



Research Report on Successful Practice of Policy Development with Citizens' Parliaments in Europe

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DELIVERABLE 6.1, V1.0

MeDeMAP - Mapping Media for Future Democracies

Grant Agreement number: 101094984



**Funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Document Information

Project	
<i>Grant Agreement no.</i>	101094984
<i>Funding scheme</i>	HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Project title</i>	Mapping Media for Future Democracies
<i>Project acronym</i>	MeDeMAP
<i>Project starting date</i>	01/03/2023
Document	
<i>Work package no.</i>	6
<i>Work package title</i>	Supply Meets Demand
<i>Work package lead beneficiary</i>	P5 - COMMIT
<i>Task(s)</i>	6.1
<i>Deliverable no.</i>	6.1
<i>Deliverable title</i>	Research report on successful practice of policy development with citizens' parliaments in Europe
<i>Deliverable type</i>	R – Document, report
<i>Contractual date of deliverable</i>	31.12.2024
<i>Actual date of deliverable</i>	13.01.2025
<i>Editor(s)</i>	–
<i>Author(s)</i>	Laurence Monnot (COMMIT) Contributors: Helmut Peissl and Andrea Sedlaczek (COMMIT), Rosemary Day (MIC), Miloš Hroch (CU) and Brankica Petković (MI)
<i>Reviewer(s)</i>	Manuel José Damásio (Lusófona), Beata Klimkiewicz (JU), Andrea Miconi (IULM), Josef Seethaler (OEAW), Nico Carpentier (CU)
<i>Version</i>	1.0
<i>Status</i>	Final
<i>Total number of pages (including cover)</i>	67
<i>Dissemination level</i>	PU - Public

Table of Contents

Executive summary	5
Introduction	6
1 Framing the scope. Definitions and methodology.....	8
1.1 Research question and sources of data	8
1.2 An attempt to define Citizens' Parliaments, Participatory Action Research, successful practice and policy development	10
1.2.1 Participatory Action Research.....	11
1.2.2 How to assess the success of a CP and its political development?.....	13
1.3 Citizens' Parliaments, a response to the call for more direct participation in politics..	14
1.3.1 The multiplication of CPs experiences	15
1.3.2 Characteristics of CP models.....	16
1.3.3 "Successful practices": OECD guidelines	19
1.3.4 Adding a PAR dimension as a parameter for success	20
2 A review of good practices of citizens' parliaments.....	24
In this section, we will present some examples of CPs at European and national levels, drawing on the databases mentioned in 1.1.	24
2.1 Historical Overview and Current Trends in Citizen Participation	24
2.2 Some prominent experiences in Europe	25
2.2.1 European experiences with CPs at EU level	25
2.2.2 European experiences with CPs at national level	26
2.3 Experiences with CPs in WP6 partner countries	31
2.3.1 Experiences with Citizen Parliaments in Austria	31
2.3.2 Experiences with Citizen Parliaments in the Czech Republic.....	38
2.3.3 Experiences with Citizen Parliaments in Slovenia.....	39
2.3.4 Experiences with Citizen Parliaments in Ireland	41
3 Good practice of CPs and PAR in view of a CP model for the MeDeMAP project	43
3.1 How does PAR apply to the design and implementation of WP6 CPs?.....	43
3.2 The role of facilitation. The Art of Hosting to enable a PAR approach.....	45
3.3 Perspectives for CPs in WP6 partner countries.....	49
3.3.1 Perspectives for the organization of a CP on media and democracy in Austria.....	49
3.3.2 Estimates concerning the organization of a CP on media and democracy in the Czech Republic.....	50
3.3.3 Estimates concerning the organization of a CP on media and democracy in Slovenia.	50
3.3.4 Estimates concerning the organization of a CP on media and democracy in Ireland ...	51

3.4	Lessons learned and recommendations	51
3.4.1	Constraints.....	52
3.4.2	Quality criteria and lessons from CPs' experience.....	53
4	References	60

Executive summary

This deliverable (D6.1) is a research report on successful practice of policy development with citizens' parliaments in Europe. It aims to answer the research question "*What are good practice examples of citizens' parliaments and applications of the participatory action research (PAR) approach?*"

The research conducted for this deliverable aims to support the design of Citizens' Parliaments to be implemented in five partner countries (Deliverable D6.2).

D6.1 consists of three parts.

Part 1 presents the methodology and various sources (academic literature on citizens' parliaments and participatory action research, evaluation reports of citizens' parliaments and interviews with practitioners). Section 1.3 examines how citizens' parliaments respond to the call for more direct participation in politics.

Part 2 reviews good practices of citizens' parliaments, starting with a historical overview of the different models (2.1), followed by a closer study of some prominent experiences in Europe (2.2), and ending with a focus on experiences with CPs in WP6 partner countries.

Part 3 draws lessons from the practices previously analyzed. With regard to the implementation of Citizens' Parliaments in Austria (COMMIT), the Czech Republic (CU), Ireland (MIC) and Slovenia (MI), and later in an experimental online process in Germany (OEAW), section 3.1 reflects on how PAR applies to the design and implementation of WP6 CPs, and how facilitation plays a role in enabling a PAR approach.

Section 3.3 focuses on the prospects for organizing a CP on media and democracy in WP6 partner countries. Section 3.4 concludes with a summary of lessons learned and recommendations for the subsequent implementation of the CPs (Deliverable D6.2).

Introduction

This “Research Report on successful practice of policy development with citizens’ parliaments in Europe” corresponds to Deliverable D6.1 of the MeDeMAP project. It aims to answer the research question “*What are good practice examples of citizens’ parliaments and applications of the participatory action research (PAR) approach?*”

D6.1 also aims to pave the way for the implementation of five citizens’ parliaments on Media and Democracy as part of MeDeMAP WP6. As stated in the MeDeMAP Grant Agreement (GA), the design of the citizens’ parliaments will be based on the results of Task 6.1. Therefore, the research conducted in D6.1 is clearly oriented to support the purpose of designing the citizens’ parliaments in the format of an audience council (GA, Annex 1, Part B, p. 17), while applying a participatory action research (PAR) approach.

In Work Package 6, “Supply Meets demand”, we focus on the thematic junction between the research conducted by the other WPs on media systems and regulation (WP3), media supply (WP4) and media demand (WP5) and guided by the theoretical framework laid out in WP2. A particularity of WP6 is the adoption of a participatory action research approach through the implementation of citizens’ parliaments.

In WP6, citizens from five MeDeMAP partner countries are involved in the research process. Organized in citizens’ parliaments and based on the results of the other work packages, the participants will reflect, deliberate and formulate recommendations based on their expectations regarding the pro-democratic role of the media and their participation through and in the media.

The process and the outcomes of the citizens’ parliaments will be disseminated to raise the awareness of a wider public, media stakeholders and decision-makers on the issue of media and democracy. The results of the citizens’ parliaments, in the form of statements and recommendations, will be officially presented to media stakeholders and/or policy-makers who regulate media systems in the five countries.

The process and the outcomes of the citizens’ parliaments in the form of resolutions developed and adopted during the process will be further analyzed to produce data on how European citizens envision the future for the Future roadmap for European media and democracy (D6.4). Ultimately, this data will be integrated into the multi-layer map of European political information environments based on the results of the research led by the other WPs. During the citizen parliaments sessions, data will also be gathered to document the participatory process for D6.5 (Leaflets and online guidance on participatory media practices) and for D2.4 (Theory-driven re-analysis on democracy, participation and representation based on the citizens’ parliaments interventions).

The research for D6.1 and D6.2 is conducted in parallel. While the design of the citizens’ parliaments (Deliverable 6.2) is based on the analysis of best practices (D6.1), the aim of D6.1 is to provide useful information for the implementation of citizens parliaments in the form of an audience council and based on a participatory action research (PAR) approach. In addition, feasibility and constraints will shape the final design of the citizens parliaments and thus influence the focus of the best practice research.

The research methodology of D6.1 includes desk research by analyzing articles and reports from various academic and non-academic sources and interviews with stakeholders (organizers, evaluators or facilitators of citizens parliaments). As stated in the GA (Annex 1, Part A, p. 12), "productive methods of facilitation, e.g. art of hosting", will also be explored.

There are many reports on previous experiences with citizens parliaments in Europe. The challenge, once we have identified the "universal" principles to be followed for a "successful" (or high-quality) process, is to identify what lessons can be learned from good and bad experiences that are relevant to our own citizen parliament design (D6.2).

Ultimately, the aim of this report is practical. It aims to identify features of good practice of citizen parliaments and features of good practice of PAR applications that would be relevant to inspire the design of a model citizen parliament in view of Task 6.2.

Three of the MeDeMAP WP6 partners, Charles University (CU), Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and Mirovni Institut (MI) contributed to this report by answering a questionnaire on their national experiences with citizens parliaments. The responses to this questionnaire have been included in Part 2.2 of this report.

Throughout this research report, we use the abbreviation CP for the term Citizen Parliament.

Quotations from non-English texts were translated from German and French with the assistance of DeepL through the text

1 Framing the scope. Definitions and methodology

1.1 Research question and sources of data

"What are good practice examples of Citizens' Parliaments (CPs) and applications of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach?" is the research question defined in the MeDeMAP Grant Agreement. The title of deliverable D6.1 adds a dimension, the question of "successful practices of policy development" with citizens' parliaments.

For this D6.1 report, which aims to inform the appropriate design of CPs (D6.2), the first task is to identify the general objectives set by the Grant Agreement, particularly in terms of format and PAR approach, taking into account time and budget constraints and the specific contexts of the implementing countries. As success criteria, we will refer in section 1.3.3 to the guidelines defined by the OECD.

Based on an academic and non-academic literature review, including theory, comparative analysis of CPs' practice and practical guidelines, we will provide operational definitions for the concepts of citizens' parliament, Participatory Action Research (PAR) and successful practice of policy development.

The research for D6.1 and D6.2 was conducted in parallel. While the design of the CPs (Deliverable 6.2) is based on the analysis of CP best practices (D6.1), D6.1 aims to provide useful information for the implementation of CPs in an audience council format and based on a participatory action research (PAR) approach. In addition, feasibility and constraints (such as budget and timeline) shape the final design of the CPs and therefore influence the focus of the research on best practices. The goal of getting citizens to deal with highly complex issues in a limited amount of time also influences the design and facilitation method.

The research on good practice examples of citizens' parliaments and participatory action research was conducted as a literature review of various academic and non-academic sources, supplemented by interviews.

To conduct a thorough and relevant review, we followed the guidelines of the integrative review method (Cronin & George, 2020), which was mentioned and applied by Doudaki and Filimonov in D2.3 (2023).

The criteria to select the literature were as follows: while we examined literature dealing with the concepts and history of CPs and PAR from earlier periods, we favored more recent comparative analyses (from 2010 onward) and case studies. We focused on literature with an empirical or operational focus. With regard to monographic reports on individual CPs, we looked at the comprehensiveness of the report (going through the entire CP process) and selected some emblematic cases. We also gave preference to the experiences of CPs in WP6 partner countries. Although the literature on CPs is rich, it mainly deals with experiences initiated by public authorities and favors large citizen assemblies. This is one of the reasons why the literature review was complemented by 10 interviews with practitioners, from grassroots organizations, CP organizers and CP facilitators in Austria and Germany.

The following search tools were used to search for academic and non-academic publications online and offline: Google Scholar, Web of Science, library repositories and major academic publishers. The MeDeMAP work package leaders were invited to suggest literature on CPs in their countries. Their suggestions shed light on interesting experiences with CPs. In addition, CU, Mic and MI, who are implementing partners in WP6, responded to a questionnaire about their experiences with CPs in their countries.

Thus, four main sources make up the data used for the report:

- Academic literature on CPs and PAR (political and sociological concepts, historical approach and comparative analysis)
- Evaluation reports and final reports of a selection of CPs
- Interviews with practitioners (organizations and institutions involved in the implementation of CPs)
- Guidelines published by institutions and civic organisations supporting CPs

Academic literature on CPs and PAR

The academic literature on CPs provided insights into the theory of participatory and deliberative democracy and comparative analysis of experiences with participatory democracy. One limitation of this type of source was that these publications focused mainly on the experiences of large citizen assemblies initiated by public authorities.

With the support of our partners at OEAW and CU and building on Hroch (2024), we also reviewed the academic literature on participatory action research (PAR) to approach the concept from a practical perspective, with the ultimate goal of understanding how PAR can be implemented in CPs.

Evaluation reports and final reports of a selection of CPs

To research the case studies of CPs in Europe, we consulted several databases of institutions and grassroots organizations and reviewed the reports and evaluation of various CPs.

The databases were the following:

- The [OECD database of representative deliberative processes](#) contains 733 examples from around the world from 1979 to 2023 at the time of its last consultation (19.11.24).
- The platform [buergerrat.de](https://www.buergerrat.de), a website of the non-profit organization "Mehr Demokratie", documents CPs in Germany and abroad. <https://www.buergerrat.de/buergerraete/bundesweite-buergerraete/>
- [Participedia](#) is a collaborative repository of citizen participation case studies supported since 2015 by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
- Go Vocal (ex [CitizenLab](#)) publishes case studies of digital participatory processes at the local level.
- We also consulted the analysis provided by the Review of the results of The POLITICIZE Dataset (Paulis et al. 2021).

The reports and evaluations of the CPs turned out to be a very good source of information on good practices and previous experiences with CPs. Most of them also provided useful recommendations.

Interviews with practitioners

To complement the academic sources of information and the reports, we conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with 10 practitioners from organizations and institutions involved in the implementation of CPs in Austria and Germany and integrated the responses of the WP6 partners on the experiences with CPs in their countries.

The interviewees were organizers, evaluators and facilitators of CPs in Austria and Germany.

Guidelines published by institutions and civic organizations supporting CPs

In addition, we consulted guidelines and guidebooks developed by international and national institutions and grassroots organizations to complete the "big picture" of the CPs process. These guidelines, with their practical recommendations and toolboxes, will also inspire D6.2.

Know-how material in the form of "guidebooks" is available on online platforms run by non-profit organizations and international institutions such as the UN and the Council of Europe. MehrDemokratie.de in Germany, Involve in the UK or DemocracyNext based in the Netherlands are all non-profit organizations dedicated to promoting civic participation in general and CPs in particular. In addition, public institutions such as the Office for Civic Participation of the Province of Vorarlberg in Austria are offering support to promote their CP "model". We also consulted studies by private foundations such as the German Bertelsmann Foundation and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

In addition, because the facilitation of CPs is expected to play a large role in the participatory experience, we also reviewed academic and non-academic literature on the facilitation of deliberative processes, particularly The Art of Hosting.

The main consulted sources thus were:

- Involve (UK), <https://www.involve.org.uk/>
- NewDemocracy (AU), <https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/>
- MehrDemokratie (DE), <https://www.mehr-demokratie.de/>
- Vorarlberg office of citizens' participation
- The Council of Europe
- Research institutes and foundations (i.e German FES, Bertelsmann, etc.)

1.2 An attempt to define Citizens' Parliaments, Participatory Action Research, successful practice and policy development

While framing the concepts, we kept in mind the goal of making them usable for later implementation in D6.2 citizens' parliaments.

What is a citizen parliament? What kind of citizen parliament are we dealing with?

In academic literature, the generic term most often used is "deliberative mini-publics" or sometimes "citizens' assemblies". As the MeDeMAP Grant Agreement refers to "Citizens' Parliaments", we will retain this wording or its abbreviation "CP".

For Gaşiorowska, referring to Escobar & Elstub (2017), "(A) mini-public (is) an institution consisting of randomly selected citizens who are representative of their population with regard to different

demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, etc.) and who deliberate on a given issue through facilitated discussion, on the basis of evidence and advocacy provided by experts” (Gąsiorowska, 2023, p. 2).

Dahl, also quoted by Escobar & Elstub, emphasized the collective deliberation on public issues and defined “minipopulus” as an assembly of citizens, demographically representative of the larger population, brought together to learn and deliberate on a topic in order to inform public opinion and decision-making (Escobar & Elstub, 2017, p. 6).

Podgórska-Rykała (2024, p. 153) underlines the participatory process and its “*impact on public policy-making by adding a civic perspective to the decision-making process*”.

Main features of CPs

The generic term “mini-public” encompasses all types of deliberative people assemblies, regardless of their size, duration, organization of meetings, facilitation, and outcomes, including Citizens’ Assemblies, Citizens’ Juries or panels, Consensus Conferences, Planning Cells, and Deliberative Polls.

If we retain the common features we have gathered from the academic literature, a CP can be defined as

- a forum of selected citizens who are representative of a population,
- expressing an informed opinion based on evidence and perspectives provided by experts,
- a process of collective deliberation,
- producing an outcome in the form of resolutions, recommendations, or assessments on issues of public interest (e.g., media and democracy).

1.2.1 Participatory Action Research

The use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) for WP6 is anchored in the MeDeMAP Grant Agreement. WP6 aims on the one hand to create a thematic junction with other WPs and on the other hand to open the research process to citizens. For the implementation of the CPs, the GA prescribes a PAR approach, which is defined as “*an approach within the broad field of responsive science (...) based on open cooperative work and sharing of knowledge.*” (MeDeMAP Grant Agreement, Annex 1, Part B, p. 15). PAR is circular and iterative. Adopting a PAR approach means that citizens or laypeople go through a circular process of learning, reflecting on that learning, developing solutions, and reflecting again in an iterative co-creation process, as exposed in Deliverable 2.2 for Work Package 2 (Carpentier & Wimmer, 2024a, p. 35).

In academic literature, the terms “action research”, “participatory action research” or “participatory research” are used alternatively, depending on the author, but the semantic distinction is not clearly established.

Participatory (action) research can take many forms. These forms can be categorized into different kinds of approaches. Cassell and Johnson (2006) quoted by Unger (2014, p. 20) distinguish Experimental Action Research Practices, Inductive Action Research Practices, Participatory Action Research, Participatory Research Practices, and Deconstructive Action Research Practices.

According to the SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research, action research describes *“approaches that integrate theory and action with the goal of addressing important organizational, community and social issues together with those who experience them. It focuses on the creation of areas for collaborative learning and the design, enactment and evaluation of liberating actions through combining action and reflection, in an ongoing cycle of co-generative knowledge.”* (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014, p. xxvi).

The term “action research” was coined in the 1940s by psychologist Kurt Lewin, who had fled Nazi Germany for the United States in 1933 (Johnson, 2020). Working on change management, Lewin undertook a series of experimental research projects in factories that challenged the top-down approach of his time. He sought to make social science research usable for social emancipatory and democracy-promoting purposes.

In the 1970s, “participatory action research” emerged as a response to institutionalized research, inspired by Lewin and also by the work of Paulo Freire. Freire, a Brazilian social educator who worked with marginalized populations, promoted a critical consciousness that made students agents of their own education and empowerment. (Kenton, 2014, pp. 601-602).

Like most PAR scholars and practitioners, Pain, Whitman & Milledge (2019) emphasize that PAR is an approach to research and not a method (which allows many methods to be used in design and facilitation).

Unger calls participatory research a “research style” characterized to a high degree by contextuality (Unger, 2014, p. 1). Its specificity is that people on which the research focuses take center stage with *“their perspectives, their learning processes and their individual and collective (self-)empowerment, [...] Participatory research is therefore never a purely academic endeavor, but always a joint project with non-scientific, social actors.”* (Unger, 2014, p. 2).

The main characteristics or “core components” of participatory research as described by Unger (2014, p. 10) are:

- *“The participation of non-scientific actors as co-researchers”*
- *“The strengthening of the “partners” through learning processes, competence development and individual and collective (self-)empowerment”*
- *“The dual objective of researching and changing social reality and the associated intervention character and action/application orientation of the research”.*

Its aim *“is not exclusively to test or obtain sociological theoretical statements, but rather to simultaneously intervene in social contexts in an examining and changing way”* (Unger, 2014, p. 15). Pain, Whitman, and Milledge (2019) have summarized the main principles of participatory action research in a useful toolkit for research in social sciences. They provide the following operational definition:

“Participatory Action Research is collaborative research, education and action used to gather information to use for change on social or environmental issues. It involves people who are concerned about or affected by an issue taking a leading role in producing and using knowledge about it.” (Pain, Whitman, and Milledge, 2019, p. 2/8)

What makes a PAR approach distinctive is according to them (Pain, Whitman, and Milledge, 2019, p. 2/8):

- it is driven by the participants (a group of people who have a stake in the issue being researched),
- it offers a democratic model of who can produce, own, and use knowledge,
- it is collaborative at every stage, involving discussion, pooling skills and working together,
- it is intended to result in some action, change, or improvement on the issue being researched.

Another way of evaluating the participatory dimension of research is to assess the degree of participation in the various phases of the research.

In participatory research, participants become partners and help shape the research process by following these possible steps: *“Goals are set together. A study design is developed, co-researchers are trained and it is clarified how participation can be made possible within the specific project framework. Data is collected (action) and evaluated (reflection). These steps are implemented by the co-researchers, who receive support in the process. Action and reflection can be carried out several times in a cyclical sequence.”* (Unger, 2014, p. 51).

Participatory research involves new forms of knowledge production. This can include data collection and the dissemination of the results. *“Data is collected by co-researchers and analyzed together”* underlines Unger, referring to Lewin’s spiral-shaped procedure of planning, action and fact-finding (Unger, 2014, p. 59).

Like other research processes, participatory research should be guided by ethical principles. The Centre for Social Justice and Community Action of Durham University (UK) for example has developed a guideline promoting the principles for “Community-based participatory research”. These are mutual respect, equality and inclusion, democratic participation, active learning, making a difference, collective action and personal integrity (Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, 2022).

1.2.2 How to assess the success of a CP and its political development?

As we have been tasked to report on “successful practice of policy development with citizens’ parliaments in Europe”, we have to ask ourselves at least once what “success” means.

The definition of the word “success” commonly found in dictionaries is the achievement of something desired, planned or attempted. The success of an initiative therefore depends on its objectives.

For this D6.1 report, which aims to inform the appropriate design of CPs within the MeDeMAP project, the first task is to identify the general objectives determined by the Grant Agreement for WP6, particularly in terms of format and PAR approach, taking into account time and budget constraints and the specific contexts of the implementing countries.

As success criteria we will refer to the guidelines defined by the OECD, bearing in mind that the OECD’s work has focused exclusively on CPs organized by or in cooperation with public authorities. Consequently, the notion of success, including the parameter of “policy development” will be examined in more detail in section 1.3.3 on the OECD guidelines for good practice. However, following a PAR approach means that the expected outcomes may be reshaped by the citizens, and the criteria for success may change accordingly.

1.3 Citizens' Parliaments, a response to the call for more direct participation in politics

Without going as far as ancient Athenian democracy, where citizens selected by lot shaped the rules of governance (excluding many categories of residents), we have seen a surge of interest in participatory democracy in Western countries as citizens express dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of the representative system (though not to the same extent everywhere). Electoral volatility, dissatisfaction with traditional parties and social representation, polarization, and loss of trust in institutions are common symptoms of dissatisfaction, as exposed by Carpentier & Wimmer (2024b).

In a time when representative democracy experiences a crisis of defiance, supporters of CPs underline the cooperative (dialogical) approach of a deliberative form of democracy such as advocated by Jürgen Habermas (Kübler, Leggewie & Nanz, 2021).

Citizens' parliaments offer this possibility. In the context of increasing polarization, promoting the construction of collective solutions can also contribute to strengthening democratic debates and inclusiveness. Thus, citizens' parliaments are a promising instrument for democratic innovation.

In a handbook on "Organizing local citizens' councils." from the German civic organization MehrDemokratie and the Universities of Wuppertal and Potsdam (Krenzer & Socher, 2024), the authors justify the place and role of citizens' parliaments in a parliamentary democracy:

"We see citizens' assemblies as an important format for a comprehensive culture of participation in our parliamentary democracy, which diversity and vitality rests on three pillars: the election of parliamentary representatives, direct democratic voting and dialogical (or deliberative) processes in which citizens can shape policy themselves. Citizens' councils are a building block of the third pillar: they contribute to the development of recommendations that support policy-makers in the decision-making process." (Krenzer & Socher, 2024, p. 13) (own translation)

Within grassroots organizations, activists are often divided over the question of participation within a parliamentary democracy or direct democracy. However, we can outline the generally recognized benefits of CPs. They can play a role in depolarizing the way an issue is addressed, restoring a dialogue, empowering citizens to express their opinion and participate in policy-making, and may increase the diversity of viewpoints.

As Gastil & Wright (2018, p. 307) argue, the diversity of experience and absence of partisanship in citizen parliaments pave the way for fruitful deliberation that leads to better policy outcomes.

The guiding idea of CPs is that *"when given the knowledge, resources, and time, groups of everyday citizens can create powerful solutions to today's biggest challenges"*, advocates the Center for New Democratic Processes, formerly known as Jefferson Center, founded by Ned Crosby, who created the Citizen Juries in 1971 (Center for New Democratic Processes).

This participatory experience of collective wisdom inspired the designers of the large citizen assemblies that flourished in the 2000s as well as smaller forms of local citizen parliaments.

"Dialogue is the core element" according to Kübler, Leggewie & Nanz (2021). "In this protected space (of a Citizens Parliament), constructive and long-term solutions to serious political problems can be developed that can ultimately be taken up by political decision-makers".

As advertised by the grassroots organization "Go vocal" (ex CitizenLab), engaged in supporting a "more participatory" democracy, the benefits of citizens' parliaments include *"constructive conversation and discussion on sensitive subjects; helping participants understand the complexities and trade-offs in policy dilemmas; allowing community members to tackle difficult questions without worries of re-election; inventing innovative solutions rooted in the collective intelligence; strengthening the democratic fabric of local communities."* (Go Vocal, 2023).

1.3.1 The multiplication of CPs experiences

In the 1970s, the experiences of Ned Crosby's Citizens Juries in the United States and Peter Dienel's "planning cells" in Germany made participatory experiences more popular and initiated a successive trend of "deliberative waves" (OECD, 2020).

Thousands of CPs of various types, size, duration, with different purposes, initiated by public authorities, grassroots organizations or a cooperation of both, have been taking place all over the world. They are organized at national, regional or local levels and even at supranational levels, like CPs initiated by the European Union, but also cross-border initiatives on topics like international transportation.

New CPs are regularly convened at local, regional or national level in many European countries. The German website buergerrat.de, linked to the grassroots organization MehrDemokratie (literally "more democracy"), provides a list of CPs around Europe and beyond and is regularly updated. Other key sources documenting ongoing CPs are websites from grassroots organizations dedicated to promoting civic participation (like the English-language Involve, based in London) and websites from public authorities organizing CPs like CESE in France, The Citizens' Assembly in Ireland or the Office for Volunteering and Participation (FEB) in the Austrian region of Vorarlberg.

An exhaustive database of past CPs organized by or with the support of public authorities is provided by the OECD. Small "grassroots only" initiatives are, however, not included in the repertoire. The OECD Deliberative Database accessed on 15.11.2024 is composed of a collection of 733 cases from 1979 to 2023. It includes data from 34 countries, with 96% of the cases situated within OECD Members (OECD Deliberative Democracy Database, 2023).

Of the 38 CPs organized in Europe in 2023 and listed in the OECD Deliberative Democracy Database (2023), 20 were at the local level, 8 at the regional level, 6 at the national level and 4 at the European level.

The most enthusiastic countries organizing CPs in 2023 were Denmark (4 local, 2 regional) and the Netherlands (2 local, 2 regional), ahead of France, Germany, Spain and the UK (3 each).

Environment, urban planning, transport and energy were by far the most popular topics, with only six CPs having a different topic. The smallest was the Citizens' Council on "Care Work and Compatibility" in Vorarlberg (regional level, Austria) with 14 participants and a duration of 1.5 days. The largest (except for the European panels) was the G1000 Wonen Zaanstreek-

Waterland organized by the grassroots G1000 Netherlands branch in the Netherlands at regional level on housing with 330 participants. It had a hybrid format with 5 face-to-face days and online sessions (OECD Deliberative Democracy Database, 2023).

The POLITICIZE Database, a research project of Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, also provides a statistical overview of the characteristics of 105 CPs that took place at national and regional levels in 18 European countries between 2000 and 2020.

In their analysis of the POLITICIZE Database, Paulis et al. show that “*the smallest mini-publics in the dataset gather around 10 participants. The largest ones reach several hundred participants.*” The Icelandic National Assembly, which was set up in 2010 in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis, gathered a record of 950 citizens. In their study, they registered about a third of mini-publics with 20 participants or less (32.2 percent) and around 27.8 percent gathering from 20 to 50 participants, and 17.4 percent between 50 and 100 participants (Paulis et al. 2021).

Countries such as Ireland, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom, and more recently France, have been experimenting with citizen participation for years. In some parts of Europe, such as the western Austrian province of Vorarlberg and the German-speaking community of East Belgium, citizen consultations in the form of citizens' parliaments have even become an integral part of policy-making. Other countries, such as the Czech Republic, still had no experience in 2024.

Outside of Europe, Canada is considered the pioneer of the wave of large CPs, and Australia has a well-experienced practice at both federal and state levels.

In its comprehensive comparative study conducted in 2020 on nearly 300 cases, the OECD has attempted to classify different forms of CPs initiated by public authorities. The classification retained refers to historical "models" with different characteristics: Citizens' Juries, Planning Cells, Consensus Conferences, Citizens' Councils, Deliberative Polls, whose characteristics have been highlighted by Escobar & Elstub (2017).

1.3.2 Characteristics of CP models

The first of these models, *Citizen juries* and *Planning cells* were developed in the early 1970s in the United States by Ned Crosby (Jefferson Center) and in Germany by Peter Dienel (University of Wuppertal). A group of 12 to 25 participants for citizen juries and 6 to 20 for planning cells meet for 2 to 5 days to discuss an issue and make recommendations. In their overview of the characteristics of the different forms of CP, Nielsen & Sørensen (2023) emphasize that they are not linked to political agendas.

Consensus conferences were initiated in the late 1980s by the Danish Board of Technology to advise parliamentarians on science and technology issues. They gathered a panel of 10-25 citizens and introduced a learning phase before the deliberation. Nielsen & Sørensen (2023, p. 131) note that they are a top-down method, initiated by the authorities with a view to building consensus or enhancing "*the governability of potential conflicts*".

The *Deliberative polls* created in the USA in 1988 by James Fishkin and the Center for Deliberative Polling, with large "samples" of 130-500 participants, aim primarily at gathering opinions on a specific issue.

The innovation of the *citizens' assemblies* in the 2000's is that although they are a top-down process, they solicit citizens to address sensitive political or social challenges. The "wave" of large citizens' assemblies was initiated by British Columbia (Canada) on an electoral reform in 2003. It triggered a referendum (that failed to validate the resolutions of the CP). Ontario (Canada), the Netherlands and Ireland also started large CPs on political or societal issues in the following years.

Table 1: Overview of the different historical models of CPs

CP form	Origin/ history	Nr. Partici pants	Compact/ over several weekends	Nr. of days	Stages	Outcome	Selection process	Addressees
Citizen assembly	2004, Canada	100- 160	8-14 months over WE	20-30	Learning/consulta tion deliberation adoption	detailed recommenda tions	random +self selection	public institution
Citizens' jury /panel	1971, USA, (Crosby)	12-26	Compact	2-6	Learning/ consultation deliberation adoption	collective position report	random selection	sponsor mass media
Citizens' jury /panel	Canada, Australia	36-45	over WE	2-6	Learning/consulta tion deliberation adoption	collective position report	random selection + correction	
Citizens' Council (Bürgerrat)	Vorarlber g Austria (Jim Rough)	12-16	Compact	1-2	deliberation adoption	Recommenda tions	random selection	Public authorities = organizers
Consensus Conference	1987 Danish Board of technolog y	10-25	compact over WE	7-8 10-30	Information deliberation	collective position report	random +self selection	parliament mass media
Planning cell	1970, Germany Dienel	100- 500 25-50	Compact	3-5	Information deliberation	survey opinions collective position report	random selection	sponsor mass media
Deliberative polls	1994, USA, Fishkin	100- 500	compact	2-3	Information deliberation	survey opinions	random selection	sponsor mass media

In its comprehensive comparative study of nearly 300 cases from OECD countries, the OECD (2020) provides statistics on the model, the duration, the number of participants, their selection, the topic and further indicators. For example, according to OECD (2020) the most frequent format (37.1 percent of the documented CPs) lasts 2–3 days (i.e. a weekend and half a day). All these pieces of information are now available in the OECD database covering 733 CPs from 1979 to 2023. (OECD database on deliberative democracy, 2023, accessed on November 15, 2024).

The "deliberative wave," as the OECD calls its study, refers to a series of CPs that share common characteristics, the main features of which have been highlighted previously in this study.

Trending topics

During the period 2000-2005 *"the most often debated policy issues were health and science-related development (especially in Denmark, France and Germany). In a second phase, around 2010, the environment became by far the most often deliberated issue. Issues related to planning (mobility, transport, urban planning) became also a frequent topic considered by DMPs. Finally, more recently (2015–2020) institutional issues emerged as a hot topic for several DMPs (in Ireland, Luxembourg, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Scotland."* (Paulis et al. 2021, p. 537).

Another evolution concerns the remit. According to Paulis et al. (2021), CPs with open agendas have become more common since 2015. We are also seeing a tendency for large citizens' assemblies to focus on one issue rather than a series of issues, as was the case with the first national CPs in Canada, Ireland, and France.

Criteria for the Selection of Participants

"The most frequent ones are sociodemographic criteria such as age, gender, education, occupation, family composition, migration background, or place of residence. Yet, some recruitment processes added other criteria. In some cases, they take into consideration the political positions of citizens. For example, the composition of the Scottish Citizens Assembly took three political attitudes into accounts." (Paulis et al. 2021).

Depending on the topic, behavioral criteria might be relevant to get a panel with broad perspectives. The CP organized in 2017 by the Brussels Regional Parliament to formulate recommendations on mobility selected participants representing the categories of pedestrians, car users, public transport users and cyclists (Paulis et al. 2021).

Decision modus

Paulis et al. (2021) note an evolution in the mode of reaching decision. For a long time, the dominant approach inspired by the Dutch model of the consensus conferences was *"the idea that through deliberation, participants will be able to reach a consensus on a few elements that they can all support. (...) Yet, over the last decade, the same project shows that it has become more common to organise formal votes among participants at the end of the deliberative process and to retain recommendations or ideas that reached the widest majority."*

In CPs taking place in the 2010's assessed by the OECD (2020, p 37), "... the final set of recommendations is voted on by all participants, most commonly by a majority vote, resulting in a detailed report and often a minority report, which acknowledges other opinions that were expressed but did not achieve majority consensus. "

However, according to final and evaluation reports of more recent CPs of smaller size, we find that they tend to seek consent rather than consensus.

1.3.3 "Successful practices": OECD guidelines

What can be considered a successful practice for a CP when based on a PAR approach? What kind of "policy development" shall be considered as successful?

It is tricky to define *a priori* what is successful, since success will depend mainly on targeted objectives related to a specific context.

This report aims to provide relevant orientations for the design of CPs on Media and Democracy as part of the MeDeMAP project, taking into account specific project constraints and national contexts. Thus, we will highlight the success criteria that enjoy consensus in the academic and non-academic literature while pointing out when they might be less appropriate in our contexts.

We should bear in mind that the OECD report only reviews CPs initiated by public authorities, i.e. mainly large format CPs and CPs for which these authorities have committed themselves to implement the outcomes in their policy developments.

OECD "Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes for Public Decision Making" and success parameters

Based on the analysis of 300 representative deliberative practices (initiated by public institutions), the much-cited OECD study (OECD, 2020) provides a very useful catalogue of "Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes for Public Decision Making". These principles, which could also be as a code of ethics for CPs, are embraced by most practical guidelines published by associations supporting CPs. In addition, the OECD study also defines parameters for success.

The key elements proposed by the OECD as standards for good practice (2020, pp. 118-119) and referred to as "principles" in the OECD study are:

1. Having a purpose related to a public issue;
2. Accountability: "*There should be influence on public decisions.*" (We must remember that the study focused on public initiated CPs).
3. Transparency;
4. Representativeness, defined as "*be a microcosm of the general public*", whereby in addition to demographic criteria the attitudinal parameter might be taken into account "*depending on the context*";
5. Inclusiveness;
6. Information from experts (in the form of a learning phase);
7. Group deliberation ("*Participants should be able to find common ground to underpin their collective recommendations to the public authority.*");

8. The design should ensure enough time;
9. Integrity (coordination is done by a contractor independent from the public authorities);
10. Respect for privacy
11. The process should additionally be evaluated by the participants.

Although most of these principles are now widely accepted as guidelines by academics and practitioners in Europe, not all CP formats apply all of them. For example, the Vorarlberg Citizens' Councils (Bürgerräte), based on the model developed by Jim Rough, do not include a learning phase with experts. They last only 1.5 consecutive days (instead of the minimum 4 days recommended by the OECD), and the facilitation method (dynamic facilitation) ensures that each participant has a voice but doesn't encourage dialogue between participants.

Parameters

The OECD study further proposes four main parameters for success, which are related to the above mentioned "principles". Chapter 4 (OECD 2020, p. 80-114) is dedicated to "*What is a 'successful' representative deliberative process for public decision making?*"

These are:

- Design integrity defined as "*the procedural criteria which ensure that a process is perceived as fair by the public and in line with principles of good practice*";
- Sound deliberation
- Influential recommendations and actions
- Impact on the wider public

"Successful practice of policy developments"

D6.1 is a "Research Report on successful practice of policy development with citizens' parliaments in Europe". With policy developments, we rejoin what is labeled by the OECD as "*influence on public decisions*" and "*impact on the wider public*", further defined as "*the secondary and long-term effects on efficacy and public attitudes*" (OECD, 2020, p. 82).

It can be measured in many different ways, depending on the objectives and context. Most studies, like the OECD, focus on large CPs organized by public authorities. As a result, they expect commitment from the organizing administrations and follow-up.

For the UK-based NGO Involve, good practice implies that "*the process should be integrated into the existing political system*" and that "*the sponsors must commit to taking action on the recommendations*" (Green, 2024). This may not or only partly apply if the initiative comes from civil society. In this case, different criteria and different kinds of commitments should apply.

Another criterion could be to consider the indirect impact produced by raising awareness in the public debate, involving the authorities, citizens and the media.

1.3.4 Adding a PAR dimension as a parameter for success

The task of WP6 is to implement the participatory part of the MeDeMAP research project through the citizens' parliaments. The research question guiding D6.1 is "*What are good practice*"

examples of Citizens' Parliaments (CPs) and applications of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach?".

Thus, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) dimension is a core element in the design and implementation process of MeDeMAPs CPs, and we will add the PAR parameter to the previously mentioned principles and criteria for success.

How does PAR apply to the design and implementation of WP6 CPs? What could good practices look like? A PAR approach will impact WP6 in various ways:

- The CP's successive stages (learning, deliberating, adopting resolutions) should enable a circular and iterative process, following the PAR cycle of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating and modifying, which will be detailed in section 3.1;
- Participants should, within the general framework of the CP theme and the three main topics (media systems, representation and participation in and through the media), be given the space to develop subtopics themselves.

As Lawson (2015, p. 2) points out, PAR enables the inclusion and empowerment of the citizens concerned by the research project: *"It gives citizens voices and choices"* and makes them actors in the search for a solution and the acquisition of knowledge.

Giving voice to concerned citizens within a research project is in itself a participatory practice. The philosophy of PAR is based on involving citizens in the research of which they are the subjects, so as (1) to make the most of their insights and (2) to involve them in the design and the decision-making process. A further degree of "PAR-ification" will be to involve them also in the evaluation of the process.

PAR meets deliberative theory

Blum, Collell & Treichel (2022, p. 295) define deliberation as a *"dialogical form of decision-making"* and advocate for *"The magic of deliberation"* as a method.

Deliberation refers to public deliberation (as opposed to internal deliberation) and to group deliberation (as opposed to individual deliberation), which emphasizes the need to find common ground. It requires that participants are well-informed about a topic and consider different perspectives in order to arrive at a public judgement (not opinion) about *"what can we strongly agree on?"* (OECD, 2020, pp. 11-12)

For Blum and al. (2022, p. 296) *"the success of deliberative formats also requires balanced information on the current state of knowledge, the opportunity to clarify questions with technical experts and experienced moderation."* (Blum and al., 2022, p. 296)

They add that deliberation must be open-ended: it is not clear in advance what the outcome of the process will be (Blum and al., 2022, p. 303).

Top-down vs. bottom-up

Usually, the distinction between top-down or bottom-up refers to the actors behind the CP: Has it been initiated by public authorities or grassroots movements? But as Bussu & Fleuß remark, the degree of openness for citizens' participation in the design process also plays a role. *"A bottom-up approach, by contrast, is characterized by a more open structure that allows*

participants to set the agenda, with greater emphasis on citizen-driven questions” (Bussu & Fleuß, 2023, p. 144).

Gradually, bottom-up initiated CPs have become more open. “There are increasing examples of bottom-up processes opened by state actors which involve the public directly in agenda setting as an attempt to tackle distrust and grapple with wicked problems, from increased polarization to societal impacts of new technology or climate change. Le Grand Débat launched in France by President Macron in January 2019 could be seen as a recent example of this more hybrid approach” (Bussu & Fleuß, 2023, p. 144).

Where and to what extent can participants be involved in the design process?

As pointed out by Carpentier & Wimmer (2024a), there will be a tension between CPs purposes (adopting resolutions on three complex topics) and an extensive PAR approach involving the CP participants in the design process. Nevertheless, participation *in* and *through* the CPs will occur at several levels.

Typical stages of a PAR project

“Research in PAR typically goes through a cycle: Planning, Action, Reflection, Evaluation” pose Pain, Whitman, and Milledge (2019, p. 3/8). In their Participatory Action Research Toolkit they have outlined typical stages of a PAR process adapted from Kindon et al. (2007).

Phases of action and reflection alternate in an iterative way:

Action: Establish relationships and common agenda with all stakeholders. Collaboratively decide on issues

Reflection: On research design, ethics, knowledges and accountability

Action: Build relationships. Identify roles and responsibilities. Collectively design research processes and tools. Discuss potential outcomes

Reflection: On research questions, design, working relationships and information required

Action: Work together to implement research and collect data. Enable participation of all members. Collaboratively analyse findings. Collaboratively plan future actions

Reflection: On working together. Has participation worked? What else do we need to do?

Action: Begin to work on feeding research back to all participants and plan for feedback on process and findings

Reflection: Evaluate both the action and reflection processes as a whole

Action Collectively identify future research and impacts

(Pain et al., 2019, p. 3/8)

From this, we could infer that in a CP, citizens could participate in:

- Co-defining the purpose and the issues: In most CPs, the purpose of the process (paving the way for a political step, raising public awareness, etc.) is primarily decided by the organizers. In contrast, we will see in 2.2 examples of institutionalized processes where citizens set the agenda.

- The process design: The phases of the CPs, with or without a learning stage, with a long or short iterative or not deliberation phase, are mostly predetermined for organizational reasons.
- The decision modus: (consensus, agreement or majority vote) are also mostly predetermined.
- The analysis of the results: CP participants are almost never involved in the collection and analysis of the results of their deliberations. Implementing a feedback analysis will be a specificity of the MeDeMAP project.

As a unique social experience, each CP design provides more or less PAR experience at different stages of the process.

2 A review of good practices of citizens' parliaments

In this section, we will present some examples of CPs at European and national levels, drawing on the databases mentioned in 1.1.

2.1 Historical Overview and Current Trends in Citizen Participation

In the early 2000s, the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Ontario embraced the deliberative tool for policymaking, initiating the wave of large-scale citizen assemblies convened by public authorities. In recent years, this CP format has become popular at the national level in a growing number of countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, and France. Meanwhile, experiences with different types of citizens' parliaments of a smaller size have flourished at various administrative levels, especially at the regional and municipal levels. In the province of Vorarlberg in western Austria and in the German-speaking community of East Belgium, the deliberative instrument has been integrated into the regular policy-making process. Public authorities and grassroots associations involved in CPs are often very willing to share their expertise because they see their concept and practice as a success.

Two citizens' assemblies stand out as milestones in the contemporary history of deliberative democracy. The first to be held on a national scale, in British Columbia in 2003-2004 on electoral reform with 160 citizens, and the Irish Citizens' Assemblies of 2013-2014 and 2016-2018, because the citizens' recommendations were followed by referenda that led to significant political change and social revolution, introducing same-sex marriage and the right to abortion, respectively.

The "Institutionalization" of CPs

In Europe (and before in Canada and Australia), several cities and regions have institutionalized the use of various forms of CPs. In practice, this means either that there is a permanent structure with rotating citizens, such as the Permanent Citizens' Council of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, which was established in 2019 and inspired The Citizens' Climate Assembly in Brussels (2023) or the Milan Permanent Citizen Assembly (2021). The Lisbon Citizens' Council established in 2022 as "permanent" is however still not anchored in the decision-making process.

Another type of institutionalization occurs when the law defines the modalities for convening a CP, namely when a popular consultation initiated by citizens has collected a certain number of signatures in support. This is the case in the Austrian province of Vorarlberg. They are usually organized and carried out by the municipality or the region. The Permanent Citizens' Council of the German-speaking Community of Belgium is implemented by the NGO G1000, but financed and supervised by the regional parliament. (The OECD Deliberative Democracy Database, 2023).

2.2 Some prominent experiences in Europe

2.2.1 European experiences with CPs at EU level

In 2019, following the European Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe (2017), the new President of the European Commission, von der Leyen, announced the creation of a two-year conference on the future of Europe.

Between June 2021 and May 2022, 800 European citizens, divided into four panels of 200 participants, discussed the economy and social justice (panel 1), European democracy/values, rights and the rule of law (panel 2), climate change, environment and health (panel 3) and the EU in the world and migration (panel 4).

Each of the panels met for three weekend sessions. In Session 1 (face-to-face), participants identified topics linked to their panels; in Session 2 (online), they identified issues and produced orientations and in Session 3 (hybrid: face-to-face and online for participants impeded), they prioritized the orientations and fine-tuned them into final recommendations.

The panels' discussions were nurtured by the interventions of policy experts. They also integrated the inputs from other citizens gathered on a multilingual digital platform. In a further step, panel participants met in Conference Plenaries with Members of the European Parliament and other institutional representatives to present and discuss the recommendations developed in the panels. Most of the deliberative process took place in subgroups of 8-12 citizens (Jones et al., 2022, pp. 25-26).

It was expected that each sub-group of the panels would produce one to five recommendations, reached by consensus, in the form of a statement identifying the desired change or policy action. The statement should be accompanied by a justification and a list of the orientations on which it is based.

The Final report highlights among other findings, that panelists showed a higher level of trust in EU institutions than the average of EU citizens. Participants were satisfied with the expert inputs (overall satisfaction rate of more than 70%) (Jones et al., 2022, p. 42) and gained knowledge even on topics from other panels that they were not involved in (Jones et al., 2022, p. 73).

The main criticism in the Final report (Jones et al., 2022, pp. 77-82) concerns the time schedule that did not allow enough time for deliberation: *“Three weekends per subgroup did not allow the deep deliberation that the topics deserved or allow participants to settle into the process”*. The authors also recommended:

- involving participants in co-design and feedback loops in the overall process design
- Narrowing the scope of the panels to allow for more in-depth discussions
- Allowing participants more time to prioritise the issues they will discuss in working groups.

They also emphasized that experts should be selected with a good mix of academic, professional, and personal experience (as was the case)

Another point of criticism concerned the multilingual digital platform which “was not well integrated into the citizen deliberation”. The report recommends either making digital deliberation a core part of the process or using such a platform only to report on offline events. Another suggestion is to share materials so that participants can reflect on the content between meetings.

Since this first European experience of citizens' consultation, the EU has launched a new series of citizens' panels on different topics involving each time 150 European citizens: “Tackling Hatred in Society” took place between April and May 2024 following panels on Energy Efficiency, Learning Mobility, Virtual Worlds and Food Waste.

2.2.2 European experiences with CPs at national level

Between 2021 and 2023, 159 CPs were added to the OECD database. France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany and the UK organized several CPs with more than 100 participants. In some cases, CPs are part of a larger process that includes an open online public consultation on the same issues. In other cases, the panels include policy makers.

Not infrequently, major national CPs have been organized by the government to address sensitive national issues, such as same-sex marriage and abortion in Ireland and the “end-of-life” in France, or to raise public awareness of societal problems, like in Germany with CPs on Germany's role in the world (2021), artificial intelligence (2022), or the “Forum against Fake News” (2024).

The Irish citizens' assemblies certainly galvanized hopes and faith in CPs as a democratic tool far beyond the country. They are cited as milestones by many European grassroots movements.

In some countries like the UK or Ireland, the CPs are getting so popular within administrations that “*they are becoming an established part of political and parliamentary decision making*”, according to the NGO Involve. Since 2003, the British NGO has been working with institutions and civil society in the UK to promote deliberative democracy.

Some well-known examples of CPs in the UK at federal and regional levels include, besides the Climate Assembly UK (CAUK), “Democracy Matters” on the reform of local governance in England in 2015, the Citizens' Assembly on Brexit (2017), and the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK in 2021.

CP's experiences in France and in the UK

Before 2019, citizen consultations in France had traditionally taken either the dramatic form of a national referendum or participatory budgeting at the local level. According to the Jean-Jaurès think-tank, more and more municipalities have been offering the opportunity to participate in budget decisions since 2014 (Bézard, 2024).

The “grand débat national” (2019)

France began to resort to citizen consultations in 2019 after the yellow-jacket protest. In November 2018, a fuel tax sparked protests from people in rural areas, for whom it meant a significant loss of purchasing power. The protests, which took the form of road blockades

(people wore yellow jackets that became a symbol of the protest), soon broadened into a more diffuse protest against the high cost of living and the "arrogance of power." It reflected a general crisis of confidence in representative institutions.

To defuse the protests that had lasted for months, the president invited French citizens to express their demands in "cahiers de doléances" (grievance books) in town halls, online or by taking part in the "grand débat national" (national debate). "Citizens' Conferences" were organized at regional level between January and April 2019, bringing together French citizens chosen by lot and representatives of various stakeholders. Four themes were discussed: taxation and public spending, organization of public services, ecological transition, democracy and citizenship.

The output, a jumble of proposals collected online (nearly 2 million contributions), at local initiative meetings (10,000 meetings bringing together 500,000 participants), in the 16,000 "cahiers citoyens" and 18 "conférences citoyennes", whose primary analysis was entrusted to different institutions, made it easy for the government to choose and pick what it wanted from it. French yellow jackets outed their frustration not having been heard enough (Courant, 2021) but the experience that mobilized several hundred thousand people gave the French presidency a taste for more.

The Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat (2019-2020) and the Climate Assembly UK (2020)

The Convention citoyenne pour le climat (CCC) or Citizens' Climate Convention was launched right afterwards in France, with the prospect to reconcile defenders of social justice and ecological transition. This time, the CP was done in a more structured manner inspired by the model of large citizen assemblies. 150 French citizens chosen by lot were asked to propose ways of achieving "a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 40% by 2030 in a spirit of social justice" (Convention citoyenne pour le climat). They debated from October 2019 to June 2020 during seven three-day sessions and adopted 149 recommendations on five topics. There was a learning phase with an audit of experts selected by the organizer, the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE), a public institution independent of the government. This was followed by phases of deliberation and adoption of proposals.

The French president had promised to include 146 of the recommendations in the government's bill. According to the newspaper Le Monde (February, 2021), 78 proposals (53%) were partially incorporated into the draft law, taking into account the will of the citizens but adopting less far-reaching measures or setting a longer deadline for their implementation. This was perceived by the media as a failure to respect the results and contributed to discrediting the process.

In a critical article in Deliberative Democracy Digest (June 9, 2021), a website supported by the newDemocracy Foundation, Courant (2021) underlines some additional shortcomings in the CCC process. Participants, being split into thematic groups and not having enough time to deliberate on the other issues in the plenary, had to vote on measures they had not examined. This impacted their final support for the whole process. Courant also criticizes the absence of attitudinal criteria in the selection process, estimating that the CP had been "representative in

demographic terms, but there was no consideration of whether participants have diverse viewpoints.” (Courant, 2021)

In their article on CPs as “democratic innovation” published before the following draft law was presented in France Kübler, Leggewie, and Nanz (2021) rather praise the quality of the CCC process:

“The procedural characteristics of the CCC - random selection and deliberative quality - were also viewed predominantly positively by the media and the public, and a high degree of trust and expertise was attributed to its recommendations.

But they also warn of public disappointment and the risk of fueling populism if the 149 ambitious measures are not implemented. The authors nevertheless conclude that the CCC revealed *“a willingness among the population for radical transformation that party politicians, with their focus on group interests, previously considered impossible”* (Kübler, Leggewie & Nanz, 2021).

In another article Mellier & Wilson (2020) compared the French CCC and its British pendant, the Climate Assembly UK (CAUK), that ran from January to June 2020. Although their design was similar, they conclude that the CCC *“was cast as a political chamber, whereas the CAUK (which was sponsored by parliamentary committees) existed to inform a political chamber.”*

Besides having been initiated by the government as a response to protests both British CAUK and French CCC followed *“a broadly standard format, which includes time for learning, deliberating, and voting”* (Mellier & Wilson, 2020). They involved a similar number of people selected by drawing lots (108 and 150, respectively). Both assemblies were also split into topic groups.

“The CCC’s civil society representatives had a formal, active role in shaping the agenda, whereas CAUK’s civil society members did not”, note Mellier & Wilson (2020). Whereas the CAUK’s framing question had been defined by parliamentary committees, the French CCC participants played a role in determining the framing question and also addressed issues that were not originally in the convention’s remit. The CCC’s participants were also given a greater agency in seeking outside input. Overall CCC participants had a more important participatory role, conclude Mellier and Wilson (2020).

Facilitation

“The CAUK was structured and facilitated, contrasting with France’s more collective self-organizing approach.” As a result, *“the French table discussions were more likely to be dominated by certain people”* and *“as a whole, the French process was far less technically rigorous than the UK process. The UK process had clear, agreed-upon ground rules for participation, which were reiterated at each session; the French process had none, trusting citizens to self-organize and self-regulate”* state Mellier and Wilson (2020).

Courant (2021) also notes for the CCC the *“absence of facilitators who could support participants at the tables, leading to asymmetries in discussion and the difficulty to stay on topic. For example, some discussions became a dialogue between its most vocal citizens, with those feeling left out ending up using their smartphones out of boredom.”*

Public visibility and impact on public opinion

The CCC generated a national debate, while in comparison, the CAUK received less attention from the public. The French population supported most of the proposals, which gave the CCC “a very powerful mandate for change”, estimate Mellier and Wilson (2020).

The Convention on the End of Life (2022-2023)

The second large national CP organized in France was the Convention on the End of Life, launched in December 2022. Like Ireland on other issues, the French government wished to have a consultation with the citizens before addressing a sensitive issue with a law. The participants were asked to answer the following main question: “*Is the framework for supporting the end of life adapted to the different situations encountered or should changes be made?*”

Called by the French government and organized again by the CESE, it brought together 184 citizens drawn at random. The organization model was the same as for the CCC.

The citizens met for nine three-day sessions (27 days) between December 2022 and April 2023. They received a stipend along with all expenses paid for (travel, accommodation, food and childcare).

Design and process

The design of this CP on the end of life was the same as previously for the CCC, but this time the task of the citizens was to adopt a position on different issues rather than propose measures.

There was an information and learning phase with French and international experts in various fields - legal, economic, social, cultural, medical, religious, and philosophical - followed by deliberation and the adoption of 65 proposals. 76 percent of the participants voted in favor of introducing assisted suicide and euthanasia within strict guidelines.

In its final report published on July 2023, the “Collège des garants” (college of guarantors) an advisory body composed of leading figures in moral and political philosophy, law, public affairs, political science and sociology, explained that due to the complexity of a very intimate topic, participants first worked on consensual subjects (improving palliative care) before focusing their deliberations on the more complex issues (whether or not to allow active assistance in dying), (CESE, 2023). Euthanasia opponents have since criticized the representativeness of the panel, suggesting that the perspective of the ill was not well represented (Levy-Soussan & Marin, 2024).

Impact

The French government adopted a draft bill that was debated but could not be passed because the parliament was dissolved in July 2024. A parliamentary debate should start again in January 2025. The report published by CESE in April 2023 includes an assessment of the degree of adoption of each recommendation in the draft law.

In an article published on its website, the Dutch foundation DemocracyNext quotes Yale professor H el ene Landemore, who emphasizes the "benchmark" created by this CP: *"This convention marks in France the end of the experimental phase and the entry into a more institutional phase in which the recourse to deliberative democracy will be normalized"* (DemocracyNext, 2023).

Experiences with CPs in Germany

Germany has also developed a taste for CPs. Various forms of CPs have been implemented at national, regional and local levels, sometimes initiated by public authorities, sometimes involving foundations and civil society.

In recent years, it has become more common in Germany for a CP to be set up as part of a wider consultation process, involving, in addition to randomly selected citizens taking part in a CP, a group of experts making their own recommendations and a wider public invited to take part in the debate online. Sometimes CPs and online consultations run in parallel, in other cases the CP builds on online recommendations, or vice versa. As of November 2024, the German website buergerrat.de listed eight ongoing CPs at the local level in Germany and seventeen "in preparation". Transportation was a popular topic (buergerrat.de, retrieved 30.11.2024).

Cooperation between public institutions, civil movements or private foundations and research is becoming common in Germany. The German national "Forum against Fakes" (January to July 2024), which aimed to develop proposals to combat misinformation, was initiated by the Bertelsmann Foundation, a powerful private foundation linked to the Bertelsmann media group, in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Interior Ministry, the Mercator Foundation and the Michael Otto Foundation for Sustainability. 120 citizens participated in the CP and voted on 15 recommendations and 28 measures to combat disinformation. Their proposals were presented on an online platform where they were supported by 216,000 voters.

About the purpose and impact of the CP "Forum against Fakes", the civic organization B urgerrat.de states: *"The aim of the project is to educate and sensitise citizens about the dangers of disinformation. The recommendations for action developed in the forum are aimed at decision-makers at federal and state level, as well as other interest groups such as platform operators, the media and civil society organisations."*

Like the civic organizations G1000 in Belgium and in the Netherlands, the German NGO Mehr Demokratie is involved in participatory projects in cooperation with public authorities. Together with the Research Institute for Sustainability in Potsdam (RIFS), MehrDemokratie has supported municipalities in organizing public consultations (Losland, 2024).

The Estonian Youth Climate Assembly of Ida-Viru

Between 2021 and 2023 three CPs have been organized at local level on the theme of environment in Estonia. They took place in Ida-Viru (2021), Tartu (2022), and Tallinn (2023) with 33, 55 and 50 participants respectively. They were organized by NGOs at the invitation of the Ministry of the Environment for the first one and the mayors for the last two.

The Youth Climate Assembly of Ida-Viru County situated in North-Eastern Estonia is particularly interesting, because it aimed to evaluate the plan for a transition in a low-income

region while empowering young people (aged 16-29) who usually stay away from civic participation. On the final day of the debate, 25 young people took part and 21 of them voted on the proposals (European Commission, 2024).

Recruiting and convincing young people was a challenge, especially as many were unaware of the transition plans for the region. Another challenge was to organize the discussion between participants with Estonian and Russian mother tongues in a region with a strong Russian-speaking minority.

In any case, the CP has helped to disseminate public information to a population group that is normally inaccessible, while at the same time involving this marginalized group in participatory political action.

A democratic tool institutionalized at a regional and local level: East Belgium

The German-speaking community of East Belgium established in 2019 a "Permanent Citizens' Council of the German-speaking Community of Belgium" determined by random selection, which can initiate occasional citizens' assemblies, also drawn by lot, to discuss and make recommendations on topics determined by the citizens' council. Although the process is financed and monitored by the regional parliament, the CPs are implemented by the NGO "G1000". One specificity is the role of the participants in setting an agenda (G1000, 2024; Bürgerdialog in Ostbelgien, 2024)

According to Podgórska-Rykała (2024, p. 158), East Belgium's experience with the Permanent Citizens' Dialogue model is considered successful and has inspired European municipalities such as London Borough of Newham, Aachen and Paris. In contrast to the Citizens' Council in Vorarlberg (Austria), there is a learning phase with experts. The result takes the form of proposals to the provincial parliament, which are not binding, but if they are not implemented, the MPs have to justify and argue why this is not. The citizens are rewarded (in contrast to Vorarlberg). Although the procedure is institutionalized, the response rate of citizens drawn by lot is with 2 to 3% very low. (OECD Deliberative Democracy Database, 2023)

2.3 Experiences with CPs in WP6 partner countries

2.3.1 Experiences with Citizen Parliaments in Austria

Apart from the western region of Vorarlberg, where "Bürgerräte" (referred to as Citizens' Council by the OECD) have been institutionalized as an instrument of regional and local policy making, the experience with CPs in Austria is limited and the perception of their impact ambivalent.

It should be noted that the Austrian constitution provides for three instruments of direct democracy: people's petition (Volksbegehren), referenda (Volksabstimmung) and public consultations (Volksbefragung). Only the first of them can be initiated by citizens.

The following CPs have been organized at national levels

- The Austrian Climate Citizens' Assembly (CCA)

- Two CPs initiated by grassroots organizations on the future of democracy and on the future of transport
- One CP initiated by a private person on redistribution of wealth and social justice

In addition, over 60 CPs have taken place in the province of Vorarlberg. Other municipalities or districts have organized deliberative consultations on concrete local issues.

Austrian Climate Citizens' Assembly (Klimarat), 2022

The Austrian Climate Assembly organized by the government in 2022 is the only federal experience (apart from the consensus conference on genetic data in 2003, a scientific initiative organized by the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) with 12 participants).

Main features

- Dates: January to June 2022 on 6 weekends (1,5 days each)
- Venues: alternatively, Vienna and Salzburg
- Initiative: Federal government following a people's petition
- Participants: 100 expected (residents in Austria for more than 5 years, over 16 years of age). 84 participants came
- Selection process: random selection by Statistics Austria, invitations with questionnaire,
- Compensation: 100 EUR per weekend (+ costs for travel & accommodation).
- Outcome: 93 recommendations
- Addressees: Minister for Climate Action and Environment and Minister of economy (initiators)
- Learning phase with experts: yes
- Advisory board: 15 members
- Learning sessions with scientists from various disciplines. Introductory reading material sent before 1st meeting. Experts available at meetings for presentations and/or questions,
- Facilitation method: art of hosting & dynamic facilitation
- Context: A people's petition demanding to give the Austrian population an active say in climate protection measures gathered almost 400,000 signatures in June 2020 (100,000 are requested to have the parliament discuss an issue). Consequently, the National Parliament asked the federal government to implement the petition which was done by setting up the Climate Citizens' Assembly.
- Topic and sub-topics: The main question was: "*What do we have to do today in order to live in a climate-healthy future tomorrow?*". Five topics had been defined: energy, production/consumption, food/land use, mobility, housing.

CP process and design

The agenda (main topic and five sub-topics) had been set by the Austrian parliament. The first weekends were dedicated to information and learning. Experts made presentations and were present to answer questions. Information packages consisted of text and video statements on each of the five action fields. The presentations included stakeholders.

The deliberation and the elaboration of recommendations were guided by an important team of experienced moderators in plenary discussions and sub-groups. The elaboration of recommendations took place in thematic working groups. All final recommendations were adopted last weekend.

Adoption of resolutions: by consent. Serious objections were documented in the final report. (Scherhauser, Plöchl, & Buzogány, 2022, pp. 42-43)

Facilitation: The team of facilitators used tools from the Art of Hosting and Dynamic facilitation. Scherhauser et al. (2022, pp. 33-34), who conducted an additional evaluation, praise the work of the large moderation team, which made it possible “to create a motivating working atmosphere among the participants very quickly”.

Outcomes: The CP presented 93 recommendations to the ministers of climate action and of economy in July 2022. A first reply took the form of a report stating for each recommendation whether and how it could be implemented and whose responsibility it would be.

Critiques and recommendations from the evaluation reports

Two evaluation reports of the Austrian Climate Citizens' Assembly have been published in 2022, the Final Report Austrian Climate Citizens Assembly, by the Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (Buzogány, Ehs, Plöchl & Scherhauser, 2022) and the Evaluation Report of the Austrian 'Klimarat' by the University for Continuing Education Krems (Praprotnik, Ingruber, Nash & Rodenko, 2022).

Lack of impact: The main critique concerned the lack of impact. Although the CCA had been organized by the government, there was nothing stipulated about what to do with the recommendations.

Representativeness of the CP participants: “Compared to the public, members of the Climate Assembly were more concerned about climate change” (Praprotnik et al., 2022, p. 4).

From a sociodemographic point of view, the survey concludes that “some parts of the population were missing” and recommends “to find a more motivating way to involve citizens, e.g. from minorities or from certain age groups” (Praprotnik et al., 2022, p. 37).

The evaluators also tackled the fact that attitudes towards climate change were inquired in the questionnaire but not taken into account as a selection criterion. A further bias was induced by the covid-context, with people resistant to vaccination being excluded.

Media visibility: The evaluation report greeted the presence of the media which contributed to its visibility. A public consultation online was organized parallel to the CP. New ideas were collected “but the results were overwhelming in their diversity and mass” which made the task only more difficult for the CP participants (Praprotnik et al., 2022, p. 36).

Grassroots' CPs on the future of democracy and on the future of transport

Two CPs on the future of democracy and on the future of transportation were organized by grassroots organizations in 2023 and 2021, respectively. They covered issues of national interest but did not involve public stakeholders. There was no follow-up to their results.

CP on the future of democracy

- Initiative: 3 grassroots organizations advocating for citizens' participation
- Dates: 18.-18.9.2021

- 10 participants (20 expected, 16 recruited, 6 did not come)
- 1 weekend (1,5 days)
- Compensation for participants: 100 EUR
- Outcome: declaration
- Addressee: undefined
- Selection process: random selection
- Learning phase with experts: No
- Facilitation method: dynamic facilitation

The initiative came from a collective of three grassroots organizations (Respekt.net, IG Demokratie, MehrDemokratie! Österreich) engaged in promoting citizens' participation. The last one withdrew from the project before its completion.

The main objective was to initiate a national experiment with a bottom-up citizen parliament and draw attention to the instrument of deliberative democracy.

The success was limited. Only 10 participants could be gathered. They were much more politically active individuals and in favor of citizen participation than the average population, which created a bias. There was no learning phase. The main topic was very broad and participants could not manage to frame sub-topics.

Critics and lessons learned: An evaluation report ordered by one of the initiators, respekt.net, raises many critical aspects. Participants did not feel that they had equal access to voice their concerns. The facilitators (in this case the method was dynamic facilitation) did not succeed in creating a safe space for each participant to express his/her concerns and proposals.

The project was not embedded in a political context. No decision-makers or stakeholders were involved or addressed. The event attracted no media attention. There was no learning process to trigger informed deliberation (Ehs, 2021).

CP on the future of transport

Two years after the CP on the future of democracy, a second CP was organized by the same grassroots organization on two weekends between October 2022 and March 2023, this time on a specific topic: transport in three regions, Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland. The target was 30 participants. 28 turned up for the first weekend, but only 17 for the second. Drawing lessons from the first experience, this CP had a learning phase with experts. A facilitation team helped the participants through the process of deliberation and adoption of recommendations. They used Art of Hosting methods with some elements of dynamic facilitation. This time the participants managed to formulate recommendations, but as no public stakeholders had been involved in the process, the recommendations did not address specific targets and therefore had little impact. Another point of criticism is again the unbalanced composition of the citizens' panel. They were much more in favor of pro-environmental transport reforms than the average population. Although participants had been invited through a random selection process, self-selection had created a bias. Reflecting on this experience, the organizers estimated that the participants benefited from the exchange with experts and from the participatory experience but were disappointed by the lack of follow-up (Wagner, 2024).

CP on redistribution of wealth (Guter Rat für Rückverteilung)

This CP was organized by a private person who wanted to directly redistribute part of her inheritance from industrial profits. The aim was twofold:

1. to have citizens allocate the sum of 25 million euros to various projects
2. to trigger a debate on redistribution of wealth and social justice in Austria.

Main features

- Dates: March to June 2024 on 6 weekends of 1,5 days
- 50 participants
- Initiative: private person
- Outcome: selection of projects and “messages” (Botschaften)
- Addressees: non specific
- Learning phase with experts: yes
- Facilitation method: art of hosting & dynamic facilitation.
- Compensation: 1.200 EUR for each of 6 weekends + travel costs
- Adoption modus: consent

Overall, the CP seems to have achieved some of its goals and attracted some attention. The main critiques focused on the experts’ choice and the lack of diversity of their points of view. The time devoted to deliberation was experienced as too short.

Materials were also sent before the sessions and made available in printed form at weekends. Finally, an online space was set up where council members could download available information. Those without Internet access received the material by post (Ingruber, 2024).

The Citizens Council of the province of Vorarlberg

Citizens Councils have not only become a tradition in Vorarlberg since 2006, but they are also enshrined in the regional state constitution since 2013. If citizens gather at least 1000 signatures, they have a right to convene a “Bürgerrat”. According to its website, the region of Vorarlberg considers Citizens councils as *“an extension of the existing political structures (that) offer space to enable and promote dialog between politicians and the population”* (vorarlberg.at).

Although we will continue to use CP as a generic term, it should be noted that the “Bürgerrat” from Vorarlberg follows the design of a definite model of CP, the Wisdom Council developed in the 1980’s by Jim Rough (US), which main characteristics are:

- A number of participants between 12 to 16
- A duration of 1,5 to 2 days
- The moderation method of dynamic facilitation
- no learning phase with experts

Since 2006, over 60 CP have taken place in Vorarlberg, 14 at the regional level, the others locally.

Initiative: Citizens Councils at regional level can be initiated either by the regional authorities or by the citizens, provided they collect 1000 signatures. They are organized by the Office for Voluntary Engagement and Participation (FEB) of the province of Vorarlberg.

Outcomes: Participants adopt statements or recommendations, which are subsequently presented to a larger audience of citizens in a public “world café” and in a third stage to a “resonance group” made up of political representatives, administration, NGOs and experts. The resonance group examines the feasibility of the recommendations and makes a recommendation on them. The state government is only obligated to inform what will or will not be implemented and why.

The Vorarlberg “model” has inspired a regional initiative in Salzburg and various experiments elsewhere at local level to foster more participation. The city of Linz, in the province of Upper Austria and the third largest city in the country, has for instance set up a participation platform where citizens can submit proposals. If they reach 50 votes within 60 days, the city will review the feasibility of the proposal and may open it for further discussion, but without commitment at this stage. The city and region of Vienna established in 2024, an “Office for Participation” with the goal of increasing citizens’ participation in projects of the city. One example is the Climate Team, where residents of three Viennese districts can submit proposals to combat climate change (Büro für Zukunftsfragen, 2019; Vorarlberg, 2024).

Table 2: Overview of Austrian CPs

CP name	model	Date	Geographical scope	Initiative	N° participants	Duration	Stages	Theme	Complexity of topics	Facilitation	Outcome	Destination of proposal	Compensation
Bürgeräte province of Vorarlberg	Citizen's council	since 2006, regularly	regional	regional government or citizens	12-16	1,5 days	deliberation adoption	all relevant regional topics	low-medium	dynamic facilitation	recommendations	public institution	No
Klimarat/ CP on climate	Citizen's assembly	Jan. to June 2022	national	National parliament following a popular petition	100 targeted 84 participated	6 WE	Learning/ information deliberation adoption	climate protection	high	Art of Hosting & Dynamic Facilitation	93 recommendations	government	100 EUR/WE
Zukunftsrat Demokratie	Citizen's council	7.2020 - 12.2021	national/ but only participants from 5 regions	grassroots organizations	10	2 days	deliberation adoption	democracy	high	dynamic facilitation	ideas	government	100/WE
Guter Rat Rückverteilung	Citizen's council	3.2024 - 6.2024	national	private person	50	6 WE	Learning / information deliberation adoption	Wealth distribution	medium-high	Art of Hosting & Dynamic Facilitation	identification of projects, declarations	broad public	1200/ WE

Conclusions on the Austrian CPs

In Austria, CPs are a well-established tool of deliberative democracy in the federal state of Vorarlberg, but only there. Nevertheless, the model has inspired other regional and local initiatives.

The lack of direct impact is a shared concern. In some cases, the lack of concrete recommendations would have made a political uptake difficult (the CP on the future of democracy was heavily criticized for its lack of concrete results). In the case of the Citizens' Assembly on Climate, most of the 93 recommendations are concrete, but the federal government has not committed to supporting them.

In Vorarlberg, the regional or local authorities must justify which measures they are leaving out and why, but still, the results are not binding.

Media coverage: The Austrian Climate Citizens' Assembly (CCA) attracted the interest of the national media *"at least until the minister said there would not be automatic uptake of the recommendations"* (interview with Erwin Mayer, evaluator). Vorarlberg's citizens councils are usually well-known to the public and covered by the local media as they are perceived as a part of the political regional or local life. The CPs initiated by grassroots organizations were largely ignored. By contrast, the privately initiated CP on redistribution managed to attract some attention (with the help of a consequent budget and a large communication team).

Facilitation: Whereas Vorarlberg is an advocate of the Dynamic facilitation method invented by Jim Rough, the facilitators hired for the other CPs turned to the Art of Hosting and/or used a mix of methods. The Austrian Climate Citizens' Assembly, whose facilitation has been praised by evaluators, resorted to the Art of Hosting and sometimes used Dynamic Facilitation tools to achieve consent. In the CP on the Future of transport, the facilitators also resorted to the Art of Hosting and employed Dynamic Facilitation only when they anticipated difficulties to exchange.

According to the facilitator Martina Handler (Interview 16.10.24), the choice of DF by Vorarlberg is justified by the fact that the expected outcomes of the CPs are either concrete proposals on local issues or the expression of citizens' expectations, which do not require much deliberation. She points out that the Art of Hosting is more appropriate when citizens are to engage in discussion and deliberation to develop proposals on complex issues.

2.3.2 Experiences with Citizen Parliaments in the Czech Republic

[OECD notes in their Public Governance Review on Czech Republic](#) (2023) that although there have been improvements in citizen participation, for example in the nonprofit sector, the country has no experience with deliberation at the national level. The OECD database has no record of experience with CPs in the Czech Republic. However, several initiatives have been taken to support the principles of deliberative and participatory democracy.

Initiated in 2021 by a collective of researchers, filmmakers, and policy experts, the Platform for Citizens' Assembly organizes the country's first national-level citizens' assembly on "energetic poverty" between October 2024 and April 2025. Its aim is to raise awareness of the potential of deliberative mini-publics to *"recover trust in society in such tools and bring useful solutions to*

societal problems” and is supported by the European Council and Czech public institutions (Platforma pro občanské shromáždění/Platform for Citizens’ Assembly, 2024).

Two other organizations engaged in deliberative and participatory democracy principles are the Participation Factory and Agora (Central Europe), a civic association founded in 1998 with the aim of facilitating communication between local governments, central government agencies and citizens. Agora CE produces materials and organizes public workshops and events for this purpose.

Impact: No citizens’ assembly has been implemented yet, but the topic has appeared several times in the media or at other public events. It remains to be seen whether it will reach citizens beyond the academic and art world.

2.3.3 Experiences with Citizen Parliaments in Slovenia

The Initiative for Citywide Assembly (Municipality of Maribor)

The most notable examples in Slovenia are probably citizen assemblies organized on a continuous basis for more than 10 years in the city of Maribor (Municipality of Maribor) with around 10 citizen assemblies in various districts of the city and on city level. The name of the initiative is “The Initiative for Citywide Assembly (Iniciativa mestni zbor – IMZ, 2024).” It is based on informal groups of citizens whose aim it is to promote non-partisan political self-organization at the city district level in the Municipality of Maribor, Slovenia.

The initiative was formed in turbulent times at the end of 2012, when people were unsatisfied with local as well as state governance and went to the streets. Civil unrest, which erupted in Maribor and spread over Slovenia, resulted in the resignations of the mayor of Maribor and later the Prime Minister of Slovenia. (Interview conducted by the Peace Institute with members of the initiative).

Citizens’ assemblies meet monthly in the same place and have moderators (citizens trained in facilitation by other experienced citizens) with clear rules for facilitation. The moderators of the local assemblies meet regularly at city level. (Iniciativa mestni zbor – IMZ. The Initiative for Citywide Assembly, 2024).

Citizen assemblies (in Slovenian language “zbor občanov”) have been institutionalized in the national legislation on local self-management. The law on local self-management specifies, in Article 45 that “*the mayor must convene a citizens’ assembly if it is prescribed by law or the municipal statute or if at least five percent of the voters in the municipality or in its individual part so request, but he can convene it on his own initiative, on the initiative of the municipal council or the council of a narrower part of the municipality*” (art. 45).

The greatest achievement of this initiative has been the introduction of participatory budgeting in the Municipality of Maribor in 2015. Later around 40 of other municipalities in Slovenia have also institutionalized participatory budgeting (ZNetwork, 2024).

Other experiences with CPs or with civilian participatory initiatives

The “protest people’s assembly” (nationwide)

During the anti-government protests in Slovenia in the period 2020-2022, the protest movement of “Friday cycling protests” have organized several sessions of the “protest people’s assembly” (protestna ljudska skupščina) in open public space (parks, squares), moderating debates on various public policy issues and collecting citizen demands for reforms.

Before the 2022 parliamentary elections in Slovenia, the protest movement joined the initiative for establishing a large civil society informal coalition aimed at mobilizing citizens for an increased voter turnout by gathering and elaborating list of demands for reforms and requesting from the political parties participating in the elections to provide answers and commitments. The large civil society coalition was named “Glas ljudstva” (Voice of the People) and has organized in past three years numerous actions aimed at participation of citizens in democracy, and at accountability of the government.

The experience of the Peace Institute

The Slovenian MeDeMAP Partner, the Peace Institute, took part in the European project “Parliament for the Future of Europe” in 2023/2024, organized in the six EU Member States with the lowest voter turnouts in the 2019 European elections. Each country panel developed a set of recommendations on various policy issues related to European democracy.

In 2025, the Peace Institute will organize a citizen assembly on political participation of migrants in the country and at the EU level within the European project „Citizens’ Action for Democracy” (CitiDem, 2024), coordinated by the University of Bologna and funded by the European Union within the CERV program. The citizen assemblies will be separately organized, in Slovenia, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Germany, France, Austria and Netherlands.

Other experiences with participatory democracy include a training on citizens' assemblies for participants from Slovenia, organized by the NGO Danes je nov dan (Today is a new day) and conducted by the Polish organization Center for Blue Democracy in 2023, which focused on the use of digital technologies and the development of innovative campaigns for participation.

Impact of CPs in Slovenia

In the case of the Initiative for Citywide Assembly in Maribor, citizen assemblies have had an impact on local and national politics, mostly by contributing to the introduction of participatory budgeting on municipal level in Slovenia.

In the case of the “protest people’s assemblies” held during anti-government protests in the period 2020-2022, the resolutions of the assemblies and the protests have been integrated in the work of the large civil society coalition “Voice of the People”. It has strongly contributed to increased voter turnout at the 2022 parliamentary elections resulting in the change of the authoritarian government, and to mobilization of voters for several referendums on progressive policies. All of that has contributed to the increased awareness of the power of active citizens in democratic procedures and institutions.

Media coverage: The national media reported on the Initiative for Citywide Assembly in Maribor in few cases, mostly at the beginning of the initiative, and with regard to the participatory budgeting introduction.

2.3.4 Experiences with Citizen Parliaments in Ireland

Since its first CP on constitutional reform (2013-2014), which resulted in the government adopting recommendations on marriage equality and voting at age 16, Ireland has organized five more large citizens' assemblies using the same model, four at the national level and one at the level of the municipality of Dublin.

Inspired by the design of the Canadian CPs, which bring together hundreds of citizens over several months to reflect on key social and political issues, Ireland's successful experience has motivated other European authorities to take the plunge. Its first CPs dealt with different, unrelated issues, the latest conducted after 2020 focused on one issue, drug use (2023), biodiversity loss (2022-2023), or gender equality (2020-2021).

More CPs have also been organized at a local or regional level. The most well-known and possibly most successful are listed here below in the order of the amount of publicity and public interest that they elicited.

2016-2018 Citizens' Assembly

This Assembly was tasked with a number of issues:

- The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution
- The challenges and opportunities of an aging population
- Fixed term parliaments
- The manner in which referenda are held
- How the state can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change

However, it was the deliberations about Article 8 in the Irish constitution that prevented Irish women from having access to abortion as a right that gave this Citizens' Assembly the greatest amount of publicity before, during and after its deliberations. The Assembly recommended that the constitution be repealed and the referendum that was held subsequently saw the right to abortion being legislated for the article denying this right being repealed.

2020-2021 Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality

Citizens in this assembly were asked to produce concrete proposals in relation to gender equality and to rank these in order of priority so that they could be acted upon.

The terms of reference specified a number of areas that should be addressed, like to challenge the remaining barriers and social norms that facilitate gender discrimination ; to identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender inequalities; to seek to ensure women's effective participation and equal opportunities at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life; to seek to facilitate greater work-life balance, etc.

As occurred during the Covid time, this CP moved to online meetings. The first two meetings were held face-to-face, and the next seven were organized online.

Outcome: The Assembly agreed on 45 recommendations by e-voting. Since the recommendations were action-oriented, they also addressed an open letter to share their general views developed during the process. The letter was supported by 96% of participants. Following the CP, the constitutional amendment in relation to Article 41, best known as a simplification to "the Woman's place is in the Home" was rejected. (Suiter et al., 2021)

Citizens' Assembly 2012-2014

This Assembly was tasked with deliberating and making recommendations with regard to various constitutional issues:

- reducing the Presidential term of office to five years and aligning it with the local and European elections;
- reducing the voting age to 17;
- reviewing the Dáil (Parliament) electoral system;
- giving citizens resident outside the State the right to vote in Presidential elections at Irish embassies, or otherwise;
- provision for same-sex marriage;
- amending the clause on the role of women in the home and encouraging greater participation of women in public life;
- increasing the participation of women in politics;
- removal of the offence of blasphemy from the Constitution

Citizens' Assembly on Drug Use 2023-2024

This Assembly was tasked with considering the legislative, policy and operational changes the State could make to significantly reduce the harmful impacts of illicit drugs on individuals, families, communities and wider society, and to bring forward recommendations in this regard. It differs from previous assemblies in that, even though it is tasked with providing some concrete suggestions for legislative changes, it was seen by politicians, journalists and the public as of value in providing insights into the world of drug users and advice to legislators that might mitigate against the societal problem of drug abuse. (The Citizens' Assembly, 2024).

Dublin Citizens' Assembly (2022)

The aim of this local assembly was to discuss and make proposals about the organization of local authorities and the election of local political representatives. It was organized in the capital city of Ireland in 2022.

This Assembly differs from those concerned with national issues in a number of ways. Not only is the topic local, political and far more concrete and constrained but the composition of the Assembly of only 80 participants reserved spaces for 12 elected local authority politicians.

It is interesting to note that the strong recommendation of the Assembly to appoint a mayor for the capital city by direct elections has had no follow-up. A strong call for reform of local authority procedures and structures was a second outcome of the deliberations. Local and more regional assemblies are beginning to emerge as organizations and institutions recognize the value of eliciting people's opinions through this mechanism. (The Citizens' Assembly, 2022).

Summary regarding Irish CPs

Design

Each of these national Citizens' Assemblies was commissioned and supported by the Irish Government. In each case citizens were randomly selected by a commissioned agency. In the case of the first Assembly (2013-2014), 66 members of the public and 33 members of the Oireachtas (Houses of Parliament) took part. After this, in all other assemblies, 100 members

of the public were recruited to participate and no politicians were members of the assemblies, except in the case of the Dublin Citizens' Assembly (see below). In each Assembly a person of note and repute was invited to act as Chair by the Government of the day.

Commenting the Irish Citizens' Assembly of 2016-2017 (which resulted after a subsequent referendum in 2018 in the repeal of the 8th amendment prohibiting abortion), the British NGO Involve underlines that the participants included "pro-lifers, pro-choicers and undecideds" who had heard from a large panel "from both sides of the abortion debate, including medical, legal and ethical specialists, and people giving personal testimonies about their experiences". The NGO also emphasizes the deliberative phases: "*Members were also given the opportunity to deliberate amongst themselves, and to listen and reflect on the views of others in the room.*" (Involve, 2018)

Impact

The Assemblies are clearly popular with the government and seem to have the trust of the population to date. They appear to be well organized and managed and are beginning to be recommended as a tool for consultation for change by more than just the government (See above).

Successive Citizens' Assemblies have led to constitutional and legislative changes, and this enhances the trust people have in them as tools for consultation and for effecting change.

Some assemblies took it upon themselves to go beyond the remit they were tasked with and introduced topics and then resolutions beyond their terms of reference.

It is interesting to note the distinction between resolutions or recommendations that could be acted upon by government through legislation and those that required referenda to vote on changes to the constitution.

Although Irish national assemblies have been reputed successful because of the societal impact, Professor Farrell from University College Dublin points out that "*a number of citizens' assembly recommendations have been entirely ignored by Government impacting on the legitimacy of the process*" (University College Dublin, 2024).

Media coverage

The national media accompanied the Citizens' Assemblies with intensive reporting in print, radio, TV and online. Reports were overwhelmingly positive about the organization of the assemblies and about the drafted and voted recommendations. In the case of constitutional changes, the deliberations of the assemblies were widely reported by journalists and fed directly into the debates within and outside of parliament.

3 Good practice of CPs and PAR in view of a CP model for the MeDeMAP project

3.1 How does PAR apply to the design and implementation of WP6 CPs?

The research for Deliverables D6.1 and D6.2 in the MeDeMAP projects is interlinked. The aim of D6.1 is to provide useful inputs for the design (D6.2) and implementation of CPs in five

MeDeMAP countries. Some parameters to guide the design are predefined in the Grant Agreement (GA). It should be inspired by the format of an audience council and follow a participatory action research (PAR) approach. The design of the CPs and the research must also take into account feasibility and constraints (such as budget and timeframe). The objective of getting citizens to deal with three highly complex issues in a limited time also has an impact on the design and facilitation method. Finally, feasibility and constraints also play a role in the degree of "PARification".

Participants in a PAR project become partners and help shape the research process. This is done, as emphasised by CU in D2.2, in a circular and iterative mode, alternating between planning, acting, observing and reflecting. (Carpentier & Wimmer, 2024a)

Possible participatory steps for the citizens selected to take part in the CPs are setting the goals, designing the process (or some part of it), participating in a learning process, reflecting on the learning support, creating solutions and adopting them. Beyond the implementation of the CPs, the cooperation between the citizens and the organizers, who are also MedeMAP researchers, can be extended to data collection and analysis.

Where and to what extent can participants be involved in the design process?

As pointed out by Carpentier & Wimmer (2024a) in D2.2, there will be tension between CPs purposes (adopting resolutions on three complex topics) and an extensive PAR approach involving the CP participants in the design process. Nevertheless, participation *in* and *through* the CPs will occur at several levels.

The CP's successive stages (learning, deliberating, adopting resolutions) should enable a circular and iterative process, following the PAR cycle of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating and modifying.

In terms of concrete steps, it means learning from experts, reflecting on input, asking for more information when needed, developing proposals in small groups, reflecting in plenary, reformulating, adopting proposals, expressing feedback or dissent. The opportunity for participants to express their dissenting opinions online after the CP sessions on days 2, 3 and 4 also creates a link with PAR.

Participants should be given the space to develop the subtopics they will address within the general framework of the CP theme and the three main topics (media systems, representation, and participation in and through the media).

Participants discuss what kind of outcome (e.g., recommendations or resolutions) they want to achieve and what wording they prefer.

In terms of recruitment, participatory dimensions imply reaching out to affected populations and being inclusive.

The advisory board/support group set up for each national CP and its members should be involved in the PAR approach and according to the context contribute to design, recruitment of participants and experts, communication, and dissemination.

Finally, the implementation of PAR in terms of iterative steps and space for deliberation depends not only on the process design, but also on the facilitation. *"An essential design feature*

of CA is the facilitation, which ensures that everyone receives an equal opportunity to express themselves, and that each voice is equally respected. Facilitation is a delicate task, as it must spot the subtle and implicit ways through which inequalities occur and distort genuine deliberation” (Vrydagh, 2023, p. 6).

3.2 The role of facilitation. The Art of Hosting to enable a PAR approach

The choice of Art of Hosting (AoH) for our CPs

The citizens taking part in the CPs will be dealing with a complex issue in just a few days: media and democracy and its articulation. The MeDeMAP project foresees that the CPs (Deliverable 6.2 in WP6) will produce results (declarations, recommendations, resolutions...) which, after being analyzed (Task 6.3 and 6.4), will be integrated into the media map for future democracies.

We have therefore been looking for a facilitation approach that can ensure that the key principles identified by the OECD (2020) and a high degree of "PARification" are respected, while being oriented towards the production of an outcome. Based on the literature on facilitation and on the interviews conducted with facilitators and organizers of CPs, we concluded that The Art of Hosting (AoH) best meets these requirements. AoH has the advantage of being flexible and adaptable to participants while drawing on a wide range of techniques and tools, including those of dynamic facilitation. Like dynamic participation, it encourages participants to express their views, but by providing a safe, shared space that allows for respectful collective discussion rather than a separate dialogue between each participant and the facilitator. Austrian facilitator Martina Handler, who currently uses different techniques, points out that the Art of Hosting is more appropriate when citizens are engaged in discussion and deliberation to develop proposals on complex issues (Interview 16.10.24).

What can be expected from facilitation?

Schneidemesser, et al. (2023) have compared facilitation approaches in three CPs based on their potential to achieve different deliberative goals. Their main finding is that differences in facilitation approaches influence the process of deliberation. They remind about the expectations from facilitation: to make deliberative mini-publics more inclusive, more comprehensive, more careful to avoid deception and coercion. Inclusivity means that participants have an equal chance to speak and also that different sides of the debate are heard. Other expectations are the interaction or the inter-group dynamics during the deliberation and achieving a result *“through group atmosphere, consistent progress toward the goal, and also increase participant satisfaction”* (Schneidemesser, et al., 2023, p. 2).

What is “The Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter”?

“The Art of Hosting is a highly effective way of harnessing the collective wisdom and self-organizing capacity of groups of any size.”(Retrieved from artofhosting.org, 4.10.2024). This is how the reference website for Art of Hosting practitioners describes the AoH process. AoH (the full name is “The Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter”) provides for a participatory process of deliberation and decision-making, while effectively guiding participants through the various stages of the CP and respecting the criteria of inclusivity.

Facilitators ensure that all participants of a group have an equal say and that the discussions are respectful and fair. They help the participants *“make better use of the knowledge and ideas that they collectively possess.”* and must be neutral in terms of content (Involve, retrieved 2024, October 10).

Woolf & Corrigan (2020) define the practice of AoH as *“an integrated set of approaches to participatory process”* using *“methods to support dialogue, harvesting and collective meaning making”*. Co-creation is another key concept.

Origins of AoH

The AoH approach was first experimented by Dutch practitioners in the early 2000s. They wanted to explore *“what it would look like to combine participative and dialogic methodologies to support change.”* (Woolf & Corrigan, 2020, p. 1/13). AoH has become common practice of participatory initiatives in various contexts involving social innovation or the field of education and health. AoH has no formal structure, it brings together a global community of practitioners worldwide, who exchange to improve their practice. Its main online portal and reference website is artofhosting.org

According to artofhosting.org, the reference website of the global AoH community, *“Practitioners in Nova Scotia, Canada, have been leading innovative community engagement processes like Build Your Center, while massive public conversations have taken place in Israel/Palestine using World Café as a way of meeting together (1000 tables project). (...) Other initiatives, such as the Protestivals in Slovenia, get active support from Art of Hosting practitioners.”* (artofhosting.org, retrieved 30.09.2024).

AoH is also being used within the European Commission and other EU institutions (often under the label *“The Art of Participatory Leadership”*), in the NGO realm, and in hospitals, schools and a variety of other places seeking to better serve people and their needs. (artofhosting.org, retrieved 30.09.2024).

Core principles and methods

Over the years, a growing community of practitioners from Europe to Southern Africa and North America began to elaborate the core principles of AoH and define what is now referred to as *“The Four Fold Practice”*: be present, participate, host others, and co-create. To enable this, it is necessary to create spaces for meaningful conversation and collective problem solving, and to be able to host and harvest the collective outcomes (Corrigan, 2020). The idea of creating safe spaces for each individual within a group to enable co-creation is inspired by Open Space Technology developed by Owen Harrison in the 1980s.

One focus of AoH lies in the ability to create a safe, trusting space for a group (conceptualized as *“container building”*), where everyone feels heard and can contribute without fear. These spaces are designed to engage the collective intelligence of participants, using participatory approaches to address complex issues (Mosse & Muirhead, 2020, p. 6).

- Hosting: *“Hosting has a different intent that overlaps with facilitation, but seeks to have participants take much more responsibility for the process. (...) It’s not filling people with information. It is creating conditions so that inner awareness can arise, individually and collectively.”* (Woolf and Corrigan, 2020, p. 6/13). The AoH host will ensure the *“comfort*

of participants, meaningful contributions, and collective intelligence" (Schwartz, 2016, p. 96) and *"help the group understand what it is uncovering as it works together."* (Woolf & Corrigan, 2020, p. 9/13).

- Harvesting: harvesting is about making knowledge visible that is generated by collective intelligence. *"Harvesting is a set of practices comprising the documentation and synthesis of multiple points of view (...) (It) can include note taking, graphic recording, photography, and video, as well as the use of the arts (poetry, dance, music, theater, etc.) to capture the deep meaning and details of a conversation"*. (Schwartz, 2016, p. 97).

Facilitating deliberation

The AoH host will ensure the *"comfort of participants, meaningful contributions, and collective intelligence"* (Schwartz, 2016, p. 96) and support *"those who are giving informational inputs"* and *"help(ing) the group understand what it is uncovering as it works together"* (Woolf & Corrigan, 2020, p. 9/13).

In their study on how AoH facilitators learn their skills, Quick and Sandfort (2014) recall that *"the ability to deliberate does not exist inherently"* and that a AoH facilitator *"supports good policy outcomes by helping participants enhance their understanding of issues"*. This involves the exploration of others' perspectives and may allow the discovery of shared values and changes of opinion (Quick & Sandfort, 2014, p. 300).

The main tasks of the facilitators are selecting the processes best suited, establishing and enforcing ground rules to maintain a respectful and inclusive environment, supporting diverse participation, managing potential conflicts, helping the group work toward its objectives and enhancing the development of mutual understanding (Quick & Sandfort, 2014, p. 302).

Tasks and approaches of the facilitators

Creating a space of trust (*"building container"*) that keeps the space free of judgment, e.g. by slowing down the process and allowing for deep listening and reflection is one core task of the facilitators, explains the Austrian facilitator Ruth Picker (interview, 14.10.2024).

According to Mary Alice Arthur, an influential practitioner quoted by Woolf & Corrigan (2020), the practitioner will ask himself or herself the following questions: *"What kind of conversation is needed? How have participants been involved up to now? What do they know and what do they need to know? What will make this a conversation that really matters and leads to worthwhile results?"* (Woolf & Corrigan, 2020, p. 9/13).

Once these questions are answered, *"The Hosting Team looks carefully at which methods might work best and when. They create a conversational flow that will help people get to know each other, be clear about why this topic matters to them, listen carefully to informational inputs and each other, work together on meeting their challenges and taking hold of opportunities and leave clear about what will happen next"* (Woolf & Corrigan, 2020, 9/13).

The hosting team should be well prepared and have distributed the roles, recommends the CP evaluator Daniela Ingruber (Interview, 8.10.2024). Will the most experienced moderator coordinate the process and thus be less available for moderation, or will the coordination (keeping track of the program schedule and steps) be taken over by someone else?

“The hosts form a hosting team and distribute the roles among themselves. Usually, you take turns in the lead,” explains AoH practitioner Ruth Picker (Interview, 14.10.2024).

Should the participants remain in plenary or form small groups? *“Usually it is a combination, you vary the method according to the needs of the process and the group: individual work - small groups - plenary; slow and quick methods”.* (Interview with Ruth Picker, 14.10.2024)

Practice and tools

“AoH practices are designed to be customisable, responsive and emergent instead of being presented as best practices” explain Mosse & Muirhead (2020, p. 6).

AoH facilitators will use different moderation techniques and tools depending on the participants and the conditions present. They may use dynamic facilitation if, at a given moment, the group is blocked in the dialogue process. With dynamic facilitation, each participant addresses the facilitator rather than the group, which creates a safe space for gathering individual ideas but does not allow for co-creation of common solutions.

Nagel (2015, pp. 202-203) mentions the wide variety of tools used in AoH, including collective mind mapping, action learning, reflective practices, listening practices and consensus decision-making. (Nagel, 2015, pp. 202-203).

“There’s The World Café (pioneered by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, also in the 1990s, that hones process for exploring in small table groups of 4-5 people, and then weaving them to the larger group learning pattern. As Juanita and David say, The World Cafe is about “conversation as action.” There’s Open Space Technology pioneered by Harrison Owen, who sought to reclaim simplicity and self-organization in how people explore and plan together, invoking the spirit of a community bulletin board to establish minimal conditions to find interested allies.” (Woolf & Corrigan, 2020, p. 4/13).

Artofhosting.org, the main reference site for AoH practitioners, lists a number of collaborative methods such as Circle, World Café, Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space Technology, ProAction Café, and specifies that *“practitioners can tailor the approach to their context and purpose”*.

An approach fostering participatory empowerment, whose principles are close to those of participatory action research (PAR)

“Some of the practices we use specifically enable participant agency. Open space technology, for example, is a process that encourages participants to self-organize to set the agenda, host conversations and gather insights to bring back to the collective” remind Mosse & Muirhead (2020, p. 6).

Like PAR, AoH also relies on knowledge created from the bottom up and emphasizes a joint, iterative process. In AoH, this happens through dialogical formats in which all participants are seen as equal contributors. This is also the case in participatory action research, as researchers and practitioners work together on an equal footing to develop practical solutions.

AoH promotes the continuous development of dialog through regular rounds of reflection and feedback. This corresponds to the iterative nature of participatory action research, in which data analysis, reflection and the planning of interventions take place in cycles.

AoH, PAR and the decision-making process

In AoH, participants become co-creators of common solutions. Like PAR, AoH encourages the continuous development of dialog through regular reflection and feedback sessions. To achieve collective results, AoH often relies on consent mechanisms to make a proposal.

In terms of the decision-making process, Corrigan (2016, p. 30) recounts the hosting conversations that United Church of Canada congregations in British Columbia had in 2009 about their future: *“Dissent was held through participatory decision making processes, including using Likert scales to make decisions. Such tools allow people to participate in a decision using a gradient of agreement, and allow processes to surface difference and diversity so it can be used as a creative resource for a group or a strategic initiative.”*

3.3 Perspectives for CPs in WP6 partner countries

CPs *“do not work in isolation but take place in a broader public sphere and political system”* (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2023, p. 248). Therefore, the MeDeMAP partners participating in WP6 have evaluated the perspectives for organizing a CP on Media and Democracy in Austria, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Slovenia based on their countries' experiences with CPs, past and current debates on this theme, and the socio-political context.

The benefits of the participatory experience in the CPs and of addressing an issue that is vital for the future of democracy are a common thread for the WP6 partners. They have considered the respective addresses and the stakeholders to be involved.

3.3.1 Perspectives for the organization of a CP on media and democracy in Austria

The Austrian experience with grassroots CPs has not been entirely successful, but the practice of CPs (mainly initiated by institutions) at the local level has spread beyond the Vorarlberg region. Given the ongoing debate on media funding and the reform of public media (a review of its structure is on the agenda), not to mention AI and disinformation, it is expected that the topic of media and democracy will generate interest and that participants will benefit from the democratic experience, which is also a multidimensional learning experience.

The aim of the CP on Media and Democracy in Austria will be to raise awareness among the public and the media world to how important it is for a democracy to support different forms of media (public/commercial/non-commercial) and to preserve a media landscape providing a public information service that is ethical and answers citizens' needs.

Stakeholders and addressees

As no new government is expected before January 2025, the first stakeholders addressed will be in priority media stakeholders: institutions involved in media regulation, media associations, trade unions, media collectives, journalists and media users, as well as organizations supporting deliberative democracy.

3.3.2 Estimates concerning the organization of a CP on media and democracy in the Czech Republic

Participating in a CP will be a new experience for Czech citizens, but grassroots organizations have paved the way for participatory democracy. The benefits for citizens, such as sharing their views, deliberating with other citizens and working together on solutions, will be highlighted. Participants will also have the opportunity to learn from experts on media and democracy and on how to organize and manage deliberations on a range of societal issues.

Stakeholders and addressees

Representatives of 10 stakeholder organizations have been invited to participate in the Advisory Board, whose role is to advise on the recruitment of CP participants and on thematic orientations, and to support the communication and dissemination of the results of the CP.

The results of the CP will be communicated with the aim of better support for independent media, better access to the media and strengthening media participation (in community media projects).

They should be addressed to media stakeholders, including professional journalistic organizations such as the Syndicate of Czech Journalists, the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting, representatives of public service media (The Czech Radio Council; The Czech Television Council): media organizations such as the Endowment Fund for Independent Journalism, and also the relevant departments of the Ministry of Culture, especially the Ministry's Department for Media and Audiovisual.

3.3.3 Estimates concerning the organization of a CP on media and democracy in Slovenia

In recent years, Slovenia has developed a culture of participatory movements. People are expected to take up this "tradition" and feel involved in the subject.

Stakeholders and addressees

Stakeholders to be possibly involved as supporting partners are:

- Slovenian Association of journalists and Slovenia Union of journalists
- Academic colleagues at the universities in Ljubljana, Koper and Maribor
- Civil society coalition "Voice of the People", including Legal Network for Protection of Democracy
- Self-regulatory bodies in media and journalism: Ethics council ("Journalists' Court of Honour") – a self-regulatory body of journalists, Ombudsman at public service broadcaster RTV Slovenija
- Ministry of Culture (Media Department)
- AKOS – Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia
- Community and non-profit media – Radio Študent, Oštro...
- Public service media – RTV Slovenija and STA – Slovenian Press Agency

The results of the MeDeMAP CP in Slovenia should be addressed to the government and the parliament in the part related to media system reforms and policy-making; to media industry associations, journalists associations in the part related to self-regulation, standards, and transparency, etc.; to public service media and community media in the part related to media

practices, ethics, representation, participation, etc.; to law enforcement institutions in the part related to the rule of law, etc.; to civil society organizations in the part related to civic engagement, watchdog role, and to academia in the part related to knowledge production, etc.

3.3.4 Estimates concerning the organization of a CP on media and democracy in Ireland

Ireland is certainly the partner country with the greatest experience of CPs, and a rather successful one at that. WP6 Partner Mary Immaculate College (MIC) could build on the popular participatory tool to address an issue, Media and democracy, that is not often addressed in Irish politics, although some journalists and editors interviewed in MeDeMAP WP4 mentioned that they suffer from limitations.

MIC plans to anchor the citizens' parliament in the socio-political agenda by using Limerick City and County as its base. This is the third most populated city in Ireland and provides an opportunity to draw from a wide and diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds including those with a high and a low interest in politics in one geographic area outside of the capital city.

Stakeholders and addressees

The Advisory Support Group will be comprised of representatives of local democracy (Limerick is the first city to elect its own mayor and his office will be invited to assist); representatives of civil society and community groups; an academic with an interest in media and democracy; a representative of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and one person from each type of news platform i.e. television; radio; print and online.

The results of the CP in MeDeMAP should be addressed to the national parliament, the media and relevant academics with the aim of raising awareness of the issues so that citizens support measures to protect journalism and democracy and are aware of the dangers that threaten both; and to strengthen democracy and introduce legislation to protect journalists in their work.

Resolutions will be brought to the Mayor's Office and the City and County Council which are the institutions of local democracy in Limerick and subsequently they will be brought to Oireachtas Eireann (Ireland's Parliament).

3.4 Lessons learned and recommendations

Although the OECD comparative study (2020) and the OECD Deliberative Database updated in 2023 still attempt to categorize CPs according to the old pattern of models (citizens' assemblies, juries, panels, conference or polls ...) most recent CPs are a hybrid construction, borrowing features from one model or another.

The international organization recognizes that *„the process of choosing and tailoring the most appropriate representative deliberative model for a given context, level of government, phase of the policy cycle, and policy issue at hand is a creative one, with opportunities to combine features from different models “* and underlines that *“it is of essence to ensure that all fundamental phases of a representative deliberative process are preserved: learning, deliberation, and developing informed collective recommendations”* (OECD, 2020, p. 62).

The concept for the citizens' parliaments that will be organized in the MeDeMAP partner countries Austria, Czech Republic, Ireland, Slovenia and Germany (online) will therefore

incorporate features from different models. It will take into account the lessons learnt from the experiences with Citizens' Parliaments in these countries and from other cases in Europe. It will also be based on a PAR approach and on the core principles developed by the OECD.

It should be noted that, apart from local CPs of short duration (such as in the Austrian province of Vorarlberg), which are often only one stage of a wider consultation process, CPs dealing with complex issues include the following stages.

- A learning phase with experts
- A deliberation phase
- A phase dedicated to the adoption of the outcomes
- A closure

CPs differ in the time they devote to each phase, the involvement of public authorities and other stakeholders, the level of PAR, the selection process for participants, the choice of experts or practitioners, the facilitation methods, communication, etc.

There are two main options for the design of the process:

-Either citizens go through all topics from the beginning, with the first session(s) dedicated to learning, followed by sessions for deliberation and later sessions for decision-making. However, this implies that citizens are divided into clusters.

-Or the sessions are structured around the topics, including the different stages of learning, deliberation and adoption. This is the model that the MeDeMAP WP6 partners are working towards, which should allow for a smoother circular relationship between the learning, deliberation and adoption phases.

3.4.1 Constraints

Before summarizing the lessons learnt from the experience with CPs in Europe, it may be useful to recall the specific constraints for the WP6 partners in the MeDeMAP project.

The constraints imposed by the grant agreement are the following: citizens will be deliberating on a complex issue; the budget is tight; the CPs will be a socio-political action embedded in a specific local context and at the same time a scientific experience whose process and results must be comparable; both the process and the data collection must follow a participatory approach.

Complex issues

The main theme is media and democracy. The subtopics are also derived from the research of the other WPs: media systems, representation in the media, participation in/through the media. These are complex issues that need to be better framed with the help of a guiding question (lesson learned from the facilitation experience).

- ➔ Because of the complexity, it is important to have a learning phase with experts who can present a wide range of perspectives (and ways of dealing with the questions) to a non-academic audience.

A tight budget

WP6 partners will have to manage essential expenses such as facilitation, data collection, venue & catering, communications and allowances for participants, experts or board members with almost no budget.

- ➔ Early stakeholder involvement is essential to identify potential material support.

Time constraints

CPs dealing with complex issues usually last longer than four days. The OECD estimates that four days is the minimum *“to allow citizens adequate time and resources to develop considered and detailed collective recommendations”*, especially if the theme is complex (OECD, 2020, p. 34). *“The shorter a process is, the less well-thought through and detailed recommendations it is likely to provide, since it means there is less time for learning and deliberation. The stricter the design of the process, the less room there can be for creative ideas and solutions.”* (OECD, 2020, p. 61).

The citizens' councils organized by the Austrian province of Vorarlberg last only 1.5 days, but they don't include a learning phase, and they mostly deal with concrete local issues, which are further discussed in the follow-up World Cafés.

The Austrian experience shows that shorter CPs on complex issues have not been able to produce useful recommendations. The lack of time for deliberation was also a source of frustration.

- ➔ The precise timing of each stage of the process is crucial. Facilitation should ensure rapid and efficient deliberation and adoption of recommendations.
- ➔ Allow sufficient time for the closing session. This is important for the integrity of the process and for the psychological satisfaction of the participants. (Ingruber, 2024).

PAR approach in the process and in data collection

The tension between involving citizens in the design and content of the CPs on one hand and ensuring efficient and timely management of the process to deliver a result on the other hand has already been mentioned. D6.2 will provide specific recommendations.

3.4.2 Quality criteria and lessons from CPs' experience

How to ensure compliance with quality criteria? It is worth recalling the main principles developed by OECD (2020) already presented in section 1.3.3.

- Having a purpose related to a public issue;
- Transparency;
- Representativeness;
- Inclusiveness;
- A learning phase with information from experts;
- Sound group deliberation

Caluwaerts & Reuchamps (2023, p. 244) add as parameters the openness of the agenda and the benefits of the learning process for the participants (referred to as "epistemic completion"). In addition, to be considered successful, most authors agree that the outcome of the CPs should be of an "influential" nature and have an « impact » (OECD, 2020).

Examples of good and not so good practice will be reviewed in the following sections in order to draw some lessons for D6.2.

Having a purpose related to a public issue, anchoring the CP in the sociopolitical agenda

The importance of the theme Media & Democracy and the sub-topics media regulation, participation in and through the media and representation in the media has been highlighted for D2.1 by Carpentier & Wimmer, 2024b.

Evaluation reports emphasize the importance of embedding CPs in a socio-political context and involving stakeholders and decision-makers at an early stage. The “failure” of the two grassroots-initiated CPs on the future of democracy and the future of transportation in Austria is principally attributed to the lack of a concrete purpose anchored in the socio-political agenda and the lack of supportive or involved stakeholders.

- ➔ Set a clear mandate for the CP
- ➔ Anchor the CP in the socio-political agenda. Promote the relevance of the CP to the participants and to the wider public and the stakeholders.
- ➔ Involve stakeholders at an early stage

Transparency

The need for transparency applies on many levels, starting with the purpose of the CP and its expected results. Lack of transparency could lead to frustration and possibly increase skepticism about the participatory process. Transparency should also apply regarding the supporting stakeholders within the advisory group and the recruitment process. This adds to the legitimacy of the process as a whole, as underlined in the report on the Austrian Climate Citizens’ Assembly (Scherhauser et al., 2022).

- ➔ Participants should be informed about what will be done with the results and what impact the process might develop (how and to which stakeholders the recommendations or resolutions will be presented at a national level). (See 3.3 national perspectives)
- ➔ Be transparent about the support group/advisory board and any financial support
- ➔ It is also important that participants understand that the CPs are part of a wider European research project and give their consent for data collection for the in-depth analysis of the process.

Representativeness

The representativeness of the citizens’ panel should be achieved through the recruitment process but which representativeness? For a CP with the format of an audience council, i.e. limited to less than 50 participants, statistical representativeness is of little relevance. Moreover, the examples of small and large CPs in Austria and elsewhere show that even when invitations to participate in CPs are sent to people drawn by lot, self-selection distorts the socio-demographic representation.

“Self-selection bias led to having mini-publics that are not real mirrors of the maxi-public. Some groups are systematically under-represented (younger and older citizens, lower educated, women, ethnic minorities, citizens residing far away from the DMP [deliberative mini-publics] venue, and so on)” (Paulis et al. 2021, p. 528). To correct the underrepresentation of certain social groups, most recent CPs recourse to a second call process targeting them actively. Another way to

achieve an inclusive representation is to “*over-sample certain demographics during the random sampling stage of recruitment to help achieve representativeness*”, as recommended by the OECD. (2020, p. 118).

In Austria, the recruitment of participants in CPs initiated by public authorities has been drawn by lot, but this does not prevent the bias that occurred at the level of the responses, says Michael Lederer from the Office for Volunteering and Participation (FEB) of Vorarlberg (Mehr Demokratie, 2020). Among the people randomly selected, men and older people are much more willing to participate and young women with children are harder to convince even when childcare is provided. Other experiences emphasize the bias in favor of educated people and difficulties reaching people from communities.

Responding to a question on the representativity of an assembly of only 12-16 participants (the Citizens Council model implemented in Vorarlberg), Michael Lederer replies that what is at stake is not statistical representativeness but a certain degree of heterogeneity, which should reflect the diversity of the society (MehrDemokratie, 2020).

This view is shared by the UN Democracy Fund: “*When you next think ‘we need to consult the people on this issue’, please think about - Diversity of perspectives and life experiences is more important than volume of people involved. A few thinking is better than many shouting: participation is not just a law of large numbers.*” (UN Democracy Fund & the newDemocracy Foundation, 2019, p. 39).

The MeDeMAP Grant Agreement specifies on p. 12 that “*the sociodemographic composition of the citizens’ parliaments should be guided by the idea of a kind of ‘audience council’ representing the interest of readers, listeners, viewers and online media users across various sociodemographic groups.*”

CPs should “*aim to gather a public that is ideationally and discursively representative of the wider societal diversity*” (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2023, p. 242).

The importance of taking into account not only socio-demographic but also attitudinal parameters in the selection process is illustrated by the experience of the Austrian Citizens' Climate Assembly (Klimarat), whose process was otherwise considered a "success". The participants were much more committed to action against climate change than the average, noted both evaluation reports. (Praprotnik et al., 2022; Scherhauser et al., 2022). More representativeness in terms of attitudinal views « would legitimize further policy-making through established democratic institutions. » concludes Scherhauser et al., 2022, p. 56).

- ➔ Both socio-demographic and attitudinal criteria, as well as inclusiveness, should be targeted in the recruitment process, regardless of whether it is carried out by an agency or through calls.
- ➔ Promote inclusiveness by covering costs
- ➔ Attitudinal bias in self-selection can be reduced by selecting a panel of citizens whose attitudinal diversity mirrors the diversity of the population.
- ➔ If the selection is not based on random selection, the selection process must be transparent and accountable.
- ➔ As agreed by the WP6 partners, the selection criteria will be inspired by the selection criteria defined by IULM for WP5 focus groups. COMMIT will propose a questionnaire model based on the two questionnaires developed by IULM for focus groups in WP5 (Deliverable 5.3, pp. 9-10) and on the CU questionnaire for its CP participants.

Support group/advisory board

Not all small-format CPs have an advisory board, but the evaluation reports emphasize the gain in credibility and the benefits of having one. Some CPs have two boards, one to oversee the process and another to monitor the learning phase and the selection of experts. In all cases, the support group can help

- Networking with decision-makers and other stakeholders
- Disseminating the calls and the information
- Help recruit experts and practitioners
- Act as advisor
- Give financial, personal or material support (venue, catering, volunteers, access to communication services)

The learning phase

As emphasized by the OECD (2020, p. 100), *“learning is one of the key elements of a deliberative process. (...) Deliberation requires accurate and relevant information, which reflects a diversity of perspectives. For participants to be able to have quality discussions over a specific policy issue and reach informed decisions on recommendations, a learning stage is essential to any deliberative participation model”*.

For Caluwaerts and Reuchamps (2023, p. 244), *“epistemic completeness”* or *“how (citizens) can learn about the issues at stake”* is a key parameter for good practice. *“Ideally, participants have access to all relevant information and are - made - competent, with access to experts on the question, policymakers and/or resource people.”*

“Primarily, diversity of sources is key. Breadth of information increases the ability for participants to weigh up different points of view, but it also ensures that all the voices within a community or on a topic are being heard. This is critical because it complements the diversity of people in the selection process with a diversity of viewpoints in information sources.” recommend The newDemocracy Foundation and the UN Democracy Fund (2019, p. 121) in a joint guidebook.

Involving the citizens is another good practice: *“At the very beginning of the process and at the end of each learning session before the deliberation phase, participants should be asked: ‘What do you need to know and who do you trust to inform you?’”* (The newDemocracy Foundation, 2019, p. 121)

Despite perfect organization and moderation, the Austrian CP on the Redistribution of Wealth was heavily criticized by evaluators and the media for inviting one-sided experts. Participants also pointed out the lack of time during the sessions and the need for participants to familiarize themselves with the topics in advance (Ingruber, 2024)

The lack of a learning phase with experts in Vorarlberg's 1.5-day citizens' panels (because they mostly deal with concrete issues and because the citizens' panel is only one step in the chain of the participatory process) and in the Austrian CP on the future of democracy has been criticised. Vorarlberg is now compensating by sending out information documents in advance. The second Austrian CP on transport had a learning phase, which was seen as the most important achievement of this CP.

- ➔ The participants should gain knowledge (both through the learning phase and the co-creation experience)
- ➔ Ensure that a diversity of perspectives is presented by the experts (including practitioners) and the documentation. *“The information programme usually begins with an introduction to the issue, the context, and the diagnosis of the problem, followed by more details about the issue, and an exploration of possible solutions”* (OECD 2020, p. 101, citing Gerwin, 2018, p. 54).
- ➔ Experts should have didactic skills; their contributions should be short and clearly formulated so that they can be understood by everyone (Handler, 2024);
- ➔ Experts should be available for Q&A sessions (OECD, 2020; Ingruber, 2024 and Handler, 2024);
- ➔ Information packages should be accessible on the website (also for reasons of transparency) and should include different types of documents: text, videos, podcasts, graphics (Handler, 2024).

Deliberation

In the deliberation process, participatory equality and inclusiveness are key principles.

“Allowing enough time for the in-person deliberation is crucial to achieving the overarching goals of: detailed and considered recommendations; building trust between participants, and instilling public confidence in the process and its outputs.” (OECD 2020, p. 98)

Caluwaerts & Reuchamps (2023, p. 247) recommend that the deliberation phase should outweigh the voting phase.

Organizers, evaluators and facilitators recommend deliberation in small groups. In this case, should all participants deal with all topics, rotating between the discussion tables or should they be affected to sub-topics? Both options have been tried. It is important to ensure that citizens support the proposals. In the case of the large French CP on climate change and the Austrian CP on wealth redistribution, participants had been clustered and some expressed frustration that they had not been sufficiently involved in formulating proposals from other clusters. Allow enough time for deliberation and include a short deliberative "digestion phase" between the learning phase and the elaboration of recommendations (Ingruber, 2024).

- ➔ Facilitation should ensure respect, mutual understanding and equal access to expression,
- ➔ Co-creation of solutions in small group and panel discussions
- ➔ Some tools of the Art of Hosting encourage the co-creation of proposals by rotating in small groups to each discussion table, ensuring that all participants have contributed to each topic.

PAR and the openness of the agenda

The degree of the citizens' participation in setting the agenda is a PAR criterion. It can be assessed on a spectrum ranging from a closed agenda to a fully open agenda: *“For instance, the agenda could be fixed but participants could also be allowed to introduce adjacent issues, and question whether pre-chosen issues should be on the agenda at all.”* (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2023, pp. 243-244).

However, Caluwaerts & Reuchamps (2023, p. 244) warn of a too loose and open agenda: *“The more open and inclusive the agenda-setting process, the harder it will prove to be to generate political*

uptake.” This was the case, for example, with the Austrian CP on the future of democracy, whose results were far too vague for an uptake.

In the case of the Irish Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality however, participants tasked with proposing recommendations felt the need to express general views and added an open letter to the government (The Citizens' Assembly, 2021).

In its evaluation report of the Youth climate assembly in Ida-Viru, Estonia, in 2021, the Estonian fund for nature recommends that : *“The choice of topics should be sufficiently narrow to keep the discussions focused and to enable the participants to explore the different facets of the problem before making a decision; On the other hand, the range of topics should be sufficiently wide to accommodate participants with different backgrounds and experiences.”* (Estonian Fund for Nature, 2021, p. 7).

In addition to the risk of an overly broad mandate, experts warn against making too many recommendations. The production of a large number of recommendations (50 in all) by the Climate Assembly UK *“(made) holding both Parliament and Government accountable in responding to all of the recommendations more challenging”* (Elstub et al. p. 13).

Framing the issues with concrete key questions is a recommendation from all professional facilitators interviewed. It provides for openness of perspectives and help participants to focus together on a constructive response. Recent national CPs have opted for this practice.

The French Convention on the End of Life (2023) asked *“Is the framework for end-of-life support adapted to the different situations encountered, or should any changes be introduced?”* and the Austrian Klimarat *“What do we need to do today to live in a climate-friendly future tomorrow?”*

- ➔ Suggest subtopics, but let participants decide which questions to prioritize within them.
- ➔ Frame the issues by asking specific questions
- ➔ Formulate questions in a way that is both easy to understand and unbiased
- ➔ Set a goal with the participants: determine how many recommendations (approximately) the CP intends to make.
- ➔ Involve citizens in the research process: provide opportunities to reflect on inputs, express feedback and dissent, and evaluate the process

The decision-making process

Regarding the decision-making process, scholars generally refrain from prescribing a mode of adoption (consent, consensus, or majority) *“as long as there is an opportunity for the minority to have its opinions and arguments heard in the final recommendations”* (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2023, p. 246).

- ➔ Make the rules clear at the beginning of the CP (Interviews with facilitators)
- ➔ Define the role of the moderator(s) when it comes to problematic situations – e.g. because time at a session is running out and results have to be voted.

Communication with the broader public and the media

Learning from their experience, the Austrian organizers of the two grassroots CPs and the CP on wealth redistribution emphasize the importance of dissemination on various social media to reach different segments of the population. In contrast to the grassroots CPs, the CP on wealth distribution attracted public attention through its active communication on social media.

The involvement of traditional media has been a dilemma for all CPs. They demand access to the discussions and to the participants, thus breaking the "safe space" necessary for deliberation.

- ➔ Invest in social media and encourage dissemination through your support group
- ➔ Traditional media: Make documents available to the media, but only invite the media to the opening and closing sessions (Interview Ingruber, 8.10.2024).

Creating welcoming conditions

Facilitators emphasize the importance of the "beauty" of the space and all the details that contribute to good conditions, such as

- ➔ Large windows, adequate catering, a coffee corner near the main room...
- ➔ The facilitators interviewed favoured a single large room where participants could break into small groups but stay together (also easier for the facilitation team to manage).

Furthermore, in order to be successful as a socio-political action embedded in a national context and as an international scientific experiment, it is important to ensure

- ➔ Respect for the privacy of members
- ➔ A follow-up involving stakeholders and decision-makers

Finally, success can only be assessed in relation to the objectives. We would like to point to three perspectives for successful policy developments with our citizens' parliaments:

- From the citizens' perspective: Gaining experience and knowledge through the process and gaining motivation, with the consequence of becoming more involved in their own environment in the future (source: feedback).
- From the point of view of MeDeMAP as a research project: to collect useful data for the analysis of CPs as a participatory research action method (source/indicators: final reports of WP6 and WP2).
- From a civil society perspective: to put the issue of democracy and media on the political agenda from the point of view of citizens, and possibly also to bring about initial changes. Indicators could be changes in media policy. This would not be documented in the project but would have to be surveyed in a follow-up project.

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