HOW TO ORGANISE A DELIBERATIVE PROCESS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

A guide for local authorities



Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
of the Council of Europe

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Original:

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Cover design and layout: Intea BH d.o.o.
Illustrations: Intea BH d.o.o.
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Acknowledgements

This guide for local authorities on organising deliberative processes at the local level was developed in the framework of the project "Innovating democratic participation at local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina", implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities within the Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022-2025).

It is a response to the Congress commitment to promote citizen participation through innovation and co-creation at local and regional level, and in line with the Congress recommendation on the use of deliberative methods in European cities and regions and the „Reykjavik Principles for Democracy".

The guide was drafted by deliberative democracy expert Prof. Damir Kapidžić and with the support of the Federation for Innovation in Democracy – Europe (FIDE). The overall co-ordination was ensured by the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance at the Secretariat of the Congress.

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Foreword

The participation of citizens in policy and decision making on matters that directly affect their lives and the future of their communities is a civil and political right and plays a crucial role in the advancement of all human rights. It is a condition for transparent and inclusive governance and for effective democratic citizenship for all residents.

This right is protected by the Council of Europe and its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities through the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207).

These standards are important, but nothing will be achieved without the involvement of local elected leaders who play a vital role in fostering a culture of participation in their towns, cities and regions. The Congress is therefore proud to stand with them in their efforts to reach out to their citizens.

The Congress has placed a particular focus on deliberative democracy, as a meaningful way to achieve participation beyond local elections in its *Recommendation on the use of deliberative methods at local and regional level*[i]. Recognising the potential of such processes to improve policy outcomes and in turn enhance public trust in public decision making, the Council of Europe has set out the first-ever international standard[ii] in the area of deliberative democracy.

Deliberative processes, in their various forms, are mechanisms designed to include diverse perspectives and experiences, especially from under-represented groups, including women and youth. This endeavour is mainly achieved through a random selection of participants, which is the main characteristic of citizens' deliberations. Time and time again, they have proven to work particularly well for matters that are difficult to resolve in polarised societies or for long-term policy issues. Deliberative processes strengthen democracy, reinvigorate representative institutions[iii], and are a genuine endeavour which complement more "traditional" ways of citizen participation.

In this spirit, and following on the Reykjavík Principles of Democracy, this guide aims to equip local and regional authorities across South-East Europe with the knowledge needed to embed deliberative democracy in decision making, and therefore contribute to innovative and inclusive democratic participation of all groups of residents, with no one left behind.



Mathieu MORI

Secretary General

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

1. Initiating a deliberative process

1.1. Deliberation as complementary to existing citizen participation

Local authorities are the level of government closest to citizens. However, engaging citizens in policymaking often remains a difficult challenge. Three issues typically arise. First, when we use an open call or moment for people to participate, experience tells us the same group of people always turns up. It is good that you have very motivated citizens, but they might not always be representative for the wider population in how they think or how they look like. They might have more extreme or polarised ideas, or often be better educated, male, and from the majority groups.

A second approach to civic engagement involves using representatives of civil society organisations as intermediaries instead of directly connecting with individual citizens. While these groups often possess crucial technical and detailed knowledge on specific topics, they may not always represent the broader population. Finally, processes involving citizens are often brief and superficial. A town hall meeting may last only two hours, during which individuals share random, separate opinions on the topic and without receiving real feedback or making a significant impact on policy. All these forms of participation have crucial functions, but clearly still leave substantial gaps.

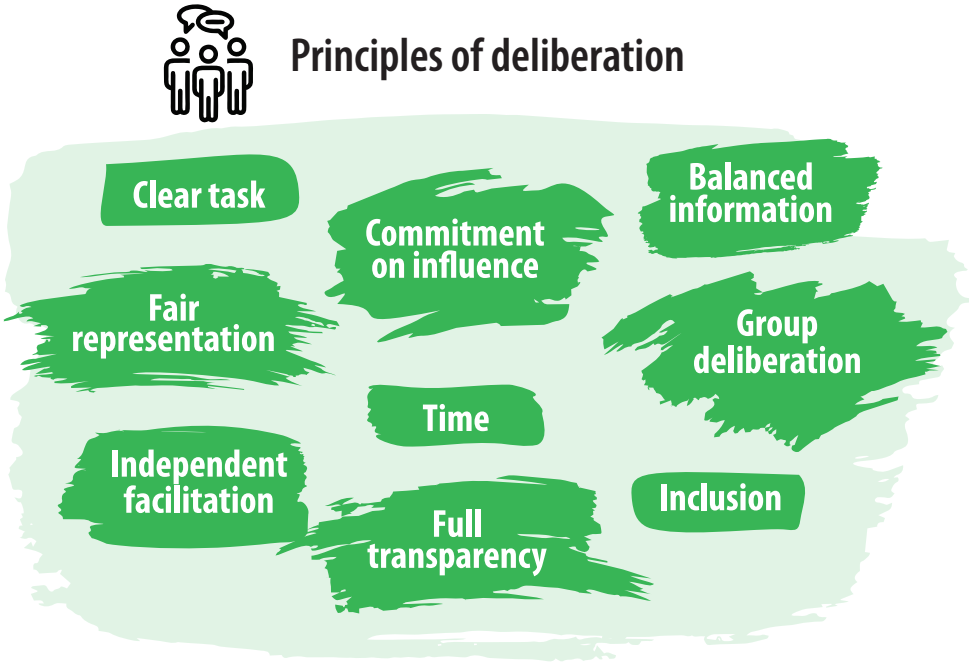
This is where deliberative processes can make a real difference. First, such a process is long (several days spread out over a longer period) and information intensive. Citizens are given a policy problem to which they give recommendations. The group of citizens in such a process hears different perspectives on the topic from speakers, but also continuously deliberate and hear each other's opinions and proposals. The result of these processes are informed recommendations, not individual hasty opinions. Secondly, because

such an intensive process can only be done with a smaller group, the principle of sortition or "lottery" is used to compose a group that represents all the different groups in the city (see below at 2.5 for the technical description). By using a lottery, everyone gets an equal chance to be invited and by using categories to compose the final group, we avoid the misrepresentation of the current "open invitation" meetings. Experience shows that a good number of people that participate in these processes normally never take part in other consultations or processes organised by public authorities. Finally, these processes are based on a clear agreement between the authorities and the participating citizens that their work will be considered in detail afterwards and that all recommendations will either receive a follow-up or feedback on why this is not possible. This method has been used throughout Europe by local authorities from villages to large capital cities to work on problems of urban planning, healthcare, education, big infrastructure projects, energy, housing, etc. There are different types of deliberative processes, which vary based on the number of participants, their duration, and specific methodological differences. We will refer to Citizen Assemblies in this guide, which roughly corresponds to the description in the paragraph above. As you will read, they require some investment and effort, but experience shows that politicians, administration and citizens alike perceive these processes as highly positive and valuable.

1.2. Principles of deliberation

If you set up such a process, it is important to ensure that it is perceived as fair and legitimate by the different actors involved. Citizens who are not part of the deliberating group must be able to observe the process (or aspects of it) and feel this is a legitimate way of making citizen recommendations. As this method is increasingly used throughout Europe, principles and standards have been formulated to make sure that this is the case and that processes follow a benchmark for quality.[iv] The Council of Europe has been at the forefront of this movement and has formulated clear quality standards.[v] These standards are practical for those organising a citizens' assembly, providing guidance on what to consider when

setting up the process. It is particularly crucial, when organising an assembly for the first time to ensure that these principles are all taken into account. We briefly review them here:



The assembly must be given a clear task or policy-problem to work on which still has enough options open for the citizens to choose from. It also needs to be told up front to the citizens what level of influence their work will be given by the authorities. Most often, this implies that the government promises to give extensive feedback to individual proposals and detailed information on how it will put into action the recommendations it commits to enact. The information given to the citizens in the assembly must cover the different views on the topic and cannot just be one-sided. The selection of the group must use a form of random selection that gives everyone a similar chance to be part of the group, while also incorporating a so-called stratification principle (see further) to ensure that all different types

of citizens in the community are fairly represented. These processes take time and a minimum of five days of assembly work is taken as a benchmark for the local level, but assemblies working on an encompassing task can take longer. These processes rely on group deliberation rather than individual opinions. This means that the citizens work together and exchange perspectives in a respectful and open environment. To achieve this, independent facilitation is key as it takes professionals at the table to make sure everyone gets their say, but also to make sure that the group progresses towards a tangible result at the end of the process. To make sure people outside of this group feel that everything is legitimate and fair, there needs to be full transparency of all the documents, information and procedures used during the process. Best way to achieve this is to have a separate website/page where all this information is available for all to see. Finally, it is important to consider specific measures to increase the inclusion of all citizens in the process. Many citizens cannot participate for practical reasons, or do not feel they have competences to say something in public. A lot of these barriers can be overcome, but it requires specific attention, measures, and resources.

This seems like a long list for a citizen process, but it is what we do for other policy procedures too. If citizen engagement processes become more ambitious, we need to make sure that the standards for them also set a high bar. Meetings of a city council or a parliament are equally transparent, have specific rules, timing, information provision, etc. We want deliberative processes to have a similar level of legitimacy and to apply similar standards.

1.3. Why commit to a deliberative process?

As the previous paragraphs have already made clear, a deliberative process is not something you put together in a short time and it requires investment and resources, so why do many local authorities in Europe started using them?

Deliberative formats can deliver better outcomes for policy. You will have a group of your citizens with very diverse backgrounds looking at your policy problem and coming up with recommendations that most of them support. This means you get the benefits of receiving all their own knowledge and perspectives on this issue before you decide. This also makes it easier for you to make some hard choices. If the citizens in the process - after hearing all the diverse information and viewpoints - can support a difficult decision, this significantly enhances its legitimacy. Moreover, your decision to give this policy question to a representative group of your citizens to look at in depth can help build trust in the city administration. You show that you are happy to give a part of your power out of hands to provide transparency and receive citizen input. Employing the so-called "democratic lottery" to ensure a diverse group of citizens is present, will make your policymaking more inclusive. We know from experiences in cities in Europe that people will show up for deliberative processes that otherwise are never present for policy participation processes. You will get input from citizens you otherwise might not have heard from. Another benefit is that by using random sortition you can also overcome polarisation. In processes with self-selection, people with strong and extreme views are more likely to show up. This can be good to see where the "strong feelings" are, but it can also create a situation where the only groups participating are the two opposed groups on an issue and not those who are more moderate (and might be a majority). Moreover, because a deliberation uses facilitated conversations in small groups and is not a shouting match in a plenary room, even if feelings are strongly divergent, practice shows that people do tend to be able to overcome them.

Sometimes, it is very difficult for city leaders to advocate for ideas that the City Council should adopt and turn into policy. Working with a citizens' assembly means a lot to me because citizens' recommendations have a particular weight and cannot be ignored.

(Mario Kordić, Mayor of Mostar)

1.4. CHECKLIST 1: DO I UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES OF DELIBERATION? (quiz)

CHECKLIST 1 **Self-assessment: do I understand the principles of deliberation?**				
#	*Item / Questions*	*I understand completely*	*Partially understand*	*I need more knowledge on this*
1	Why does an open call for citizen participation often fail to assemble a group that reflects the broader population?			
2	What are the advantages of using a lottery to recruit citizens for participation?			
3	Deliberative processes are less superficial compared to most other forms of citizen engagement. Why?			
4	Why does a deliberative process require clear principles and guidelines?			
5	Why do we need facilitation in a deliberative process?			
6	Why is transparency so important here?			
7	What are the reasons for you as a policymaker to opt for such a deliberative process?			

2. Before: setting up a citizens' assembly

2.1. Mandate and remit

Every deliberative process must begin with a decision made by someone. Usually, this decision is mandated by a political authority. In the case of local citizens' assemblies, the mandate is given by a local authority, which can be the mayor, local council or administration. The mandate to organise a citizens' assembly signals a commitment to involve citizens in decision-making processes. Mandates can be given, for example, through public announcements or campaign promises, annual work plans, or as part of broader policy making or reform initiatives. When giving a mandate, you should commit to ensuring a dedicated budget, allocate sufficient time, identify the main team structure responsible for organising the process, and confirm that your administration intends to discuss how to implement the citizens' recommendations. Finally, the mandate you give should include a clearly identified problem with a call for citizens to provide recommendations for a solution. The exact wording of the problem, and the question given to citizens is called the remit.

Defining the remit is often the first very important decision you will make in a deliberative process. The specific question you ask should match the kind of process that will be implemented. For a citizens' assembly this means that the question should not be simple or obvious and it should not already have desired answers. A broad and open question around a difficult issue that can solicit open responses is the best way to go. Consider that this is not just a consultation exercise, or a population survey, but a mutual engagement to address real challenges. First think about what kind of problem you want to solve in your city. Then consider the kind of answers that you want to get and that will help you solve this problem. It is best to avoid complexity and to ask a singular

question on a singular topic. Do not be too cautious and believe that your citizens can be very smart and that they can provide you with intelligible solutions to any protracted issue. In case you do not know where to start, think about opening up the topic selection process to include other stakeholders or even citizens, such as was the case in Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina). If there are numerous problems that you need to solve, then citizens might give you an idea of which priorities to focus on.

Practically, the remit often consists of two sentences. The first one usually includes a statement that defines the problem and sets the scene. The second one asks for the kind of solutions you want from citizens in response, which can be broad or more focused, depending on your policy aims. Both sentences should be simple enough to be well understood in any setting, for example, when talking to someone on the street. They should also be open, so avoid using any language that might suggest the content of the responses you want to receive. Once the remit is defined, stakeholders and relevant institutions can provide feedback before it is approved by the mandating authority. The remit is made public, often at the launch of the deliberate process, and it is included in the invitation letters sent out to citizens.

Examples of remits:

Mostar 2021: There is a lot of trash on many streets in Mostar and public spaces are not well maintained. How can the City improve the cleanliness of public spaces and make them more pleasant?

Banja Luka 2024: Banja Luka wants to support innovation, sustainable development, and create new jobs in order to reduce immigration of youth abroad. How can we effectively support young entrepreneurs in our community?

2.2. Assembling the team

Once you made a public announcement to hold a citizens' assembly, the next step is to identify the people who will design and implement the deliberative process. The group you assemble can be called the Project Team. Together, they are responsible for taking your initiative from a promise and making it into a practical reality. The composition of the Project Team can vary but should include members of your administration, experts on participatory deliberative processes, capable operators that can implement things on the ground, and skilled, independent facilitators who will be working with citizens. You do not need to identify all of them at once, but at least start with the deliberative experts and members of your administration. Having a capable and well-functioning Project Team will make the whole process go forward much smoother.

You will need to ask yourself who will run the process? Will this be run by your own administration, or is outsourcing an option? Very often deliberative processes are run by working with the governments, or by professional organisations that specialise in areas such as facilitation. If you decide to implement most of the process with the help of your administration, make sure that they have enough resources and the ability to consult expert knowledge when needed. If you decide to outsource implementation, make sure to draft a comprehensive Terms of Reference for the contracted Co-ordination Team. For a small six-day deliberation, with up to 50 participants, you can work with a core team of 3 to 4 people. For a larger or longer deliberation this core team can become very large and include 15 people or more.

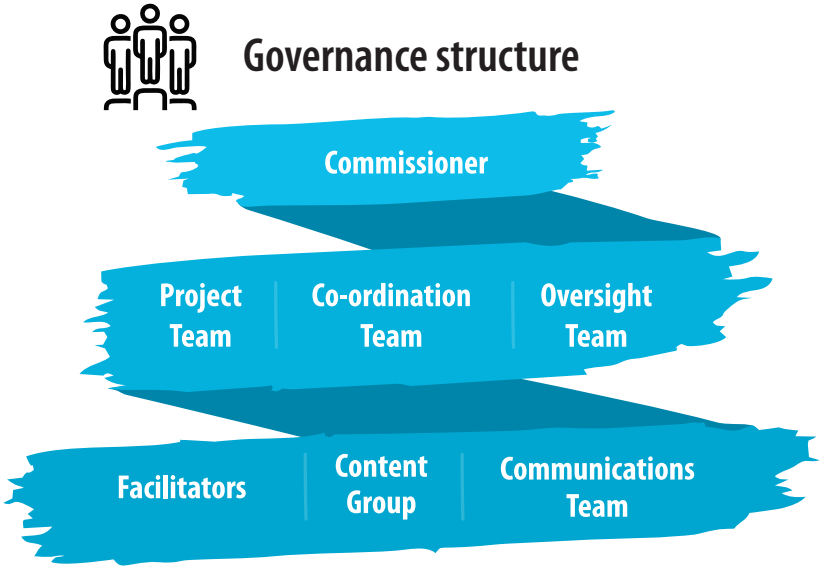
Get a team of people together who are communicative, proactive, energetic, systematic, and thorough in their work. The process consists of many phases and steps that need to be completed at a specific time, and sometimes require simultaneous co-ordination with over 80 individuals in one city.

(Mostar Project Team 2024)

The whole team initially learned much about the basic principles of deliberative democracy and the citizens' assembly process. We were in constant communication with interested parties to address the challenges of the process.

(Banja Luka Project Team 2024)

2.3. Governance and structure



A key task of the core team will be to create a governance structure for the deliberative process. This will allow everyone involved and working on implementing a citizens assembly process to be clear about their responsibilities. It will also ensure greater accountability and lead to more transparency. The governance structure usually consists of teams with designated tasks and a timeline. It can be adopted internally, or by the commissioning administration. There are different ways to go about this, but in general, the governance structure will be more expansive for a controversial

national assembly than for a local one on implementation of a non-controversial policy. The governance structure is usually drafted by the Project Team that was established earlier.

The first basic element of a governance structure is the Commissioner, the institution or institutions that give a mandate, set the remit, and secure a budget. They are also the addressee of citizens' recommendations and tasked with possible policy implementation. Then there is the Project Team, sometimes also called the Design Team. This group of individuals and experts is mentioned in section 2.2 and is delegated by the Commissioner to set up the process and be responsible for the macro design. The third body is the Co-ordination Team or implementing operator who oversees on-the-ground tasks and operational issues. They are responsible for recruitment, space and venue, as well as general logistics. The facilitators are mentioned separately because they propose the agenda of the assemblies at the micro level and deliver in-person facilitation. These individuals or organisation play a vital role to ensure success of the process by focusing on facilitating interactions between citizens. Finally, the fifth required structure is the Oversight Team or Expert Advisory Group. This body consists of external stakeholders and experts from academia and civil society, possibly recruited by open call or direct invitation, but can also include few members of the administration. It is tasked with resolving disputes and giving legitimacy to the process though external assessment.

Two additional groups that enhance a deliberative process, especially if it is large or addresses sensitive topics, include the following: the Content Group, which independently selects experts and information to be presented to citizens and should be different from the Commissioner and the Co-ordination Team to ensure impartiality. It usually consists of academics and research groups representing divergent opinions; and the Communications Team, or individual, responsible for ensuring proper documentation, visibility, and public outreach.

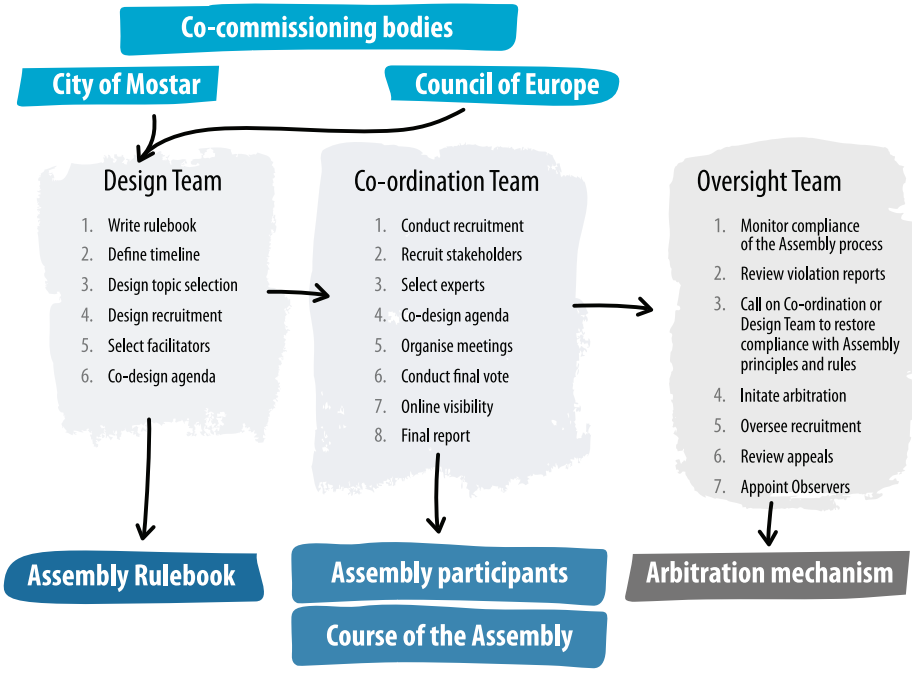
The governance structure is typically formalised in a rulebook, contract, or statute, but it can also be established implicitly through consensus among the Project Team. For a larger or more complex

process it is advisable to formally adopt a governance document. For the 2024 Citizens' Assemblies in Mostar and Banja Luka, the rulebooks outlining governance were drafted by the Project Teams and adopted by the Oversight Team, which also monitored compliance. An example of the governance structure, as seen in the 2021 Mostar Citizens' Assembly, is detailed below.

The role of the Oversight Team was to ensure the transparency of the process by reviewing and adopting the rulebook, overseeing the deliberation process, and assessing whether the assembly was held in accordance with the established rules.

(Banja Luka Oversight Team member 2024)

Governance structure of the 2021 Mostar Citizen's Assembly



2.4. Budgeting

Citizens' assemblies typically span several days and involve many participants. Setting them up requires a dedicated budget that is substantially larger than that of other forms of citizen consultations. The payoff, however, is also substantial as citizens' assemblies can yield more nuanced, informed and operationally significant recommendations. It is important to understand that budget planning should encompass allocated resources such as personnel and potentially venue costs. When commissioning an assembly, you need to decide whether you will set a budget limit in advance, or whether you can be flexible in terms of resources while prioritising other elements such as duration and size. In many instances, a draft budget is compiled by the Project Team, adopted by the Commissioner, and implemented and reported on by the Co-ordination Team. Ideally, the budget for a deliberative process should be made public, either at the outset or in the final report, to enhance the transparency of the process.

When considering the budget, here are the main elements to take into account:

First, there are staff costs and fees for members of the Project Team, the Co-ordination Team, facilitators and experts. These costs are not covered by the operational fees for the Co-ordination Team. The Co-ordination Team costs are second and they can be limited to just operational costs, but can include staff and travel costs as well, depending on funding regulations of the Commissioner. If the organisation of the assembly is outsourced, this can constitute a substantial part of the budget. Third is the recruitment process and selection of assembly members, which includes mailing invitations and conducting the lottery process. It might require outsourcing to a professional polling company if databases of citizens or households do not exist or if access is limited. Then there are daily honoraria for citizens selected to participate in the assembly. An average daily rate per member in Southeast Europe would be between 25-40 Euros, while longer and larger processes will necessarily require more funding. Fifth element are the travel, accommodation and inclusion costs for assembly members which need to be covered, especially if assembly members are not local residents. Be sure to

include a contingency fund to support members with different needs such as disability, childcare and interpretation/translation. This also applies to all personnel, including experts and facilitators, if not covered by the operational fees for the Co-ordination Team (see above). Separately, calculate costs of venue and catering, possibly including renting of audiovisual equipment. While the costs for communication and dissemination can be under the Co-ordination Team costs, they might also be given separately. This often includes photo and video documentation and servicing a dedicated website or page. Finally, the production of a final report can be included, and for larger processes an evaluation or audit.

This already seems like a lot, but it is by no means an exhaustive list. The budget for a small process can start from around 30,000 Euros, but it can go up to several million Euros for a large national process, depending on the living standard costs in the country. For a very good local six-day process in Southeast Europe on a difficult topic in 2024, you can work with estimate total budget of around 50,000 Euros. The estimate budget for a process that involves higher levels of government, or a more complex topic can be above 100,000 Euros. When funds are limited and there is a need to prioritise, costs can be reduced though in-kind contributions (such as using a city venue for free, providing in-house catering, and relying on administrative staff help), as well as limiting travel and accommodation, and reducing fees and number of outside staff. When doing this, it is important to strike a healthy balance and make sure not to undermine the legitimacy of the process. Taking too many cuts and shortcuts can lead to questionable and even unacceptable outcomes.

Plan more funds, rather than less, for items you are not used to procuring. This can be work with a polling agency during recruitment, or facilitators during the sessions. When drafting the budget, be aware of the time it takes to go from planning to implementation as inflation can impact prices.

(Mostar Project Team 2024)

2.5. Recruitment and sortition

The last major step before the assembly is the recruitment of the assembly members. These ordinary people are selected by a democratic lottery to represent the diversity of views in their community and take the time to thoroughly examine an issue before developing considered advice for policymakers. This is a key element that makes citizens' assemblies different from other participatory processes. If you aim to let a group of people, come together and deliberate for several weeks, then it is essential to ensure a high level of diversity that mirrors the diversity of the city population.

To recruit citizens for a deliberative process like a citizens' assembly, the first step is to establish clear aims and principles for the recruitment. The overarching aim should be to design a process that results in a representative group that can legitimately make recommendations on behalf of the broader public. Key principles include randomness, inclusiveness, and impartiality. Recruitment must aim to achieve a group that mirrors the demographic makeup and range of views in the community to the greatest extent possible through random selection. The randomness can be best achieved through multiple rounds of random selection, which in turn increases the legitimacy of the selected members being perceived as "people like us" by the rest of the population. To achieve this, a set of demographic criteria needs to be identified that are relevant for the city. At the least, these include gender and age, but should also consider area of residence, education, employment, language or ethnicity, and citizens' views on the topic (such as views about human-caused climate change, or behaviours related to transportation and mobility). Percentages for each criterion in the final assembly makeup will mirror percentages in the population, according to census data or polling. Depending on the topic, overrepresentation of some categories can be justified, on a select basis.

The next step looks at the practical side of recruitment, the people and organisation who will run it in practice. An impartial third party should administer recruitment to ensure randomness and avoid bias, but they can rely on help and resources of the administration.

For example, if the administration has access to a database of its citizens and their addresses, such as through voter rolls, that can significantly speed up the process and lower the costs by identifying a random sample of addresses. If this is not the case, due to technical or legal issues, then an outside provider, such as a polling agency can help identify a random group of addressees to send out invitations. Common methods include random digital dialling for phone numbers or random address selection from postal codes. The goal is to compile several thousand randomly selected addresses of individuals or households that will be evenly distributed according to population density, amongst other. For instance, this number can range from 4000 to 10000 addresses for an assembly of 50 participants, depending on the number of demographic criteria identified above. The Commissioner or Project Team need to be aware of tendering or commissioning procedures in place to hire an outside provider, and plan in the time necessary for this to happen.

The city mayor will send a letter to these several thousand citizens, inviting them to register for the citizens' assembly. The letter should include the question, assembly dates, and renumeration amount, as well as a registration link and, or telephone number. Giving daily honoraria to citizens for their participation will greatly increase the registration rates and incentivise a more diverse group to register. To ensure impartiality, conflict of interest protocols for the administering agency must be included in the rulebook or guidelines for recruitment. For example, this would exclude elected officials and appointed political party staff from registering. All citizens who register will be registered in a database, run either by the Co-ordination Team or an outside provider, such as a polling agency. From this group, a representative sample will be selected through a two-stage stratified sortition process. The first stage makes use of sortition software to select several possible panels, for example Panel A, Panel B, and Panel C, each of which is representative of the population. The second step is a lottery among the selected panels, often using physical objects like rolling dice. This second step is often livestreamed with the aim of further enhancing legitimacy through transparency.

Once citizens have been recruited, it is important for the Co-ordination Team to consider how members will be on-boarded and engaged throughout the process. High drop-out rates before and during the assembly can undermine the legitimacy of recommendations if the final group is no longer representative. On-boarding involves clearly communicating expectations, providing orientation materials, and establishing personal contact with a process co-ordinator. At this point, it can be useful to start bringing in facilitators to engage with selected assembly members, even before the start of the in-person process.

By exploring the recruitment process of previous assemblies, it is possible to identify and adopt best practice sortition methods and focus on maintaining participation[vi].

Recruitment and sortition process[vii]



2.6. CHECKLIST 2: BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY

	CHECKLIST 2 **Before the Assembly**			
#	*Item / Questions*	*Person / Team responsible*	*Deadline (milestone date)*	*Progress / Completion / Notes*
1	A clear and public mandate for the assembly from the Commissioner	Commissioner		
1.1	The mandate includes a timeline and possibly location	Commissioner		
1.2	The mandate includes a (promised) budget	Commissioner		
1.3	The mandate includes provisions on what happens with citizens' recommendations	Commissioner		
1.4	The remit is defined and approved by relevant decision-makers and/or institutions	Commissioner		
1.5	The remit tackles a significant problem for the community	Commissioner		
1.6	The remit phrasing is clear and not suggestive	Commissioner		
1.7	The remit is made public	Commissioner		
2	The teams responsible for planning and implementation are formed	Commissioner / Project Team		
2.1	The Project Team is formed (contracted) and includes experienced experts on deliberative democracy (responsible for design) and facilitation (lead facilitators)	Commissioner		
2.2	The ToR for the Co-ordination Team is drafted (for outsourced implementation)	Project Team / Commissioner		
2.3	An implementing organisation (Co-ordination Team) is selected	Project Team / Commissioner		
2.4	Contracts prepared and signed with all teams (individuals / organisations)	Co-ordination Team / Commissioner		
3	A governance structure is clearly defined, other teams are formed	Commissioner / Project Team / Co-ordination Team		

3.1	Decision on how to formalise governance (public rulebook vs. internal document) but keeping in mind that more transparency is better	Commissioner / Project Team		
3.2	An Oversight Team is created	Project Team / Co-ordination Team		
3.3	Rules on conduct and voting are defined	Project Team		
3.4	Responsibilities for dispute resolution are clear	Project Team		
3.5	If public, the rulebook is adopted	Project Team / Oversight Team		
4	The budget is secured	Commissioner / Co-ordination Team		
4.1	The budget covers all elements of the process: recruitment, venue and catering, travel, facilitation, experts' fees, member allowances, operating costs, and other. It is enough to cover some unforeseen expenses	Co-ordination Team		
4.2	Financial reporting is clear, and responsibilities are assigned	Co-ordination Team		
5	Recruitment is completed and assembly members are onboarded	Co-ordination Team / Project Team		
5.1	The recruitment methodology and implementation are designed	Project Team		
5.2	Responsibilities for recruitment are assigned or outsourced, depending on circumstances	Co-ordination Team		
5.3	Recruitment materials are finalised: invitation letter, information package in print or online, sign-up options	Co-ordination Team / Project Team		
5.4	Public sortition event	Co-ordination Team		
5.5	Onboarding and filling reserve spots	Co-ordination Team		
5.6	Ongoing onboarding and communication with selected members until assembly start	Co-ordination Team		

3. During: running a citizens' assembly

3.1. Facilitation, inclusion and member commitment

Facilitation plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of a citizens' assembly. It is important to include the lead facilitators in the Project Team and consult them from early-on in the deliberative process. When the assembly starts, their role becomes much more important. As an assembly brings together a diverse group of citizens to discuss important issues and work towards solutions, having skilled facilitators to guide the process is essential. Facilitators help create an environment where all participants feel included and comfortable sharing their views, actively listen to understand different perspectives, and work collaboratively towards consensus. They must remain independent of the process itself and stay neutral throughout the deliberation, all while fostering an environment of respect among and towards assembly members. Thus, facilitation involves more than just managing a meeting; it is about empowering citizens and helping them feel a sense of ownership over the assembly's work. Effective facilitation can transform a group of individuals into a cohesive community committed to democratic decision-making.

Before the assembly, facilitators can provide valuable input on outreach efforts, recruitment and onboarding, engaging marginalised communities, development of pre-assembly materials, and public communication. This is typically the role of the lead facilitator, who also plays a crucial role in designing the agenda, which will be covered in the next section. Additionally, there is the role of the process moderator who will be primarily responsible for keeping the agenda on track and facilitating plenary discussions. This role can be filled by the lead facilitator or a different person altogether. Finally, there are several support facilitators, or support facilitators, who will help ensure a productive and collaborative

process, manage small group discussions and handle learning materials. The number of support facilitators depends on the number of assembly members and the facilitation style, but generally, you can plan for one support facilitator for every 8-10 assembly members.

Once the assembly begins, skilled facilitation is crucial at every step. Facilitators must guide complex discussions on important issues in a way that elicits multiple viewpoints and moves the group towards solutions. They need to ensure that all citizens have an equal voice while also keeping discussions productive. Facilitators should use various techniques to engage quieter participants, manage dominant voices, and help the group synthesize different ideas. Their role is not to insert their own views but to remain impartial and help citizens work through challenges themselves. Facilitators must understand both the social and technical aspects of their role.

All these tasks require a specific set of skills and knowledge that can be gained through training and experience. But how to recruit facilitators and where? You should look for individuals with experience guiding complex public discussions as well as competency in areas like group dynamics, conflict resolution, and inclusive decision-making. Certain organisations can provide professional facilitation services; they may have a roster of certified facilitators, or they can provide facilitation training. This should cover subjects like meeting design, consensus building techniques, active listening, managing difficult conversations, and addressing unconscious biases.

Facilitators are key to the success of the process. They lead the sessions of the assembly, co-ordinate work in groups, and the quality of the final recommendations largely depends on their expertise and engagement.

(Banja Luka Project Team and Mostar Project Team, 2024)

Facilitation contributed to creating an environment in which everyone felt safe to express their opinions and ideas, through a well-prepared methodology and facilitator skills. I think this is crucial for the success of a Citizens' Assembly.

(Goran Kučera, Mostar 2024 lead facilitator)

It is important to include the lead local facilitators early in the project planning process, and to keep them informed about the activities with the city administration.

(Mirna Dabić Davidović, Banja Luka 2024 lead facilitator)

All of us who were there appreciated the work of the facilitation team, and during our work with them there was rarely a question, if any, on which we did not reach an agreement.

(Assembly member, Mostar 2024)

3.2. The agenda: who, when, and how?

The agenda for a deliberative process is more detailed and slightly different from a regular meeting agenda. It needs to be clear and well-structured, include tasks and responsibilities, any comments related to the venue or material, have a set timing for every element, and yet be flexible enough to be modified on the go. Setting the agenda will involve everyone on the Project Team, although it is primarily done by the lead facilitators. Let's give an example.

For the 2024 Banja Luka Assembly, the agenda was co-designed by the lead facilitator and other members of the Project Team. A detailed day-by-day agenda was drafted for each of the six days,

spread out over three weekends, including tasks for the weeks between sessions. The first day blended learning and group-building activities. It consisted of introductory statements, a learning session on deliberative processes, ice-breaker games for assembly members, co-creation of deliberation principles, and a topic-related learning session and deliberation on the content. The second day continued with topical learning sessions and deliberation on the content. The third day included several facilitation methods, such as an open forum, to generate and consolidate responses. On the fourth day these responses were turned into draft policy recommendations, debated and voted on. Before the fifth day, political stakeholders had enough time to give feedback to citizens on their draft recommendations. These were then debated, reassessed, and revised during the fifth day. The final sixth day consisted of voting, drafting the report preamble, and presentation of the recommendations. An additional day or "reserve" time was considered in case it was required.

This example clearly demonstrates that deliberation, both in small groups and in plenary sessions, occupies a significant portion of time during an assembly. At least half of the time should be devoted to discussions among assembly members, in addition to learning about the topic from experts and incorporating stakeholder feedback. The persons who will be largely working with the agenda are the facilitators, and therefore it is key that they are the ones who will shape the agenda to steer the process towards its goal of creating good recommendations.

3.3. Sorting out the logistics: where, what, and who?

A large part of running an assembly is making sure all logistical issues are sorted and everyone knows their roles. The main body responsible for the logistics is the Co-ordination Team, with tasks further subdivided among its members. The Project Team needs to ensure that the Co-ordination Team is aware of all logistical tasks. And there can be a lot of them.

Starting with the major ones, think about the location, size, and accessibility of the venue. It should have ample space for both plenary sessions and several parallel small group discussions. If participants are coming from distant parts of the city, then transportation may need to be provided or reimbursed. And if it is a regional or national assembly, accommodation in or near the venue is necessary. Transportation and accommodation also need to be provided for the co-ordinators, facilitators, and topic experts. As the assembly will last throughout the day, catering that includes a proper lunch and possibly dinner needs to be arranged.

Next are reimbursement costs, the most important being the reimbursement of daily honoraria to assembly members. It is important to keep track of attendance and swiftly process payments once the assembly has concluded. If certain participants have special needs or require assistance, such as accessibility accommodations, childcare, translation services (both of materials and on-the-spot interpretation if needed), these should be addressed. Finally, there is the technical aspect of providing audiovisual equipment, printers, and online connectivity, or at least ensuring that the venue's provided equipment is operational. Working materials for facilitators, such as sticky notes, flipcharts, and markers, name tags, etc. also need to be provided. It may involve a long list of minor items but maintaining and regularly updating an internal checklist is highly beneficial.

3.4. Information provision: selecting the experts

The information provided to the members of the assembly is one of the most crucial elements in the design of your process. You want the citizens to be informed enough to understand different options for the policy problem and know the most important trade-offs when making choices. You also want them to know the different positions certain groups or stakeholders in the community have about the issue. On the other hand, especially in a local setting, you will have limited time and will need to make judicious choices on how much information is "enough". Finally, you want to ensure that the individuals responsible for selecting the speakers and the

information are perceived as neutral or legitimate in their roles. If someone wants to contest the outcome of an assembly, they will try to argue that the members were only given "one sided" or "partisan" information. You need to be able to show that this is not the case.

The first step you need to take is to decide who will select the information. In many cases a separate group is set up for this task to enhance legitimacy. An information selection group would thus consist of the following members:

- Experts in the policy domain: Often these are academics but could also be other individual experts. They have a grasp of what information is available on the topic and potential examples from other cities that can be inspiring.

- Experts on deliberation: You would want to have one or more experts on deliberation, as they will know how much information is manageable for a diverse group of regular citizens given the amount of time available in the planning. Moreover, they will be knowledgeable about different styles of learning (see below) and advise on different methods to bring information.

- Persons representing the major stakeholders: Including some persons representing the major stakeholders often results in the broadest spectrum of information sources selected.

Which *types of information* inputs should be included in the process? Providing information to a citizen assembly does not simply mean inviting academic specialists. Different types of experts and information sources can be identified. The organising government can send a representative who is often invited to present a current state of affairs. To avoid making this political, a senior civil servant is better than a politician. Secondly, you would want your knowledge experts: individuals with specialist academic, technical, or legal knowledge who provide information. This can include persons who have worked on the same policy topic with some innovative solutions in another city. The third group consists of your stakeholders or active voices. They are the representatives from interested parties (citizen or interest groups) who usually provide

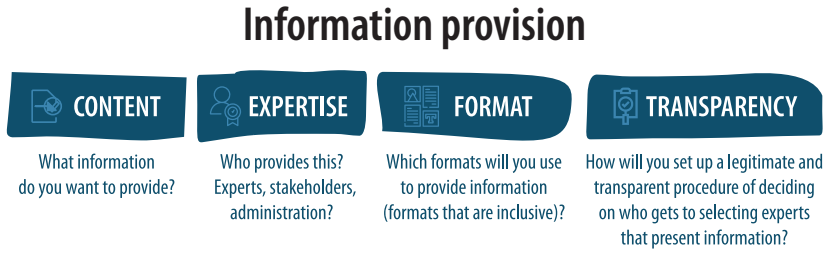
evidence advocating for a certain perspective. In some assemblies, two more sources are used, but they require some extra effort. First is the information from the wider society. This is when you allow the public to send in information which can be presented to the assembly. The issue with this is that if it is successful, you might have a high number of submissions and need to find a way to present this. The opposite risk is that only a minority of citizens sends in remarks, and these are all from a similar activist perspective. In some processes, such as in Copenhagen, this is solved by having an "open session" of the assembly where the members converse with citizens who come to that meeting. A final source of information that is sometimes very useful are people with "lived experience". If an assembly is looking at homelessness, it might be as informative to hear a homeless person talk about all the issues they face as it is to hear from an academic expert.

To ensure your members feel adequately informed, it is useful to ask them after the information phase of the process has ended whether they believe they have all the information needed. If not, you can ask what type of sources they would still like to hear from to make an informed decision. Doing this creates an extra layer of legitimacy but can also create some logistical issues if you do not have much time between sessions to find the requested sources or information.

One of the reasons it is useful to include one or more individuals with experience in deliberation in the group preparing your information is that they are aware of different learning styles and various methods to organise exchanges with experts. Most experts tend to present in an academic manner, using monologue and slides. These presentations are frequently quite technical and overly complex for the average citizen. It is advisable to check with the experts before the presentation to ensure the information is comprehensible to the average citizen. Using other methods, such as video, can also be helpful, as this allows people to rewatch the information if needed.

Naturally, all of this depends greatly on the available resources. Having speakers in the room means you need to cover their travel costs if they are coming from elsewhere. It might also be a challenge

to find a speaker for every session you have planned, as this is very demanding on their free time (e.g. an academic that must come on a weekend). This is where video-calls or recorded submissions, for example, might cut costs. Similarly, when you ask citizens if they need additional information, do not ask them "who" they want to hear, but rather "what type of information or source" they need. The latter is a more flexible option than the former, where they might request a specific individual that you cannot procure.



Compromise is always possible, but it takes a little goodwill for people to sit down to talk or at least to listen. I think that listening to different viewpoints and what others have to say is the key to everything.
(Assembly member Banja Luka 2024)

3.5. Writing and voting on recommendations

The tangible result of a deliberative process are policy recommendations that address the original remit given to the citizens. Having a group of citizens with no special starting knowledge on a topic write such recommendations requires specific skills that a trained facilitator should possess, which reinforces the importance of making a good choice when hiring your facilitators. There are, nevertheless, several guidelines to take into account.

Citizens should be given a blank page and there should be no guidance from the commissioning authorities on "the right direction" of the proposals. In many processes it is the citizens that hold the pen to write recommendations, often after they first agreed on broader principles of what the solutions should look like. Sometimes they are helped by the facilitators in formulating their proposals, but again this should be done without guidance in a specific direction. In some processes, outsiders can put forward recommendations that citizens then consider, amend, or reject after having heard all the information. While this can be a way to speed things up, it means the proposals did not truly originate from the citizens themselves. Another important consideration is whether you want to limit the number of recommendations that citizens can put forward. While restricting the number at first sight seems to dampen the ambition of the process, one must be aware that a very large number of recommendations might mean most of them never make it to implementation. This is why, in certain processes, the number of recommendations is kept low, but these recommendations have stronger signalling power, indicating that these are truly the things the citizens want. A process in the city of Miskolc in Hungary ended up with only seven recommendations, but one included building a tramline. This example shows that a lower number of recommendations does not equate to meagre ambition. On the other hand of the spectrum, we have seen processes with close to or over a hundred recommendations, which often is just too much for a city administration to process. There is a middle ground where many assemblies come up with 20 to 40 recommendations. Whatever choice is made here, it needs to be transparently justified and established up front, not during the process.

Once the citizens have finished their first draft of proposals, it is also common practice to have a feedback moment for policymakers and stakeholders. They can say whether, in their view, the proposals are feasible or not. This feedback can be very valuable for the citizens to write their final version of the recommendations, so they are sure that what they propose is implementable. This session should be strictly moderated, so the politicians do not steer the final direction of these proposals and weed out everything they do not like. In

this phase of drafting of recommendations, it is important that all citizens feel equally involved and having a fair voice. Again, this is the reason why you need to have good facilitators as part of the process to oversee this.

In almost all processes, at the end there is a vote on the recommendations by the citizens. Even though they work on them together, it is possible that not every recommendation is completely supported by everyone. A vote also increases legitimacy, as this indicates that even if some people might have felt they could not always participate fully, they could still approve or disapprove the result. A recommendation with a very high vote gives a strong signal that it was not just the option of a few of the most assertive people at the table. This is also why a vote should not be public. Having worked together for several weeks as a group, casting a dissenting vote might not be easy if you must do it in public. A private vote makes sure people are 100% free to decide. Several ways of voting have been used, going from a simple "I support – I do not support" dichotomy to a scale, which allows more nuance, but also sometimes makes it less straightforward to interpret the results. Experience over the last years tells us that many recommendations will reach a very high level of support. This is in part because as citizens deliberate beforehand, they already iron out many of the dissenting opinions and views before they put something on paper.

To enhance the strength of citizen recommendations, in most cases the threshold for a vote is not placed at 50% but higher for recommendations to be seen as "strong". In some Polish processes that barrier was put at 80%, in others it is put at 75% (assemblies of the German speaking community of Belgium) or two-thirds of the votes. Regardless of that level, this "supermajority" shows that the recommendations that make it through are really those supported by a very large group of the assembly members. Finally, it is also customary to allow a sizeable minority on a recommendation to write a dissenting opinion in the report if they want to. If a recommendation has 80% support, the remaining 20% can explain in writing why they chose not to vote for it. This can give information to policymakers about specific feelings held by minority groups of citizens.

3.6. Transparency: communication and media engagement

We have emphasized throughout this document that it is key to make sure the process is seen as legitimate by outsiders. One of the most crucial elements is therefore complete transparency throughout the process. From the selection of members to the information given to the citizens, to the rulebook of the assembly or the agenda of the sessions, everything should be public. This is why a dedicated website is indispensable for your assembly. This can be part of the website of the city, but it should be a dedicated place with all the information. On this website, videos can also be shared of the work of the assembly when it is ongoing. These days, the technological setup needed to do a livestream of all the plenary moments on a website is not that complicated anymore and therefore we would recommend it. The recordings can also be made available afterwards.

Viewing communication in a deliberative process as merely having a website is too minimalist a perspective. The members in your process are in a way representing the larger citizen group and it is therefore important to make sure that they also know that this is happening. Therefore, have the communication team of the city involved from the start in the deliberative process. They can reach out to traditional media and post on social media to give visibility to this process. It is good to define a number of milestones in the process at which you will reach out to media, such as the recruitment, the first session, a presentation by a known speaker or the presentation of the final recommendations.

You can have members of the assembly communicate with the media to give a personal face to the process. There are a number of elements to take into account: not all citizens feel comfortable talking to the media or want to, so it should be made clear that this is optional. *The French National Climate Assembly* provided citizens with coloured badges to pin on their clothes, indicating to the media whether they were open to talking. Secondly, inform your citizens at the start of the process about some ground rules for talking to the media. This includes, for example, not divulging

individual positions of members on what is discussed. Finally, most processes ask citizens not to discuss the content of the work with the media until the end of the process, but rather to focus on how the process itself is going.

There are a number of key moments where your communication will want to engage the wider citizen group. This will primarily be the case ahead of the recruitment. To ensure that as many people as possible reply to your invitation letter, it is helpful to run a campaign notifying citizens about it. It will also give basic information about the assembly, so people know what it is about. If you want citizens to contribute with their ideas to the assembly members during the process, you also need to make sure this opportunity is widely known so everyone can contribute (see 3.4). Similarly, you would want your stakeholders to be aware of the different moments in which they could connect to the assembly. This might mean that in some cases you reach out to them separately to make sure they know they can contribute to the process.

A general rule of assembly communication is that all plenary moments and documents are public, but that the small group deliberations are not. Many citizens will not feel at ease if someone is recording what they say during their conversations. A deliberative process is about the group outcome, not the individual positions. To create an atmosphere during group work where everyone feels completely free to speak their mind, the media is not allowed at that time. To create transparency on this aspect, you can agree to have observers (academics for example), but they will have to agree to stringent rules to be in the background and not interfere in the process or publicise individual positions. In France, for example, it is customary to have up to three "guarantors" in a process who observe the proceedings during the assembly and write a report at the end.

Everything was so transparent, so many people had good will. They had so much constructive ideas and suggestions and that was fantastic.

(Assembly member Mostar 2024)

3.7. CHECKLIST 3: DURING THE ASSEMBLY

	CHECKLIST 3 **During the Assembly**			
#	*Item / Questions*	*Person / Team responsible*	*Deadline (milestone date)*	*Progress / Completion*
1	The facilitation team is selected and trained	Project Team / Co-ordination Team		
1.1	The lead facilitator has been involved as part of the Project Team with clear responsibilities	Project Team		
1.2	An adequate number of support facilitators has been selected	Lead facilitator / Co-ordination Team		
1.3	Support facilitators have been trained	Lead facilitator / Co-ordination Team		
2	Agenda is designed	Lead facilitator / Co-ordination Team		
2.1	Draft agenda	Lead facilitator		
2.2	Events with officials are added before the agenda is finalised	Lead facilitator / Co-ordination & Project Teams		
2.3	A detailed runtime (executive agenda) is created	Lead facilitator		
2.4	Agenda is possibly revised in between assembly sessions	Lead facilitator / Co-ordination Team		
3	Logistics are all taken care of			
3.1	Where? An appropriate venue is selected and inspected	Co-ordination Team		
3.2	Catering is provided	Co-ordination Team		
3.3	Transportation and accommodation for members, co-ordinators, speakers, facilitators are provided	Co-ordination Team		
3.4	Technical equipment (audio, video, working materials) is provided	Co-ordination Team		
3.5	Procedure for honoraria reimbursement for assembly members is in place	Co-ordination Team		
3.6	Special needs of participants (accessibility, childcare, etc.) are taken care of	Co-ordination Team		
3.7	Documentation is secured (photo, video)	Co-ordination Team		
3.8	Video and photo consent forms (assembly members, participants, and others) are made	Co-ordination Team		

4	Information provision is transparent and independent	Co-ordination Team / Project Team		
4.1	Have procedures in place to identify & select experts: external expert group or Co-ordination Team	Project Team / Co-ordination Team		
4.2	Identify a list of potential experts and availability	Expert group		
4.3	Make sure different viewpoints and stakeholders are represented	Expert group		
4.4	Coach the experts on how to present to ordinary citizens: simple language, visual aids, etc.	Expert group / Co-ordination Team		
4.5	Ask assembly members to identify topics where they need more information	Co-ordination Team		
5	Writing and voting on recommendations is considered legitimate	Co-ordination Team / Project Team		
5.1	Ensure the voting rules are understood and public, including provisions on how many recommendations can be adopted	Project Team / Co-ordination Team		
5.2	Identify who can give feedback on recommendations or to help citizens formulate them, if anyone	Co-ordination Team		
5.3	Make the results available publicly as soon as possible	Co-ordination Team		
5.4	Assembly selects members to present the recommendations to Commissioner			
6	Transparency through communication and media engagement	Co-ordination Team		
6.1	Identify responsibility for content writing and media management, within the Co-ordination Team or in a separate Communications Team	Co-ordination Team		
6.2	Have a process website/webpage and update it regularly with as much information as possible	Co-ordination Team		
6.3	Livestream as many information sessions as viable (online), but preferably not the deliberation	Co-ordination Team		
6.4	Plan for promotional outputs such as process video and photos	Co-ordination Team		

4. After: the follow-up

4.1. Landing with administration

A lot of attention when setting up a first deliberative process goes to the actual meetings of the citizens during the assembly, and rightfully so. What is often forgotten is that some of the most important work to make sure the process amounts to actual policy-change needs to be done before and after the citizen meetings.

When designing after the citizen meetings, it is important to decide in advance on the rules and timing for the follow-up by policymakers once the assembly ends. This needs to be included in the rules of the assembly to ensure that the commissioning authority is obligated to adhere to these agreements afterward. Another important step before the start of the assembly is to involve the department(s) that will be working on the potential recommendations that emerge from the process. If you have a deliberative project on city planning, these might for example be the mobility department, your planning department and the central mayor's office. Having a meeting ahead of the process informs them that this process is happening and that they will have recommendations and action plans on their desk soon. Not only does this allow them to plan ahead, but it also creates a feeling they are a part of the project and not just bystanders. Similarly, it is good to have those department heads visit and observe the assembly at some point. This will allow them to understand better how these recommendations were formed and the citizen logic behind them. The civil servants that must help run the assembly can perform an important liaison function here.

What rules do you need to put in place for follow-up? First of all, this is about setting a number of required meetings where the policymakers give feedback to the assembly members on what they will do with their work. Secondly, it is about the format in which

this feedback will take place. Regarding the required meetings, one could say that three is the minimum. The first will be at the end of the assembly where the citizens present their final recommendations and have their time to explain their motivations. The report with the citizen recommendations is handed over to the policymakers. A second meeting is most often planned three to four months later. This is where the policymakers have had time to go through the report and recommendations and explain what they intend to follow up and what is not possible according to them. A third meeting would then follow another six to ten months later where the policymakers report on the progress of first implementations. It is possible to plan more meetings after that to keep following up implementation. Regarding the format, it is considered a minimal quality standard that feedback is provided not only verbally but also in an official document, with each recommendation addressed individually. A bad practice from the early days in this field was that politicians would give a verbal reply without going into all the separate recommendations. This is inadequate and is perceived by most citizens as a lack of respect of their work. The written reply should include timelines and concrete details for all the recommendations the city plans to follow up on. When the authorities will not follow up on a recommendation, this will need extensive explanation as to why this is the case. Again, this needs to be done in writing. A good example here is the Parliament of the Brussels capital region in Belgium. Their report gives this type of reply for the different branches of government: the parliament will respond what they can and cannot do per recommendation, and the responsible ministers will provide separate answers. To make this very easily readable for the citizens, these reports use colour codes per recommendation to indicate whether there will be follow up or not. These reports should be made public. Once the implementation phase has started, a public progress tracker that is regularly updated, on the website, for example, increases the sense of accountability. This has been implemented, to a certain degree, during the 2021 Mostar Citizens' Assembly.

The recommendations are very realistic, meaningful and necessary for Mostar. At the end of the day, I believe that the first citizens' assembly in 2021 was the tipping point to decide on forming a single utility company in the area of the city. It is indeed a rare socio-political process that effectively brought direct positive consequences for the City of Mostar.

(Vlatko Marinović, City Councillor Mostar)

4.2. Translating recommendations into policy

A specific process for translating the citizens' recommendations from an assembly into policy was piloted by the Council of Europe and the City of Mostar in the 2021 Mostar Citizens' Assembly. The 32 recommendations were turned into a City Action Plan. For each recommendation the responsible city office was identified, possible measures were drafted, along with implementation indicators and required resources, and an implementation timeframe. The Action plan required a yearly or more frequent reporting on its implementation to the City Council, which gave assembly members and the wider public opportunity to assess how the city was handling their recommendations. Two implementation reports have been presented and adopted by the City Council in 2022 and 2023. A third report is expected to be adopted in 2024. A similar process was also implemented for the 2024 citizens' assemblies in Banja Luka and Mostar.

The Action Plan for implementation should be drafted by people who work on the topic of the Citizens' Assembly. It is necessary to start from the recommendations in a way that defines responsibilities, activities, a time for implementation, and financial resources to make them happen.

(Mostar Project Team 2024)

4.3. Following up with assembly members

It is normal that the members of the assembly are kept informed about all the subsequent steps after the end of the assembly. Moreover, they should be invited to the different follow-up meetings described in 4.1. Scientific research of many assemblies over the last decades shows that participating in an assembly has an energising effect on the people who participate and often increases their sense of engagement in the community.[viii] There are reports from many places that after participating in an assembly people became volunteers in civil society, took up a role in their community or even ran for office.

This energy can be harnessed in several ways. There are examples where citizens who took part in an assembly on climate later visited schools to talk about this issue with young people. In some cases, policymakers asked citizens back to help them review another piece of policy. This was the case in the German-speaking region in Belgium, where, shortly after an assembly on housing was completed, the government worked on a new housing bill. They invited the citizens of that assembly back for an exchange on the plans for the new bill. In a number of cases, citizens felt so strongly about their work afterwards that they created an organisation to keep together and follow-up their work. This was the case after the French Climate Assembly, where the members created an official NGO called "The 150" (after the number of members in the assembly) to keep advocating for their recommendations. Finally, in some cases (see 4.5 below) former citizens are given a role in more institutionalised or permanent assemblies.

Consider the competences of local level of governments to implement recommendations and be considerate when addressing requests for a specific recommendation to higher levels of government.

(Banja Luka Project Team 2024)

I was a little sceptical at first, but now I see that citizens can have a lot of public influence on the government structures to change the way the City works, in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. The fact that citizens in this assembly talked publicly with city councillors and asked various questions constitutes progress.

(Assembly member Mostar 2024)

Survey results collected from assembly members before and after the 2024 Mostar and Banja Luka assemblies show an increased appreciation for the advisory role of citizen assemblies to local governments after a deliberative process. This highlights the importance of interaction with administrations and follow-up.

4.4. Evaluation of the assembly

Citizens' assemblies are a new form of participatory democracy that is both more substantial and more costly. A proper evaluation after each assembly is a way to ensure that resources have been used in the best possible way, and that progress was made in engaging with citizens. The broader aim is to learn how to improve the quality of future deliberative processes while meeting minimum standards. That said, evaluation is very different for small local assemblies than for large national ones, and specific rules around funding and reporting can play a big role. Best practices and guidelines for evaluation have been drafted by the OECD. They emphasize that an evaluation needs to be evidence based, with a transparent procedure, conducted independently, with constructive feedback, and accessible results.

Planning for evaluation usually starts when the Project Team is drafting the timeline and budget. Both time and resources need to be committed, while the scope of activities differs. These include an evaluation of the process design integrity through financial reporting, and/or narrative self-reporting. In case of large and

expensive assemblies, an external evaluation is the standard. The deliberative experience is evaluated through surveys with assembly members (usually done both before and after the process), and the impact of a deliberative process is assessed through interviews with stakeholders. Evaluation results are usually approved by the Oversight Team and discussed in a final session of this body. At the same time, different institutions are the final recipients of these evaluations, such as the Commissioner, government audit offices, international organisations, CSOs, academics, the assembly members themselves, and the public.

At the assembly so many people opened up, said what they think, what bothers them, and such an assembly is really necessary. Not only for citizens to participate, but for them to create very important decisions. This time around it was about young entrepreneurs, and something like this process was really needed.

(Assembly member Banja Luka 2024)

4.5. Permanent or institutionalised assemblies

There are a few places that have decided after initial single assemblies to make them a permanent feature of their policy-making. While this is already a further step, it can be informative to see how this type of process can be ingrained as a structural feature of your governance. Most of these permanent assemblies have at their heart repetitions of the type of assembly as described in this guide: a group of randomly selected citizens that come together to deliberate on a specific topic to produce policy-recommendations. Off course even when given this legal basis, these processes remain as a consultation to the representative system, not replacing or superseding it. How are then these permanent assemblies different? One of the differences is how the topic can be set, once this type of assembly happens regularly. In the Brussels Regional Parliament for

example a petition by 1000 citizens can call for a Citizens' Assembly. But the politicians can still propose a topic. In the German-speaking community of Belgium, a separate Council exists whose members have all been part of a Citizen Assembly at one point. It is this Council of 25 members that selects topics for assemblies that will be organised. But this Council also has the task to make sure that the parliament organises the follow up of each assembly in the right way as is stipulated in the rules. The City of Milan installed a permanent assembly to have citizens help with the implementation of the city's long term "Climate and Air Quality Plan". In this assembly, citizens are rotated every nine months. So while these assemblies are permanent as institutions, the citizens in them change. Cities like Paris and Copenhagen similarly have specific formats of permanent citizen assemblies. No example exists as yet in Central and Eastern Europe, but it seems just a matter of time before this happens. Creating a resource pool of former assembly members to serve as deliberative experts and ambassadors is a viable and important first step.

It [citizens' assembly] should be introduced as an advisory body of any city, especially ours, in order to hear the voice of the people, both pensioners, high school students and people who are middle-aged from any ethnic group.

(Assembly member Banja Luka 2024)

4.6. CHECKLIST 4: AFTER THE ASSEMBLY

CHECKLIST 4 **After the Assembly**				
#	*Item / Questions*	*Person / Team responsible*	*Deadline (milestone date)*	*Progress / Completion*
1	The administration is on board to accept recommendations	Co-ordination Team / Project Team / Commissioner		
1.1	Involve administration throughout the process by design, either directly or by keeping them informed	Project Team / Co-ordination Team		
1.2	Ensure that the recommendations will be presented to decision-makers	Project Team / Commissioner		
1.3	Build in a commitment for decision-makers to provide feedback to assembly members	Project Team / Commissioner		
2	Translating recommendations into policy	Project Team / Commissioner		
2.1	Consider best ways to translate recommendations into policy proposals	Project Team / Commissioner		
2.2	Establish responsibility for this within administration, and offer assistance on best practices such as Action Plans	Project Team / Commissioner		
3	Follow up with assembly members	Commissioner / Project Team		
3.1	Establish ways to report to and follow up directly with assembly members after the project is completed. Transfer this responsibility to permanent staff	Commissioner / Project Team		
4	Preform an evaluation of the citizens' assembly project	Co-ordination Team / Commissioner		
4.1	Process evaluation based on best practices and standards	Co-ordination Team		
4.2	Financial evaluation	Co-ordination Team		
5	Consider a next assembly or institutionalisation	Commissioner		
5.1	Plan topics and budget for a next assembly	Commissioner		
5.2	Consider creating a deliberative experts' resource pool of former assembly members	Commissioner		

REFERENCES:

[i] Council of Europe Recommendation 472 (2022) on the use of deliberative methods in European cities and regions, https://rm.coe.int/0900001680a5b00d

[ii] Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 on deliberative democracy, https://search.coe.int/cm?i=0900001680ac627a

[iii] Council of Europe Resolution 2552 (2024) on strengthening democracy through participatory and deliberative processes, https://pace.coe.int/en/files/33633/html

[iv] OECD (2020), Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave

[v] Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 from the Committee of Ministers to member States on Deliberative Democracy, adopted on 6 September 2023 and the recommendation "Beyond elections: The use of deliberative methods in European municipalities and regions" from the Congress of Local and Regional authorities CG-GOV(2021)19-03

[vi] Alonso, I. & Dejaeghere, Y., (2022) "Organising a democratic lottery" Federation for Innovation in Democracy - Europe.

[vii] Numbers are indicative of the processes at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina but may differ in other cases.

[viii] See: Lindell, M. (2023), **"Internal dynamics at work"**, in Reuchamps, M., Vrydagh, J., Welp, Y. (Eds.), *De Gruyter Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, pp. 257-270, for a review of research findings into the effects that participating in an assembly has on its members.

RESOURCES:

- UNDP and New Democracy (2019), Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections, United Nations Development Programme, available at: www.un.org/democracyfund/sites/www.un.org.democracyfund/files/newdemocracy-undef-handbook.pdf, accessed 19 July 2024.
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- Kapidžić, Damir, (2024), The Mostar Citizens' Assembly: Bridging diversity and division in Bosnia and Herzegovina, OECD Participo, available at: https://medium.com/participo/the-mostar-citizens-assembly-bridging-diversity-and-division-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-48adc46cd00f, accessed on 29 July 2029.

FIDE list of resources:

Resources Spring School on Climate Citizens' Assemblies, available at: https://www.fide.eu/spring-school-2023

Materials mentioned in this guide:

Agenda of the Banja Luka Citizens' Assembly 2024. See more at: www.banjaluka.rs.ba/gradjani/skupstina-gradjana-grada/
Citizens Assembly of Mostar: www.mostargradimo.ba
Online sortition tool Panelot, available at: https://panelot.org
Stratified Random Selection Tool, available at: https://selection.newdemocracy.com.au

Participation of people in decision-making is a key component of good governance and a core principle of human rights.

This guide is intended for local authorities who want to engage citizens' in formulating policies through deliberative democracy, with particular focus on citizens' assemblies.

The guide explains what assemblies are and follows the steps needed before, during, and after the process. It makes use of real-world examples and checklists to track progress, covering topics such as principles of deliberation and why a public authority should commission an assembly, as well as why commitment to a deliberative process is important.

The guide aims to motivate, generate interest, and understanding among local elected officials, members of the administration and wider society about what it takes to run a deliberative process.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is the institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and the three committees it brings together 612 elected officials, representing more than 130,000 local and regional authorities.

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