



ENERGYCITIES

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LOCAL

CITIZENS'

ASSEMBLIES

CLIMATE AND ENERGY

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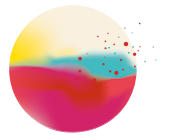
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INTRODUCTION

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES ARE ENRICHING POLICY-MAKING AND BOOSTING PUBLIC TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS.

Since the 1970s, this globally popular 'conselling' format has spread, demonstrating that when people are given the right and possibility to decide, along with sufficient time, balanced, evidence-based information, and expert guidance in a well-structured process, they can make informed decisions in the public interest, even on complex issues.

Citizens' assemblies are particularly suited to address long-lasting issues that have reached a political impasse or that can risk polarising the population. They offer a fair method, where everyone has an equal chance of being randomly selected to submit proposals to local authorities. Increasingly, citizens' assemblies on climate issues are being organised worldwide, at national, regional and city levels.

Thanks to its fairness and direct involvement of citizens into the decision-making process, citizens' assemblies have become a popular tool to enhance participation within a territory¹.

However, organising citizens' assemblies requires substantial time, resources and a rigorous methodology. Drawing on the experiences among Energy Cities' network of members, we have observed several challenges. A lack of political backing can

lead to commitment issues and communication gaps can result in limited public awareness and engagement. Ensuring public visibility is also crucial, as it usually impacts confidence and trust in the assembly's work. Additionally, maintaining long-term participation in models that require sustained involvement can be challenging².

Still, the periodic commitment and consensus-building model of citizens' assemblies, and its methodology to gather a representative assembly, does emerge as one of the most effective tools.

We first present short case studies on local citizens' assemblies in Bologna, Bordeaux, Bourgogne-Franche Comté, Brussels, Grenoble, Gipuzkoa province and Stuttgart. From these examples, we then analyse different models and configurations of citizens' assemblies.

All of the aforementioned cities are part of Energy Cities' network, except for the city of Bologna, the larger territorial units of Bourgogne-Franche Comté region, and Gipuzkoa province.

¹ <https://rea.riga.lv/rigas-iedzivotaju-asambleja/>

² <https://energy-cities.eu/citizens-assemblies-no-one-said-it-was-easy-but-its-worth-it/>



BOLOGNA

BOLOGNA CITIZENS' CLIMATE ASSEMBLY

Assemblea Cittadina per il Clima di Bologna

Dates: May – November 2023

Topics covered: Climate change

Initiated by: The Municipality of Bologna. The city council voted on the principle of a climate assembly in 2021, with a framework established in 2022. The first assembly addressing climate issues took place between May and November 2023.

Managed by: Fondazione Innovazione Urbana (Bologna's urban centre, which primarily works for the municipality) with a budget of around €180,000.

Members: The assembly included 100 participants, comprising 80 Bologna residents selected randomly, based on geographic, age, and gender criteria. Additionally, 20 "city users" were selected – 10 students and 10 public transport users who do not live in Bologna but frequently visit the city.

HOW IT WORKS

The process was structured by the municipality and consisted of 9 sessions, each lasting 4 hours. The assembly was overseen by three committees: a coordination committee, a support committee, and a guarantee committee.

The first two meetings were dedicated to information and training, delivered by experts and scientists, mainly from the University of Bologna. The third and fourth meetings involved discussions with local stakeholders, including businesses and climate organisations like Extinction Rebellion. After the summer of 2023, the deliberation phase began, with four additional sessions focused on debating and discussing the various proposals. Decisions were made by consensus, but in cases of disagreement, a vote was held. For a proposal to be approved, it required a two-thirds majority from the assembly.

At the final meeting, a Monitoring Committee composed of 21 assembly members was elected.

OUTCOMES

The proposals were grouped into six main recommendations. One key proposal was to make Bologna "greener" by introducing concrete measures to naturalise the city and improve permeability. A specific suggestion was to incorporate the "3/30/300" rule into urban planning: every property should see at least 3 trees, 30% of each neighbourhood should be covered by vegetation, and every resident should have access to a green space within 300 meters of their home.

In total, the citizens made more than 120 concrete proposals. These recommendations were compiled into a **final document** presented to the city council, which voted a **resolution** to fully or partially approve about half of the recommendations. For each proposal, the municipality provided an explanation of its decision. These commitments will form part of Bologna's City Climate Contract, developed as part of its designation as an EU "Mission City" aiming for climate neutrality by 2030.

Some members of the assembly chose to continue their efforts by creating an independent association.



BORDEAUX

CITIZEN DIALOGUE "CLIMATE EMERGENCY"

Dates: February 2023 – May 2024

Topics covered: Climate change

Initiated by: The Municipality of Bordeaux, inspired by the ***French citizens' climate convention.***

Managed by: The initiative was coordinated by Vox Operatio (an engineering and consultation strategy agency), Décalez! (a professional training organisation using theatrical improvisation), and D'Asques et D'Ailleurs (an association that develops educational, artistic, and recreational projects through audio-visual and digital tools). Additionally, two guarantors appointed by the French National Commission for Public Debate ensure the process remains neutral.

Members: The assembly consists of 92 Bordeaux residents, randomly selected from telephone lists. All neighbourhoods and age groups (ranging from 17 to 81 years old) are represented, with 53% of participants being women.

HOW IT WORKS

The process was divided into three phases:

February – September 2023: Effervescence

This phase involved sharing experiences, open to all local stakeholders and citizens. Participants could propose solutions through online platforms or physical contributions via an "ephemeral parliament," which traveled to eight neighbourhoods.

October 2023 – January 2024: The Citizens' Convention

In this phase, 92 randomly selected Bordeaux citizens gathered. It started with an introductory session on climate issues, also aiming at mobilising contributions from the previous phase. It was then followed by two investigation sessions featuring contributions from 37 experts and local transition actors to formulate proposals. Those proposals were debated and deliberated on during two additional sessions.

February – May 2024: Landing

This phase involved the widespread dissemination of the proposals. The recommendations within the city's purview will be deliberated by the city council, voted on by the public, or directly implemented by municipal departments.

OUTCOMES

The assembly produced a ***public document.*** organised into three categories of recommendations, each containing proposals and sub-proposals:

- Common Values
- Principles for Action
- Concrete Actions

The citizens requested financial and human resources to support implementation, better communication, a clear implementation timeline, and the creation of a monitoring body. Additionally, the assembly expressed a desire to form an independent collective to continue its efforts.

The citizen assembly presented its conclusions during the ***city council in March 2024.*** Some members were given the opportunity to speak, emphasising that "we won't let you go" (in reference to the municipality's commitment). The municipal majority praised the quality of the work, while the opposition raised concerns: "Is it right for 100 citizens to replace elected representatives? I fear this citizens' convention is merely a tool for a communication campaign and a pretext for delaying action." The next step will be to observe the concrete implementation of the proposals.



BOURGOGNE-FRANCHE COMTÉ

CLIMATE ASSEMBLY OF ENTERPRISES - BOURGOGNE FRANCHE-COMTÉ 2023

Convention Des Entreprises Pour Le Climat – Parcours Bourgogne Franche-Comté

Dates: May 2023 – February 2024

Topics Covered: Agriculture, Business, Industry, Services

Initiated by: Climate Assembly of Private Enterprises (CEC), together with organisation Ulteriora, a local actor promoting ecological transition.

Managed by: Steering Team constituted by CEC members/employees.

Members: 48 organisations with some 100 participants (76% SMEs, 12% intermediate enterprises, 10% microenterprises, and 2 big groups); selected in order to form a representative panel of the territory in terms of representation of different sectors, company size, or even of their transition “maturity”. In total, they represented some 22 thousand employees and associates and €5 billion of revenue.

HOW IT WORKS

The primary objective is to produce the final Roadmap for regenerative transformation going beyond climate change to anchor itself in the new planetary limits.

The Roadmap is developed and adjusted over the course of the sessions – relying mainly on 3 pillars:

- Maintaining and regenerating the Earth’s system
- Taking care and accompanying the people
- Managing and sharing the values created

The Roadmap is elaborated in 3 stages:

1. First, participants carry out a self-evaluation of their economic model to assess their position relative to the regenerative vision and to understand the transformations needed to fit within planetary limits (organised in four categories: “Business as usual”, “Responsible”, “Contributory” and “Regenerative”).

2. Following this first stage, a “generative” question is formulated to define a course for 2030 and to identify key strategies for redirection, accompanied by an action plan and measurable impact objectives, while engaging the business’s existing and future cooperative ecosystems.
3. Each session then provides an in-depth exploration of the different components with working aids and facilitation methods designed to make the participants’ vision of transformation more authentic.





OUTCOMES

- 48 roadmaps for businesses designed to facilitate their transformation into regenerative enterprises, going beyond mere reduction or neutralisation of negative impacts to create net positive effects for ecosystems and society.
- In addition to the newly defined course for 2030, identified strategies for redirection, action plan, and impact evaluation on the cooperative ecosystems, companies were able to further develop diverse transformative elements.
- The Roadmaps include “regenerative objectives” such as: cutting-off more carbon than the company emits, regenerating more biodiversity than that destroyed by the activity, revegetating, empowering stakeholders, sharing values with stakeholders, offering a decent income, and improving stakeholders’ physical, emotional and social health.
- Analysing the social issues, HR challenges, and focusing on people inside their businesses, organisations envisioned integrating new forms of cooperation in their governance scheme, implementing changes in decision-making, or introducing new means for raising awareness of these issues.
- 94% of the participants are (preparing to or) carrying out their carbon footprint assessment.
- CEC has raised awareness of companies’ dependence on and impact of natural ecosystems; 89% of organisations identified a connection to living organisms (39% a direct connection) and/or a dependence on biodiversity.
- Furthermore, in the different Roadmaps, we can find examples of renouncement of “eco-incompatible” activities, new partnerships that were created thanks to the CEC exercise, commitments to reduce carbon emissions, and a strong focus on team well-being, as well as both business and personal transformations.
- Finally, as documented in the CEC report, cooperative projects (Projets Coopératifs de Territoires) emerged alongside the main objective (elaboration of the Roadmaps), through the spontaneous creation of working groups based on common affinities and shared objectives, aimed at developing realistic, collective solutions.



BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION

PERMANENT CLIMATE CITIZEN ASSEMBLY

Dates: Started in February 2023, ongoing (one topic per year)

Topics covered (until now): Housing and food (each topic is chosen by the previous assembly)

Initiated by: The Environment Department of the Brussels-Capital Region, following an initiative by the Brussels Minister for Climate Change and Participatory Democracy.

Managed by: G1000 (a Belgian platform for democratic innovation) and Missions Publiques (an agency specialising in citizen participation).

Members: Between 65 and 100 citizens are selected each year from a pool of 10,000 randomly chosen inhabitants who receive invitations by mail. This group is renewed annually to ensure the Assembly remains a long-term process. Participants must be at least 16 years old and are selected based on criteria such as gender, language (French/Dutch), age, postal address, education level, and profession.

HOW IT WORKS

The process follows several steps: information, training with researchers, debates and deliberations, proposal formulation, and finally, validation and presentation. Each topic is explored over four sessions spanning three months. For example, the second assembly, which focused on food, followed this schedule: a full weekend (Saturday and Sunday), two additional Saturdays, and one final full weekend.

Each participant receives a stipend of €75 per day of participation. A childcare service is also available for those who need it.

The Brussels-Capital government has committed to responding to the assembly's proposals and developing a roadmap to integrate these long-term recommendations into the region's climate governance. However, the specifics of this commitment remain somewhat unclear. A monitoring committee is also formed after each assembly, consisting of 10 members from the most recent assembly. Its role is to track how the Brussels government implements the citizens' proposals.





OUTCOMES

Each assembly develops a “2050 vision” on the chosen topic. For the topic of housing, citizens first identified three main priorities: living differently, renovating with a focus on social justice, and increasing urban greenery to improve city living. They then defined several key “ambitions,” such as supporting shared spaces, shared resources, and ensuring buildings conversion.

For each ambition, concrete proposals and recommendations were made. For example, one proposal was to regulate shared facility functions and require public funding recipients with enough roof space to install solar panels and join pilot energy community projects.

In total, citizens have made approximately 60 recommendations for each assembly. The *housing* and the food reports are publicly accessible (in French). The Brussels government has published initial responses to both topics (also in French, on *housing* and *food*). While most proposals are considered “relevant,” the government has not made concrete commitments to implement them.

However, the responses are transparent, especially when a proposal is deemed unfeasible due to financial constraints or falls outside the government’s jurisdiction and competences – in such cases, the government passes the proposal to the appropriate stakeholders.



GRENOBLE

METROPOLITAN CITIZENS' CLIMATE CONVENTION

Dates: March – October 2022

Topics covered: Climate (with a focus on climate mitigation)

Initiated by: Grenoble Alpes Métropole (an inter-municipal structure encompassing the city of Grenoble and 48 other communes), inspired by the [French national climate convention](#).

Managed by: Res Publica (consultation agency) and WZA (communication agency).

Members: The convention consisted of 100 citizens from the Métropole's territory, selected to represent various age groups, genders, education levels, locations, and attitudes towards environmental issues. The selection process was randomised from a database (telephone list) of 50,000 residents. Each participant received a financial compensation of €350. The Métropole also covered transportation costs to the meeting venues and childcare expenses for those in need.

HOW IT WORKS

The citizens met over five weekends (Saturday and Sunday). The first weekend was focused on providing information about global climate issues and presenting the local climate plan of Grenoble Métropole, as well as the local government's responsibilities and competences. During the second session, four potential scenarios for achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 were introduced. Small group workshops began to develop "visions" for the region.

The third weekend included inspiration meetings with various stakeholders, such as economic actors and climate organisations like The Shift Project, followed by workshops to identify key priorities. Over the summer, members submitted individual proposals for action. These were further developed and prioritised during the fourth session. The final session focused on approving the proposals, with decisions made by consensus when possible, or through a vote (with options of "yes," "no," or "blank vote").

The process was overseen by an operational committee, and "guarantors" were appointed to ensure the neutrality of the debates.

OUTCOMES

The convention adopted 221 proposals, organised into nine main categories: agriculture, urban planning, mobility, consumption and waste, energy production, carbon capture, economy, education, and training. One example of the recommendations in the energy sector is the proposal to ease aesthetic regulations to allow for the broader implementation of renewable energy solutions.

All the recommendations were symbolically presented to local elected officials during the Metropolitan Council meeting in October 2022, and compiled into a [formal document](#). Proposals within the Métropole's jurisdiction and competences were submitted to a [special Metropolitan Council](#) meeting on April 28, 2023, where only five were rejected. Some of these proposals may be integrated into the Metropolitan Climate Air Energy Plan in its next revision.

A monitoring committee remains in place to track the progress of these commitments. It includes representatives from the Métropole, Grenoble University, and citizens from the convention.



GIPUZKOA

CITIZEN'S ASSEMBLY OF GIPUZKOA PROVINCE

Dates: November 2022 – January 2023

Topics covered: Rural Environment and Climate

Initiated by: The Provincial Council de Gipuzkoa (Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia the government of one of the three provinces in the Spanish Basque Country) to address the balance between rural/agricultural issues and climate concerns.

Managed by: Deliberativa (a consulting firm specialising in citizen participation, which designed the assembly process), Arantzazulab (a semi-public innovation lab for governance and democracy), and TMeLab (a think-tank involved in social innovation and new forms of governance), who coordinated the assembly.

Members: 32 citizens from the region were randomly selected using criteria such as age, gender, education level, language skills, place of residence, and connection to local products to ensure a diverse representation of the region.

HOW IT WORKS

The main question was defined by the local government. Citizens participated for a total of 40 hours over four weekends. To start, members of the assembly deepened their understanding of the rural primary sector and the climate emergency from presentations given by experts and professionals from the field. They then debated potential solutions and formulated written recommendations.

Three committees were established:

- **A “motor” group** comprising representatives of the local administration and agencies involved in the process.
- **A monitoring committee** that brought together all political parties and stakeholders.
- **A “content” committee** that included experts such as researchers and forestry professionals.





OUTCOMES

The 32 citizens produced 9 key recommendations, detailed in a ***public document*** (including the percentage of members who voted for each measure, ranging from 78% to 100%). Examples of proposals include providing economic compensation to rural landowners based on their contribution to ecosystem services, raising public awareness on agricultural and climate issues from an early age, and promoting local products by adjusting taxes. Each recommendation is well-detailed and justified, reflecting the assembly's focus on the quality of proposals rather than quantity.

The Gipuzkoa Provincial Council responded to the recommendations two months after the assembly's conclusions, with a ***public document***. A meeting was also held with the citizens involved. The Council accepted all recommendations outlining different timelines and budgets for their implementation and committed to publishing an annual report on the progress of the actions. The ***first report***, published in November 2023, indicated that around half of the commitments had been fulfilled, a quarter had been initiated, and the remaining quarter had not yet started. The next report is expected in November 2024.

Furthermore, the Parte Hartuz research group at the University of the Basque Country (UPVEHU) conducted an evaluation of the Gipuzkoa Citizens' Assembly.



LYON

CITIZEN'S CLIMATE ASSEMBLY OF CIVIL SERVANTS

Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat des Agents (3CA)

City of Lyon Climate Assembly of Civil servants is using the methodology of citizens' assemblies with a new target group. It is aimed to transform the municipal public service and find solutions together to meet the challenges of the ecological, inclusive and democratic transition.

Dates: 19th September 2023 (Introduction of 3CA) – 17th September 2024 (Booklet presentation and delivery to the Mayor, Deputy Mayors and Executive Board)

Topics covered: Biodiversity in urban spaces, Ecological Transition, Food, Health, Mobility, Resources and Waste management, Solidarity, Work Conditions

Initiated by: City of Lyon, Mayor of Lyon and the Executive Board

Managed by: Mission transition écologique Staff from the Direction and the Deputy Director General of the Délégation Générale à l'Urbanisme à l'Immobilier et aux Travaux with strong support from the Communications and Internal Cooperation Departments, as well as Mission projet d'administration.

Members: 74 civil servants from the City of Lyon administration randomly selected, and a guarantor of the Convention Cyril Dion (writer and film director).

HOW IT WORKS

- 74 civil servants agreed to take part in the assembly (Convention) for a period of 10 months, until July 2024.
- After the selection, the members were trained on the challenges of the ecological transition within 6 raising-awareness sessions in the form of conferences, site visits, collective games and meetings with local actors, as well as internal and external experts. They equally attended 4 "production" (methodological) sessions.
- After undergoing their training, their aim, aligned with the objectives of the 3CA, was to formulate opinions and make proposals on the challenges and to present them to the elected representatives and the administration afterwards.
- Working groups were formed, engaging more than 50 civil servants to develop actionable proposals addressing the ecological transition.
- Civil servants received support from both external and internal experts, as well as a team of volunteer staff.
- The final proposal was approved using the principle of adoption by consent of the civil servants.





OUTCOMES

After one year of effort, the members of 3CA delivered a booklet consisting of:

» **5 opinions** on two questions posed by the Mayor and Executive Board:

- “What would be an exemplary administration in its practices to make a success of the ecological transition?”
- “How can we ensure continuity of public service during heatwaves, while preserving the health of staff?”

» **12 proposals** focused on administrative organisation and municipal public policies for the ecological transition.

The **opinions** consist of an analysis of the context and main issues, with objectives and targets to achieve within a certain time frame. Together with a description of the opinions, they outline: stages of implementation, responsible department/directorate, and conditions for success, as well as success indicators.

The **proposals** cover aforementioned topics and are organised into 5 bigger thematic blocks: work conditions, endocrine disruptors, water use in the city, biodiversity and solidarity. They follow a structure similar to that of the opinions, with an analysis of context and issues, set objectives and targets within a certain time frame, and the definition of conditions for success and its indicators.

The assembly thus contributes to the city’s plan to make Lyon a carbon-neutral region by 2030.



STUTTGART

CLIMATE ASSEMBLY

Dates: March – June 2023

Topics covered: Mobility, Heat

Initiated by: The Stuttgart City Council following a *citizen initiative* in 2021 signed by 2500 residents, calling for a climate citizen assembly. In response, the city council passed a crossparty motion to establish the assembly, aiming to engage citizens in addressing climate challenges and assisting the city in decision-making.

Managed by: The city delegated the coordination of the assembly to a neutral party (attributed to ifok GmbH and the communications agency Ulmer). This coordination team organised the citizens' assembly meetings, facilitated moderation, oversaw the voting on recommendations, and authored the *final report*. In addition, scientific experts contributed by writing an *evaluation report*.

Members: The assembly consisted of 61 members, randomly selected from a pool of 800 volunteers. All districts, age groups, and genders were represented. Participants received a financial stipend for their involvement.

HOW IT WORKS

The assembly met six times on Saturdays. First, the meetings focused on educating participants about climate issues and the city's relevant powers and competences, with expert presentations (for which the experts were paid) and input from stakeholders (including city departments, companies, and climate organisations such as Fridays for Future). Political parties were not allowed to participate.

Recommendations were developed in areas such as mobility or heat. Some proposals were directly suggested by experts or stakeholders. The assembly then concluded with a secret vote. For a recommendation to pass, it required at least two-thirds of the vote, with the options being: "Yes, I'm in favor," "Yes, but I have some doubts," or "No."

The city council reviewed and analysed all recommendations. If any were rejected, the council was required to provide valid reasons.

OUTCOMES

The citizens adopted 24 out of 26 recommendations, including:

- Introducing charges for parking across the city
- Removing 5% of parking spaces each year to convert them into public spaces
- Increasing the number of buses in surrounding villages
- Expanding grants/subsidies to support the transition to sustainable heating systems in individual and collective housing

Each political group in the city council publicly shared its stance on each measure in a public document. However, it appears that a formal vote by the city council on these recommendations did not follow.



EXAMPLES OF ONGOING CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES

LYON MÉTROPOLE

METROPOLITAN ASSEMBLY FOR THE CLIMATE

After a concertation stage with the local economic and community actors, the Metropolitan Assembly was launched in September 2024. It brings together 110 citizens from all around the “Grand Lyon” area, selected following gender, age and “socio-professional category” criteria, for a representative population mix.

Their work is based on the question “How to adapt our region to climate change?”. The main concern being heatwaves, citizens will have to address the issues of housing, public spaces as well as economic, cultural or sporting activities. Ultimately, every participant has to keep in mind the social justice dimension.

The participants will meet for five one-and-a-half-day working sessions between September 2024 and January 2025. The conclusions of the convention will come together in a “Citizen’s Opinion on adapting the Lyon Metropolitan Area to climate change”.

These conclusions will be added to the Métropole’s Territorial Climate, Air and Energy Plan (Plan climat air énergie territorial), that will consequently be reviewed and voted in the City Council in June 2025. The newly revised Plan should come into force in Summer 2026.

The first meeting, held on October 3rd, brought the members together in the Métropole’s hemicycle. This was the opportunity for members to get to know each other and introduced to the objectives and the key action strategies that will guide the Assembly’s future sessions. Citizens have already started to work in small groups to share their experience on the impact of heatwaves, an important topic for the Lyon area.

The following day, a lecture on climate change, its impacts and possible adaptation was held. This was followed by a presentation on socio-environmental inequalities related to climate change adaptation. Participants were also introduced to the regulatory framework for climate policies.



EXAMPLES OF CURRENTLY ONGOING CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES

RIGA

RIGA CLIMATE ASSEMBLY

The Riga Climate Assembly is organised by the Zaļā brīvība (Green Liberty) association together with the Riga City Municipality and Riga Energy Agency. It is funded by the EU's Horizon programme.

Gathering 35 citizens and experts, the Citizens' Assembly shall focus on vital adaptation aspects, addressing heatwaves, blue infrastructure and health impacts. It should develop ideas and proposals to promote meaningful climate solutions, enhance collaborative policy design, while fostering local ownership.

The Assembly is guided by principles and values such as: Democracy for All, Fair Demographic Representativity, or Transparency. To uphold these values, sufficient time and space are provided for discussion and reflection on the proposals.

Riga Citizens' Climate Assembly officially kicked-off on September 21st, 2024. All participants gathered to gain new insights on climate change, its main causes in the recent decades, and potential solutions.

The participating citizens will contribute their recommendations to the Riga Greening Plan, and will be presented with the ideas outlined in the plan. Participants also have the opportunity to explore what both city residents and the municipality can do to enhance biodiversity in the urban environment.

The Citizens' Assembly will conclude its sessions on November 23rd, 2024, followed by a presentation of the city's Greening Plan.



CROSS-ANALYSIS OF OUR CASE STUDIES

Initiation

The assemblies are typically **initiated by the municipality** itself or a relevant regional authority. The French local assemblies, for example, were inspired by a similar project carried out at the national level. Climate assemblies can also be triggered by a citizen initiative or by private local actors, either with or without the support of the city council.

Management

When it comes to the climate assemblies' management – a key part of the process that determines the quality of the outcomes – we observe that several assemblies are **guided by private consultation agencies or organisations** specialising in citizen involvement in public affairs. In the most recent cases (Lyon and Riga), the management falls under the **responsibility of the initiators**. Cities appear to leverage the past experiences of others when managing their assemblies. However, it is crucial that their teams receive at least **basic training on the principles** of guiding such activities to ensure the smooth and effective functioning of the process.

Formation

Participants are typically **selected randomly** from the database of residents available to the local authority (e.g., phone lists). Some cities, however, introduced a pool of volunteers, which can potentially lead to biased participation, attracting individuals who are already interested, rather than ensuring a truly representative sample of the population. Nevertheless, **criteria** are almost always established to ensure **proper representation** of a population in the given territory. These criteria are designed to reflect diverse age groups, genders,

educational levels, locations, and other demographic factors.

Representativeness

In terms of representativeness, we can draw lessons from the case of Bologna, that decided to include **not only residents** of the city, but also its **“users”** – students and public transport users who don't live in the city but come in on a regular basis. In the case of representing **enterprise delegates**, the size of the enterprise, in terms of employees and revenues, should be taken into account, as in the Bourgogne Franche-Comté example.

Compensation

In some cases (such as Brussels, Grenoble and Stuttgart), a **financial compensation** was offered to participants. Although it might motivate some to participate, it should not be the main incentive for people to participate. To ensure inclusiveness¹, a **remuneration to cover the expenses** directly linked with participation should be envisaged. To further break down barriers of participation, **non-financial facilities** such as childcare services should be considered. These services were provided in the cases of Brussels and Grenoble.

Operation

A closer look at how different assemblies operate reveals that the initial sessions are typically focused on **information and training**, where experts, researchers, climate organisations, and other relevant authorities equip assembly members with essential knowledge on climate change, its impacts, and the capacities and legal powers of the city or local authority, particularly in relation to implementation possibilities. **Sharing personal**

¹ OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes. 2022. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/7759a39c-en.pdf?expires=1728475632&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=892DEA246E4EF325E33D0625B95655F8>



experiences or other relevant insights at the outset can enhance the overall understanding of the topic, highlighting its multiple dimensions. This approach, for example, was used in Bordeaux.

Inputs

Stakeholders and local actors focused on climate questions should also be given the opportunity to share their inputs on the topic, adding yet another dimension to decision-making process. Nevertheless, these contributions should always be constructive and respectful to the **scientific knowledge** on the topic. Political parties (represented in the municipal council) should be excluded from influencing the process with their political agenda, as was the case of Stuttgart where they were not allowed to participate, to prevent external bias from shaping the climate assembly's decision.

Recommendations

Following the discussion at an assembly, **a set of recommendations** is typically formulated. Adopting them through **consensus** or a reinforced ("qualified") **majority** of two thirds of the participants seems reasonable. A secret vote could also be considered as an option.

Committees

Supporting committees can play a valuable role by providing important technical expertise and insights to assembly members during the decision-making process. **Monitoring committees**, in turn, offer an effective mechanism for overseeing the implementation of recommendations. It is essential to ensure fair representation of assembly members within these committees.

Adaptability

Finally, the variability in the duration and structure of assemblies, which varies from case to case, suggests that **flexible frameworks** are better suited to accommodate local contexts and participant needs, ultimately enhancing both engagement and outcomes.

Local government response

The outcomes reflect the different objectives of each assembly, making it difficult to compare

them as such. Nevertheless, we can observe that a large part of recommendations is **approved by the city councils**. Some of the cities intend to include the recommendations in their **revised climate plans** (such as Bologna and Grenoble). Yet, other local governments are less clear about future actions (like in Brussels). In case a recommendation is refused, it is crucial that the **local government justify its choice** in detail. Encouraging local governments to **commit to responding** to assembly outputs can bridge the gap between citizen input and policy-making, fostering a more dynamic and responsive governance structure.

Follow-up

Establishing monitoring committees is a crucial step toward successful implementation. However, **substantial support**—either **financial** or in terms of **personnel**, as suggested by the Bordeaux assembly—is needed to effectively track both the commitments and the implementation process. **Clear communication** about progress should accompany this process throughout. Additionally, local governments must ensure **transparency in reporting their progress** on the assembly's proposals. Establishing **clear deadlines**, along with targets and milestones, will further enhance accountability and ensure the timely achievement of goals.

Measures

If it is in the local authority's competences, an adjustment on taxes linked to local products or production seem to be an interesting measure emerging from a climate assembly (Gipuzkoa).

Legacy

An interesting phenomenon has emerged with the **formation of independent organisations** and **citizen movements**, either during the process itself (as in Bourgogne-Franche Comté) or after the assembly concluded (as seen in Bordeaux and Bologna). Leveraging the knowledge gained and relationships established, citizens can build on their recent effort and continue to engage in public affairs and community action.



LOCAL CLIMATE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES IN EU POLICIES

European Union supports citizens' assemblies by providing several instruments at the EU level: the right to petition, the European Citizen's Initiative or the Commission's public consultation and Citizen Dialogues. Yet, these are largely ineffective in bolstering bottom-up participation.

This is why the support and organisation of local citizens' assemblies should be further encouraged through currently available means.

As it is the case for the Riga Climate Assembly, such projects can be funded through the **Horizon Europe programme**, within the framework of the **CLIMAS project**. This project will test the prototype Climate Assemblies through the end of 2024, with plans to develop a toolbox together with a set of recommendations for decision-makers and the broader community, as well as promote its results throughout 2025. The **LIFE Programme** is also co-financing Riga's Assembly, within a larger adaptation project **LIFE LATESTadapt** dedicated to cities in Latvia and Estonia.

Additional support for citizens' assemblies could be provided through the **Technical Support offered by DG REGIO** in collaboration with the OECD, which facilitates innovative participatory processes, including deliberative approaches, within EU Cohesion Policies. Extending this support to (Climate) Citizens' Assemblies should be prioritised.

Furthermore, the funding programme **CERV** (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values), which aims to protect and promote Union rights and values, could also include support for (Climate) Citizens' Assemblies under one of its 'strands' – Citizens' engagement and participation.

These programs should go beyond merely co-financing citizens' assemblies; they should also focus on creating an easily accessible platform to share diverse experiences and methodologies for organising assemblies.

Climate Citizens' Assemblies should primarily be supported in Member States with limited experience using this participatory tool, particularly those without prior experience with a national platform, as seen in countries like France. Preference could also be given to organising Climate Assemblies in regions covered by the Just Transition Fund or in Member States eligible for the Modernisation Fund.

Finally, the new **Commissioner for Implementation and Simplification**, Valdis Dombrovskis, could draw inspiration from the Lyon Civil Servants' Climate Assembly by organising an EU Civil Servants' Assembly. Such an initiative could generate valuable recommendations for simplifying EU processes and improving the implementation of various programs.



CONCLUSION

LOCAL CITIZEN ASSEMBLIES ARE A REMARKABLE POLICY-MAKING TOOL WITH A GREAT POTENTIAL TO ENHANCE CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES. THEY REFLECT A GROWING TREND TOWARD COLLECTIVE ACTION IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE ISSUES.

Although their role is largely consultative, the opinions and recommendations provided by citizens can be highly valuable for municipalities. Despite challenges in organising such assemblies - in terms of time, resources and methodology - they are effective in addressing citizens' concerns, enhancing a sense of citizenship and ownership, and promoting transparency and inclusivity.

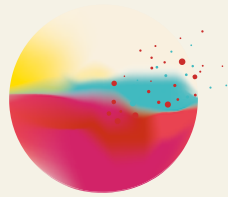
Citizens' assemblies are typically initiated by local authorities, though they may sometimes draw inspiration from prior national or regional projects. Ensuring representativeness is a critical aspect of these assemblies. Strategies like random selection that reflects population diversity, along with practical support such as childcare, are essential to reducing barriers to participation. Moreover, it is valuable to extend participation beyond residents to include city "users," fostering a broader and more inclusive perspective.

The diversity in assembly structures and the importance of fostering constructive dialogue among stakeholders significantly enhance the quality of its outcomes. Commitments from local governments to act on Assembly recommendations are crucial for bridging the gap between citizen input and final policymaking. Politicians must ensure transparency in the decision-making process and communicate clearly regarding the

implementation steps. This process should be overseen by a monitoring committee that is drawn from the Assembly itself.

Citizen participation extends beyond just assemblies; a growing phenomenon of independent organisations and movements, which build on the knowledge and connections gained, further demonstrates citizens' strong desire to engage in social and political life.

Finally, the European Union should deepen its focus and its support for citizens' assemblies, not only on climate, but possibly on other emerging issues at the local level. Multiple funding programmes such as Horizon Europe, LIFE and CERV, as well as Technical Support instruments, could provide support for organising local assemblies.



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