we must listen.





Rahvakogu – Estonian experiment with deliberative democracy

Urmo Kübar

Civil Society adviser to the President of Estonia

Urmo Kübar has been involved in Estonian civil society development since he was an undergraduate in journalism and political science at the end of the 1990s. While working for the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations from 2005 to 2014 (including seven years as its CEO), he was responsible for designing and implementing a number of initiatives to encourage public participation.

Abstract

Rahvakogu (People's Assembly) was a deliberative democracy initiative in Estonia, run by a network of civil society organisations (CSOs), political parties and various experts from January to April 2013. It led to policy changes regarding political party regulations, party financing and public participation in policymaking. The following paper discusses both the successes and shortcomings of Rahvakogu as a consultation and citizen education mechanism.

Introduction

In May 2012, a former MP, member of the leading Reform Party, announced that a few years earlier he had received EUR 7 300 from party officials that he then had to donate to the party as if it was his own money¹. He also said that this was a common practice in the party.

The Reform Party denied the accusations and a criminal investigation was shelved a few months later due to lack of hard evidence. However, the public, having calmly accepted tax rises and budget cuts as a response to recession in 2009, found the party's explanations unconvincing. Protest meetings took place in bigger towns over the autumn months, demanding more transparency and openness in policymaking. A petition

Since 2004, Estonian political parties – in addition to the funds they receive from the national budget – can only accept donations from individuals, not from companies, and all the names of donors should be made public in quarterly reports.

with similar demands, started by 17 respected public figures, gained 18 000 signatures within a few weeks.

The country's president – who does not have executive power but serves rather as the representative of the state and guardian of the constitution – responded by calling for a meeting with party representatives and CSOs. At that meeting, the CSOs proposed the idea of launching a deliberative democracy initiative to seek workable ways of bridging the gap between the public and those in power. The process was later named Rahvakogu (People's Assembly).

1. Who and what?

The organising committee was put together on a voluntary basis from representatives of key CSOs (NENO, the Praxis thinktank, Estonian Cooperation Assembly, e-Governance Academy, Open Estonia Foundation, Harta 12), political parties and legal and PR and IT experts.

The committee decided on four phases for Rahvakogu. In early January 2013, a month after the initial meeting, a website was launched where everyone could propose their ideas under five categories, seen by the organisers as most relevant to the issues in question: transparent party financing, an open political landscape, fair elections, meaningful public participation in policy making and avoiding political nepotism.

Within three weeks, the website got 57 000 visits. More than 2 000 registered users submitted ca. 6 000 proposals for policy changes (many of them duplicating one another).

The second phase, in February, started by systemising this input into 59 sub-categories (e.g. under party financing there were sub-categories such as public funding, donations from individuals and from companies, membership fees, earned income, control mechanisms, etc., each with several proposals). Groups of experts then

commented on the feasibility and potential outcomes and impact of proposed changes. These groups consisted of lawyers, scholars, public officials, politicians, CSO staff, journalists, etc., thus ensuring diverse viewpoints.

The third phase, in March 2013, brought together the authors of proposals and experts in five subject-specific seminars. In smaller groups they discussed the proposals and expert comments in each sub-category and then voted on them, based on the relevance (e.g. does it help to increase the transparency of party funding, openness of political landscape, etc.) and impact (i.e. does it provide a fundamental or merely a partial solution).

So far, Rahvakogu had been quite successful in collecting input from the more active parts of society. However, it was also clear that some groups had remained silent. The analysis of the website input showed that it came mostly from middle-aged men, while older women and younger age groups particularly were under-represented.

As a result, for the last phase of Rahvakogu a representative sample of society was put together. Instead of running just a public opinion survey that does not take into account the level of information a respondent has, the organisers were interested in a different kind of input. Inspired by the work of James Fishkin², the goal was to find out what the public would prefer if they were put in a position to give an informed opinion.

On April 6, 2013, more than 300 people – a microcosm of society based on gender, age, regions and education – gathered in Tallinn for Rahvakogu deliberation day (D-day)³. Randomly divided into groups of 8-10, each table read the background information for each of 18 issues that had been voted as being most relevant and having the greatest impact at the seminars in March. Each table had a discussion leader whose task was to ensure that everyone got the

² Fishkin, J.S. (2009). When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation. Oxford University Press.

³ The original sample was 500, but about a third failed to show up, making the turnout similar to the national elections. Also similarly to the elections, older age groups and more educated people were slightly over-represented at D-day.

same chance to speak; translation into Russian was provided on request⁴. The experts were also present, not as participants but available for comments if a group invited them.

The tables did not have to find a consensus, but after the discussion each participant voted individually for their most preferred solution under each question. The results were then handed over to parliament together with all the previous material from the Rahvakogu process.

2. So what?

Rahvakogu proved itself to be a functional model for combining the input of interest groups, experts and the informed public into policymaking. While the first two had already been acknowledged as necessary in policymaking (although not without problems in practice), the importance of the last was viewed somewhat sceptically by politicians and the media, as well as by some CSOs, before D-day. There were doubts whether the "average" citizen was interested and capable of providing valuable input on complicated matters such as the election system or the regulation of political parties beyond overly simplified and populist sentiments.

The feedback survey among the participants showed their satisfaction with the process. More importantly, they noted that they had acquired more detailed information about the topics (87%) and become more interested in these issues and policymaking in general (82%). 70% said that, based on this additional information, they had altered at least some of their earlier positions on the issues.

Some policy changes were made by parliament as the result of Rahvakogu. To improve the openness of the political landscape, more public funding was made available for political parties outside parliament and the membership re-

quirement for establishing a party was lowered from 1 000 to 500⁵.

Parliament also passed a law on petitions that gave people a more direct right to initiate a legislative process. More scrutiny was added to the control mechanisms over party funding.

However, instead of welcoming their input, MPs tended to see Rahvakogu more as a competitor that challenged their remit, despite the fact that their parties had also been among the organisers. The process of working with Rahvakogu's input was slow and bureaucratic and this lukewarm reaction left the wider public rather confused and disappointed instead of feeling empowered by the experience.

3. Lessons learned

Rahvakogu thus remained a one-off experiment, although some of its elements have later been implemented on a smaller scale.

The fact that it grew out of the protest movement contributed both to the success and short-comings of Rahvakogu. On the one hand there was a vast interest among the public and media that would have been difficult to achieve under more "normal" circumstances. At the same time, it triggered a defensive attitude from parliament, who saw the initiative as being directed against them, despite the organisers' message that Rahvakogu was not seeking to replace representative democracy, but offered a helping hand.

The pressure from the public and the media for outcomes created an extremely tight timeline. From the first meeting to D-day, the project took four months; design and implementation were simultaneous. Although there were no noteworthy failures, each phase could have benefited from an additional week or two for preparations.

It also became clear that after such an intense period of work (which came at the expense of

⁴ Nearly 30% of the Estonian population are native Russian-speakers.

⁵ As a result, one new political party entered parliament at the 2015 elections and another was close to passing the threshold in 2019.

their other duties), the organisers no longer had the energy for a proper follow-up and advocacy once the work went over to parliament. This is probably the main reason why MPs felt quite safe to handpick only some of the suggestions for adoption.

The organisational structure of Rahvakogu was a loose network of CSOs, experts and political parties, although the commitment of the last remained problematic. There was no formal leadership, but different people took the lead in different phases of Rahvakogu, based on their competencies. Under the circumstances it worked well, but may not be sustainable in the longer run. In addition, such a structure may (and did) raise questions of legitimacy and mandate.

Most of the work was done by volunteers, but given the workload this would not be a sustainable approach in the case of regular events. The costs of Rahvakogu arose mostly from D-day (selecting and inviting the participants by a polling company, renting rooms, transportation and catering), the website and systemising the input. The funds came from Open Estonian Foundation, Estonian Cooperation Assembly and donations.

4. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism draw inspiration from the *Rahvakogu* experience?

Based on the Rahvakogu experience, the key success factor for similar processes is the commitment of policymakers to respecting the outcomes of the consultations. This does not mean giving up their role as the legislative power, but first and foremost showing appreciation of the time and energy the participants have put into the process by working with the input in a timely manner and giving proper feedback to the public. Such a commitment from the politicians'

side was largely absent in the case of Rahvakogu, which led to a subsequent feeling of disappointment on the part of the wider public.

The fact that Rahvakogu was organised bottom up had its own advantages. Having fewer bureaucratic burdens, CSOs are normally more flexible and creative, speak a language that people understand and often have more public trust. At the same time, the common lack of human and financial resources makes them more vulnerable to fatigue, as happened with Rahvakogu when the process was later slowed down in parliament.

Rahvakogu's approach of combining input from interest groups, experts and an informed public into policymaking can be used for a range of issues, at local, national and international level. It can also be adapted for consultations with certain groups in society, which may be especially important with disadvantaged people whose voice is often missing from the public debates. As with other consultation methods, it should only be used when there is a real interest in participants' input, even when this may not be in line with the organisers' preferred approach.

One should also keep in mind that, due to the lack of legitimacy, such a method cannot be used for decision-making, so it does not replace representative democracy. This should be made very clear to the public from the very beginning to avoid misunderstandings.

Conclusions

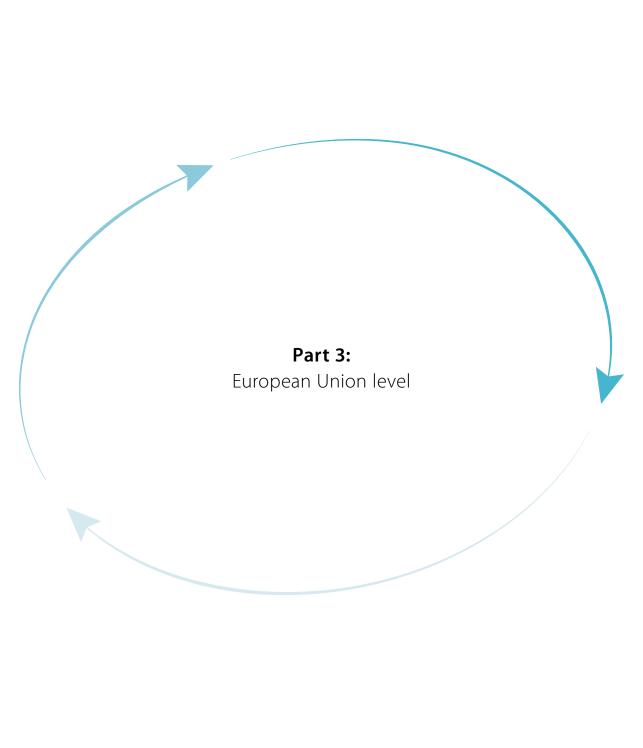
A well-known aphorism goes that the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with an average voter. The Rahvakogu experience shows that the problem lies not so much on the voter's side, but rather in policy-makers' lukewarm interest in dedicating more than five minutes to such conversations. Busy with their everyday lives, people may indeed lack information and be thus prone to manipulation. However, given the right conditions and

⁶ The quotation is often attributed to Winston Churchill, but there is no evidence he ever said it.

treated with respect, they are perfectly interested and capable of learning about the issues, hearing diverse viewpoints, bringing in their ideas and concerns, looking for compromises and accepting less desirable outcomes if they realise that the process has been fair.

As such, Rahvakogu was not just a consultation mechanism for policy change, but also a citizen education process. If run with commitment and the best intentions from both sides, such initiatives can contribute to better understanding and cooperation in society, and to overcoming the democratic deficit.







Transnational Citizens' Dialogues

Alessandro Giordani

Head of unit in the Directorate-General for Communication,
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Alessandro Giordani is a head of unit in the Directorate-General for Communication at the European Commission. His unit is implementing the Europe Direct concept, through several hundred Europe Direct Information Centres and European Documentation Centres in all the Member States. The Unit also develops coordination across all the outreach networks of the European Commission.

Prior to this, Alessandro was deputy head of the Citizens Dialogues Unit. Until 2015 he was responsible for the European Commission's communication activities in Italy. He worked as diplomatic advisor on EU issues in the Italian Prime Minister's private office until 2012. Earlier in his career he worked in various departments and Directorates-General of the European Commission, including the private office of the Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection.

Introduction

The "Transnational Citizens' Dialogues" pilot project was carried out by Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) in 14 cross-border regions across the EU. It consisted in bringing together an audience of up to 250 citizens from the areas concerned for three successive events, each comprising an informative part and a discussion part. 40 events were organised between May 2018 and April 2019.

This project's objectives were to contribute to the emergence of a European public sphere via public debates, and to give citizens a better understanding of how the EU works, looking towards the European elections to be held in May 2019.

Around 2 300 citizens were involved in the events in person, which also generated further outreach via social media, local print press, TV and radio stations as well as a dedicated Facebook group.

1. Who?

EDICs on the ground were in charge of selecting participating citizens. There was no unified process for the selection of participants. EDICs were asked to involve citizens from all sociological and demographic groups, not just young people or students (see below for more information about the process).

2. What?

Each Transnational Citizens' Dialogue consisted of three successive events. The first event was about presenting and discussing the EU, its nature and its competences. The second event revolved around challenges and options related to the evolution of the EU: this meant, for each of a number of policy areas (e.g. migration, agricultural policy, defence, cohesion policy), showing participants the hard choices that had to be made when it came to allocating limited budgetary resources at EU level (prioritising one policy area means spending less on another). The third event gave participants the opportunity to discuss such options against the background of the political debate developed in the run-up to the 2019 European elections.

A wide variety of topics were discussed, including the future of the EU, Brexit, defence cooperation, cohesion policy, the place and role of smaller Member States in the EU (in some of the countries concerned), youth mobility, migration and integration, agricultural policy, etc.

Topics were selected by the EDICs involved in close cooperation with DG Communication in Brussels. They were chosen with a view to ensuring that they would match local concerns and issues of interest.

The primary aim of the initiative was not to gather citizens' opinions about the topics discussed, but to foster debate, improve participants' knowledge about the EU and contribute to the emergence of a European public sphere. The results of the events were mainly analysed from that perspective, leading to the conclusion that such debates did indeed give participants a sense of what a European public sphere could be, and succeeded in making them better informed about the EU (see "So what?" below).

3. So what?

It appears that the initiative delivered on one of its key objectives, namely to give participating citizens a better understanding of how the EU works and how European citizens can shape the policies coming from "Brussels" via their vote at the European elections 2019. A large majority of participants expressed full satisfaction with the events, praising in particular their educational benefits. Most of them indicated not only that they now better understood the EU's decision-making system and the issues at stake, but also that they had been made aware of the channels through which they could make their opinion count at EU level. As an exercise in civic education for EU citizens, the initiative can therefore be considered a success.

The initiative also succeeded in putting citizens from different EU countries in a position to discuss issues of common interest (e.g. migration, the environment etc.) and to find convergences/divergences with fellow participants irrespective of their national backgrounds. Here, too, the initiative clearly met one of its objectives, namely to put the notion of a "European public sphere" into practice and to turn it into a tangible reality – albeit, of course, on a limited scale.

The Transnational Citizens' Dialogues were primarily an exercise in civic education, not in participatory democracy. The initiative was not aimed at feeding into the EU decision-making system. We were very open and transparent with participants about this point, in order to avoid raising false expectations. We will, however, compile citizens' input and bring it to the attention of our political leaders.

It is worthwhile building on the positive experience of the transnational dialogues, by exploring how it can become part of a permanent, structured process of engagement with citizens.

4. Lessons learned

The ambitious, unprecedented nature of the project generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm from stakeholders on the ground. It contributed to the high level of mobilisation of participating EDICs, which were instrumental in the success of the initiative.

Participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the format and organisation of the events. They particularly praised the interactive nature of the sessions, the presence of representatives of EU institutions (with whom they could engage in direct discussions), and the smooth handling of logistical aspects. The format was deemed very innovative and effective by EDICs and other partners involved – for instance, some Swedish teachers decided to use some of the structure and documentation provided as part of their teaching on the EU.

In terms of areas for improvement and mistakes to avoid, it appears that the initiative mostly reached people already knowledgeable about and/or supportive of the EU project. Involving all demographic and sociological segments of the population proved difficult, as is often the case with initiatives of this kind.

It has to be borne in mind that this was a pilot project, launched and implemented within a very short timeframe. As a consequence, it generally proved easier and faster for our partners on the ground to recruit as participants people with whom they already had some connections. This limited the potential outreach of the initiative, restricting the pool of participating citizens to a rather narrow base. Giving more time to select participants would be a way to address this shortcoming. For a future, full-blown version of such an initiative, it is absolutely essential for the stakeholders involved in organising the events at local level to ensure that the participants reflect the full diversity of the population in the area concerned.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

By its very nature and goals, the Transnational Citizens' Dialogue initiative was quite different from the European Citizens' Consultations (ECC) mechanism – as emphasised above, it was an exercise in civic education rather than in participatory democracy. However, some of the lessons learned

from the initiative can certainly provide some insight to the promoters of the ECC project.

A bottom-up selection of topics appears much preferable to a top-down approach. On several occasions, participants in the transnational dialogues took ownership of certain topics while rejecting some others that had been submitted to them. Citizens are certainly eager to discuss topics that are of direct interest to them, not necessarily those that are deemed important by EU officials or decision-makers (but are in fact quite disconnected from citizens' concerns).

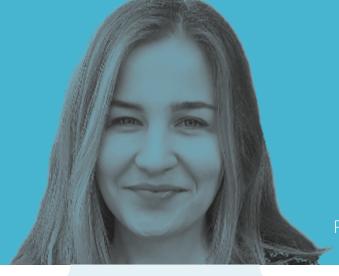
It is also clear that the selection of participants should aim to reflect as closely as possible the demographic and socio-economic diversity of the EU's population. Various methods can be used to that end, all requiring that adequate resources and time be spent on that part of the initiative (e.g. massive promotion effort to ensure that all segments of the population are made aware of the initiative, and convinced of the importance of getting involved).

Finally, the transnational nature of discussions seems to be of great value as it allows European citizens to realize that debates on important political issues (migration, the environment etc.) transcend national borders, and that opinions can be formed regardless of national backgrounds. This transnational dimension should therefore be a key element of the ECC initiative.

Conclusions

The "Transnational Citizens' Dialogues" pilot project showed the benefits of bringing together citizens from different EU countries to discuss issues of common interest. It showed that the building of a European public sphere is not a utopia, but a realistic objective. It also revealed that civic education is absolutely crucial to put European citizens in a position to make informed choices about issues often perceived as too remote and disconnected from their immediate concerns.





A broader civil society perspective on citizens' consultations

Vanessa Cotterell

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Vanessa Cotterell is Policy Manager at the European Movement International (EMI), a network of pro-European organisations present in 34 countries. In her current role, she coordinates EMI's policy output and advocacy planning, is involved in the organisation's partnership building and has been leading projects such as the Women of Europe Awards and the European Democracy Group. Through its network, the European Movement has played an active role in the organisation of the European Citizens' Consultations and offers recommendations on how to make them more effective, transparent and inclusive. Vanessa Cotterell will share these findings.

Abstract

With citizens across Europe taking to the streets, tirelessly protesting for change, it is hard to deny that Europeans want to have a say in political decisions and policy solutions in Europe. To this end, citizens' consultations can serve as a constructive tool for engagement. For this, they need to be organised in a transparent and consistent manner and allow for a meaningful dialogue between citizens and EU institutions.

Introduction

Present in over 30 countries, the European Movement International brings together European civil society, business and employer organisations, trade unions, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local authorities, political parties and academia. Since its foundation in 1948, the European Movement has continuously advocated for European cooperation and integration, based on the principles of peace, democracy, liberty, solidarity, equality, justice, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Today, we provide a platform to encourage and facilitate the active participation of citizens and stakeholders from a cross-section of sectors in the development of European solutions to our common challenges. By using innovative and inclusive tools, we aim to inform the debates on Europe's future and to influence policy-makers in favour of an open, inclusive, transparent and united Europe.

1. Who?

Witnessing citizens across Europe taking to the streets to protest for climate protection, social security or equal rights leaves us with no doubt that Europeans want to have a bigger say in the future and political direction of Europe. At the same time, we see a low degree of trust in national governments and European institutions and nearly every second EU citizen believes his or her voice does not count.¹ This leads us to believe that few feel they can make a real difference in national, let alone European decision-making processes.

However, as a civil society network with national and local branches across Europe, we also perceive a growing demand for democratic participation beyond elections.² A more ambitious strategy alongside innovative tools are therefore needed in order to give citizens, especially those underrepresented at decision-making level, a meaningful say when shaping future EU policies.

To this end, citizens' consultations or dialogues can serve as a constructive tool for engagement. In fact, throughout the European Movement network and beyond, citizens' dialogues and consultations have been taking place for years, in an attempt to bridge the gap between decision-makers, citizens and stakeholders across all sectors. However, in order for these events to be of added value to European democracy, they must follow a consistent structure and be organised in an inclusive and transparent manner.

Back in 2018, the European Movement network put together a set of criteria that the European Citizen Consultations should fulfil in order to serve as a constructive and representative tool within European democracy.³

When it comes to the selection process for participants, the consultations and their outcome can only be considered valid if they gathered the input of a diverse and balanced group of European citizens, representative of the respec-

tive Member States' societies. The consultations should be equally open to citizens who are not entitled to vote in their current country of residence. Both pro-European and EU-critical voices should be invited to join, in order to avoid a distorted image of citizens' opinions.

Moreover, the consultations should involve not only individual citizens, but also organised civil society, political parties, trade unions, entrepreneurs, local governments and further stakeholders concerned by the debate around the future of Europe.

2. What?

EU-wide citizens' assemblies, dialogues and consultations, where citizens are given a chance to deliberate on European issues and policies on a regular basis and where results feed into the political decision-making process, can serve as a participatory and constructive tool within European democracy. They should be considered a fundamental requirement for stable and sustainable development of the European Union in the interest of all citizens. However, especially when they take place at European level, they must be organised in a transparent and consistent manner, to produce comparable results that can feed into the policy-making process.

Citizens' consultations should not only give European leaders the state-of-play in terms of citizens' current attitudes and opinions vis-à-vis the EU; they must also result in a clear set of ideas about how the EU can develop and be delivered in a way that can be translated into policy. For this, EU-wide dialogues must have a clear objective and follow common guidelines, as a way to connect the consultations in the different Member States.

Citizens should be placed at the core of these exercises, and a bottom-up approach is therefore crucial. The choice of topics to be addressed during the discussions should ideally be developed in coordination with organisations close to cit-

¹ Standard Eurobarometer 90 Autumn 2018

² European Movement International (2019) Sibiu Summit 2019 – Citizen Consultations in Europe

³ European Movement International (2018) European Movement Criteria for the EU-wide Citizens' Consultations

izens, such as NGOs, municipalities and regions, youth organisations, trade unions, schools or universities, for example. Moreover, the consultations must be oriented towards the everyday lives of citizens and accessible to all. They should not be held just in the capital of each Member State but also in smaller towns and rural areas.

Last but not least, European consultations should focus on discussing issues that concern Europeans across the continent, where national remedies alone cannot provide the answers to the challenges facing citizens today.

3. So what?

Citizens want to feel and see the effects of their contributions to the debate on the future of Europe. European leaders must therefore refrain from relying on ad hoc and stand-alone consultation exercises that serve no bigger purpose than political communication. Alongside consistent, transparent and bottom-up implementation of the consultations, an ambitious follow-up strategy is crucial.

While the EU and the Member States must find better ways to communicate the goals and results of the consultations, thereby legitimising the process in people's eyes, policy-makers should commit themselves to seriously dealing with the content and results of the dialogues. To connect the different consultations taking place across Europe, the discussions rely on a clear objective, a shared red line and a target audience set out in advance.

At the same time, consultations must go hand in hand with accessible, understandable and well-designed communication about the EU, in order to help citizens to make an informed choice. National governments must play their part in ensuring that the consultations are advertised widely, supporting national and European media and at the same time aiming for media coverage that is transnational in nature.

Above all, EU leaders must commit to following up on the outcome of the consultations, setting out which of the citizens' comments were taken into account and for what reasons.

4. Lessons learned

There are various hurdles that we need to overcome when organising citizens' consultations. As far as diversity and inclusiveness goes, we have found that achieving a true balance when gathering citizens in a room to discuss European policies can be a challenge and relies on a good plan and thorough implementation.

While the goal must be to reach out into the regions and to engage communities outside of the main hubs, consultations must focus on EU-wide issues, so they do not turn into debates about national or regional questions. In addition to pre-selected topics for the dialogues which may give citizens the chance to reflect on current issues of importance to the EU, citizens must also be given the opportunity to put forward their own topics for consultations. We have also found that regional priorities in relation to EU policies often do not reflect national priorities. This therefore needs to be taken into account when designing the questions and topics for the consultations and when analysing the outcomes.

Any form of future European citizens' consultations or dialogues needs to be designed as an active listening exercise and result in a real dialogue. To achieve this, the events should contain as few speeches and panel discussions as possible, leaving more time for contributions from participants. The moderator should be neutral and facilitate the discussion in the most inclusive manner possible. Additional facilitators can help to ensure a consistent coordination as well as a thorough follow-up of the outcomes, while making sure the dialogue reflects the true opinions of a group, rather than existing policy.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

Looking ahead, European leaders must take citizens' concerns and fears about the future seriously. More effective, structured and transparent procedures are needed in order to give citizens the opportunity to

voice their opinions on EU policies and contribute to change as part of a bottom-up process.

Naturally, there remains disagreement and uncertainty about how to effectively organise citizens' consultations at European level. However, it is a good sign that organisations and institutions are taking a step back to reassess previous attempts and to discuss how the tools can be improved and which stakeholders need to be involved in future.

While there is no single correct way to carry out citizens' consultations, democratic and representative organisations and associations can be of help in developing and implementing this process and should be involved from the start. In addition, government-level support can add credibility to the process, but efforts must be made to ensure that results are a truly independent reflection of the attitudes and opinions of the audience. Member States must equally be supported in carrying out a range of different consultations that suit their local and national situation.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that the results from these exercises should be used to define the broad orientations of EU policies in the years to come and to improve specific EU policies. At the same time, the different dialogue formats and their common criteria should be used to develop new and innovative formats and boost citizens' participation.

Most importantly, when observing these exercises within our network, we see a clear appetite for civic engagement and constructive criticism about the EU at grassroots level. This perception, of a consistent and possibly growing base of engaged citizens who tirelessly stand up for the protection of European values and fundamental rights, also encourages us to be more ambitious when developing new tools and formats to promote civic engagement and participation.

Citizens want to have their voices heard and it is up to civil society organisations, as well as governments and institutions, to encourage and facilitate this process and to enhance the structures through which citizens can have a say in EU policies.





WeEuropeans

Tremeur DenigotDirector of Communications at CIVICO Europa

Tremeur Denigot is the Director of Communications at CIVICO Europa, a non-profit, independent and transnational association aiming at allowing EU citizens to take back control of the European project by helping to transform the EU into a democratic power founded on continuous civic participation. Together with the civic tech platform Make.org, last December CIVICO launched the WeEuropeans initiative.

Abstract

WeEuropeans is a civic and non-partisan project aimed at mobilising citizens of all European countries to reinvent the European project. Its purpose is to put the citizens back at its centre. All of them, irrespective of their opinions, were asked to participate in the largest public consultation ever carried out in Europe.

Introduction

On 15 December 2018, a call was launched by the transnational association CIVICO Europa and the French Civic Tech Make.org in 22 newspapers in 15 EU countries. It gathered the signatures of more than a hundred European personalities from various political backgrounds who shared the view that in the face of nationalism, the EU required a democratic leap forward by putting citizens back at the centre of European democracy. A transnational consultation was announced together with a Congress of Europeans that would deliver its results before the May 2019 European elections.

The consultation process took place from February to March 2019. Eventually, the 10 proposals for which the greatest consensus was found at European level were selected: they constitute the European "Citizens' Agenda" which was presented to leaders of European political parties and civil society at the European Parliament on 22 March. All leaders were invited to

take a stand on the proposals in view of their election campaign.

1. Who?

The WeEuropeans consultation was launched in 27 countries and 24 languages, and took place between 4 February and 15 March. It asked Europeans willing to participate a simple open question: "What are the concrete steps we can take to reinvent Europe?", reaching more than 38 million Europeans in five weeks. Of that number, 1.7 million voted 11.3 million times and submitted 30 000 proposals.

Europeans were reached through an EU wide social media campaign operated by Make.org, and a newspaper campaign with articles including the widget giving immediate access to the consultation (press campaign facilitated by the media companies Havas and Euros/Agency). The consultation allowed citizens to propose their solutions to reinvent Europe, with proposals limited to 140 characters and to vote on other' solutions that were randomly selected and proposed in a renewable series of 10 proposals. Everyone was free to participate. Participation was very easy and very quick.

Each citizen's proposal was carefully moderated by a dedicated human team to respect the ethics charter under the supervision of the WeEuropeans' Ethics Committee, which ensured the transparency and independence of the initiative throughout its duration.

The consultation had two stages. First, a national round: at the end of this phase, all citizens from a particular country had voted on the 10 most approved proposals formulated in their language. All national proposals were then translated into all 24 official national languages. Second, a European round: each European participant had the possibility to vote on the 270 proposals coming from all Member States. The results of that vote are the 10 most supported proposals at European level and constitute the "Citizens' Agenda".

2. What?

Thanks to its algorithm, the Make.org platform was able to statistically identify the proposals that set themselves apart based on the votes of citizens, also ensuring that each proposal had an equal chance of success. Make.org kept track of the "for" and "against" votes: each vote could be labelled by citizens who could choose between "I love it", "Definitely not!", "Trivial" and "Realistic". These comments allowed for a more precise analysis and ranking of the propositions, highlighting consensus and disagreements. The 10 final proposals were those that generated the strongest consensus amongst participants.

Contrary to pessimistic beliefs, results showed that Europeans care about the EU by responding in great numbers and sharing common concerns. Results show a large variety of topics tackled over the whole consultation, but five core themes emerged: Environment (19%), Democracy and Institutions (13%), Social Policies (9%), Taxation (8%), Education and Research (4%).

On the environment, the main proposals were about recycling and using less plastic, promoting renewable energies, developing biodiversity conservation policies and enforcing tougher sanctions on polluters.

There was also a strong demand for more democracy and better functioning European Institutions that should promote transparency and communicate more on their actions.

The consultation also shed light on a strong demand for increased citizen participation, more robust anti-corruption policies and effective simplification of administration.

On social harmonisation, the main theme was the creation of social European standards in terms of wages, labour laws, pensions and access to health care.

The fight against tax dumping was another concern with proposals for a harmonised tax system and the enforcement of a taxation system on

major international corporations, including digital ones.

Finally, access to education all over Europe and investment in research was a recurring demand, especially in Eastern European countries.

3. So what?

Participants received frequent feedback via newsletters in order to keep them posted and mobilised.

Results were officially released during the WeEuropeans Congress (+500 participants, webstreamed) in the presence of European political and civil society leaders, EU Institutions' representatives, citizens from all across Europe, and the 10 citizens who authored the proposals with the most votes. This event was meant to be the starting point of a European public debate between political forces about citizen's concerns.

The Citizens' Agenda helped citizens make their priorities known as the campaign was building up, and encouraged candidates in the European elections to better reflect the concerns of EU citizens in their political programmes and future legislative work.

The Citizens' Agenda:

- We should set up a Europe-wide recycling programme. Raw materials should be reused and not destroyed.
- We should ban those who have committed crimes (e.g. tax evasion) from working in public sectors or running for elected positions in Europe.
- We should protect all forests with good management and rebuild deciduous forests. We need to plant five trees for each one felled.
- We should stop tax breaks for multinational corporations. Taxes should be paid in the country where the profits are generated.
- We should invest in education and research.
- We should protect workers' rights in all EU countries.
- We should coordinate chemical restrictions, especially in the food industry.

- We should support renewable energy projects in cities.
- We should have clear and transparent information about all the projects and agreements in the European Union.
- We should ensure that every EU citizen can get medical care in any EU country with a European Health Card

Political parties were then invited to take an official stance on these proposals on the WeEuropeans website, showing publicly to potential voters their roadmap to implement them or submitting alternative solutions.

4. Lessons learned

The key to the success of a transnational consultation like WeEuropeans is promotion, in order to ensure large-scale and balanced participation at EU level. Significant means were therefore required for both social media campaigning (a must) and traditional national press campaigning to raise awareness and foster participation. One cannot just wait for people to come to the consultation on their own in a noisy and competitive information environment. If the quality of the contributions is obviously important, the quantitative aspect is essential to ensure full legitimacy. Size matters.

A good consultation has to be simple in its form and objectives. People must easily understand the scope and the procedure to be able to participate without wasting too much of their time and scratching their heads for too long. The WeEuropeans consultation was indeed very flexible and intuitive. Most importantly, it was delivered in the national language of every participant.

Open questions are an asset – they empower participants. They require more resources to be properly moderated and analysed, but they also lead to results that are more in line with people's concerns. The WeEuropeans platform was also innovative in giving participants the possibility to vote on other people's proposals and label the votes with more nuance than a simple yes/no.

Citizens must be engaged in such a way that they feel they have ownership over the consultation.

Every consultation risks being a one shot exercise with little impact. That is the best recipe for frustration. Consultations should be seen as processes and not events, with full cycles from conception and promotion to decision-making. Ideally (this is the tricky part) community management should go beyond the consultation to maintain mobilisation, give feedback to participants until concrete impact has been proven and allow continued participation. WeEuropeans aspires to complement representative democracy with a more permanent participation process. The experiment is still in progress!

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

The selection process for an EU Citizens' Consultation very much depends on the objective pursued. If it is about gathering ideas and suggestions to feed the reflection of a pre-decision process, quality overcomes quantity. A random selection of volunteers can be a good method, provided it is geographically, socially and gender balanced. In this case, the consultation could be an in-depth process asking participants various questions but with one main focus (every consultation must have a clear and single purpose). A top-down selection of these topics is required since the consultation aims to answer a specific request by the institution.

If the consultation is more about a "temperature check" and open questioning aimed at letting people make their voice heard on a specific topic of interest that would inspire decision makers and guide their activity according to people's concerns, quantity might be more important. No specific selection process is required but such a consultation requires more means in terms of promotion at transnational level. Geographical balance is important. That kind of consultation should be simpler in terms of rules/procedure

and less time consuming. It should favour open questioning and a more bottom-up approach, empowering participants. This triggers more interest, but it also raises more expectations.

In both cases, the use of national language is a must to ensure a representative participation and quality of the proposals, especially in the case of open questions.

A platform giving frequent feedback to participants is recommended, allowing people to follow up the discussion and the institution to feed its inspiration by receiving further feedback. The institution must be able to illustrate how the consultation process has had an impact on its decision-making process. This is the best reward for the participants, and the only way to build up a community based on a spirit of co-creation, hence on trust.

Conclusions

The WeEuropeans initiative was meant to be a wake-up call addressed by citizens to political decision makers, asking them to commit to European fundamental democratic values, foster their political willingness to underpin a bottom-up transformation agenda, and reinforce citizen's ownership of the European project. It looked to build momentum.

With a transnational consultation gathering almost 2 million participants, a transnational communication campaign and eventually 200 European political parties taking a stand on the proposals that emerged from the consultation, WeEuropeans helped contribute to the edification of a European public space where European concerns could be debated. Environmental issues proved to be the first of these concerns.

It also helped to get people to vote during the elections, even if a precise assessment of that impact remains difficult. Figures have proven that voter turnout has increased everywhere in Europe, and people showed by their votes how environmental issues were one of their main concerns despite what many analysts were saying.

Reflection and work are still ongoing. WeEuropeans aims at monitoring legislative activity and reporting this activity to citizens, giving them the possibility to react and be heard during the next legislative session. Citizens must feel that their participation goes beyond the election period.

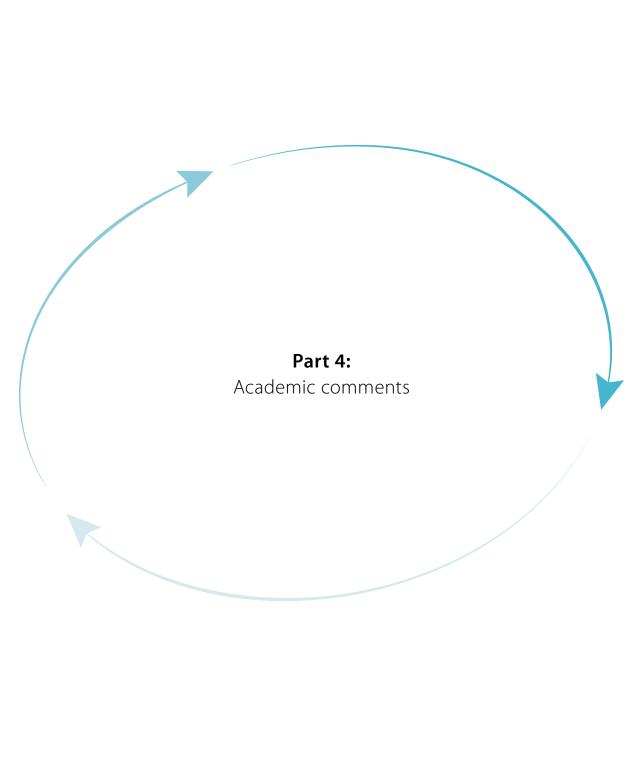
A more continuous consultation process would add a useful brick to the complex edifice of our European democracy.

https://weeuropeans.eu

http://civico.eu/en/

 $https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxgX_yIOs6A$









Ambiguity in diversity: analysis and evaluation of the 2018 European Citizens' Consultations

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Abstract

The European Citizens' Consultations (ECCs) were a Member-State-led initiative, consisting of events held across the EU and an online questionnaire hosted by the European Commission. The EPC monitored the implementation of the idea and produced two evaluative reports, one focusing on process, the other on outcomes and lessons. Although they were to be welcomed, the ECCs suffered from a lack of a cohesive identity and no agreement on their precise purpose.

Introduction

In autumn 2017 French President Emmanuel Macron raised the idea of holding events "all over Europe" that would "give the people a voice" in European affairs. In January 2018, the EPC published an in-depth study that laid out a plan of action for how these European Citizens' Consultations (ECCs) should be implemented, and later monitored and evaluated the process as it unfolded in practice, beginning in April 2018. In cooperation with the Democratic Society, and with the kind support of the King Baudouin Foundation and the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the EPC set up a sustainable network of civil society organisations (CSOs) working on/interest-

 [&]quot;Speech by Emmanuel Macron before the French Parliament convened in Congress", Office of the President of the French Republic, 3 July 2017.

² Stratulat, Corina, Rittelmayer, Yann-Sven, and Butcher, Paul (2017), "En Marche l'Europe? - A strategy to implement democratic conventions", EPC Discussion Paper, Brussels: European Policy Centre.

ed in the ECCs. Drawing on the network's research and analysis and interviews with CSO representatives and government and Commission officials, a report³ was issued to evaluate the ECCs and make recommendations as to how the instrument can be improved. In May 2019, with the kind support of the OSF, the EPC published an evaluation⁴ of the ECCs' results based on the national reports and interviews carried out with various relevant stakeholders who had been involved in the consultations.

1. Who?

Our research suggests that little attention was paid to how representative the audience was in the vast majority of cases. Interview partners frequently reported that audiences were diverse (in terms of age, occupation, etc.), but there was no means to control who attended the events. There were a handful of exceptions where participants were selected or screened, for example by handpicking the audience from a set of applications – this method was used in the Netherlands and in a few events in France and Germany. In addition, some events were targeted towards particular memberships, such as those organised by interest groups or for particular professions (e.g. farmers), but these events were not "closed door" as such. Some governments made special efforts to involve particular groups, such as minorities.

Implementation was led by the government in every Member State, usually via the Ministry of Foreign and/or European Affairs. Governments' relationships with civil society actors varied. Broadly speaking, there were three types of consultation:

- Government: the government organised these consultations itself. The majority of ECCs fell into this category, particularly in Central and Eastern European countries, such as Poland and Slovakia.
- Partnership: the government partnered with one or more CSOs or independent institutions, to which it delegated the organisation of events. By doing so, the government had some control over the number and location of events but took a hands-off approach to their format. This model was used in Germany, Ireland, Romania, the Netherlands, and Malta.

Open: the government launched an open application process, calling on CSOs or even private citizens to organise events and apply to use the national branding. This process took place in France, Spain, Lithuania, Denmark, Finland, and Luxembourg.

2. What?

Process

Formats varied widely between countries and organisers. By and large, it is possible to group the ECCs into three formats:

- Panel discussion: a panel of several speakers gave input before taking questions from the audience. This was the most common format, particularly in Central and Eastern European Member States.
- Question & Answer (Q&A): a minister or other politician took questions without giving a speech beforehand.
- Roundtables: citizens, generally in small groups (ten people or fewer), discussed among themselves with no politicians present. This was the primary model only in Ireland and the Netherlands, and was also used in some consultations organised in Belgium, France, and Luxembourg. In each case they were organised by CSOs.

Just as the organisation and format of individual events varied, there was also considerable diversity in the planning and strategy of each national process. While some countries, notably France, went for a "bigger is better" approach by hosting as many events as possible and getting high numbers of attendees, others adopted a more restricted but systematic form of implementation, for example by holding one event in each region of the country to ensure regional balance even within a succinct process.

Topics

In most cases topics were either selected in advance (especially for government-organised consultations) or the discussion was completely free, with little attempt to structure the conversation. European topics were generally discussed from a specifically national or local perspective. This was largely inevitable, especially when there was no concern about whether the topics chosen for discussion would apply in

³ Stratulat, Corina and Butcher, Paul (2018), "The European Citizens' Consultations: Evaluation Report", Brussels: European Policy Centre.

Butcher, Paul and Stratulat, Corina (2019), "Citizens expect: Lessons from the European Citizens' Consultations", EPC Discussion Paper, Brussels: European Policy Centre.

a specifically European context or if participants had no prior understanding of how Europe was relevant to national or local issues. Particularly when a government minister was present, the questions were likely to cover the whole of his/her brief rather than being restricted to EU topics. In several countries, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, the government appears to have interpreted the ECCs as an opportunity to push its own political priorities.

Results

In countries where the government took the lead in organising events, it also handled how they were reported. This was usually done by an official from the Ministry of Foreign or European Affairs who attended the meetings and took notes. In all other cases, the organisers were tasked with preparing a report for each event, usually using a template provided by the government. Each country's government then produced a national synthesis report to be submitted to the December 2018 European Council. A few countries outsourced this process: France arranged for a commission of experts to work on a synthesis, while Germany contracted Kantar Public, the same company that organised the Citizens' Panel⁵, to prepare a summary report.

3. So what?

The results of the consultations largely reflect familiar policy priorities: environmental issues (including climate change) and migration were the "top" subjects in nearly every country. Other topics that were frequently raised include European values; concern about the rule of law; how to encourage or build a European identity; and the need for more solidarity, cooperation, and integration between Member States. The general impression here was that the EU at present does not work as effectively as it should.

These results may be predictable, but the follow-up to citizens' priorities and suggestions is not. Some national governments have announced policies in direct response to the consultations, such as plans in Germany and Luxembourg to introduce a new cur-

riculum on the EU in schools. However, if the goal was to influence European policy, nearly all of the interviewees said that they were not aware of any follow-up from the EU. The Declaration⁶ resulting from the Sibiu Summit, the nominal end-point of the "Future of Europe" discussions and the occasion when European leaders determined the Union's priorities for the next five years, did not refer to the ECCs at all. The list of vague commitments it describes covers all the important buzzwords, but fails to mention or reflect the discussions conducted with citizens that were intended to be at the heart of the Summit's conclusions. Given that the priority areas invoked by citizens during the ECCs are fully captured by the Summit's "wish list", the failure to draw a link with the consultations is a missed opportunity that would have given the final Declaration a dose of popular legitimacy without needing to navigate any political sensitivities among Member States. It also raises doubts about how seriously European leaders have taken the ECCs, and risks letting down the citizens who participated in the consultations.

No immediate plans to continue the consultations have been laid out systematically by the Member States. Even President Macron, the "father" of the initiative, has not referred to it since the discussions at the 2018 December Summit. This silence could see the European Citizens' Consultations file archived with all the other democratic and open government initiatives which have so far failed to make much of a difference.

4. Lessons learned

The hallmark of the initiative was diversity: in exchange for agreeing to participate, the Member States were given a free hand to implement the events in whichever way best suited their aims, resources, and national practices. Thus, the ECCs effectively took the form of 26 separate campaigns,⁷ each with their own branding, format, timescale, and goals. This flexibility came at a price. With so much national variation, the

- 5 On the Citizens' Panel, please see chapter by Zacharzewski, Anthony in Stratulat and Butcher (2018), op. cit, pp.: 19-22.
- 6 European Council (2019), The Sibiu Declaration.
- 7 In Italy, political factors, notably the crisis resulting from the March 2018 general election, prevented the ECCs from taking place. The United Kingdom decided not to participate given its forthcoming departure from the EU.

initiative failed to acquire an identity and produced no clear criteria by which to judge its success.

Perhaps the key takeaway from the ECCs relates to the importance of specifying the exercise's objective(s) in advance: why organise such events? While nominally intended to gather ideas and proposals from the citizens on the future of Europe, in practice the ECCs were often used by organisers as awareness-raising or communication tools. This is certainly welcome, especially since citizens expressed a desire for more information on the EU. But it also means that both citizens and organisers approached the events with different goals in mind, thus complicating the possibility of offering meaningful follow-up.

It is also true that even if the Member States had introduced the consultations as a new means of allowing participation in EU decisions, the ability to assess whether they had fulfilled their objective would still be difficult under the current system. Decision-making in the EU is complex and multi-layered. Promising a direct translation of citizens' input into policy outcomes is often unrealistic. From this perspective, it seems rather important to ask whether participatory objectives can be secured at all within the EU's existing institutional framework, using available channels or linking to established processes of influence. And if not, would political leaders consider reforming the system and granting it a more participatory dimension?

Both participatory and awareness-raising objectives are relevant. European citizens in the 21st century demand both a greater say in the democratic political process and more knowledge and information about the EU. However, the two goals are distinct from each other. The ECCs did not properly distinguish between these two objectives, and so their ability to deliver meaningful results was undermined.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

Knowing the goals of a consultation will help the organisers to align their objectives with the means available, both in terms of process design and

budget. The experience of the 2018 ECCs has raised several questions about the practical choices involved in designing consultation processes:

Should discussions consist of a Q&A session with a politician or expert, or should they use a deliberative format?

A top-down format might be more useful if the aim of the consultation is to communicate or establish a dialogue or debate on the EU with its participants. In turn, a deliberative format seems necessary if the objective is participation in decision-making, as this would allow citizens to discuss topics among themselves and potentially reach a conclusion without guidance from politicians or other authority figures.

Should the events be organised by governments or civil society organisations?

Including CSOs did not in itself offer any guarantee that the events would be better than the government-organised ones. In cases where the CSOs were organisations with experience and interest in citizens' participation, they made an effort to include more ambitious methodologies, such as audience selection, online platforms, deliberative focus groups, and so on. But CSOs working on European issues generally relied on the tried-andtested formats like panel discussions and Q&A sessions. The lesson, then, would be that involving CSOs with experience and expertise in citizens' participation probably leads to an improved consultation design – but contracting a CSO just because they have an interest in EU affairs will not necessarily produce anything more interesting or useful than whatever kind of events the governments would have implemented.

Should events be open to all, or should organisers make efforts to ensure more representative audiences, e.g. via audience selection?

Our research suggests that events with open access tend to attract the pro-EU "usual suspects". More specific audiences, on the other hand, seem more appropriate the more specific the topic of the discussion is, and especially if the objective is participatory. For example, a discussion on the Common Agricultural Policy can benefit enormously from a larger number of farmers and agricultural workers in

the room. Conversely, the broader or more controversial the issue – for example EU Treaty change or genetically modified organisms – the more desirable it seems to have an audience that is representative, or at least as diverse as possible.

Should the topic of discussion be general or specific; open or set in advance?

In general, the broader the subject, the broader the input. General topics are perhaps therefore more suitable for communication events, in which participants can ask questions and express their opinions about whichever aspects of the EU they want, thus freely volunteering their personal priorities. Conversely, a narrower topic seems appropriate if the purpose is to collect input for decision-making, as it is more likely to result in a useful conclusion.

In each case, these are decisions that must be made according to the defined goal of the event. Those implementing such initiatives do not need to improvise from scratch or re-invent the wheel: there is plenty of know-how in this field. Choosing appropriate formats is not a question of creativity, but rather of whether the means fit the purpose, whatever that purpose may be.

Conclusions

The ECCs should be considered in light of what they accomplished against the odds. The idea was conceived, organised, and implemented in less than a year. Achieving the political will to embark on a process of consulting citizens at a time when Europe is facing a growing radical populist challenge, and risk giving voice to those views, was no mean feat. Yet the ECCs not only went ahead but actively involved all Member States, thus expanding the scope of European discussions. In many countries, it was the first time that European issues had been prominently debated at national level. In that sense, the ECCs were a decisive - albeit small - step forward in the history of democratic and open government initiatives. However, the prospects for cohesive output were hindered by the huge diversity of formats involved and the ambiguity over their purpose.

The guiding question must be this: why to hold these consultations? What do they seek to achieve? Answering the "why" will help to answer the "who", "what", "how", and so on. This can be a sensitive question, however. Perhaps we may even have to rethink the decision-making system as a whole to accommodate institutionalised citizens' participation channels.





Participatory democracy: From the talk of the town to a fundamental cultural change

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Dominik was in charge of the creation and management of the Citizens' Forum in Germany, initiated by the Federal President. The Citizens' Forum involved 25 cities and 10 000 randomly selected participants. He conceived and implemented several civic engagement projects and facilitated large-scale events with the Federal President, the Chancellor of Germany as well as European Commissioners.

Dominik teaches at the University of Konstanz on new forms of public participation. He also taught at the University of Sydney and the International College of Management, Sydney. He holds a Master's degree in Public Policy and a PhD in Social Sciences from the University of Konstanz.

Abstract

New participatory methods have spread widely across Europe. The European Union and its institutions are catching up. After talking about the "Europe of and for citizens" for decades, the fire of innovation has now also been lit in Brussels. This article reflects on five developments and challenges in the participatory landscape. Participatory democracy is trending, and yet it often remains misunderstood. In order for it become embedded in the institutional system policymakers and shakers will have to undergo a fundamental culture change. The best situations and topics still need to be identified on a European level.

Introduction

Deliberative democracy, participatory democracy and new forms of citizen participation seem to be the new "talk of the town". Various schemes to give citizens a chance to participate at local government level have been in place for several decades. By introducing a nationwide "Citizens' Assembly", Ireland has successfully resolved long-running social conflicts, such as the reform of the law on abortion (Farrell, Suiter & Harris, 2019). With his "Grand Débat", French president Emmanuel Macron has managed to reduce popular pressure while simultaneously giving his country's citizens new participation opportunities. The EU, which likes to talk about the "Europe of the Citizens", is still struggling to come to terms with the direct involvement of citizens in European policymaking. But EU institutions have also set about testing innovative ways, means and methods of addressing and involving citizens. One such event took place in Brussels – more or less unnoticed by the public – in May 2018: the first European Citizens' Panel, attended by around 100 citizens chosen at random from all EU Member States (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018).

What is the significance of this new participation trend for the EU? What lessons can it learn from its own participation attempts? And what needs to be considered in the development of new EU participation processes? In the following, five observations and reflections will be discussed.

Participatory democracy - one term, various (mis-)understandings

The concept of participatory democracy is spreading rapidly.¹ Test laboratories for democratic participation are being set up in many countries worldwide.² Among the population in general, but also in the political establishment, the resurgence of populist movements has raised awareness of the importance of revitalising democracy and new forms of citizens' engagement – even if this is often out of political necessity rather than intellectual curiosity.

However, the general heightened interest in participatory democracy does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of the aims and purpose of new participatory procedures and methods. Citizens, policymakers and politicians often have diametrically opposed ideas regarding the nature and essence of new participatory formats. Citizens are mainly interested in direct involvement in political decision-making processes, whereas politicians are mostly looking for new forms of communication that do not entail fundamental changes to the existing policymaking process.

The new buzzword is "deliberative democracy" – but many political stakeholders confuse the term with the concept of direct democracy. What exactly constitutes "participatory, deliberative democracy" is often unclear. The discrepancy between the knowledge, experience and expectations of the community of participation experts on the one

side, and citizens and the political establishment on the other, remains extremely wide.

Citizens as "experts" is unusual – and leads to criticism

Tout nouveau, tout beau (shiny and new) is a common French expression. Processes such as citizens' panels, with randomly selected citizens based on diversity criteria, always have the charm of novelty in a pre-political space. However, while traditional instruments of political participation – such as voting in elections or getting involved in political parties – are accepted and rarely questioned, new forms of participation are scrutinised more closely. This can be a good thing. Just because political institutions more frequently use deliberative processes does not mean that they have to be adopted without being criticised.

Nevertheless, what is needed is a fundamental cultural change concerning the role and the importance of non-organised citizens in the political process. "You, dear citizens and participants in our Citizens' Panel, are the experts." Such a statement, with a few nuances, can be often heard during citizens' participation projects. This is a new dimension for the citizens themselves and a rather unusual one. Critics of the new formats and processes of citizens' participation are not the only people who question the expertise that citizens can have on political issues. But it is often the participants themselves who quickly seek the support of external specialists, believing that their own expertise in these matters is too limited.

Participants in deliberative processes need to have the opportunity to consult independent external experts to address specific topics. However, the starting point is that politics is everybody's concern. Questions about the fundamental orientation of future European policy must ultimately be debated on the basis of facts, but also on a normative basis. Citizens will then be able to contribute, becoming experts themselves.

More participation: It is not about l'art pour l'art

The demand for new participation formats from the communication departments of various political in-

¹ An overview of different forms and methods of deliberative democracy: Hierlemann et.al. (2013).

² One example is the parliament of the German-speaking community in Belgium, which has introduced a loose citizens' council, which determines the topics for a citizens' assembly, which is also loose, and cooperates in political implementation: Van Reybrouck (2019).

stitutions at local, regional, national and EU level has undoubtedly increased. Certainly, from a communicative or even PR perspective, new ways of addressing people in the digital age are not merely interesting, but indispensable.

Although this is unquestionably a positive development, there is also a risk of what I would like to describe as the "Neighbour's Mercedes Phenomenon". The idea is simple: I don't buy a Mercedes because I am necessarily convinced of the qualities and advantages of the car, but simply because my neighbour already has one. When applied to the political situation, this means that political authorities do not introduce new participation formats simply – or at least not solely – because they believe them to be necessary, but because this appears to be a trendy development. It is precisely at EU level - where the citizen has traditionally been seen more as a target for political communication than as an active political co-contributor - that such a development could rapidly backfire, and actually be counter-productive for the continued anchoring of new participation forms in the political system. Clearly, participation for participation's sake is not the answer.

What does the participatory process aim to achieve? Where are the limits of the project? What happens to the results? Only when a clear expectation management system is in place before and during the process will it be possible to utilise all aspects of a participatory format. Sincerity and seriousness must be recognisable. Citizens recognise it very quickly when something turns into a farce. This also applies to the results: although they do not necessarily have to be implemented one-to-one by politicians, it has to be clear what happens to them.

The consequence is that clear quality standards for good participation must be developed – but not completely from scratch – at European level. The experience gained from decades of citizens' participation procedures at national level must now be transferred and adapted to the EU.

Embedding new forms of participation within the institutional system

In recent years, a rich variety of new participatory formats has emerged in various democratic states.

But only in a few cases (see Ireland), Citizens' Juries or other forms of participation have been connected directly to existing institutions. It is important to understand that a lively, diverse, and modern democracy can only succeed by connecting representative, direct democracy and other new dialoque-based elements and institutions.

The crucial question now is: How do we organise a system that allows these elements to interact?

New forms of participation for citizens are only likely to succeed if they are embedded in existing institutional networks and linked with traditional forms. For the EU, this means that the development of new participatory forms must not be regarded as an alternative concept to traditional political models. Only when actual political movers, shakers and policymakers recognise the additional benefits of dialogue-based citizen participation and communicate accordingly, will it be possible to exploit its full potential and improve policymaking. The French president Emmanuel Macron said at the end of the Grand Débat: "We are creating a new democracy in which deliberation has its place, in which citizens are better represented" (press conference, 2019). Therefore, not just citizens' participation needs to be rethought and revamped, but democracy as a whole.

Identifying ideal situations and developing trust

Citizens' Forums, Citizens' Juries or Citizens' Panels – whatever the exact name given to new citizens' participation formats, they are suitable for use in a wide variety of situations and topics. Citizen participation has proved itself equally useful and successful in complex technical matters as well as in controversial social and ethical questions. What is successful on the local, regional or national level can also succeed at European level.

Nevertheless, there are numerous additional challenges in Brussels, such as complex EU policymaking decision processes, different political traditions in Member States, heterogeneous cultures of participation, or simply general cultural diversity. The first step is therefore to carefully analyse which situations might offer scope for new forms of citizen participation to benefit the wider political process. Clarity is required regarding the topics and institutions to which citizen

participation may successfully offer new access to shaping political developments.

New participation forms and formats will also develop in the EU and its institutions. Changing and improving the participation architecture will be a chance for the EU to make "Europe for citizens" a more tangible term. However, politicians, officials and many representatives of organised civic society will not develop trust in these new forms of dialogue-based participation until they have had the opportunity to experience such processes first hand. Dialogue-based forms of participation require courage both from participants, as they are entering unknown territory, and from politicians, because every participatory process can develop its own dynamics. Time and patience are required to raise awareness — particularly in official circles and government ministries — that these new forms of access work.

Finally: One ongoing truth

Our democracy is constantly forming and evolving. This truth is, as is usually the case with truths, abundantly banal. Nevertheless, it is momentous. Only some 100 years ago, the women's right to vote was introduced in Western democracies. Twenty years ago, we could not imagine what influence the internet would have on our democracies. Only a few years from now, the notion of good representation mechanisms of citizens and their interests may mean something different from today. The instruments of good representation may well look different. Until now, most politicians and representatives of political institutions, but also observ-

ers and interpreters of politics, have retained a very traditional understanding of representation, in which parties and parliaments have the greatest importance. New forms of participation then often tend to be "quick fixes" or "Band-Aid solutions" that do not change anything in substance. There is a need for a renewed debate about Europe's democratic future and the place of citizens' participation. In the end, there could be a new architecture of participation: innovative and additional forms of participation allow citizens to take part in EU politics in a modernised democratic system.

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Can citizen participation really revive European democracy?

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Abstract

From Hong Kong and France to Sudan and Algeria, the viral spread of protests is a testament to citizens' demand for a greater voice in how political power is exercised. The Open Government Partnership's (OGP's) recent report "Democracy Beyond the Ballot Box" emphasises how much progress is still needed on citizen participation.¹

In Europe, initiatives to increase citizen participation have made substantial progress. Participative forums that involve ordinary citizens in public decision-making have significantly expanded in recent years, including ad hoc citizens' assemblies that address specific policy questions, government-instigated citizens' panels that cover wider sets of challenges, and more fixed deliberative structures and citizens' petitions. These efforts may offer lessons of global applicability.

This spread of consultative participation represents a notable development in European political governance. Enthusiasts argue that such participation offers a means of rebooting democracy and creating at least a partial antidote to illiberal populism - to the extent that it

Open Government Partnership. (2019). Democracy beyond the ballot box. Retrieved from https://www.opengovpartnership. org/campaigns/global-report/

addresses citizens' frustration with not having an impactful say in public policy-making.

The participative turn in European democracy is welcome and overdue. Yet, to date, it remains confined to relatively narrow policy issues; its wider political consequences have been modest. Consultative participation has affected mainly what can be termed low-politics issues - decisions related to local projects - rather than high-politics issues related to national-level ideological matters. There are severe difficulties and challenges to overcome if participative forums are to address these core issues and contribute more significantly to democratic quality.

Europe's participative turn

Until a few years ago, the potential of citizen participation outside the main channels of representative democracy was underappreciated, except among a fairly self-enclosed community of experts who pushed for participative initiatives and focused on the procedural details of how they should best be organized and run. But as problems with representative democracy have intensified, European governments, international organizations, civil society bodies, and citizens have embraced participative practices more widely.

Just in recent months, there has been a flurry of new developments. On the back of its so-called Grand Débat, or Great Debate, the French government has established a citizens' assembly to discuss climate change.² In Belgium, a particularly sophisticated new system of participation is being set up for the German-speaking community. In Spain,

the Madrid city council has established - with OGP backing - a permanent assembly to deliberate on local issues.3 A network of citizens' assemblies has been established in a number of Polish cities. Through its Innovation in Democracy Programme, the British government is piloting a similar scheme across a number of local councils. In April 2019, the Scottish parliament announced it would set up a citizens' jury to issue recommendations on a wide scope of political challenges. Around a dozen citizens' assembly projects are now underway across the United Kingdom.⁴ After previous successful exercises, the Irish government announced in June 2019 that it intended to run two new citizens' assemblies on gender issues and reforms to municipal politics in Dublin. The European Citizens' Consultations process, from mid-2018 to 2019, welcomed suggestions on the future of the EU.5

With many more such examples, it is evident that a critical mass of participative initiatives is beginning to accumulate. While old hands caution that similar initiatives have existed previously, participative forums are multiplying and attracting more general interest for the first time in Europe.

Moreover, the methodological quality of many of these participative initiatives has improved significantly in recent years.⁶ After years of trial and error, experts have reached agreement on the procedures necessary to generate high-quality citizen participation that revolves around deep and balanced deliberation. Such measures include selecting participants by random lot; moving methodically from broad agenda-setting discussions to more specific solutions; involving experts; structuring delib-

² Thillaye, R. (2019, April 26). Is Macron's Grand Débat a Democratic Dawn for France? Retrieved from https://carnegieeurope.eu/2019/04/26/ is-macron-s-grand-d-bat-democratic-dawn-for-france-pub-79010

³ CitizENGAGE. (n.d.). Let Madrid Decide. Retrieved from https://www.ogpstories.org/photo_essay/let-madrid-decide/

⁴ Wray, B. (2019, June 17). Democracy Experts Welcome Plans for @ScotGov Citizens' Assembly But Say 'Devil Will Be in the Detail'. Retrieved from https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/14366/democracy-experts-welcome-plans-scotgov-citizens-assembly-say-devil-will-be-detail; Hughes, T. (2019, June 28). Keeping Up With the Citizens' Assemblies. Retrieved from https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/blog/news/keeping-citizens-assemblies

⁵ Butcher, P., & Stratulat, C. (2018). The European Citizens' Consultations: Evaluation Report. Retrieved from https://www.epc.eu/pub_details. php?cat_id=1&pub_id=8839

Open Government Partnership Practice Group of Dialogue and Deliberation. (2019). Deliberation: Getting Policy-Making Out From Behind Closed Doors. Retrieved from https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Deliberation_Getting-Policy-Making-Out_20190517.pdf

eration in ways that avoid polarising debate; and getting public authorities to commit to the results of participative forums.⁷

An increasing number of successful examples of participation has helped dispel doubts over whether citizens really want to be involved with decision-making or can engage open-mindedly with complex policy debates. A wealth of evidence (for example, gathered by participedia.net) suggests that participative initiatives can effectively engage citizens in specific debates, and participants often converge around an agreed-upon compromise.

But as the demand for participative forums grows, necessary methodological standards have begun to slip.8 Several recent examples in Europe show how shallow and hastily designed initiatives are being promoted as "democratic participation" when, in fact, they do not represent progress in any meaningful sense. Some recent participative forums have not been especially deliberative; some have been quite deliberative but with fairly limited participation. As European governments increasingly feel obliged to demonstrate citizen consultation, they will be more tempted to check that box with one-off conferences and the like. Ensuring that methodological standards are maintained and that the involved ministries devote sufficient resources to participation will require renewed vigilance.

Moving from low politics to high politics

Participation across Europe is contributing constructively to low-politics issues. To date, experts have focused mainly on improving the internal processes and methodology of participation and deliberation. This mode of analysis places the onus on initiatives organized around practical challenges that permit constructive solutions, allowing only limited consideration of the role of citizen partici-

pation in broader democratic renewal.⁹ That means there is a tendency to work toward a fairly narrow understanding of technical or sector- and service-based local participation, as opposed to genuinely open-ended political participation.

Participation has most commonly taken the form of governments and local authorities asking for opinions on a specific issue. This is different from a permanent citizens' mechanism to solicit input on a full range of policy issues and wider matters of national identity.

So far, the majority of citizen participation has taken the form of debates about projects - what authorities should spend local funds on. It most commonly takes place around issues needing a one-off decision - for instance, choosing between alternative development plans for a local neighborhood or deciding whether to a introduce a traffic-reduction scheme. Of course, most matters of public policy are not like this. Rather, most issues are the subject of ongoing discussions and decisions, do not lend themselves to ever being definitively resolved, and require a rolling series of balances and trade-offs rather than the simple selection of one option over another. Consider the decisions governments make to balance revenue and spending, or the negotiations they have to undertake with international partners on a huge range of matters.

While participation at the project level is extremely valuable in the practical sense of gauging support for specific, funded projects, it is unlikely to quell citizens' larger anxieties over the state of European democracy or their diminishing trust in politicians. A key question is whether participatory initiatives can move to a higher political level and contribute meaningfully to democratic revitalization. This would require authorities to make some significant, qualitative changes to the

⁷ Gastil, J., & Richards, R. (2013). Making Direct Democracy Deliberative Through Random Assemblies. Politics and Society, 41(2), pp. 253–81; Gerwin, M. (2018). Citizens' Assemblies: A Guide to Democracy That Works. Krakow: Open Plan Foundation.

⁸ As noted in the mission statement of Democracy R&D. Retrieved from https://democracyrd.org/

⁹ Caluwaerts D., & Reuchamps, M. (2016). Generating Democratic Legitimacy Through Deliberative Innovations: The Role of Embeddedness and Disruptiveness. Representation, 52(1), pp. 13–27.

way that citizen participation is structured, in order to correct the disadvantages currently plaguing these forums.

The challenge of scaling up participation from the local to national level is a key part of any such evolution. Optimists point to a small number of cases where citizens' assemblies have worked at a national level on big political issues like abortion and other questions of values. However, making participation more political is not just - or even primarily - a question of scale; rather, it requires a qualitative shift in the kinds of issues and debates that participation broaches. While experts most commonly focus on scaling up participation, this is not in itself sufficient to shift such forums from low to high politics.

The same is true of another issue prominent in current debates: the shift from one-off to permanent forums. While the creation of more permanent assemblies is important, it does not in itself denote a move from low to high politics. Some local authorities have begun to move toward the creation of more permanent structures of participation, but the basic mode of action remains largely the same: citizens reviewing different project-based ways of spending local resources.

Even where participation is scaled up and made more permanent, a qualitative challenge remains in how citizens' assemblies deal with the intricate and complex linkages between different areas of policy. While participative initiatives tend to treat issues distinctly, the thorniest political dilemmas result from the tensions and necessary trade-offs between different policy goals and citizens' preferences. At present, a core problem is the inconsistencies between what citizens do in

participative forums and their political party preferences.

For instance, climate change is an increasingly common focus of many new national-level citizens' assembly proposals. Citizens in local participative forums support projects like greener neighborhoods, pedestrian streets, more parks, and limits on traffic. Yet many citizens then vote for national political parties whose broader policy agendas run counter to all these goals—and, in fact, government-imposed green taxes are often a trigger for citizens' protests. While climate change is clearly a high-politics issue, climate change—related assemblies will only be useful if they address this issue in the context of voters' wider political choices.

The way that participation has developed so far means that the number of citizens involved has been very limited - in most instances, no more than a few dozen people. Most citizens are not even aware of their increased prominence. The sobering reality is that even in places with successful, recent experience in participatory initiatives, this has not sufficed to stem illiberal macro-level political trends. Estonia's online and other deliberative initiatives are world-famous, but the right-wing, populist EKRE (Conservative People's Party of Estonia) surged dramatically in the country's 2019 elections. Belgium has the G1000, one of the most respected and innovative participatory initiatives, yet Flemish nationalists rose dramatically in 2019.10 The Madrid city council's much-admired cluster of participatory initiatives is likely to be maintained but remodeled, because local elections in 2019 brought to power a coalition that includes the far-right Vox party.¹¹ Participative forums have not pro-

Estonia Election: Opposition Party Wins But Far-Right Support Doubles. (2019, March 4). Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/03/estonia-election-centrist-parties-far-right; Brzozowski, A. (2019, May 27). Belgium's 'Black Sunday' Sees Far-Right Surge, Threatens New Government Crisis. Retrieved from https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-elections-2019/news/belgian-black-sunday-sees-far-right-surge-threatening-new-government-crisis/

¹¹ Desatascar Los Presupuestos Participativos, Mejorar Foros Locales Y Más Competencias Para Los Distritos [Clear Participatory Budgets, Improve Local Forums and More Competition for Districts]. (2019, July 19). Retrieved from https://www.madridiario.es/mvc/amp/noticia/470286

vided any antidote to the rise of illiberal populist parties - at least, not yet.

This record suggests that dovetailing participation with other areas of democratic reform still presents a significant challenge. For many years, experts have argued that emerging forms of direct citizen participation need to work in tighter concert with existing channels of representative democracy. This is a much-repeated point. Yet practical progress in joining together different types of democratic renewal remains limited across Europe - at the EU, national, and subnational levels.

In a small number of recent cases, participative assemblies have worked in tandem with parliamentary debate forums and mechanisms of direct democracy. Estonia's assembly on elections, political parties, and citizen engagement, as well as Ireland's approach to amending a constitutional clause prohibiting abortion, are normally cited as the best examples. Such successes are the exception, however - and even the Irish case has its skeptics. In general, efforts across Europe to improve the participative, representative, and direct forms of democracy are not particularly synchronised.

Indeed, notwithstanding plentiful rhetoric about combining participative and representative democracy, many participative initiatives are still framed in opposition or as a counterweight to parliaments and parties. Debates among citizens' assembly experts can sometimes be strikingly dismissive of political parties, parliaments, and other bodies of democratic representation. For many enthusiasts, the whole point of participative forums is to move the democratic center of gravity away from these pillars of democracy that they insist are in irremediable decline. Some fear the new popularity of citizens' assemblies risks

worsening one of democracy's underlying problems - namely, politicians' tendency to shirk difficult decisions.¹⁴

In some sense, participation across Europe can sometimes feel curiously depoliticized. Citizens' initiatives individualize citizen engagement - they are predicated on citizens participating as individuals. This risks deflecting attention away from the ways citizens still need collective organisations, like parties, unions, and associations. Without these, democracy is left devoid of its necessary collective transmission belts between the individual and the state. Such mediated representation is still needed to help address deep-seated power relations between different groups in society. If participative forums undercut this, they risk crystalizing existing social, economic, and political imbalances and injustices. In some instances, they can even appear quite conservative - to the extent that they implicitly work around the deeper systemic distortions of European democratic processes.

This depoliticisation means that participative initiatives are often based on the unrealistic assumption that policy and identity disagreements among different groups can be neutralized - and that this is the key metric for democratic progress. Yet the main, underlying reason why democracy is faltering in many EU countries has more to do with stubborn and deep-rooted structural impediments to equality and justice. Similar to the way the concept of civil society can be used - or misused - civic deliberation implicitly gets framed as a tame, consensus-oriented, civilising phenomenon, devoid of sharp, ideological power contestation.

Thefactthatleft,right,pro-EU,anti-EU,local,pan-European, populist, and anti-populist voices all formally support more citizen participation

¹² Eesti Koostöö Kogu. (n.d.). People's Assembly. Retrieved from https://www.kogu.ee/en/activity/peoples-assembly/

O'Leary, N. (2019, June 18). The Myth of the Citizens' Assembly: It Worked in Ireland but it Won't Solve Brexit. Retrieved from https://www.politico.eu/article/the-myth-of-the-citizens-assembly-democracy/

¹⁴ The Irish Times View on Citizens' Assemblies: Out-Sourcing Political Decisions. (2019, June 14). Retrieved from https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorial/the-irish-times-view-on-citizens-assemblies-out-sourcing-political-decisions-1.3924889

is clearly a strength.¹⁵ However, it should perhaps also ring some alarm bells. It remains to be seen whether, on bigger political issues, participative initiatives can really dissolve differences and simultaneously benefit all these diverse ideologies. European democratic renewal cannot and should not be inoculated from deeper power struggles and divisions whether rooted in class, material, identity, or national divergences. Yet the spread of new participative initiatives across Europe still looks strikingly disconnected from such intrinsic dynamics.

Ways forward

What do these challenges mean for the future of citizen participation? And can they be resolved? Expectations around participative democratic initiatives are now running extremely high. Arguably, the pendulum has swung from neglect all the way over to an uncritical assumption that deliberative citizens' initiatives can be a major plank in efforts to restore EU democratic accountability.

Conversely, skeptical voices raise doubts that participative processes can be extended from low to high politics. They warn that small-scale deliberation may work when consensus is within easy reach, but will be stretched past the breaking point when applied to the divisive problems that afflict the overall state of European democracy. In private, many experts who have been working for years in this area express unease that participative forums are now being so widely touted as a panacea to populism and the bigger problems plaguing European democracy.

Heeding these warnings, governments and other authorities will need to be guided by a measured degree of ambition. They should begin to explore pilot ideas for how to modestly widen participative forums by tentatively moving them into increasingly political

territory without overextending the dynamics of citizen engagement. The goal should be to widen the political relevance of participation without undermining the practical features that have made it successful in some EU states and municipalities - to maximize its potential without running the risk of overstretching it. If the potential of participative forums is oversold, citizens may become disillusioned. If it is undersold, these forums will remain a niche arena, disconnected from broader political problems of European democracy.

The challenges identified above highlight the qualitative changes necessary to give participation a modest injection of high-politics relevance. So far, the focus has been on spreading existing, low-politics forums and methodologies to a larger number of localities. Alongside these efforts, governments and EU institutions might also experiment with participation of a different kind. This would involve zooming out from singular issues to broader policy questions; finding ways of incorporating participative initiatives into other areas of democratic reform; and molding participation around more contentious power dynamics.

European governments are unlikely to consider standing national legislative chambers made up of randomly selected citizens. But they might consider more modest experiments, in which citizens and members of parliament work together on specific issues in a single forum. Local citizens' forums might be used as a base to feed into higher-level deliberation, so that different levels of debate relate organically to each other. The EU might provide a common template on the kinds of questions that will guide the next phase of citizens' initiatives across Europe

So far, there has been no higher-level systems perspective on the broader political impact of the rapid growth of participative initiatives

¹⁵ Youngs, R. (2018). Europe Reset: New Directions for the EU. London: I.B. Tauris.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Bachtiger, A. et al., eds., (2017). The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

across Europe.¹⁷ The need to work toward such an understanding will be at the fore-front of the next phase of European citizen participation. It will be important to propel participation without overly idealising its potential relative to other areas of much-needed democratic reform. European democracy will need a judicious balance of mediated and unmediated citizen engagement. The challenge will be to design participation in a way that improves other forms of democratic accountability, rather than undermining or overshadowing them. Participation will need to be a catalyst for reforming democracy, not a stand-alone alternative.

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¹⁷ Hendriks, F. (2019). Democratic Innovation Beyond Deliberative Reflection: The Plebiscitary Rebound and the Advent of Action-Oriented Democracy. *Democratization*, 26(3), pp. 444–64.











Material deliberation: exploring food futures at the #EXPO2015

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Abstract

In 2015, the universal exposition was held in Milan. Over six months, many countries showcased technologies, innovation, culture and traditions relating to food and nutrition. 100 people of various ages, nationalities and origins participated in the Food Futuring Tours of the EXPO's pavilions. This was an experiment featuring various formats of material deliberation techniques that sought to collect people's expectations and visions about the future of food.

Introduction

In 2015, the universal exposition was held in Milan, focusing on the challenges of 'feeding the planet'. Over six months, well over a hundred countries showcased technologies, innovation, culture and traditions relating to food and nutrition. Between May and October 2015, 100 people of various ages, nationalities and origins took up the JRC's invitation to participate in five unique walks through the EXPO's pavilions. The participants were asked to record [photograph] hints and cues about food futures being presented in the pavilions.

The purpose of the walks, called Food Futuring Tours (FFT), was to test public engagement in future-oriented thinking using an experiential and material approach. Participants were asked to develop geographically specific food scenarios based on what they individually recorded and their collective expectations about food. This was an opportunity to experiment with different formats of material deliberation techniques, as well as a unique opportunity to engage with futures in the making.

1. Who?

A few months before the opening of the EXPO, the FFT project was launched on a dedicated website hosted by CNR, via which anyone could register for the tours. Any member of the public could participate, thanks to an open call that was widely publicised, not only by the institutions involved (JRC and CNR) but also in supermarkets and Italian solidarity-based food purchasing groups (GASs) in Milan and other provinces. The site explained what was expected from the people participating in the project, how the results would be used, and why and how the tours were being planned. Five tours were organised between May and October, for groups of around 20 people, led by a team of four people. Participants were given free entrance to the EXPO but, in order to take part, each participant was asked for their motivations to participate. Instructions included bringing the following to the tour:

- A digital photographic device (smart phone, tablet or digital camera);
- A USB stick or internet access to upload the photos or audio;
- An audio recorder for any interviews or to record sound;
- 4. Comfortable shoes and clothing.

Participants could register for only one of the five planned tours, each of which lasted an entire day. The majority of the 100 participants were Italian women from the north of Italy, most of them living in Milan. They ranged from 17 to 65 years of age, but most of them were around the age of 40. Participants included students, administrative per-

sonnel and researchers, all of them interested in their own way in addressing food issues as a multifaceted system. Their reasoning for participating was a key part of the selection process, although a balance was sought in terms of age groups and range of occupations.

2. What?

The Food Futuring Tours approach is based on the 'finding futures' methodology developed by Davies et al. (2013). The Joint Research Centre saw the EXPO in Milan as an opportunity to extend the methodology to the topic of food futures, as the EXPO focused mostly on technological and social innovation around food. Hence, participants spent half a day walking around the EXPO following a pre-established tour – this was necessary because the EXPO site was very large and the number of visitors gradually increased over the year, making it essential to pre-book the visits to the pavilions. The pavilions selected for each tour were as diverse as possible, including country pavilions centred on technology and others more focused on showcasing traditions and culture. Participants were asked to reflect on the system of food in its private, social, environmental, production-related and economic dimensions, identifying the aspects that interested each of them most. Within the pavilions and spaces visited, participants traced the past, present and emerging future of food. The materials that individual participants collected during the walks, primarily photos taken on smart phones and digital cameras, were then printed.

Following the tour in the morning, in the afternoon participants were split into two groups, and each group developed a scenario for a different geographical scale of their choice. The participants' discussions and reflections took a selection of photos as a starting point, chosen by each group; they then developed a collective vision following a chronological approach (from 2015 to 2040 or vice versa – 'backcasting') and identifying the main drivers – e.g. social, economic, cultural, ethical and environmental dimensions – that, in their view, would facilitate or block the path towards the imagined vision

of food futures or foods of the future, as well as key uncertainties. Scenarios were then presented and discussed in a whole-group setting. 10 scenarios were developed, which interestingly all focused on desirable values around food production and consumption.

3. So what?

The 10 scenarios were illustrated using photos and graphics produced by the participants. Their stories, while superficially different, actually had many points of convergence, speaking of well-being, coexistence, quality, awareness, coming together, responsibility, self-reliance, resilience, technology, inequalities, contamination, consumerism and shared celebration. In other words, they speak of everything that food has always meant to humanity. Furthermore, they reflect the rich conversations held by participants about contemporaneous thinking and practices surrounding food, as well as about processes of change, food materiality, food ethics and in general participants' expectations, values, concerns and contentions regarding food. They represent a critical appraisal of the EXPO's narratives, suggesting drivers and uncertainties beyond what could be expected in professional realms. The drivers discussed included not only generally accepted disruptions and pressures such as the depletion of natural resources, economic, political and demographic factors, corporations, and techno-science, but also community building and cooperation, traditions, conviviality (food as place - space and time - for encounters and conversation). But there was also a real emphasis on values such as aesthetics, pleasure, autonomy and identity, and emotions such as disconnectedness, disenchantment and anger, which seem to receive little attention in much of the 'official' scenario development. Here these were prominent.

The whole process was presented in an event organised specifically for that purpose at the EXPO, to which all participants were invited, along with a panel of various actors, including the municipality of Milan, a prominent chef, and

foresight and social researchers, who commented on the outcomes.

Earlier in the year, the JRC had developed four scenarios through foresight activities at the request of DG SANTE (Mylona et al. 2016); the FFT scenarios were delivered in the form of a book (Guimarães Pereira et al. 2018), complementing the work delivered, illustrating the types of outcomes that could be achieved through citizen engagement to inform policy-making. DG SANTE subsequently commissioned the JRC to work on school food procurement inspired by the FFT methodology.

4. Lessons learned

Even though this was an experiment in citizen engagement, it was quite iconic in terms of many of the factors that contributed to the good response to the invitation to participate in this particular activity. These include the following points:

- food is a tangible topic with which citizens develop different types of attachment and about which there seems to be hope that policy-making and governance should consider citizens' expectations, imaginaries and practices;
- the location of the citizen engagement activities made the topic and activity of futuring more authentic – participants could experience the reasoning and promises set out in the pavilions' displays;
- material versus discourse as triggers of critical thinking and imagination - the essence of material deliberation methodologies;
- 4. the issues of concern were framed by the participants the EXPO was a good venue for unset debates in relation to food, including the nexus of water, energy and food (production and distribution);
- 5. a clear contract with participants.

Furthermore, we feel that the final event, at which all the materials produced were presented, and the analysis discussed by participants and commented on by the panel of experts, represented an ideal respectful relationship with the participants. The contract with them was clear: this was a research project and the outcomes would be delivered in that context. The feedback from

participants was excellent, and the production of a book with all these materials was furthermore seen as representative of this respectful relationship. We also see DG SANTE's decision to commission citizen engagement work based on the methodologies explored during the EXPO to be a sign of success. This low-budget project was also deemed one of the 50 best practices by 'Responsible Research and Innovation' tools (https://www.rri-tools.eu/-/food-futuring-tours-fft-a-participatory-visionary-lab-to-think-and-tinker-the-future-of-food) in 2016.

5. How can the European Citizens' Consultations mechanism be inspired by your experience?

First, this was an experiment on dialogue and deliberation. As such, it privileged the debate and conversation. These types of exercise do not establish a priori the matters of concern and matters of care. These emerge through the process. As such, these types of engagement should be carried out before setting the questions used in the consultations. In other words, Citizens' Consultations should be about "citizens' questions" informed by upstream dialogic formats.

The selection of citizens might be an issue, but we argue that it strongly depends on the issues that are the subject of public policy making. Food concerns everybody, but there can be issues that are only relevant to certain communities (e.g. specific health issues or food in schools); hence, it is important to identify the communities concerned before initiating citizen engagement. An 'open call' might not be ideal in all cases. We recommend that topics need to be tangible and situated, thus also making citizen engagement situated. This means that the engagement process, including the focus of the conversations need to be malleable enough to not pre-frame issues and allow citizen engagement to be about the different possible affectations (interest, concern, etc.) people have about the issues. Recently the JRC was asked to carry out a citizen engagement exercise on Connected and Automated Vehicles, but the conversations rapidly shifted from the technology to the broader issue of mobility. We suggest that the agendas for debates need to be negotiated with the participants themselves, and the methods used to conduct citizen engagement should allow this to happen. Current mechanisms of consultation performed by EU institutions do not foresee co-framing of matters of concern, and hence, pre-determine not only what the issues are but also the space of solutions to address them.

Another important aspect is the institutional expectation of social representativeness. When this is required, then other types of citizen engagement can be used to test the pervasiveness of the outcomes of dialogue-based methodologies. A new function of EUROBAROMETER surveys could do exactly that.

As suggested above, the 'contract' with participants should establish the degree to which the outcome of the citizen engagement process will influence the broader processes within which it takes place. In the EU institutional context, it would be highly desirable for all these processes to be initiated with a request from the policy side to make citizen engagement relevant by design and by default; however, this requires governance mechanisms that are not only open to working with the outcomes of citizen engagement at every phase of the policy cycle, but also allow for a different contract with participants - one that ensures genuine influence of EC engagement processes on the policy stages in which citizens are involved. We suggest that FFT-like approaches and material deliberation in general, are appropriate for early stages of policy design, before issues are framed, so that the policy addresses the actual matters of concern and care of citizenry and not those of powerful elites.

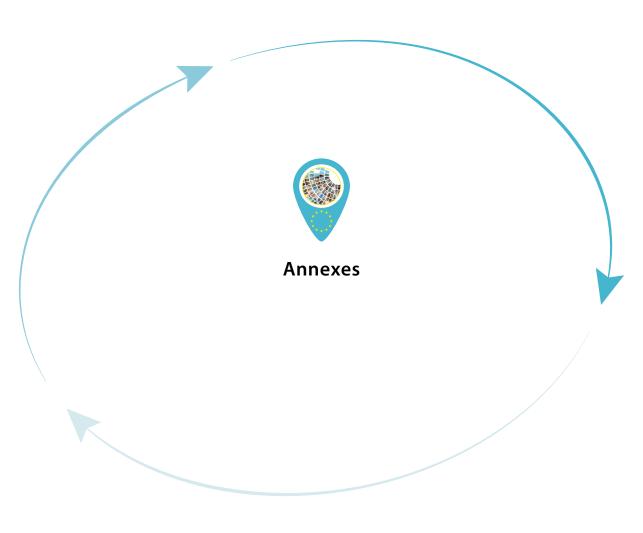
Conclusions

Discourse on the future of food is often seen as the preserve of elites such as scientists, designers, chefs, food companies and other corporations. By contrast, the Food Futuring Tours sought to enrich the debate on these issues with insights, expectations and visions from people who, every day, choose, prepare and eat food themselves and also feed others. The FFT shed light on how new standards arising from corporate and governmental practices disregard received social norms about food, a root cause of citizen distrust and anger about current models of food production, processing, distribution and consumption. We would argue that this type of outcome is not necessarily limited to food. Many other societal issues are being deliberated away from public scrutiny, and are thus in need of dialogue formats such as FFTs. Consultations are mere tokenism (Arnstein, 1969) if they are framed around what specific elites have decided the issues to be and the grounds on which they should be addressed.

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Bringing the EU closer to its citizens: The call for an EU permanent mechanism for structured consultations and dialogues with citizens

A proposal by: Karl-Heinz Lambertz and Luca Jahier

Presidents of the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee

14 December 2018

Working for an open, transparent and regular dialogue with EU citizens

The European Union is a unique political entity, which unites different levels of government in working towards the common goal of economic and social progress for its citizens. The elected leaders of cities, regions, member states, the leaders of the EU institutions and civil society organisations have the joint obligation to work together to develop the European project further and to make it more transparent and democratically accountable in the spirit of article 11 of the Treaty on European Union, calling on the institutions to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with its citizens, representative associations and civil society.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) are in constant dialogue with citizens through their members and their respective constituencies: civil society organisations for the EESC and local and regional authorities for the CoR. Thus, the Committees have been developing expertise, knowledge and tools to constitute the bridge between citizens and the European Union.

In recent years, EU institutions and bodies, including European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions, have increased their efforts to connect with citizens. They have launched a multitude of dialogues, consultations and similar initiatives. The citizens' consultations and dialogues carried out by the Member States in 2018 have also asked the citizens about their views on the future of Europe. On 13 and 14 December 2018, the European Council will receive a report on these initiatives which highlights the desire of many

citizens to be better involved in decision-making by the European Union.

The dialogues and consultations have shown that the EU citizens, but also local and regional elected politicians and organised civil society representatives, have a genuine interest in its policies and in becoming more engaged in their Union's future.

The time has come to bring initiatives together and to reinforce their impact on EU policies design and implementation

The time has come to give more coherence to such active interest and efforts, making them more meaningful with regard to their impact through a longer-term strategy and feedback mechanism involving both organised civil society and local and regional authorities.

As Presidents of the EU's two advisory bodies representing the European Union from a local, regional and civil society perspective, we suggest to build up on the experience developed in the Committees and other EU institutions by establishing an EU permanent structured consultation with citizens, cities, regions and civil society organisations.

Such a consultation should:

- boost the democratic dimension of the European Union by mobilising and encouraging the broad engagement of citizens, organised civil society organisations and local and regional parliaments and governments;
- provide real feedback on the EU policies to improve their design and implementation and to establish a follow-up mechanism;

Bringing the EU closer to its citizens:

The call for an EU permanent mechanism for structured consultations and dialogues with citizens

A proposal by the Presidents of the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee

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- involve actively all EU institutions as well as locally and regionally elected representatives and civil society organisations, who must play a key role in organising and following up on these dialogues;
- become a permanent, annual exercise.

We argue that an EU permanent structured consultation with citizens will require a coordinated and coherent approach agreed between the EU institutions and advisory bodies in order to exploit synergies and complementarities among them as well as to speak with a clear and coherent voice to citizens.

The contribution of the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions to a permanent dialogue mechanism

The contribution of the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions would include the organisation of local citizens' assemblies and hearings with the participation of locally and regionally elected representatives and civil society organisations. It would of course fully exploit, in a synergic and coordinated process, the tools and mechanisms that they have developed in these years to consult with citizens. This would gather views on new European Union initiatives and legislation with a regional and local impact.

Collecting the views of citizens, local and regional elected representatives, social partners and civil society organisations would follow the logic of an annual cycle. The cycle would start following up on the announcement of the European Commission's annual work programme in autumn, from which topics for consultations could be selected.

Debates would be held during the first semester of the following year. All events would produce reports and recommendations. In the context of their respective plenary sessions the Committees could invite national and European associations to share their views on the selected topics.

The Committees would publish a joint summary report in autumn which would be presented to the Presidents of the European Council, of the European Commission and of the European Parliament at the occasion of the State of the Union speech.

This report should support EU action to respond better through appropriate measures to citizens' needs and expectations. It is indeed crucial that citizens feel their contributions are taken seriously and can constitute a real input to the EU decisionand policy-making process.

The EU permanent mechanism for structured consultations and dialogues with citizens would be accompanied by supporting activities such as

- related communication activities documenting the process, applying a single European Union brand across all citizens'-related communication and consultation activities;
- training and networking among the local, regional and EU institutions and organisations involved;
- the setting-up of a joint advisory board composed of experts and experienced think tanks;
- an evaluation programme looking at the impact of the process from an external point of view.

We propose the establishment of an EU inter-institutional working group in order to agree upon common guiding principles and a methodology to launch an EU permanent mechanism for structured consultations and dialogues with citizens during the next EU institutional cycle (2019-2024).

A glossary on citizens' consultations and participatory democracy

Active subsidiarity: a "new way of working" as coined by the Report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity and Proportionality (see below), which defines the principle of coordination and cooperation in EU policy-making between the European, national, regional and local levels of government.

Citizen engagement: the two-way interaction between citizens and governments or the private sector – policy dialogue, programs, projects, and advisory services and analytics – that gives citizens a stake in decision-making with the objective of improving the intermediate and final development outcomes of the intervention. The spectrum of citizen engagement includes consultation, collaboration, participation and empowerment.

Citizen participation: Also known as 'public participation' and is sometimes used interchangeably with the concept or practice of stakeholder engagement and/or popular participation. Generally, public participation seeks and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision. This can be in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, companies or any other entities that affect public interests. The principle of public participation holds that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

Citizens' assembly: a body formed from citizens to deliberate on an issue or issues of national importance. The membership of a citizens' assembly is randomly selected (see 'Sortition'). The purpose is to employ a cross-section of the public to study the options available to the state on certain questions and to propose answers to these questions through rational and reasoned discussion and the use of various methods of inquiry such as directly questioning experts.

Citizens' panel: a large, demographically representative group of citizens regularly used to assess public preferences and opinions.

Citizens' council: a body in relation to citizens' assembly, but restricted: among topics suggest-

ed by the assembly, the council picks out the ones for consultation.

Citizens' consultation: asking for and receiving citizens' feedback on policymaking. Receiving citizens' feedback requires providing information to citizens beforehand. Consultation thus creates a limited two-way relationship between government and citizens (cf. "Active participation").

Citizens' dialogues: encounters organised by the European Commission in the style of townhall debates, taking place across the EU.

Citizens' empowerment: measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority.

Civic engagement: Civic engagement or civic participation is any individual or group activity addressing issues of public concern.

Civil society: dense network of groups, communities, networks, and ties that stand between the individual and the modern state.

Conference on the Future of Europe: On 16 July 2019 in the European Parliament, the President-elect of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, presented her "Political Guidelines" for the period 2019-2024 including a two-years' "Conference on the Future of Europe" to begin in 2020. It should "bring together citizens (...), young people, civil society and EU institutions as equal partners" with a "clear objective, agreed between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission" and the possibility to suggest "legislative action if appropriate". Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/interim_en.

Convention on the future of Europe: a body established by the European Council in December 2001, committing the EU to greater democracy, transparency and efficiency, and setting

out the process by which a constitution could be arrived at. The Convention finished its work in July 2003 with their Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

Deliberative democracy: a form of democracy in which deliberation is central to decision-making. It adopts elements of both consensus decision-making and majority rule. Deliberative democracy differs from traditional democratic theory in that authentic deliberation, not mere voting, is the primary source of legitimacy for the law.

Democratic legitimacy: the right and acceptance of an authority, usually a governing law or a régime. The notion of a "democratic deficit" within the European Union is the idea that the governance of the EU lacks democratic legitimacy.

Direct democracy: also called 'pure democracy', forms of direct participation of citizens in democratic decision-making, in contrast to indirect or representative democracy (see below), based on the sovereignty of the people. This can happen in the form of an assembly democracy or by initiative and referendum with ballot voting, with direct voting on issues instead of for candidates or parties.

Digital participation: succeeds in approaching certain groups that are difficult or impossible to reach with traditional forms of participation, but might exclude other groups (see "Digital divide"). Postal voting, physical presence in meetings, fix or mobile ballot boxes are alternatives to digital participation.

e-democracy: (a combination of the words electronic and democracy), also known as Digital Democracy or Internet Democracy, incorporates 21st-century information and communications technology to promote democracy. It is a form of government in which all adult citizens are presumed to be eligible to participate equally in the proposal, development, and creation of laws.

e-governance / electronic governance: the application of information and communication technology (ICT) for delivering government services, exchange of information, communica-

tion transactions, integration of various standalone systems and services between government-to-citizen (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G), government-to-employees (G2E) as well as back-office processes and interactions within the entire government framework.

European Citizens' Initiative (ECI): a participatory democracy instrument that allows EU citizens to suggest concrete legal changes in any field where the European Commission has power to propose legislation, such as the environment, agriculture, energy, transport or trade. To launch an initiative, it takes seven EU citizens, living in at least seven different Member States, who are old enough to vote. Once an initiative gathers 1 million signatures with minimum thresholds to be reached in at least seven countries, the European Commission must decide whether to take action or not. Since the ECI was introduced in 2011, there were four such initiatives, which reached the necessary threshold, 27 did not reach it, and 21 were still open, i.e. collecting support in August 2019. More: https:// ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome.

Grassroot engagement: engaging people and building relationships through providing means to engage directly and personally with one another on something that matters to them (a community concern, an election, a policy issue, etc.).

Ladder of Citizen Participation: The term was coined through an article published in 1969 by Sherry P. Arnstein, then assistant at the U.S. Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare, in which she defines eight levels of citizen participation towards the background of urban planning processes.

Liquid democracy: also known as 'delegative democracy' is a form of democracy whereby an electorate has the option of vesting voting power in delegates rather than voting directly themselves. Liquid democracy is a broad category of either already-existing or proposed popular-control apparatuses. Voters can either vote directly or delegate their vote to other participants; voters may also select different delegates for different issues. In

other words, individual A of a society can delegate their power to another individual B – and withdraw such power again at any time. Liquid democracy lies between direct and representative democracy.

Material deliberation: processes of deliberation and citizen engagement, which incorporate an awareness, openness or sensitivity to non-traditional modes of deliberative interaction, including, but not confined to, the sonorous (music, singing, laughter, shrieks, noise), the discursive (gossip, storytelling, anecdote, polemic, drama), the material (objects, bodies, sites, places) and the affective (hate, love, fear, attachment, nostalgia, intuition, pleasure). Such engagements show a sensitivity to the situated nature of all encounters, deliberative or not, as embedded in particular spaces, material configurations, and temporalities.

Open government: the governing doctrine, which holds that citizens have the right to access the documents and proceedings of the government to allow for effective public oversight.

Participatory budgeting: a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making, in which ordinary people decide how to allocate part of a municipal or public budget.

Participatory democracy: broad participation of constituents, strives to create opportunities for all members of a population to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities.

Reflecting on Europe: an initiative of the European Committee of the Regions, providing a platform for citizen engagement in the ongoing debate on the future of Europe.

Representative democracy: system by which citizens of a given constituency elect representatives for a certain term of office to take political decisions.

Representativeness: a distinct group of people, who represent a population of a given city, region

or country and their diversity as defined, for example, by gender, age, socio-economic situation etc..

Sortition: the action of selecting or determining something by the casting or drawing of lots.

Stakeholder consultation: also referred to as 'consultations with interested parties' or with 'external parties', applies to consultations with stakeholders and citizens outside the European institutions and bodies.

Task Force on Subsidiarity and Proportionality and 'Doing Less More Efficiently': established by then-European Commission President Juncker in November 2017 and chaired by Vice-President Timmermans, the Task Force was composed of members of the European Committee of the Regions and national parliaments to look into the role of local and regional authorities in policy-making and implementation of European Union policies; the role of subsidiarity and proportionality in the work of the Union's institutions and bodies; and whether responsibility for particular policies areas should be re-delegated to the Member States. The report of the Task Force of July 2018 was followed up by a Communication of the European Commission in October 2018 suggesting, among others, a stronger role of regional and national parliaments and local and regional authorities in the design, making and implementation of EU policies.

Citizens' participation: further reading and resources

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Created in 1994 following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of 350 regional and local representatives from all 28 Member States, representing over 507 million Europeans. Its mission is to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council are obliged to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union if its rights are infringed or it believes that EU law infringes the subsidiarity principle or fails to respect regional or local powers

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