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# Can Citizen Participation Be Institutionalised?

Feasibility study for a permanent, national deliberative mechanism in Luxembourg

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## Summary<sup>1</sup>

- This study examines the feasibility of establishing a permanent deliberative body in Luxembourg. It provides an overview of existing practices in Luxembourg, highlighting in particular the recommendations from scientific evaluations of pilot projects carried out in 2021 and 2022, namely the [Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050 \(BK2050\)](#) and the [Klima-Biergerrot \(KBR\)](#).
- Faced with growing demand for citizen participation and the erosion of trust in representative institutions, many European countries are exploring new models of democratic inclusion. Luxembourg is no exception to this trend: local and national participatory initiatives have been trialled here. These mechanisms illustrate the potential of randomly selected citizens' assemblies but also raise the question of their sustainability.
- Opinion polls conducted in Luxembourg show that the majority of citizens are in favour of more frequent use of citizens' assemblies, while political parties, although sometimes cautious, recognise their value in complementing representative democracy.
- The study also draws on a comparative analysis of eight institutionalised deliberative mechanisms in Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, European Union), ranging from highly institutionalised models to experiments still in development. Their geographical scope varies; some are regional (particularly in Belgium and Austria), others are

<sup>1</sup> This summary, written in French, is followed by translations into Luxembourgish and German.

national (France and Germany), and one is supranational (European Union).

- **The models examined also differ in terms of their sustainability and degree of institutionalisation:** the permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community (Belgium) is the most legally and politically integrated, whereas the European panels remain without a formal legal basis.
- The comparative analysis provides several key lessons: the **key role played by parliaments** in both initiating and overseeing deliberative mechanisms; the **need for autonomous governance** through the establishment of a dedicated body; the importance of **rigorous participant selection**, and the existence of **political follow-up mechanisms**.
- The majority of the mechanisms compared have a **strictly consultative function and are designed to complement representative democracy**. Consequently, they are not designed to supplant the traditional model of representative democracy.
- **The impact of these mechanisms depends heavily on political commitment and oversight.** Some cases, such as the permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, demonstrate that well-designed institutional integration can produce tangible effects on public policy.
- The comparative analysis does not identify a model that can be directly transposed to Luxembourg. However, it highlights **several options, which this study evaluates in light of the country's unique local, societal, political and legal characteristics, in order to propose the most appropriate solutions**.
- The success of a permanent deliberative mechanism in Luxembourg will require several conditions to be met:
  - **Clear, cross-party political commitment:** The establishment of a permanent deliberative mechanism requires a strong commitment on the part of parliamentary and government authorities. This involves, in particular, embedding the mechanism in a stable legal framework to ensure its continuity beyond changes in government.
  - **Autonomous and credible governance:** For the mechanism to have legitimacy, it must be independent of the legislature and the executive.

The creation of a permanent citizens' council, responsible for ensuring the smooth running of deliberative processes and proposing topics for deliberation, could be a solution worth considering.

- **Particular attention to inclusivity:** Random selection could be accompanied by rigorous socio-demographic stratification to ensure representativeness. This could be reinforced through specific measures to remove material and symbolic barriers to participation, such as reimbursement of expenses, accessibility, multilingualism, support for vulnerable groups, etc.
- **A robust deliberative framework:** The quality of deliberation depends on the presence of trained facilitators, pluralistic scientific support and a sufficiently flexible timetable to allow participants to develop their expertise.
- **A clear follow-up mechanism:** The strength of a deliberative mechanism lies in its ability to influence public policy, even indirectly. Transparent follow-up procedures, including reasoned responses from institutions and the participation of citizen follow-up committees, could therefore be integrated from the outset.
- **Transparency and continuous evaluation:** To maintain trust, it would be crucial to guarantee public access to the work, recommendations and policy responses. In the longer term, **continuous evaluation for collective learning purposes** would also have a role to play in improving the deliberative mechanism put in place.
- **Proactive communication:** Informing the public and raising awareness about the functioning and outcomes of the mechanism is essential if public buy-in is to be achieved. A communication strategy, in conjunction with the media and civil society actors, could support the process at every stage.
- In short, **Luxembourg has a favourable foundation for the establishment of a permanent citizens' assembly**. By drawing inspiration from existing European practices and taking account of its own societal characteristics, Luxembourg could build a **robust, inclusive and legitimate model capable of strengthening democratic trust and innovating dialogue between citizens and institutions**.

# Zesummeaassung<sup>2</sup>

- Dái virleidend Studie énnersicht d'Émsetzbarkeet vun engem permanenten deliberative System zu Lëtzebuerg. Si mécht eng Bestandsopnam vun de besteeënde Praktiken zu Lëtzebuerg a sträicht dobäi besonnesch d'Recommandatiounen aus de wëssenschaftlechen Evaluatiounen vun de Pilotprojeten ervir, déi 2021 an 2022 duerchgeféiert goufen, nämlech de **Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050 (BK2050)** an de **Klima-Biergerrot (KBR)**.
- Duerch déi émmer méi grouss Demande no Biergerbedeelegung an de Vertrauensverloscht an d'representativ Institutionoune gi vill europäesch Länner a Richtung vun neie Modeller fir demokratesch Inklusioun. Lëtzebuerg ass do keng Ausnam: Lokal an national partizipativ Initiative goufen ausprobéiert. Dës Systemer weisen d'Potenzial vun zoufälleg zesummegegesete Biergerbedeelegungen, werfen awer och d'**Fro vun hirer Perennisation** op.
- Aus den zu Lëtzebuerg duerchgeféierte Meenungsëmfroe geet ervir, dass d'Bierger sech gréissstendeels favorabel weisen, méi heefeg Biergerversammlungen anzesetzen, wouguéint d'politesch Parteien, wann och heiando méi virsichteg, hiren Notzen als complementaire zur representativer Demokratie gesinn.
- D'Studie berout och op enger **Verglächsanalys vun aacht institutionaliséierten deliberative Systemer an Europa** (Belsch, Frankräich, Däitschland, Éisträich, Europäesch Unioun), **déi vu staark institutionaliséierte Modeller bis hin zu Tester ginn, déi nach amgaange sinn, ausgeschafft ze ginn.** Hir geografesch Verankerung ass énnerschiddlech: Verschidener si regional (notamment an der Belsch an an Éisträich), anerer national (Frankräich, Däitschland) an een ass supranational (Europäesch Unioun).
- **Déi énnersichte Modeller sinn och énnerschiddlech, wat hir Perennitéit an hire Grad un Institutionaliséierung ugeet:** De permanente Biergerdialog an der däitschsproochege Communautéit (Belsch) ass juristesch a politesch méi intégréiert, wouguéint déi europäesch Panelen keng formell legal Basis hunn.

- D'Verglächsanalys weist eng Rei wichteg Viraussetzungen: **d'Schlësselroll vun de Parlamenten** beim Initiéieren awer och beim Suivi vun den deliberative Systemer, **d'Noutwendegkeet vun enger onofhängerer Gouvernance** duerch d'Schafe vun engem dofir dediéierten Organ, **d'Rigueur bei der Selektioun vun de Participanten** an d'Asetze vu Mechanisme fir de politesche Suivi.
- D'Majoritéit vun de Systemer, déi verglach goufen, hunn **eng reng berodend Funktioun, déi complementaire zur representativer Demokratie ass.** D'Aféierung vun dése Systemer ass deemno net derfir geduecht, den traditionelle Modell vun der representativer Demokratie ze ersetzen.
- **Den Impakt vun dése Systemer hänkt staark vum politesche Suivi a Wëllen of.** Verschidde Fäll, wéi de permanente Biergerdialog an der däitschsproochege Communautéit an der Belsch, weisen, dass eng gutt duerchduecht institutionell Integratioun konkreet Effekter op d'ëffentlech Politik kann hunn.
- Am Kader vun der Verglächsanalys war et net méiglech, e Modell ze fannen, dee sech direkt op Lëtzebuerg transposéiere léisst. Si beliicht awer **verschidden Optiounen, déi an dëser Studie am Hibleck op d'local, d'gesellschaftlech, d'politesch an d'juristesches Spezifissitéite bewäert ginn, fir déi Léisungen ze proposéieren, déi sech am beschten eegnen.**
- Et gëtt verschidde Konditiounen, déi zu der Reussite vun engem permanenten deliberative System zu Lëtzebuerg bäidroe kënnen:
- **E kloren a parteiwwergräifende politische Wëllen:** Den Asaz vun engem permanenten deliberative System setzt e staarkt Engagement op der Säit vun den Autoritéiten am Parlament an an der Regierung viraus. Dat geschitt notamment iwwert d'Aschreiwung vum System an e stabille gesetzleche Kader, fir seng Kontinuitéit iwwer de politesche Wiessel eraus ze garantéieren.

**Eng onofhängeg a credibel Leedung:**  
D'Onofhängegkeet vum Dispositif géigeniwwer dem legislativen an exekutive Pouvoir ass essentiel, fir seng Legitimitéit ze garantéieren. D'Schafe vun engem permanente Biergerrot, deen zoustänneg wier, fir fir de gudden Oflaf vum Berodungsprozess ze suergen a

<sup>2</sup> Dëst ass eng Iwersetzung vun der franséischer Zesummeaassung op de Säiten 1-2 vun déser Note scientifique.

- Berodungstheemen ze proposéieren, kéint eng méiglech Léisung sinn.
- **Fokus op d'Inklusivitéit:** D'Auslousung kéint begleet gi vun enger strenger soziodemografescher Stratifikatioun, fir d'Representitivitéit ze assuréieren. Dëst kéint duerch spezifesch Mesurë verstärkt ginn, fir materiell a symbolesch Barriären opzehiewen: Opwandpauschalen, Zugänglichkeit, Méisproochegeet, Begleedung vu vulnerabele Gruppen etc.
- **En zolitten deliberative Kader:** D'Qualitéit vun den Debatten hänkt vun der Presenz vun ausgebilte Moderatoren of, enger pluralistescher wëssenschaftlecher Ënnerstëtzung an engem Zäitplang, dee flexibel genuch ass, fir eng Kompetenzsteigerung bei de Participanten ze erméiglechen.
- **E klore Mechanismus fir de Suivi:** D'Stäerk vun engem deliberative System läit a senger Capacitéit, d'ëffentlech Politik, och indirekt, ze beaflossen. Transparent Prozedure fir de Suivi mat begrënnten Äntwerte vun den Institutiounen an der Bedeeklegung vu Biergerkontrollkommiteeë kéint deemno vun Ufank un integréiert ginn.
- **Eng bestänneg Transparenz a Bewäertung:** Fir d'Vertrauen ze erhalten, wär et kruzial, den öffentlechen Zugang zu den Aarbechten, Recommandatiounen a politeschen Äntwerten ze garantéieren. Laangfristeg wär och **eng bestänneg Bewäertung fir kollektiv Léierzwecker** pertinent, fir den deliberative System, deen agesat gouf, ze verbesseren.
- **Eng proaktiv Kommunikatioun:** D'Bevëlkerung iwwert de Fonctionnement an d'Resultater vum System ze informéieren a se dofir ze sensibiliséieren, ass essentiel fir seng sozial Zoustëmmung. Eng Kommunikatiounstrategie mat de Medien an den Akteuren aus der Zivilgesellschaft kéint de Prozess bei all Etapp begleeden.
- Alles an allem huet Lëtzebuerg favorabel Viraussetzungen, **fir e permanenten deliberative System anzesetzen**. Lëtzebuerg kéint, andeems et sech vu besteeënden europäesche Praktiken inspiréiert a seng eege gesellschaftlech Spezifissitéite berücksichtegt, **e staarken, inklusiven a legitimme Modell opbauen, deen d'Vertrauen an d'Demokratie stäerken an den Dialog tëschent Bierger an Institutiounen innovéiere** kéint.

# Zusammenfassung<sup>3</sup>

- Die vorliegende Studie untersucht die Umsetzbarkeit eines permanenten deliberativen Systems in Luxemburg. Sie gibt einen Überblick über die bestehenden Praktiken in Luxemburg und hebt dabei insbesondere die Empfehlungen hervor, die aus den wissenschaftlichen Bewertungen der 2021 und 2022 durchgeföhrten Pilotversuche resultieren, nämlich dem ***Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050 (BK2050)*** und dem ***Klima-Biergerrot (KBR)***.
- Aufgrund der zunehmenden Nachfrage nach Bürgerbeteiligung und der Schwächung des Vertrauens in die repräsentativen Institutionen gehen viele Länder in die Richtung neuer Modelle der demokratischen Inklusion. Luxemburg bildet dabei keine Ausnahme: Auf lokaler und nationaler Ebene wurden partizipative Initiativen ausprobiert. Diese Systeme zeigen das Potenzial zufällig zusammengesetzter Bürgerversammlungen, werfen jedoch auch die Frage nach ihrer langfristigen Weiterführung auf.
- Aus den in Luxemburg durchgeföhrten Meinungsumfragen geht hervor, dass die Bürger einem häufigeren Einsatz von Bürgerversammlungen mehrheitlich positiv gegenüberstehen, während die politischen Parteien, wenngleich manchmal mit einer leichten Zurückhaltung, ihren Nutzen als Ergänzung zur repräsentativen Demokratie anerkennen.
- Die Studie basiert auch auf der Vergleichsanalyse von acht deliberativen Systemen, die in Europa institutionalisiert sind (Belgien, Frankreich, Deutschland, Österreich, Europäische Union), wobei sie von sehr stark institutionalisierten Modellen bis hin zu Versuchen reicht, die noch in der Ausarbeitung sind. Ihre geografische Verankerung ist unterschiedlich: Einige sind regional (wie in Belgien und Österreich), andere national (Frankreich, Deutschland) und eines ist supranational (Europäische Union).
- Die untersuchten Modelle unterscheiden sich auch hinsichtlich ihrer Beständigkeit und ihres Grades an Institutionalisierung: Der permanente Bürgerdialog in der deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (Belgien) ist juristisch und politisch gesehen am weitesten integriert, wohingegen die europäischen

Bürgerforen keine formelle gesetzliche Grundlage aufweisen.

- Die Vergleichsanalyse zeigt mehrere wichtige Voraussetzungen auf: die **Schlüsselrolle, die Parlamente** sowohl bei der Einföhrung als auch beim Begleiten der deliberativen Systeme zukommt, die **Notwendigkeit einer unabhängigen Verwaltung** durch die Gründung einer dafür zuständigen Einheit, die **Strenge in der Auswahl der Teilnehmer** und das Bestehen von **politischen Begleitmechanismen**.
- Der Großteil der verglichenen Systeme hat **eine rein beratende Funktion und sieht sich als Ergänzung zur repräsentativen Demokratie**. Die Ausarbeitung solcher Systeme soll also nicht das traditionelle Modell der repräsentativen Demokratie verdrängen.
- **Der Einfluss dieser Systeme hängt stark von den Folgemaßnahmen und dem Willen der Politik ab**. Einige Fälle, wie der permanente Bürgerdialog in der deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft in Belgien, zeigen, dass eine gut durchdachte institutionelle Integration konkrete Auswirkungen auf die öffentliche Politik haben kann.
- Im Rahmen der Vergleichsanalyse konnte kein Modell gefunden werden, das sich ohne Weiteres auf Luxemburg übertragen lässt. Dennoch beleuchtet sie **mehrere Möglichkeiten, die in dieser Studie in Hinblick auf lokale, gesellschaftliche, politische und juristische Besonderheiten bewertet werden, um so die am besten geeigneten Lösungen zu finden**.
- Mehrere Bedingungen können zum Erfolg eines permanenten deliberativen Systems in Luxemburg beitragen:
- **Ein klarer und parteiübergreifender politischer Wille**: Die Einföhrung eines permanenten deliberativen Systems setzt ein eindeutiges Bekenntnis vonseiten des Parlaments und der Regierung voraus. Dies geschieht nicht zuletzt durch das Einbetten des Systems in einen stabilen rechtlichen Rahmen, um so seine Kontinuität über politische Wechsel hinaus zu gewährleisten.

**Eine autonome und glaubwürdige Leitung**: Die Unabhängigkeit des Systems gegenüber der Legislative und Exekutive ist unerlässlich, um seine Legitimität zu gewährleisten. Die Schaffung eines permanenten Bürgerrates, der dafür

<sup>3</sup> Es handelt sich hierbei um eine Übersetzung der auf den Seiten 1-3 abgedruckten französischen Zusammenfassung der vorliegenden wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung.

- zuständig ist, für den reibungslosen Ablauf der Beratungsprozesse zu sorgen und Beratungsthemen vorzuschlagen, könnte eine Lösung sein, die in Betracht gezogen werden sollte.
- **Ein besonderes Augenmerk auf Inklusivität:** Das zufällige Auswahlverfahren könnte mit einer strengen soziodemografischen Stratifikation verbunden werden, um so die Repräsentativität zu gewährleisten. Dies könnte noch durch spezifische Maßnahmen verstärkt werden, die dazu dienen, physische und symbolische Hürden zur Beteiligung zu beseitigen: Aufwandspauschalen, Barrierefreiheit, Mehrsprachigkeit, Begleitung vulnerabler Gruppen usw.
- **Ein solider Rahmen für das deliberative System:** Die Qualität der Debatten wird durch das Vorhandensein von ausgebildeten Moderatoren, einer pluralistischen wissenschaftlichen Unterstützung und einem flexiblen Zeitplan erreicht, um den Teilnehmern eine Kompetenzsteigerung zu ermöglichen.
- **Ein klarer Begleitmechanismus:** Die Stärke eines deliberativen Systems liegt in seiner Fähigkeit, die öffentliche Politik, auch indirekt, zu beeinflussen. Transparente Begleitverfahren mit begründeten Antworten der Institutionen und der Beteiligung von Bürgerkontrollkomitees könnten demnach von Anfang an mit einbezogen werden.
- **Transparenz und eine ständige Evaluierung:** Um das Vertrauen zu wahren, wäre es entscheidend, einen öffentlichen Zugang zu den Arbeiten, Empfehlungen und politischen Antworten zu gewährleisten. Langfristig wäre auch **eine ständige Evaluierung für den kollektiven Lernprozess** sinnvoll, um das umgesetzte deliberative System zu verbessern.
- **Eine proaktive Kommunikation:** Die Bevölkerung über die Funktionsweise und die Resultate des Systems zu informieren und sie dafür zu sensibilisieren, ist unumgänglich, damit es von ihr angenommen wird. Ein Kommunikationskonzept in Zusammenarbeit mit den Medien und den Akteuren der Zivilgesellschaft könnte den Prozess in jeder Phase begleiten.

Alles in allem **verfügt Luxemburg über gute Grundvoraussetzungen, um eine permanente Bürgerversammlung einzuführen**. Indem es sich von bestehenden europäischen Systemen inspiriert und die eigenen gesellschaftlichen Besonderheiten berücksichtigt, könnte Luxemburg **ein solides, inklusives und legitimes Modell aufbauen, welches das**

**Vertrauen in die Demokratie verstärken und den Dialog zwischen Bürgern und Institutionen innovieren könnte.**

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# 1 – Introduction

## Research project proposal

With a view to establishing a national citizen participation platform:

- draft a research paper summarising existing participatory models in other European parliaments;
- when drafting this paper, take into account the results of scientific evaluations conducted by the University of Luxembourg on two experiments in democratic participation, namely the *Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050* and the *Klima-Biergerrot*.

For several years now, European democracies have been confronted with a dual challenge: a gradual erosion of trust in representative institutions and a growing demand for direct citizen involvement in decision-making processes. In response to these trends, numerous participatory initiatives have emerged at different governance levels<sup>4</sup>, reflecting a renewed need for interaction between elected representatives and citizens.

Luxembourg is no exception to this trend. From local experiments to national pilot projects<sup>5</sup>, some political parties have begun to consider whether certain citizen participation mechanisms should be institutionalised<sup>6</sup>.

It is in this context that this scientific research paper proposes to examine the feasibility of an institutionalised citizen participation mechanism under the auspices of the Chamber of Deputies. The purpose of this research is to provide an overview of all the elements and factors to be taken into consideration in designing an institutionalised

deliberative mechanism capable of complementing parliamentary work and helping to renew the relationship between civil society and representative bodies. It therefore **involves analysing the conditions for and implications of such a democratic innovation, taking account of Luxembourg's specific context, previous experience in Luxembourg, and models developed in other European countries.**

First, we will examine the **existing participatory mechanisms in Luxembourg**, whether they are integrated into parliamentary proceedings or external to them (Section 2). We will then focus on a **comparative analysis of similar mechanisms implemented abroad**, particularly in Germany, Austria, Belgium, France and at European Union level (Section 3).

Particular attention will be paid to **deliberative mechanisms: these tools go beyond simple consultation by promoting reasoned discussion among citizens, often selected at random, with the aim of formulating informed recommendations for decision-making bodies**. We will focus more specifically on **so-called "permanent" or institutionalised deliberative mechanisms**, i.e. those that are permanently integrated into national or regional parliaments.

Finally, building on the findings of Sections 1 and 2, we will identify the key elements for designing a model applicable to the Luxembourg context, while also taking account of the conditions for success identified from the deliberative experiments already carried out in the country, such as the *Klima-Biergerrot* or the *Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050* (Section 4).

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2020), *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*, OECD Publishing (also available in French [here](#)); Paulis, E. et al. (2020), "The POLITICIZE Dataset: An Inventory of Deliberative Mini-Publics (DMPs) in Europe", *European Political Science* 20(3), pp.521–542 (<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-020-00284-9>).

<sup>5</sup> Kies, R. et al. (2024), *Country Report: Luxembourg. The Significance of Citizen Participation in Politics and Society*, Robert Bosch Stiftung, 13 p.

<sup>6</sup> Paulis, E. (2025), "Democratic Innovation or Inertia? Ideology and Electoral Competition in Luxembourg's Political Parties' Engagement with the 2022 Assembly on Climate", *PS: Political Science & Politics* (<https://doi.org/10.1017/S104909652500040X>).



**Participatory democracy**<sup>7</sup> refers to all mechanisms that enable citizens to intervene directly in political decision-making processes, without going through elected representatives.<sup>8</sup> It emerged in the United States in the 1960s in the wake of student movements and experiments in self-management, and aims to complement representative democracy, which is perceived as insufficient in the face of the professionalisation of politics and the dominance of political parties. It takes various forms, including consultations, petitions, discussions, participatory budgets and mobilisation of local citizens. These instruments enable citizens to debate, propose reforms or influence public decisions, even if they do not have the final decision-making power, which remains in the hands of elected representatives. Participatory democracy pursues a dual objective: to strengthen the legitimacy of public decisions and more concretely embody the principle of government 'by the people'.

**Deliberative democracy**<sup>9</sup>, by contrast, refers to a set of practices that aim to involve citizens in the deliberation phase prior to decision-making, in order to better inform political choices. The concept, developed by the philosopher Jürgen Habermas<sup>10</sup> among others, is based on the idea that democratic legitimacy derives from collective deliberation, i.e. a reasoned, rational and unconstrained exchange between citizens. In practical terms, this takes the form of mechanisms such as randomly selected citizens' assemblies, mixed committees of citizens and elected representatives, and deliberative panels. The aim is not so much to gather the opinions of the largest number of people as to ensure a **high-quality, representative and informed debate**.

While deliberative democracy and participatory democracy share the goal of strengthening citizen participation, they differ in their approach: the former emphasises the quality of the debate, while the latter emphasises the inclusion of as many people as possible. In practice, the two can be complementary, but they can also sometimes be in tension, particularly when it comes to reconciling broad participation with the need for in-depth deliberation.

For the purposes of this research, the terms "deliberative process" or "deliberative mechanism" are used to replace the term "national citizen participation platform", a term not established in scientific literature and used only in the request.

<sup>7</sup> Centre for Socio-Political Research and Information (CRISP), *Vocabulaire politique*, "Démocratique participative" [Political Vocabulary, "Participatory Democracy"], entry updated in 2022.

<sup>8</sup> The term "self-management" refers to the concept theorised by Jaroslav Vaněk, professor of economics at Cornell University, in his research on participatory economics (companies managed by their employees or workers' cooperatives). Self-management is also considered beyond the economic context to refer primarily to a mode of collective organisation in which actors (workers, communities or cultural groups) manage their own affairs, but also to alternative social and cultural forms. See: Pluet-Despatin J., Corpet O. (1975), "Présentation: L'autogestion aux États-Unis ? [Presentation: Self-management in the United States?], *Autogestion et socialisme : études, débats, documents*, no. 32, pp. 3–21 (<https://doi.org/10.3406/autog.1975.1138>).

<sup>9</sup> Centre for Socio-Political Research and Information (CRISP), *Vocabulaire politique*, "Démocratique délibérative" [Political Vocabulary, "Deliberative Democracy"], entry updated in 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Habermas, J. (1981), *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* [Theory of Communicative Action], Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1216 p.

# 2 – The participatory context in Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, the issue of citizen participation arises within a unique context, marked by a series of democratic challenges and contrasting developments in institutional practices. The demographic composition of the country is a prime indicator of this: a large proportion of the population is made up of non-citizens, whether foreign residents (resident population) or cross-border workers (working population), who are excluded from voting in national elections<sup>11</sup>. This structural exclusion, although partially offset by access to local and European elections, contributes to a form of disconnection between part of the population and the mechanisms of political representation. It raises questions about the democratic legitimacy of the system of representation, particularly in a context where voters are increasingly failing to turn out in legislative elections<sup>12</sup>.

This situation has fostered an aspiration for a more open democracy, in which citizens would be able to contribute substantially to the shaping of public policies. In this regard, the 2015 constitutional referendum, although consultative, represented a significant attempt to open up the political debate to all citizens residing in Luxembourg. Nevertheless, its results indicate that the issue of electoral participation and inclusion is a socio-cultural dividing line within Luxembourg society and among political elites<sup>13</sup>.

It is within this unique landscape that several methods of participation have been established over time to complement the electoral system. This section therefore reviews the non-electoral participatory formats that exist in Luxembourg, from the local to the national level.

## 2.1 – Non-electoral participation at the local level

At the local level, there are three forms: participatory processes based on municipal law, participatory

<sup>11</sup> As of 1 January 2025, out of a total population of 681,973, the total number of foreigners stood at 320,726, or 47% of the total population (Statec, [Lustat database](#)).

<sup>12</sup> Dumont, P., Kies, R. (2024) "Luxembourg: Political Developments and Data in 2023", *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook*, 63, pp. 294–310.

<sup>13</sup> Kies, R., (2019), "Étendre le droit de vote des étrangers aux élections législatives : Pourquoi les Luxembourgeois n'en veulent pas ?" [Extending voting rights to foreigners in legislative elections: Why don't Luxembourgers want it?], in N. Farhat, P. Poirier (eds.), *Démocratie(s), parlementarisme(s) et légitimité(s)*, Editions Bruylant, parliamentary studies collection, pp. 222–247.

processes based on ministerial action plans, and participatory processes initiated by municipalities.

### 2.1.1 – Participatory processes based on municipal law

The Local Government Act of 13 December 1988<sup>14</sup> provides for two mechanisms for participation: the consultative referendum (Article 35) and popular consultation (Article 36), the latter of which may be initiated by the municipal council or the college of aldermen. These instruments are rarely used, except in the case of municipal mergers (14 mergers since 2004<sup>15</sup>), for which a consultative referendum is mandatory, and which are generally accompanied by citizen consultation processes. Recent draft amendments aim to strengthen these instruments<sup>16</sup>: referendums initiated by municipal councils would become binding, while referendums initiated by citizens would remain consultative. Public consultation would be renamed "citizen consultation", with more detailed organisational rules. A major new feature is the introduction of a local citizens' initiative, inspired by the European Citizens' Initiative. This would allow citizens to submit proposals to the municipal council, through a multi-stage process: drafting the proposal, verifying its admissibility, collecting signatures, and presenting it to the council. Other forms of local participation also exist, such as public meetings on general planning or neighbourhood committees, which are often organised by citizens but have limited impact due to the absence of legal recognition.

### 2.1.2 – Participatory processes linked to ministerial action plans

Certain ministerial plans strengthen local participation. The Pakt vum Zesummeliewen (municipal pact for intercultural living together) established in 2021, replaces the former municipal integration plan and aims to promote the inclusion and participation of all

<sup>14</sup> [Loi communale du 13 décembre 1988](#) [Local Government Act of 13 December 1988], *Mémorial A* No. 64 of 1988, consolidated version as of 14/08/2023.

<sup>15</sup> For an overview of municipal mergers, see: [https://gouvernement.lu/fr/dossiers.gouv2024\\_mainten+dossiers+2021+Fusions-de-communes.html](https://gouvernement.lu/fr/dossiers.gouv2024_mainten+dossiers+2021+Fusions-de-communes.html)

<sup>16</sup> [Bill no. 8218](#) of 17 May 2023 amending: 1) the amended local government act of 13 December 1988; 2) the amended act of 19 July 2004 on municipal planning and urban development.

municipal residents, in collaboration with the Ministry of Family Affairs, SYVICOL (the association of Luxembourg cities and municipalities) and participating municipalities ([32 to date](#)). In addition, the Ministry of the Environment has launched the [Climate Pact 2.0](#) programme, which provides for local dialogue days on climate policies between citizens, associations, schools and businesses, often organised in collaboration with the Centre for Ecological Learning Luxembourg (CELL).

Finally, the [Zesumme Vereinfachen](#) (Let's simplify together) platform, initiated by the Ministry for Digitalisation, enables citizens and businesses to get directly involved in simplifying Luxembourg's public services. It sets up an easily accessible participatory and collaborative process in four languages, where anyone can propose ideas, comment on others' ideas, participate in surveys, vote or prioritise initiatives, or even participate in workshops. This mechanism is part of a ministerial strategy for administrative modernisation, which aims to place the user experience at the heart of simplification projects.

### 2.1.3 – Participatory processes initiated by municipalities

Some municipalities are developing their own participatory processes. Two cases stand out.

Firstly, [the Nordstad merger project was the subject of an extensive public consultation involving a citizens' council](#), a forum and an online dialogue.

Secondly, the city of Dudelange is a pioneer in this field. Committed since 2004 to the Citizen Participation Charter<sup>17</sup>, the municipality has implemented several initiatives: consultation for the development of a new neighbourhood (*NeiSchmelz*), youth parliaments (*Jugendgemengerot*) and children's parliaments (*Kannergemengerot*). In 2020, Dudelange signed an agreement with the University of Luxembourg to monitor and support its participatory initiatives. Three permanent processes are now in place and coherently structured: a Biergerrot (a biannual meeting of a group of 15 to 20 citizens selected at random from the population register and

<sup>17</sup> Town of Dudelange, *Forum Diddeleng mat de Bierger fir de Bierger, [Charter on citizen participation in municipal life]*, 2004. The authors would like to thank Mr Félix Bonne, coordinator of the Participatory Democracy department of the town of Dudelange, for giving them access to the documentation relevant to this analysis.

<sup>18</sup> For a presentation of these permanent participatory mechanisms, see: <https://jeparticipe.dudelange.lu/fr-FR/pages/faq>.

<sup>19</sup> Kies, R. (2019), ["E-pétitions à la Chambre des Députés. Un succès déstabilisant"](#) [e-petitions in the Chamber of Deputies. A destabilising success], in C. Friesisen, R. Moes, M. Polfer, R. Wagner (eds.) *100 ans de suffrage universel au Luxembourg*, Silvana Editorial S.p.A.; Kies, R. (2016), ["Analyse de l'utilisation des \(e-\)pétitions à la Chambre des Députés"](#)

representative of Dudelange's diversity, who deliberate on a specific theme and formulate opinions for the municipality), a citizens' panel (online and/or paper questionnaires sent to residents to gauge the level of acceptance of the Biergerrot's proposals among the general public), and a participatory budget (residents are invited to submit, discuss and vote on development proposals up to a maximum amount of €100,000)<sup>18</sup>. Dudelange is also the first municipality to have hired a staff member dedicated to citizen participation and to have created a specific ["Participatory Democracy"](#) department. Since then, the municipalities of Roeser, Differdange and Esch-sur-Alzette have launched similar initiatives, offering participatory budgets based on the same model.

These **local participatory developments are also rooted in the increased use of participatory digital platforms** (e.g. [jeparticipe.dudelange.lu](#) or [jeparticipe.roeser.lu](#)), which aim to promote participatory approaches and interactive exchanges with residents.

## 2.2 – Non-electoral participation at national level

At the national level, there are three distinct forms: constitutional processes, ministerial consultations and deliberative citizens' assemblies.

### 2.2.1 – Constitutional participatory processes

The Luxembourg Constitution provides for three participatory mechanisms.

Firstly, **Article 29 establishes the right to submit electronic petitions to the Chamber of Deputies (hereinafter 'e-petitions')**<sup>19</sup>. Introduced in 2013, this mechanism has become a popular tool: more than 3,000 e-petitions have been submitted, and nearly eight out of ten Luxembourgers say they have already signed one<sup>20</sup>. In addition to being popular, the system is also relatively effective, with a degree of influence on political decision-making<sup>21</sup>.

[Analysis of the use of (e-)petitions in the Chamber of Deputies], *Civilex Report*, Chair of Research in Parliamentary Studies, University of Luxembourg; Sharashidze, N, Kies, R. (2024), ["Pétition en ligne"](#) [Online Petition], in G. Petit, L. Blondiaux, I. Casillo, J.-M. Fourniau, G. Gourges, S. Hayat, R. Lefebvre, S. Rui, S. Wojcik, & J. Zetlaoui-Léger (eds.), *Dictionnaire critique et interdisciplinaire de la Participation*, DicoPart (2nd edition). GIS Démocratie et Participation.

<sup>20</sup> Original data from [the Medialux survey](#) funded by the Ministry of State. Questionnaire completed by 1,643 Luxembourg respondents surveyed between September and October 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Kies, R., Seidenthal, S. (2021), ["Quand les e-pétitions influencent-elles la décision politique ? Une analyse du système de pétitions électroniques de la Chambre des députés du Luxembourg"](#) [When do e-petitions influence

Secondly, Article 80 authorises the use of national referendums, although this procedure is rarely employed. Since 1919, five referendums have been held in Luxembourg. Two of these, concerning the preservation of the monarchy<sup>22</sup> and an economic union with France or Belgium<sup>23</sup>, took place on the same day, 28 September 1919. In 1937, a referendum was held on the so-called "order law", nicknamed the "Maulkuerfgesetz" (muzzle law) by its opponents, which was rejected<sup>24</sup>. In 2005, citizens were consulted on the European Constitution<sup>25</sup>. Finally, in 2015, a consultative referendum was held on three proposals: the right to vote at 16, granting conditional voting rights to non-nationals, and limiting ministerial terms of office<sup>26</sup>. All three were rejected by a large majority<sup>27</sup>.

Thirdly, Article 79 introduces a right of legislative initiative for citizens ("reasoned proposals for the purpose of legislating"), provided there are 125 proposers and 25,000 signatures are gathered; this right, included in the new 2023 Constitution, has not yet been exercised. It should be noted that the binding referendum initially planned to validate this new Constitution did not ultimately take place, as the text was adopted directly by Parliament.

## 2.2.2 – Ministerial consultations

Ministries regularly organise public consultations on legislative or strategic projects.

For example, the Ministry of the Interior conducted a consultation entitled Mateneen fir eng modern Gemeng (anchoring citizen participation in municipal practice) as part of the reform of the local government act, mobilising more than 5,000 participants. The Ministry of Transport consulted 22,000 people in 2017 on needs relating to the RGTR network, while the Ministry of the Economy sought citizens' views on economic scenarios for 2050.

At the same time, legal consultations known as 'public enquiries' have been centralised since 2021 on the website enquetes.public.lu. However, participation in these consultations remains low, and they are generally non-deliberative in nature.

political decisions? An analysis of the electronic petition system of the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies] *Participations*, 3(28), pp. 177–202 (<https://doi.org/10.3917/parti.028.0177>).

<sup>22</sup> Act of 3 April 1919 on the organisation of a referendum on the dynastic question and the form of the State, *Mémorial A* No. 22, 1919.

<sup>23</sup> Act of 4 July 1919 on the organisation of a referendum on the economic union to be entered into by the country, *Mémorial A* No. 46, 1919.

<sup>24</sup> Act of 12 May 1937 on the organisation of the referendum of 6 June 1937, *Mémorial A* No. 36, 1937.

<sup>25</sup> Act of 14 April 2005 on the organisation of a national referendum on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, signed in Rome on 29 October 2004, *Mémorial A* No. 48, 2005.

## 2.2.3 – Deliberative citizens' assemblies

Luxembourg has recently made its mark in the field of deliberative democratic innovations with two pilot projects.

The Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050 (BK2050) was a citizens' committee integrated into the broader *Luxembourg in Transition* consultation process, aimed at developing scenarios for land use planning, urban planning, architecture, economics and ecology. Adopting all the characteristics of a traditional citizens' assembly (random selection, facilitation, training, deliberation, formulation of recommendations, etc.), the process, which involved 30 citizens and took place over a year (2021), stood out for its ability to foster high-quality citizen deliberation on issues related to net zero carbon.

In 2022, the Government organised the Klima-Biergerrot (KBR), a citizens' assembly bringing together around 100 people selected at random and representative of the population, to discuss Luxembourg's current and future commitments in the fight against climate change. This led to the formulation of concrete proposals on climate policy, several of which were incorporated into the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (PNEC). These two experiments revealed the potential of deliberative mechanisms – particularly by involving non-national residents in public policy-making – while highlighting the challenges associated with their organisation, transparency and sustainability, especially in terms of their relationship with the traditional decision-making process.

From an organisational standpoint, the two project evaluation reports<sup>28</sup> emphasise the importance of clearly defining objectives and improving the connection between citizen participation and decision-making processes. The KBR report emphasises in particular the need for a more stable participatory framework, better educational support and more accessible communication. It also recommends striking a better balance between the roles of experts and citizens,

<sup>26</sup> Act of 27 February 2015 on the organisation of a national referendum on various matters relating to the drafting of a new Constitution, *Mémorial A* No. 35, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Dumont, P., Kies, R. (2016), "Luxembourg: Political Developments and Data in 2015", *European Journal of Political Research, Political Data Yearbook*, 56 (1), pp.175–182 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/2047-8852.12098>).

<sup>28</sup> Paulis E., Kies R., Verhasselt L. (2024), Evaluation Report: 2022 Luxembourg Climate Citizens' Assembly (Klima Biergerrot – KBR), PLDP, University of Luxembourg, 167 p. and Verhasselt L., Kies R., de Jonge L. (2024), Evaluation du Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050: Résumé analytique [Evaluation of the Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050: Executive Summary], PLDP, University of Luxembourg, University of Groningen, 9 p.

ensuring that the former do not excessively influence the debates. It also proposes more shared governance, with spaces for inter-institutional and citizen discussion. Furthermore, the report emphasises the importance of selecting participants based not only on socio-demographic criteria, but also on the basis of their opinions, attitudes or behaviours in relation to the topic at hand.



The two reports converge on a series of key recommendations:

- ensure transparent follow-up of contributions;
- integrate the results into public policies through formal mechanisms;
- professionalise the management of participatory processes;
- establish more continuous and long-term formats;
- strengthen the symbolic and political recognition of participants;
- build a sustainable participatory culture through collective learning, institutional openness and networking among different citizen initiatives at the national level;
- ensure that participants are also represented on the basis of their opinions, attitudes or behaviours in relation to the topic under discussion.

The efforts deployed as part of these two initiatives form part of a **broader dynamic at European and indeed global level, marked by the rapid spread of deliberative practices<sup>29</sup>**, often conceived as responses to crises of legitimacy and participation.

The "deliberative wave"<sup>30</sup> affecting many countries has led to the establishment of deliberative mini-publics, i.e. "assemblies of randomly selected citizens who deliberate on a specific policy issue in order to

<sup>29</sup> OECD (2020), note no.4; Paulis, E. et al. (2020), note no.4 .

<sup>30</sup> Term used by the OECD in its aforementioned report on citizen participation. See note no.4 .

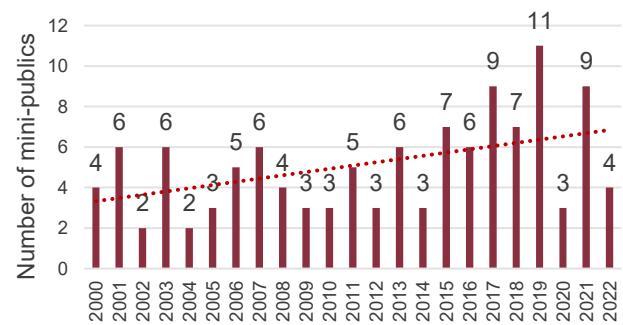
<sup>31</sup> Paulis, E. et al. (2022), "Mini-publics délibératifs" [Deliberative mini-publics], in G. Petit, L. Blondiaux, I. Casillo, J.-M. Fourniau, G. Gourgues, S. Hayat, R. Lefebvre, S. Rui, S. Wojcik, & J. Zetlaoui-Léger (eds.), *Dictionnaire critique et interdisciplinaire de la Participation*, DicoPart (2nd edition). GIS Démocratie et Participation.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, G. (2024), We Need to Talk about Climate: How Citizens' Assemblies Can Help Us Solve the Climate Crisis. London, University of Westminster Press.

formulate recommendations for policymakers".<sup>31</sup> . While referendums, for example, are often associated with a concept of direct participatory democracy, citizens' assemblies directly embody the ideal of deliberative participatory democracy.

It is clear that **assemblies addressing climate-related issues have gained in prominence<sup>32</sup>**, although they are not limited to this agenda alone.

Figure 1: The number of deliberative mini-publics over time in Europe



Note: The data covers European Union countries (+ the United Kingdom, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) for the period 2000–2022. It records, by year, the number of deliberative processes launched by representative institutions (parliament or government) at national or regional level.

Source: [POLICITIZE database on deliberative mini-publics in Europe](#).

Furthermore, there is also a growing trend towards the institutionalisation of deliberative practices<sup>33</sup>. While local experiments have proved particularly fruitful<sup>34</sup> – with the municipal level often acting as an incubator<sup>35</sup> – it is proving harder to integrate these practices on a lasting basis at regional and national levels. In most European countries, deliberative mechanisms at these levels remain sporadic and organised on an *ad hoc* basis. Truly sustainable experiences that are permanently integrated into the institutional architecture remain rare and are analysed in this study.

<sup>33</sup> OECD (2021), Eight Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy. OECD Publishing.

<sup>34</sup> Some notable examples include the cities of Paris, London (Newham), Gdansk, Milan, and Aachen, which have institutionalised citizens' assemblies.

<sup>35</sup> Falanga, R. (2024), "Democratic innovations: is the local scale (still) the ideal laboratory for democracy?", *Local Government Studies*, 50(6), pp. 1052–1061 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2024.2407010>).

## 2.3 – Perception and reception among political actors and citizens

Before analysing models of institutionalised citizens' assemblies in depth, it is worth examining how these mechanisms are received by the general public. Their legitimacy depends not only on public acceptance, but also on how they are perceived by political elites, whose commitment and support are essential for their implementation and follow-up<sup>36</sup>. Comparative studies tend to show that public opinion in Europe is generally receptive to the idea of greater citizen involvement in political decision-making, particularly through consultative citizens' assemblies<sup>37</sup>. While a lack of knowledge on the subject remains the norm, when citizens are informed, they tend to support such mechanisms. These studies also highlight high expectations regarding the ability of political leaders to follow up on and take into consideration the proposals resulting from these mechanisms, as well as to translate these proposals into concrete policy outcomes<sup>38</sup>.

Furthermore, citizens' assemblies seem to resonate particularly strongly with citizens who are experiencing a certain degree of discontent<sup>39</sup> or who belong to socio-political groups that are generally under-represented in representative institutions<sup>40</sup>. Among political actors, opinions appear to be more divided and often more cautious<sup>41</sup> due to an attachment to the representative democracy model and fears of potential upheaval of the established order. Nevertheless, the growing calls for and use of deliberative mechanisms reflects a gradual opening up of the political world<sup>42</sup> across the entire ideological spectrum<sup>43</sup>.

### 2.3.1 – The perspective of Luxembourg political actors

In this context, several sources can be used to assess the situation in Luxembourg. From a political standpoint, the *Smartwielen* app asked candidates in the last elections (2023) to state their position on the use of randomly selected citizens' forums, based on a brief description of the mechanism as implemented during the *Klima-Biergerrot*. Figure 2 shows that **candidates were generally in favour of citizens' assemblies**. However, there were differences among parties: candidates from the déi Gréng (Green) party, the Piraten (Pirate) party and the Democratic party (DP) were the most supportive, followed by those from the CSV (Christian Social People's party) and the déi Lénk (Left) party, who were also generally in favour. The LSAP (Socialist Workers' party) appears more divided, with some candidates opposed and others rather favourable. Candidates from the ADR (Alternative Democratic Reform party) were the most sceptical.

Figure 2: The views of candidates in the 2023 Luxembourg elections on citizens' assemblies

<sup>36</sup> Burks, D., Kies R. (2019), "A gradualist path towards sortition", in O. Wright Erik and Gastil J. (eds.), *Legislature by Lot, Verso, The Real Utopia Project*, London/New York, pp. 259–277.

<sup>37</sup> Pilet, J.-B. et al. (2023), Public Support for Deliberative Citizens' Assemblies Selected through Sortition: Evidence from 15 Countries, *European Journal of Political Research*, 62 (3), pp. 873–902 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12541>); Goldberg, S. et al. (2025), "Empowered Minipublics for Democratic Renewal? Evidence from Three Conjoint Experiments in the United States, Ireland, and Finland", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 119, Issue 3, pp.1393–1410 (doi:10.1017/S0003055424001163).

<sup>38</sup> Van Dijk, L., Lefevere, J. (2023), "Can the Use of Minipublics Backfire? Examining How Policy Adoption Shapes the Effect of Minipublics on Political Support among the General Public", *European Journal of Political Research*, 62(1), pp. 135–55 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12523>).

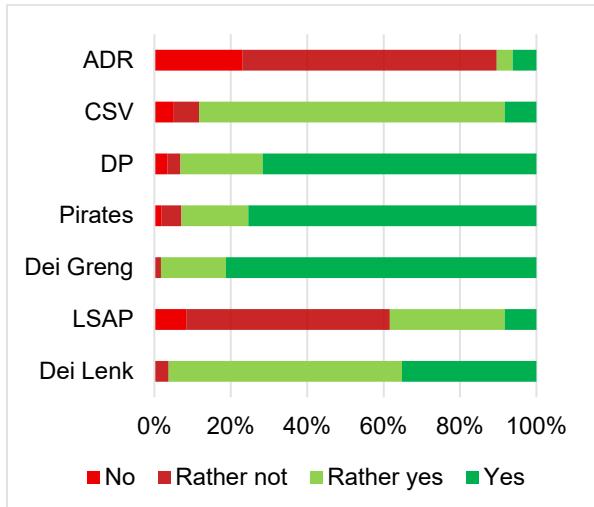
<sup>39</sup> Goldberg, S., and Bächtiger, A. (2023), "Catching the 'Deliberative Wave'? How (Disaffected) Citizens Assess Deliberative Citizen Forums", *British Journal of Political Science*, 53(1), pp. 239–247 (doi:10.1017/S0007123422000059).

<sup>40</sup> Talukder, D. Pilet, J.-B. (2021), Public Support for Deliberative Democracy. A Specific Look at the Attitudes of Citizens from Disadvantaged Groups, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 34(5), pp. 656–76 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2021.1978284>).

<sup>41</sup> Rangoni, S. et al. (2021), "More competent thus more legitimate? MPs' discourses on deliberative mini-publics", *Acta Politica*, 58(3), pp. 531–551 (<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41269-021-00209-4>); Jacquet, V. et al. (2020), "Sortition, its advocates and its critics: An empirical analysis of citizens' and MPs' support for random selection as a democratic reform proposal", *International Political Science Review*, 43(2), pp. 295–316 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/019251212094995>).

<sup>42</sup> Gherghina, S. et al. (2024), "Limited Congruence: Citizens' Attitudes and Party Rhetoric About Referendums and Deliberative Practices", *Politics and Governance*, 12 (<https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.8754>).

<sup>43</sup> Ramis-Moyano, R. et al (2025), "Mini-Publics and Party Ideology: Who Commissioned the Deliberative Wave in Europe?", *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 21(1) (<https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.1559>).



Source: *Smartwielden*.

In the same vein, political parties' election manifestos are a good indicator of their collective positions; how those manifestos change from one election to the next can reveal interesting dynamics<sup>44</sup>. The manifestos of the *déi Gréng* party and the Democratic Party (DP) – both incumbent parties and driving forces behind the *Klima-Biergerrot* – made direct reference to this process, advocating the establishment of a permanent citizens' assembly on climate change. The *Piraten* party also supported the creation of a permanent citizens' assembly, though without restricting it to climate policies. It should be noted that these three parties emphasised referendums in their 2018 programmes, but in 2023 shifted towards supporting citizens' assemblies. The *déi Lénk* party, for its part, maintained a consistent position in favour of citizen participation in its 2018 and 2023 manifestos, particularly on climate and urban planning issues, although its preferred institutional format remains unclear. The position of the incumbent LSAP party has also evolved: while it advocated referendums in 2018, in 2023 it supported citizens' assemblies, while emphasising that they must remain consultative and not replace representative democracy – a position consistent with its status as the historically dominant party. Conversely, the CSV has remained silent on non-electoral citizen participation in its recent manifestos, signalling an implicit conservatism. Finally, the ADR party has remained true to its longstanding position by supporting binding referendums, mainly on sovereign issues such as immigration and security.

<sup>44</sup> Kies, R. et al. (2024), note no.5; Paulis, E. (2025), note no.6.

<sup>45</sup> Consultation debate No. [3902](#) in October 2022 was intended to discuss the final report of the *Klima-Biergerrot*, while orientation debate No. [3882](#) in March 2023 focused on citizen participation in public policymaking.

To conclude on the political perspective, several parliamentary debates have focused on citizen participation since the organisation of the *Klima-Biergerrot*<sup>45</sup>. In these debates, **the majority of political parties have expressed their support for more systematic citizen participation in decision-making processes, particularly through citizens' assemblies**. With the notable exception of the ADR party, all parties represented in the Chamber recognised the value of such initiatives in complementing representative institutions. The discussions enabled the parties to articulate their views on the legitimacy, representativeness, inclusiveness and institutionalisation of participatory processes. **While there is consensus on the need for greater citizen involvement, the practical arrangements remain subject to debate.**

The desire to formalise and structure these mechanisms, as expressed in several parliamentary motions<sup>46</sup>, reflects a parliamentary openness to the institutionalisation of deliberative democracy. This desire is also evident in the 2023 coalition agreement, which states that citizen participation will be encouraged in climate policies. The precise contours of this commitment have not yet been finalised.

### 2.3.2 – The perspective of the Luxembourg population

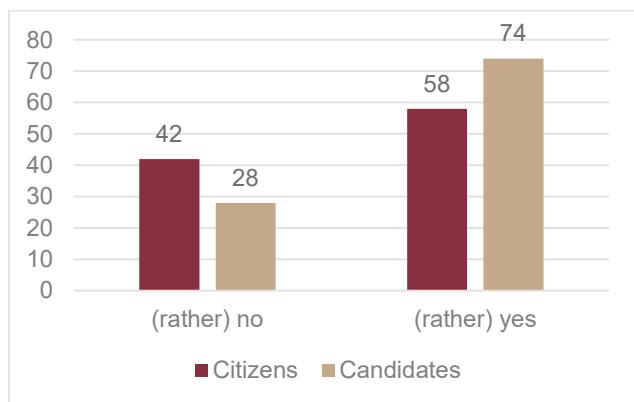
As with the candidates, the *Smartwielden* app makes it possible to gauge the opinion of more than 26,000 individuals who responded to the same questions. When asked whether citizens' assemblies should be encouraged, **almost one-third of respondents did not express an opinion**. There may be several reasons why citizens are uncertain or hesitate to answer a question about citizens' assemblies. The most likely reason is **a lack of familiarity or knowledge: many are unfamiliar with the concept of deliberative democracy** or have only a limited understanding of how it works, its advantages and disadvantages. Other factors may also come into play, such as **a lack of interest in politics** (which makes the question feel irrelevant to them) or **cognitive overload due to the number of topics covered in the questionnaire**<sup>47</sup>, making it difficult to reflect deeply on each point. If we focus solely on those who responded, the general public appears quite divided:

<sup>46</sup> Here are two examples of motions: Motion [No. 3999](#) tabled on 25 October 2022 in public session No. 8 by Mr Max Hahn (LSAP) and adopted with 33 votes in favour, 6 against and 21 abstentions; Motion [No. 4103](#) tabled on 21 March 2023 in public session No. 39 by Mr François Benoy (*déi gréng*) and adopted with 55 votes in favour and 5 against.

<sup>47</sup> Kies, R. et al. (2024), note no.5.

**58.6% of respondents expressed a (very) positive opinion, while 41.6% were opposed.**

Figure 3: The views of Luxembourg citizens and political elites on citizens' assemblies



Source: *Smartwielien*.

However, the sample collected via *Smartwielien* is not representative of the entire population.

**A population survey conducted in parallel with the *Klima-Biergerrot* provided a better understanding of the opinions that actually exist within Luxembourg society.**

The question asked was: would respondents like to see citizens' assemblies organised more frequently and on topics other than climate change? This question can be used to gauge their opinion on the idea of placing this type of initiative on a permanent footing.

In this case, only **3% of respondents did not answer the question**, while around 20% chose a neutral option, expressing neither a favourable nor an unfavourable opinion. A large majority (73%) agreed with the idea, compared to only 4.3% who were fundamentally opposed to it. No significant difference was observed between respondents of Luxembourg nationality and non-nationals. Furthermore, data collected as part of the KBR shows that this experiment had a positive effect on citizens who were aware of the process, increasing their level of support for it and their acceptance of its outcomes<sup>48</sup>.

Finally, another study shows that Luxembourg citizens who were initially opposed to the KBR's recommendations for more stringent climate measures were more inclined to accept their implementation if they had a positive view of the citizens' assembly mechanism<sup>49</sup>. This suggests that citizens' assemblies may serve as an effective lever for promoting acceptance of potentially unpopular or controversial public policies.

<sup>48</sup> Paulis E., Kies R., Verhasselt L. (2024), [Evaluation Report: 2022 Luxembourg Climate Citizens' Assembly \(Klima Biergerrot – KBR\)](#), PLDP, University of Luxembourg, 167 p.

<sup>49</sup> Paulis, E. et al. (2025), [When climate assemblies call for stringent climate mitigation policies: Unlocking public acceptance or fighting a losing battle?](#), *Environmental Science and Policy* (171) (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2025.104159>).

# 3 – Comparative analysis of permanent deliberative mechanisms

This section compares several deliberative democracy mechanisms in Europe in order to shed light on the options available to Luxembourg.

The analysis draws on eight specific cases in which deliberative mechanisms have achieved a certain degree of permanence or even full institutionalisation.

As noted previously, focusing on institutionalised mechanisms at national and regional level significantly reduces the number of cases to be analysed. Indeed, while many European countries have experimented with deliberative practices in one way or another, particularly at local level, few have made the leap to institutionalising such processes.

## 3.1 – Institutional framework and geographical scope

The mechanisms examined cover a broad geographical and institutional spectrum. Five cases have regional geographical scope. It should be noted that these examples come from **federal states where the regional level plays a crucial role and enjoys considerable autonomy**. These comprise the mixed deliberative committees of the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region in Belgium, the Citizens' Assembly on Climate in the Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium), the permanent citizen dialogue established in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, and the *Bürgerräte* (citizens' councils) in the Vorarlberg region of Austria.

In addition to these regional examples, we also consider **national mechanisms**, such as the citizens' conventions organised by the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (ESEC) in France, or the German citizens' councils (*Bürgerräte*) initiated at federal level by the Bundestag. Finally, we include **one supranational case**: that of the European citizens' panels organised by the European Commission.

### 3.1.1 – Diversity of models: from advanced experimentation to full institutionalisation

However, these cases differ in terms of their degree of institutionalisation.

For example, the permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium is an example of advanced integration of citizen deliberation within representative institutions. Its legal basis is a decree adopted by the Parliament of the German-speaking Community on 25 February 2019 that establishes a model of permanent participation, structured around a citizens' council (*Bürgerrat*) and citizens' assemblies (*Bürgerversammlungen*)<sup>50</sup>.

#### Decree of 25 February 2019 establishing a permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community

##### **Art. 4 Citizen Council**

§ 1 – With regards to the preparation, the organization and the follow-up of the Citizen Assemblies, a permanent Citizen Council will be installed. The Citizen Council is composed of 24 citizens, drawn by lot from those citizens that have been previously part of a Citizen Assembly. After the end of their mandate, which is 18 months long, the mandate holders will be replaced by new representatives from previous Citizen Assemblies. This rotation will be done every six months for one-third of the in total 24 mandates.

Membership in the Citizen Council is voluntary. When a citizen leaves the Citizen Council before the end of the mandate, then this mandate will be passed on to another citizen drawn by lot from previous Citizen Assemblies. To this end, several replacement members

<sup>50</sup> [Decree of 25 February 2019 establishing a permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community](#), M.B. 2019-04-12, p. 37798.

can already be drawn by lot ahead.

Three aspects of this model are particularly innovative: its permanence, its close connection with the functioning of parliament, and the articulation of the permanent citizen council with the citizens' assemblies it may convene<sup>51</sup>.

In the Vorarlberg region of Austria, the establishment of citizens' councils is based on article 1, paragraph 4 of the Vorarlberg Constitution, which stipulates that the Region "adheres to direct democracy in the form of popular initiatives, referendums and citizen consultations and also encourages other forms of participatory democracy"<sup>52</sup>. A directive from the government of this federal state (*land*) specifies the operating procedures for citizens' councils<sup>53</sup>.

#### Constitutional Law on the Constitution of the Federal State of Vorarlberg

##### **Article 1\*) Form of government, sovereignty**

(...)

(4) The state is committed to direct democracy in the form of referendums, popular initiatives and public consultations, and also promotes other forms of participatory democracy.

Conversely, European citizens' panels, although supported by the European Commission, remain experimental to date and **have no formal legal status**.

Between these two extremes, mechanisms such as the **mixed deliberative committees** in Brussels and Wallonia, or the citizens' conventions organised by the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (ESEC) in France, fall within **semi-institutional frameworks**, often based on rules of procedure (for deliberative committees<sup>54</sup>) or organic laws<sup>55</sup> (for citizens' conventions).

#### **Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region**

##### **Joint Assembly of the Common Community Commission**

##### **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

##### ***b)1 Mixed deliberative committees composed of members of parliament and randomly selected citizens***

##### **Article 25/1**

1. Parliament may, when it deems it useful, set up a deliberative committee composed of members of parliament and randomly selected citizens, hereinafter referred to as a "deliberative committee".

<sup>51</sup> Niessen, C. and Reuchamps, M. (2019), "Le dialogue citoyen permanent en Communauté germanophone" [Permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community], *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*. 43 p. (<https://doi.org/10.3917/cris.2426.0005>).

<sup>52</sup> Translation carried out with the assistance of artificial intelligence (DeepL).

<sup>53</sup> Richtlinie der Vorarlberger Landesregierung zur Einberufung und Durchführung von Bürgerräten [Directive of the Vorarlberg federal state government on the convening and conduct of citizens' councils], 19 February 2013. According to information obtained from the competent authorities of the Vorarlberg federal state government responsible for citizens' councils, the 2013 directive is a decision governing the procedure and defining the general conditions for convening and holding citizens' councils. It is a decree that binds the administration in the conduct and implementation of citizens'

councils and has no effect outside this framework. This directive, and therefore the procedures for organising such councils, is currently under review.

<sup>54</sup> On 13 December 2019, the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region and the Joint Assembly of the Common Community Commission amended their common rules of procedure to include the possibility of creating deliberative committees (Article 25/1). On 20 December 2019, the French-speaking Parliament of Brussels also included this possibility in its rules of procedure (Article 42ter).

<sup>55</sup> Organic Law No. 2021-27 of 15 January 2021 on the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, JOFR No. 0014 of 16 January 2021 (Article 4-3 of the consolidated version).

## Organic Law No. 2021-27 of 15 January 2021 on the Economic, Social and Environmental Council

### **Article 4-3**

For the exercise of its duties, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council may, on its own initiative or at the request of the Prime Minister, the President of the National Assembly or the President of the Senate, consult the public on matters within its remit. It may organise a random selection process to determine the participants in the consultation. To this end, it shall appoint one or more guarantors who are bound by an obligation of neutrality and impartiality and who are responsible for ensuring compliance with the safeguards referred to in Article 4-2.

The random selection procedure shall ensure balanced representation of the territory of the Republic, including overseas territories, and shall guarantee gender parity among participants.

The Council shall publish the results of these consultations and forward them to the Prime Minister, the President of the National Assembly and the President of the Senate.

The Permanent Citizens' Assembly on Climate of the Brussels-Capital Region is a government project established by an ordinance of 7 March 2024, amending the ordinance of 2 May 2013 establishing the Brussels Code for Air, Climate and Energy Management with a view to implementing the building renovation strategy<sup>56</sup>.

### Ordinance of 7 March 2024 amending the Ordinance of 2 May 2013 establishing the Brussels Code for Air, Climate and Energy Management with a view to implementing the building renovation strategy

**Art. 8.** Book 1, Title 5 of the same ordinance, inserted by the ordinance of 17 June 2021, is supplemented by Article 1.5.2, worded as follows:

"Art. 1.5.2.

§ 1. Within the framework of the principle of citizen contribution referred to in Article 1.2.5, § 2, 3°, of this Code, a permanent citizens' assembly on climate, hereinafter referred to as "the Assembly", is created with a view to drawing up a report containing a long-term vision and short- and medium-term recommendations for achieving this vision.

The secretariat of the Assembly shall be provided by Brussels Environment. It shall provide the administrative and organisational support necessary for the Assembly to carry out its tasks referred to in the first subparagraph.

The Assembly shall be composed of one hundred citizens selected at random in accordance with the conditions set out in paragraph 2, taking account of: 1) a balanced representation of genders, official languages of the Brussels-Capital Region and age groups; 2) geographical balance; and 3) socio-economic diversity.

<sup>56</sup> [Ordinance of 7 March 2024 amending the Ordinance of 2 May 2013 establishing the Brussels Code for Air, Climate and Energy Management with a view to implementing the building renovation strategy](#), M.B. 2024-03-22, p. 35579.

In Germany, there is no legal basis or fixed regulatory framework for *Bürgerräte* at the federal level. These citizens' councils are not explicitly enshrined in the Basic Law or in any other legislation. Their establishment is based on **specific resolutions adopted by the Bundestag** each time a citizens' council is convened<sup>57</sup>.

### 3.1.2 – Institutional driver and legitimacy: the central role of parliaments

**The legitimacy of a deliberative mechanism depends largely on the institution that supports it. In most of the cases studied, it was parliaments that took the initiative to set them up.** In Belgium, the French-speaking Parliament of Brussels established deliberative committees bringing together citizens and elected representatives, while its Walloon counterpart drew heavily on this model to set up its own deliberative committees. In the German-speaking Community, it was likewise the parliament that drove the establishment of the permanent citizen dialogue. The same holds true in Austria, where the Vorarlberg regional parliament supports the mechanism. It should be noted, however, that while most of these initiatives are relatively recent, Vorarlberg is a pioneer in institutionalising citizen participation. The region has organised thirteen regional citizens' assemblies since March 2011, and citizen participation occupies an important place in the state's constitution<sup>58</sup>. In Germany, citizens' councils have also been established by the federal parliament as part of a drive for openness, but this drive is still in its infancy and only a small number of assemblies have been organised to date.

Interestingly, two cases stand out because they were mainly driven by the executive branch and are heavily dependent on the government's political will. First, the citizens' conventions in France were initiated by President Emmanuel Macron with the aim of establishing a mechanism for citizen consultation in the wake of the *Gilets jaunes* ['yellow vests'] crisis. The transformation of the ESEC is a major development in this respect, as it provides the French state with a permanent structure for organising citizens' conventions. Second, at the Brussels regional level, the Citizens' Assembly on Climate is a project led by Ecolo party minister Alain Maron, who is responsible for climate transition, environment,

energy, participatory democracy and health. However, the assembly has not yet been fully established, and the electoral changes that followed the 2024 regional elections raise questions regarding its future.

At the European level, citizens' panels are organised by the European Commission, without the direct involvement of the European Parliament; this limits their institutional scope.

### 3.1.3 – Who holds the power of initiative: politicians, citizens, or other actors?

A core dimension in the design of deliberative mechanisms concerns the question of initiative: who can trigger the organisation of a participatory process? **Comparative analysis reveals a wide variety of models, ranging from closed mechanisms – where only institutions can take the initiative – to more open models, allowing for citizen intervention or even self-organisation.**

In Germany, ***Bürgerräte* are initiated exclusively by the Bundestag**, via a parliamentary resolution. There is no mechanism allowing citizens or civil society to compel their creation. A parliamentary group or 5% of Bundestag members can initiate the procedure.

Likewise, **the Citizens' Assembly on Climate in the Brussels-Capital Region is convened at the sole initiative of the regional government.** In contrast, the mixed deliberative committees (in Wallonia and Brussels) can be initiated either by parliamentarians or by citizens via a "citizen suggestion" procedure, requiring a minimum number of signatures (1,000 in Brussels, 2,000 in Wallonia).

**In France, citizens' conventions can be initiated by the government or parliament.** Citizens can also submit a petition; if it reaches the required threshold of signatures, the ESEC Bureau examines its admissibility and whether a convention on the topic should be organised. **The ESEC also has the right to self-refer;** it can, of its own initiative, decide to launch a citizens' convention on a topic within its remit.

**In Austria, Vorarlberg's *Bürgerräte* (citizens' councils) can be convened by the regional government, the parliament or citizens** (with a threshold of 1,000 signatures). This model is also distinctive in that it allows municipalities or local associations to initiate a process. The mechanism

<sup>57</sup> The first Citizens' Assembly on Food Transition was established by a resolution of the Bundestag on 10 May 2023, following a [joint motion by the SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, FDP and Die Linke](#): Deutscher Bundestag, 20th electoral term, [motion by the SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, FDP and Die Linke parliamentary groups](#) Einsetzung eines Bürgerrates "Ernährung im

Wandel : Zwischen Privatangelegenheit und staatlichen Aufgaben" [Establishment of a Citizens' Assembly on Food Transition: Between Private Matter and State Responsibility], 09/05/2023, Drucksache 20/6709.

<sup>58</sup> See: <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/participatory-democracy/-/from-ukraine-to-austria-local-authorities-and-csos-learn-about-participatory-democracy>

thus aims to strengthen synergies between the local and regional levels.

At European Union level, it is the European Commission that sets priorities and organises the citizens' panels. Citizens have no formal right of initiative, nor any direct means of initiating such processes through parliament.

**Finally, the German-speaking Community of Belgium offers a unique model in Europe with its permanent citizen dialogue, based on an autonomous citizens' council.** This council can propose topics and directly initiate citizens' assemblies, in collaboration with parliament. The system, established by a parliamentary decree, also provides for parliament itself to convene an assembly. This represents an advanced form of institutionalised deliberation, where the power of initiative is shared between citizens and elected representatives, but with a stable citizen body playing a central role.



In all cases where citizens have the power of initiative, citizenship of the country concerned is not required; it is sufficient to reside there. The only exception is the federal state of Vorarlberg, where only citizens eligible to vote, i.e. those registered in the local electoral register, are eligible to submit and sign a petition requesting a citizens' council.



The eight cases examined illustrate a diversity of deliberative mechanisms, ranging from highly institutionalised models to experiments still under development. Their geographic basis varies: some are regional (notably in Belgium and Austria), others national (France and Germany), and one is supranational (European Union).

Their sustainability and degree of institutionalisation also differ: the permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community is the most firmly embedded legally and politically, while the European panels remain without any formal legal basis.

While most of the mechanisms are driven by parliaments, some depend on the executive, which makes them more vulnerable to political change. Particular attention must be paid to the question of initiative: in some cases, only elected representatives can initiate a process, while others offer citizens or local actors the opportunity to initiate citizens' assemblies themselves. This openness strengthens the mechanisms' democratic basis and responsiveness to social expectations.

### 3.2 – Composition, participation and functioning of citizens' assemblies<sup>59</sup>

Beyond their legal framework or geographical scope, the participatory mechanisms compared also differ in their specific operating arrangements. This includes the format of the sessions, the structure of the deliberative process, the involvement of experts and the role of facilitation. These elements have a direct impact on the quality of deliberation and the experience of participants.

<sup>59</sup> This subsection is based primarily on information taken from institutions' websites and official documents from the institutions responsible for

organising and monitoring the deliberative debates that have been established. See Annex: Table of Comparative Data and Reference List.

### 3.2.1 – Random selection methods: towards greater sociological representativeness than parliaments

Although the procedure may vary slightly from one case to another, **all mechanisms rely on random selection, followed by socio-demographic stratification to ensure representativeness in terms of age, gender, level of education and geography.** In practice, a number of invitations are sent to citizens selected at random from population registers. Then, among those who respond positively, a final selection is made on the basis of socio-demographic quotas. **This task is usually entrusted to external operators, such as polling organisations**, which have a good knowledge of the population.

**This procedure is a cornerstone of citizens' assemblies, which aim to bring greater representativeness and diversity to public policymaking.** It is an essential element in establishing their legitimacy with the general public, and in particular with non-participating citizens: the latter must be able to identify with the process, knowing that individuals "like them" are sitting in the assembly, representing their social categories and also their interests and opinions.

In addition, **other more specific criteria may be used in the selection process: these may be socio-demographic or related to opinions, attitudes or behaviours relevant to the topic at hand.** It is important that the diversity of opinions present in the population is also reflected in the assembly.

Some models, such as the mixed committees in the Brussels Region and Wallonia (Belgium), introduce **a mix of citizens and elected representatives**. These mechanisms provide for the joint participation of members of parliament and citizens to promote interaction between citizens and political representatives. As far as parliamentarians are concerned, their participation is generally linked to their membership of the parliamentary committee responsible for the topic under discussion, to a personal desire to be involved, or to discussions within their political group to decide who will sit on the committee.

#### Representativeness and perceived legitimacy:

some studies show that citizens value random selection and attach great importance to the representativeness of citizens' assemblies. When assemblies deviate from this and exhibit socio-demographic or political biases, their perceived legitimacy diminishes, as does the acceptance of their outcomes<sup>60</sup>. Furthermore, citizens are particularly favourable towards mixed mechanisms combining elected representatives and citizens, even more so than those composed solely of randomly selected citizens<sup>61</sup>.

### 3.2.2 – The size of assemblies

**The size of assemblies varies greatly depending on the context.** In the regional assemblies surveyed, the number of citizens recruited ranges from 25 to 60 participants. At the national or even European level, panels are generally larger, with around 150 to 160 citizens. In this respect, the German mechanism stands out as one of the most ambitious, involving up to 160 people.

Several factors explain these differences: the nature and complexity of the issues addressed, the logistical and financial resources available and the ambitions set for the process. **A smaller group often facilitates more in-depth and interactive discussions, while a larger panel tends to reinforce the perceived legitimacy in the eyes of the public.**

**Size and perceived legitimacy:** studies show that, all other things being equal, citizens tend to perceive large assemblies as more legitimate than small ones, due to their assumed ability to better reflect social diversity<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Paulis, E. et al. (2024), ["Fair Enough? Mini-Public Composition and Outcome Acceptance from the Maxi\\_Public"](#), *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 20 (1) (<https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.1535>); Germann, M. (2025),

["Mini-Publics, \(Lack of\) Representativeness, and Legitimacy Beliefs"](#), *British Journal of Political Science* 55: e11 (doi:10.1017/S0007123424000322).

<sup>61</sup> Goldberg, S. et al. (2025), note no.39.

<sup>62</sup> Goldberg, S. et al. (2025), note no.39.

### 3.2.3 – Duration of the work

**The duration of the work in the permanent mechanisms studied varies greatly.** The shortest processes are those in Vorarlberg, Austria, where citizens' councils generally meet for a day and a half. By contrast, French citizens' conventions require a significant commitment from participants, spanning six to nine months, with an average of more than one weekend per month dedicated to the assembly's work. Similarly, German Bürgerräte organise several sessions over a period of three to five months. Halfway between these formats, the Brussels and Walloon deliberative committees represent an average commitment of four to five days, spread over several weeks. The Brussels-Capital Region Citizens' Assembly on Climate also spreads its sessions over a period of three to six months, typically one weekend per month.

In some cases, citizens may be re-engaged after the work is completed, particularly in relation to follow-up on recommendations. This is the case, for example, in Vorarlberg, where citizens are invited to participate in a follow-up phase several months later. The advanced permanent citizen dialogue mechanism in the German-speaking Community of Belgium also provides for long-term involvement: assemblies meet several times over a period of three to six months, and some participants may be randomly selected again to join the citizens' council or evaluate the follow-up of the recommendations a year later, thus extending their initial commitment if they so wish.

**The length of the process has a direct impact on the quality of the deliberation.** A discussion spread over several months allows for a better understanding of the subject, more in-depth collective work and more robust recommendations. On the other hand, a long process can lead to fatigue, a decline in motivation or people dropping out along the way. Conversely, a shorter format is often perceived as more accessible and less burdensome but may leave some citizens feeling that they have not had enough time to discuss the issues in depth.

**A balance must therefore be struck between the expected quality of deliberation, the feasibility of the timetable, and the risk of participants dropping out.** The question of the availability and time that citizens can devote to these processes is crucial, especially since time is a key resource in the mechanisms of (non-)mobilisation within participatory

instruments and is distributed unevenly across different social groups.

To better address these constraints, several mechanisms adopt **hybrid formats**, combining face-to-face sessions with remote work or discussions. This optimises the organisation and availability of participants.

Finally, in Brussels, an interesting idea has been put forward: the creation of "**citizen leave**"<sup>63</sup>. In the context of Brussels' deliberative committees, this refers to a proposal to allow citizens to take time off work to participate in these committees, modelled on jury duty leave. The aim is to facilitate participation by all, particularly people from low-income households or those working atypical hours, in committees that sometimes meet at weekends.

### 3.2.4 – Expenses allowance, incentives and accessibility: the conditions for inclusive participation

**All citizen assembly mechanisms pay an expenses allowance to ensure equal access and to prevent participation from being restricted to a minority of citizens with sufficient time or resources.** However, the amount of the allowance varies from one country and mechanism to another. In Brussels (Belgium) and France, for example, citizens receive an allowance of €80 per day or per working session, while in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, participants receive an attendance allowance of around €100 per meeting (depending on the length of the meeting), as well as a travel allowance for kilometres travelled or to cover journeys made by public transport. In general, these amounts are indexed to the cost of living, which helps to maintain their incentive value over time.

Other mechanisms take a different approach. There is no fixed allowance as such in Germany and in the deliberative committees of the Walloon region. Instead, participating citizen' expenses directly related to participation – such as accommodation, travel, meals and, where applicable, interpreting or translation services – are fully covered. The amount of expenses paid may therefore vary from one participant to another, but the principle of financial support is preserved. At European level, citizens' panels can pay up to €325 to participants, provided they attend all scheduled sessions.

**It should be emphasised that these allowances do not constitute additional income or a salary, but**

<sup>63</sup> See, in this regard, the proposal put forward by Magali Plovie, current judge at the Belgian Constitutional Court, former President of the French-

**rather symbolic recognition of the time and commitment provided by citizens.** They also contribute to a fundamental objective: ensuring the social diversity of participants and reducing barriers to participation. In this respect, most citizens' assemblies not only cover travel and accommodation costs but may also offer specific support to certain categories of participants, for example those with disabilities or special needs. Accessibility is usually considered when choosing venues so that all citizens can participate in dignified and inclusive conditions.

Finally, some schemes also incorporate a linguistic dimension to reflect the cultural diversity of the areas they cover. This is particularly the case in Brussels, where invitations to participate are sent not only in French and Dutch, the two official languages of the Region, but also in five other languages, chosen to reflect the multicultural diversity of the Brussels population. **This concern for accessibility, whether social, material or linguistic, demonstrates a desire to build mechanisms that are truly inclusive and representative of the entire population.**

### 3.2.5 – Logistical organisation, facilitation and coordination

Without exploring this aspect in too much detail, it is nevertheless important to note a few differences in the governance of the participatory mechanisms studied.

**The quality of deliberation is highly dependent on the presence of professional facilitators<sup>64</sup>, who ensure inclusion, mutual respect and compliance with the rules of deliberation.**

In Brussels and Wallonia, the sessions are supervised by **external facilitators from the private sector** who are trained in deliberative democracy. Their role is essential in mixed citizen-elected representative groups to balance speaking time and promote co-construction. In the German-speaking Community, facilitation is handled by an independent coordination unit, supervised by parliament, in conjunction with the citizens' council. This unit is supported by scientists and deliberation experts, ensuring the quality and impartiality of the process.

<sup>64</sup> A facilitator is a professional trained in deliberative democracy, responsible for supervising and facilitating discussions in citizen deliberation processes.

<sup>65</sup> Article 25/1, paragraph 9 of the Common Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region and the Joint Assembly of the Common Community Commission provides for the establishment of a steering committee responsible, among other tasks, for drawing up a list of experts.

<sup>66</sup> See Magali Plovie's personal website: [Les Commissions Délibératives: Guide Complet \[Deliberative Committees: Complete Guide\]](#), July 2023, p. 14.

In France, the Convention on Climate was supported by a governance committee and professional facilitators from *Missions Publiques*, a private agency specialising in citizen participation. Each thematic working group had its own facilitators. A committee of guarantors also supervised the methodology.

In Austria (Vorarlberg), facilitation is entrusted to **neutral experts, often from civil society or academia**. The short format requires very structured facilitation to quickly produce proposals.

The European panels are supported by **multilingual facilitators** recruited by the European Commission through calls for tenders. Each session follows a predefined structure (introduction, information, small groups, plenary summary).

In Germany, the Bundestag citizens' council coordination unit works with **an external scientific advisory board and specialist facilitators to ensure sound organisation and methodological neutrality**. The scientific advisory board is composed of twelve scientists from recognised universities and research institutes, appointed by the parliamentary groups via the citizens' council rapporteurs' group, ideally by consensus. The assemblies are organised into sub-groups, with independent moderation.

### 3.2.6 – Scientific support and expertise: between pluralism and neutrality

**All the mechanisms studied seek to balance information and deliberation by involving experts selected with varying degrees of transparency.** Indeed, it is not always clear how experts are identified based on the available resources.

In Brussels, for the deliberative committees, the support committee selects external experts, ensuring diversity of viewpoints<sup>65</sup>. Citizens can also propose experts<sup>66</sup>. In Wallonia, the procedure provides for fifteen experts to be heard during the sessions<sup>67</sup>. As part of the Brussels-Capital Assembly on Climate, experts from the public administration, academia and civil society are responsible for the training phase. However, both responsibility for selecting these

<sup>67</sup> Wallon parliament, [Rapport présenté au nom de la Commission délibérative, "Comment impliquer les Wallons et les Walloons dans la prise de décision, de manière délibérative et permanente, en s'inspirant notamment du dialogue citoyen permanent existant en Communauté germanophone qui procède au tirage au sort?"](#) [Report presented on behalf of the deliberative committee, "How to involve Walloons in decision-making, in a deliberative and permanent manner, drawing inspiration in particular from the permanent citizen dialogue that exists in the German-speaking Community, which uses random selection?"] 2023-2024 session, file no. 1605(2023-2024) 1, 25 February 2024, 189 p. (see p. 6).

experts and the extent to which citizens can request expert inputs remain unclear<sup>68</sup>.

For the permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community, experts are chosen by the citizens' council in coordination with the support unit. This mechanism ensures a bottom-up approach to identifying and appointing experts<sup>69</sup>.

In France, the conventions identify and appoint several dozen experts, chosen by the governance committee and sometimes proposed by citizens themselves<sup>70</sup>.

In Austria, experts are invited as needed, often at the request of the participants themselves<sup>71</sup>.

At European level, participants have access to multilingual briefing documents and meet experts during supervised sessions with simultaneous interpreting. Everything is prepared directly by the Commission<sup>72</sup>.

In Germany, experts are selected by the external operator responsible for organising the citizens' council, with a view to ensuring diversity, rigour and transparency<sup>73</sup>.

### 3.2.7 – Cost and economic feasibility: a democratic investment?

**Financial data on citizens' assemblies is sometimes incomplete or only available informally, making comparisons difficult.** Nevertheless, certain benchmarks provide an idea of the order of magnitude.

In Belgium, the annual cost of the permanent citizen dialogue system set up by the German-speaking Community is estimated at around €90,000, to which additional variable costs – ranging from €50,000 to €150,000 – may be added, depending on the number of citizens' assemblies organised during the year. In

<sup>68</sup> The information available on the dedicated website does not shed light on this aspect. See the FAQ on the following website: <https://www.assembleeclimat.brussels>

<sup>69</sup> Niessen, C., Reuchamps, M. (2019). Le dialogue citoyen permanent en Communauté germanophone [The permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community]. *CRISP Courrier hebdomadaire*, 21(2426), p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> See the newspaper article dated 19 June 2020, which highlights the risk of influence exerted by experts. E. Barroux, A. Garric, "Convention citoyenne pour le climat: le rôle des experts dans la formation de l'opinion" [Citizens' Convention on Climate: the role of experts in shaping opinion] published in *Le Monde* on 19 June 2020.

<sup>71</sup> Article 5b, paragraph 6 of the Richtlinie der Vorarlberger Landesregierung zur Einberufung und Durchführung von Bürgerräten [Directive of the Vorarlberg federal state government on the convening and conduct of citizens' councils], which states that "Die Beiziehung von Sachverständigen und Auskunfts Personen ist zulässig" (free translation by the authors: the use of experts and reference persons is permitted).

Brussels, official data is not publicly available, but opposition parties have suggested an estimate of €150,000 for the organisation of a single deliberative committee<sup>74</sup>.

On a very different scale, the French Citizens' Convention on Climate required a budget of around €6 million. This amount covered not only the logistical organisation of the sessions, but also the participation of experts, communication costs, and all the resources mobilised to support the process over several months. The Convention on the End-of-Life had a smaller but still substantial budget (€4.2 million)<sup>75</sup>.

In comparison, the model implemented in the Austrian region of Vorarlberg stands out for its low budget: each citizens' council costs between €10,000 and €30,000. This minimalist format is based on a deliberately simple and inexpensive structure, making it a flexible model that can be easily replicated on a smaller scale.

**These disparities show that the issue of costs is central to the sustainability of participatory mechanisms.** Depending on the ambitions pursued, the frequency of meetings and the resources available, compromises must be made. Decision-makers must therefore constantly balance depth of deliberation, inclusion, process frequency and budgetary constraints.



Far from being insignificant, the organisational choices made by citizens' assemblies – in terms of random selection, duration, composition, logistical support, facilitation and expert involvement – directly influence the quality of deliberation and the inclusiveness of the process.

Stratified selection ensures greater sociological representativeness than

<sup>72</sup> Bailly, J. (2023), "The democratic quality of European citizens' panels (Conference on the Future of Europe)", CEVIPOL Working Paper (1), p. 13. (<https://doi.org/10.3917/lcdc1.231.0002>)

<sup>73</sup> New experts were added to the initial list following recommendations from the evaluation by researchers and feedback from members of parliament on the first citizens' council experiment. See: German Bundestag, Directorate of Science and International Relations, Citizens' Council Support Group, "Bürgerrat zu Deutschlands Rolle in der Welt. Bericht der Verwaltung des Deutschen Bundestages" [Citizens' Assembly on Germany's Role in the World. Report by the Administration of the German Bundestag], 10 May 2021, 23 p.

<sup>74</sup> This figure is found in, for instance, an article published in the Belgian daily newspaper *La Dernière Heure* on 26 August 2022. See: de Manne A., "Les assemblées citoyennes, c'est Oui-Oui fait de la politique : la démocratie participative sous le feu des critiques à Bruxelles" [Citizens' assemblies are Oui-Oui playing at politics: participatory democracy under fire in Brussels], *DH*, 26 August 2022.

<sup>75</sup> See in this regard: <https://conventioncitoyennesurlafindevie.leceze.fr/-organisation/budget>

parliaments. **Flexible yet demanding formats** make it possible to balance citizen engagement and collective efficiency.

**The support of professional facilitators and a diverse range experts strengthens the neutrality and rigour of the debates.**

Finally, the most robust systems provide for fair **financial compensation** and a strong focus on accessibility. Budgetary sustainability remains an issue, but these assemblies are a strategic democratic investment, the cost of which must be weighed against the benefits in terms of legitimacy and public trust.

### 3.3 Political scope and binding effects: the question of impact<sup>76</sup>

#### 3.3.1 - Follow-up and political response

**In general, the citizen participation mechanisms studied are consultative: the recommendations made are not binding.** However, follow-up is core to achieving legitimacy<sup>77</sup>. This is why permanent mechanisms often include arrangements to regulate and highlight how citizen proposals are taken into account.

In Belgium, in the deliberative committees of the Brussels-Capital Region, recommendations are followed up by the members of parliament who participated in the process<sup>78</sup>. They can table legislative proposals, question the ministers concerned or initiate resolutions. Six to nine months after the deliberative committee is held, a follow-up session is organised in Parliament: citizens are invited to observe how their recommendations have been dealt with and provide feedback. Follow-up is made public via an online platform. In the case of the Citizens' Assembly on Climate<sup>79</sup>, a report is first

presented publicly, then the government assesses the feasibility of the proposals. The relevant ministers must respond within three months, and then again within twelve months. A follow-up committee, composed of ten citizens selected at random, monitors government action during this period and meets with ministers twice.

In Wallonia<sup>80</sup>, the recommendations made by the deliberative committees are presented at a plenary session of parliament. They are then reviewed by the relevant committees, and a follow-up report is made public. The Walloon parliament's website allows citizens to monitor the progress of the measures adopted. In the German-speaking Community<sup>81</sup>, the permanent citizen dialogue is governed by a decree requiring parliament and the government to examine each recommendation in a reasoned manner. A citizens' council, composed of former participants, oversees this follow-up by questioning parliamentary committees and ministers. The process is structured around three public sessions: one for the presentation of recommendations, one for the response of policymakers, and a final one, a year later, to review implementation. The entire process is public and reported on the Citizens' Dialogue website<sup>82</sup>.

In Austria (Vorarlberg)<sup>83</sup>, the recommendations are first debated publicly at a "citizens' café", which brings together elected representatives, citizens and the public administration. They are then forwarded to the competent authorities, who must respond publicly. A small group of citizens from the panel acts as a liaison with decision-makers and reports on the follow-up. Each recommendation receives a reasoned response – adoption, modification or rejection – which is generally communicated at a public event or via a report. The monitoring of the various citizens' councils is centralised on an online platform managed by the state.

In France, citizens' conventions generally submit a report to the executive branch (often the President<sup>84</sup>)

<sup>76</sup> This subsection is based primarily on information taken from public websites and official documents of the institutions responsible for organising and following up on the deliberative debates established. See *Appendix: Table of Comparative Data*.

<sup>77</sup> Jacquet, V. and Van der Does, R. (2020), "Deliberation and Policy-Making: Three Ways to Think About Minipublics' Consequences", *Administration & Society*, vol. 53, Issue 3 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/009539972096451>).

<sup>78</sup> See Magali Plovie's personal website: Les Commissions Délibératives: Guide Complet [Deliberative Committees: Complete Guide], July 2023, p, p.50.

<sup>79</sup> See the presentation available on the website of the Brussels-Capital Region's participation department.

<sup>80</sup> Walloon parliament, Rapport présenté au nom de la Commission délibérative, "Comment impliquer les Wallons et les Wallonnes dans la prise de décision, de manière délibérative et permanente, en s'inspirant notamment du dialogue citoyen permanent existant en Communauté germanophone qui procède au tirage au sort ? [Report presented on behalf

of the Deliberative Committee, "How to involve Walloons in decision-making, in a deliberative and permanent manner, drawing inspiration in particular from the permanent citizen dialogue existing in the German-speaking Community, which uses random selection?"]], session 2023–2024, file no. 1605(2023–2024) 1, 25 February 2024, 189 p.

<sup>81</sup> Niessen, C., Reuchamps, M. (2019), note no.69.

<sup>82</sup> See: <https://www.buergerdialog.be/fr/>.

<sup>83</sup> See, in this regard, the simplified information presenting the citizens' councils on the Vorarlberg state website: <https://www.buergerrat.net/at/vorarlberg/?lang=en>; and Zubizarreta et al., (2020), "Citizens' Councils: What are they, and why are they so popular in Austria?" Research and Development Note, newDemocracy, 27 August 2020, 7 p.

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, during the Citizens' Convention on Climate: <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/01/10/echanges-avec-les-150-membres-de-la-convention-citoyenne-pour-le-climat>.

at the end of their work, which publicly commits to respond to each recommendation. This follow-up therefore depends largely on political will. The responses are generally accessible<sup>85</sup>, sometimes via an online dashboard on the [Agora](#) website, with explicit justifications for the acceptance, modification or rejection of proposals. In the case of the Citizens' Convention on Climate, and despite an initially strong political commitment, most proposals were rejected, leaving participants with mixed feelings.

In Germany<sup>86</sup>, recommendations are submitted to the Bundestag, which must respond to them but is not obliged to implement them. A parliamentary session or committee debate allows the proposals to be examined, followed by written or public feedback. Parliament is not obliged to implement them, but it must justify each decision.

Finally, European citizens' panels have a formalised follow-up process. At the end of each panel (usually three sessions), the recommendations are forwarded to the European Commission in the form of policy or legislative proposals. Although the Commission is not legally obliged to implement them, it may publicly explain the fate of each proposal. Despite the publication of various reports on a [dedicated online platform](#), the follow-up to the recommendations remains unclear, fuelling debate about the real impact of deliberative processes at European level and their ability to inform the Commission's work.<sup>87</sup>

Although permanent deliberative mechanisms remain consultative, follow-up mechanisms are in place to enhance their transparency, the responsiveness of institutions and citizens' confidence in the usefulness of their participation.

#### Political consideration and perceived legitimacy:

studies on the legitimacy of citizens' assemblies show that follow-up and political will are essential if the general public, who are not directly involved in the deliberation, are to support the mechanism. **Citizens value deliberative processes that get political attention and whose recommendations are genuinely followed up** and can have an

impact<sup>88</sup>. They also appreciate **transparent communication about this follow-up**<sup>89</sup>. Furthermore, the majority are in favour of citizens' assemblies remaining consultative<sup>90</sup> and of representative institutions having the final say. **This indicates that citizens do not perceive citizens' assemblies as a substitute for elections and the representative democracy model, but rather as a useful complement**, providing them with a stronger voice and, potentially, greater influence on decision-making.



Even if deliberative mechanisms are consultative, the **establishment of structured follow-up procedures is essential to strengthen their legitimacy**. Everywhere, formats such as reasoned responses, public presentation of responses or citizen follow-up committees make it possible to link proposals back to institutions. The case of the German-speaking Community of Belgium illustrates exemplary integration. These follow-up mechanisms do not impose a legal obligation to act but create a form of moral and political obligation. They thus play a **central role in building citizen trust and the credibility of participatory mechanisms**.

### 3.3.2 Effects on public policy

Ultimately, as these mechanisms are not decision-making bodies, they do not directly bind public authorities. Nevertheless, on an ethical and normative level, they generate expectations — particularly among participants — regarding their influence on decisions related to the issues they discuss. Their actual impact therefore depends largely on political will. It must be noted that, **despite increasing institutionalisation and increasingly formalised follow-up procedures, the concrete impact often remains limited, or difficult to assess**. This is partly

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, during the Citizens' Convention on Climate: <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/suivi-convention-citoyenne-climat/>.

<sup>86</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, Abteilung Wissenschaft und Außenbeziehungen Begleitgruppe Bürgerrat, "[Bürgerrat zu Deutschlands Rolle in der Welt. Bericht der Verwaltung des Deutschen Bundestages](#)", [Department of Science and External Relations Citizens' Assembly Support Group, "Citizens' Assembly on Germany's Role in the World. Report by the Administration of the German Bundestag] 10 May 2021, 23 p.

<sup>87</sup> Bailly, J. (2023), "[The democratic quality of European citizens' panels \(Conference on the Future of Europe\)](#)", CEVIPOL Working Paper (1), p. 13. (<https://doi.org/10.3917/lcdc1.231.0002>).

<sup>88</sup> Van Dijk, L. and Lefevere, J. (2023), note no.38; Germann, M. et al. (2024), "[Scaling Up? Unpacking the Effect of Deliberative Mini-Publics on Legitimacy Perceptions](#)", *Political Studies* 72(2), pp.677-700 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321722113744>).

<sup>89</sup> Goovaerts, I. et al. (2025), "[When Deliberative Mini-publics' Outcomes and Political Decisions Clash: Examining How Responsive Communication Influences Legitimacy Perceptions](#)", *European Journal of Political Research* 64(2), pp.767-89 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12711>).

<sup>90</sup> Goldberg, S. et al. (2025), note no.39.

because these mechanisms are still recent, and that political institutions must adapt to this new reality, especially in areas characterised by strong institutional inertia. Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to measure their direct legislative impact<sup>91</sup>.

The deliberative committees of the Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium) have had a moderate but tangible impact. Some recommendations have been incorporated into parliamentary resolutions or even included in bills or ordinances, particularly in the areas of climate justice and anti-discrimination. However, there is no automatic transposition mechanism, and the impact depends heavily on the commitment of political groups. Their main impact seems to be to put certain previously little-discussed topics on the agenda. In Wallonia, the mechanism was introduced very recently and so the impact remains limited. Nevertheless, the first experiment, which focused on establishing a permanent deliberative mechanism in Wallonia, seems to have been taken seriously by parliamentarians, who organised additional hearings and initiated discussions in committee. This follow-up also led to changes in the way the deliberative committees operate. Furthermore, the structure of the parliamentary follow-up envisaged suggests that there is potential for the recommendations to be incorporated into the parliament's legislative work; it is, however, still too early to assess their actual influence.

The first cycles of the Brussels-Capital Region's Citizens' Assembly on Climate produced ambitious recommendations on topics such as mobility, energy and building renovation. Although the government responded publicly, few concrete measures have been implemented. This process served primarily as a full-scale test for Brussels institutions in terms of citizen deliberation on climate issues. An academic evaluation is currently underway, but the results remain largely symbolic for the time being.

**The most successful example in terms of concrete impact remains the permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium.** Several assemblies have led to parliamentary resolutions and adjustments to regional policies, for example **on the reception of refugees or health policy**<sup>92</sup>. The permanent citizens' council plays a key

role in this, ensuring institutionalised follow-up of recommendations and making it more difficult to dismiss them politically. The permanent nature of the mechanism thus promotes structural integration into public policymaking<sup>93</sup>.

In France, citizens' conventions have had a partial, sometimes controversial, impact. The Convention on Climate, for example, led to the inclusion of certain proposals – concerning energy-efficiency renovation, advertising and environmental standards – in the Climate and Resilience Act adopted in 2021. However, many recommendations were rejected, particularly those related to taxation, consumption and transport, causing some disillusionment among participants. Nevertheless, the process helped to legitimise citizen deliberation as a lever for ecological transformation. The Convention on the End-of-Life produced clear recommendations, but parliamentarians are struggling to find a legislative compromise, and the project remains on hold.

In Austria, although there is a lack of documentation to prove it, the citizens' councils in Vorarlberg appear to be having a concrete, local and targeted impact. Their short format and focus on important issues – mobility, land use planning, water management – facilitate implementation, generally at the level of municipalities and their administrations.

In Germany, citizens' councils (*Bürgerräte*) are a recent innovation whose full impact is still emerging. The first pilot citizens' council, organised in 2019 in collaboration with civil society, focused on democracy. Its main objective was to test deliberative formats rather than directly influence policy. The first **citizens' council institutionalised** by the Bundestag took place in 2023–2024 on the theme of "The Future of Food". It submitted its nine recommendations to the Bundestag on 20 February 2024 in the form of a citizens' report. These recommendations were debated in a plenary session on 14 March 2024 and then referred mainly to the parliamentary food and agriculture committee, as well as other relevant committees (family, health, climate, finance). The food and agriculture committee concluded its deliberations in January 2025, but due to the snap elections in February 2025, no final decision or implementation

<sup>91</sup> Minsart, E., Jacquet, V., (2023), *"21 The impact of citizens' assemblies on policymaking: Approaches and methods"*, in M. Reuchamps, J. Vrydaghs, Y. Welp (eds.), *De Gruyter Handbook of Citizens' Assemblies*, Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter, pp. 283–294 (<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110758269-023>).

<sup>92</sup> Gebauer, R., et al. (2024), "Le Parlement de la Communauté germanophone comme laboratoire de participation citoyenne : analyse du suivi des recommandations du Dialogue citoyen permanent en Belgique de l'Est" [The Parliament of the German-speaking Community as a laboratory for citizen participation: Analysis of the follow-up to the recommendations of the

permanent citizen dialogue in East Belgium], *Lien Social et Politiques: RIAC*, No. 92, pp. 1–19 (<https://doi.org/10.7202/1112804ar>).

<sup>93</sup> For a summary of the progress made during the last legislative term, see: Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, *Bürgerdialog in Ostbelgien – Übersicht der Prozessoptimierungen in der Legislaturperiode 2019-2024* [Citizen Dialogue in East Belgium – Overview of Process Optimisations in the 2019–2024 Legislative Term], 1 July 2024, 11p.

had been adopted before the end of the legislative period<sup>94</sup>.

Finally, in some studies, European citizens' panels have been criticised for their weak impact<sup>95</sup>. As part of the Conference on the Future of Europe, these panels made recommendations, but most were only marginally included in the final documents. To date, they have not been translated into European policies<sup>96</sup>. The impact is primarily symbolic and experimental. However, the European Commission is considering renewing the model for certain targeted legislative proposals, which could pave the way for more structured integration in the future<sup>97</sup>.



**Although they are not decision-making bodies, deliberative mechanisms generate high expectations in terms of their impact on public policy. Their actual influence remains very uneven.** In French-speaking Belgium, some recommendations have fed into resolutions or bills, but the main effect is often to put issues that have previously been little debated on the agenda. In the German-speaking Community of Belgium, the impact is more visible and structural thanks to the permanent nature of the mechanism. In France, citizens' conventions have made a lasting impression but have also caused frustration due to limited implementation. Elsewhere, such as in Austria and Germany, the effects are targeted or symbolic, and European panels are struggling to move beyond the experimental stage. **Ultimately, it is not so much the mechanism itself as the political will and follow-up structures associated with it that determine its effectiveness.**

### 3.4 Transparency and evaluation: openness and learning

**Transparency and independent evaluation are essential in establishing the legitimacy and**

**credibility of deliberative democracy mechanisms.** They make processes accessible to citizens, prevent suspicions of manipulation and ensure that participatory assemblies can contribute to a lasting improvement in the quality of public decision-making<sup>98</sup>. Their presence or absence can have a significant impact on public perception, the institutional uptake of recommendations, and the possibility of repeating these experiments.

#### 3.4.1 Transparency

Transparency can be assessed at several levels. First, it requires **guaranteeing public access to information on how the mechanisms function**: rules for selecting participants, methodology, working documents and decisions taken. Second, transparency requires that the **deliberative exchanges themselves be made visible**, either through video recordings or through accessible transcripts, summaries or reports. Finally, it also implies **external openness, whether to the media, researchers or civil society**. Indeed, some mechanisms go beyond direct observation and also provide for **maintaining a link with the broader public, giving them the opportunity to submit proposals** (before or during the process) that will be debated by the participating citizens.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, deliberative committees are characterised by a clear commitment to procedural transparency. **Sessions are recorded or broadcast live, final reports are made available to the public, and a dedicated platform ([democratie.brussels](https://democratie.brussels))** provides access to preparatory documents, profiles of speakers and summaries of discussions. This channel can also be used to launch citizen initiatives. Efforts are also made to relay the work via the parliament's social networks. In Wallonia, a similar level of transparency is ensured: reports are published, expert hearings are public, and information on the processes is posted on the parliament's website. The Assembly on Climate organised by the Brussels Government also has an information and dissemination platform ([assembleeclimat.brussels](https://assembleeclimat.brussels)).

<sup>94</sup> See the website [Buergerrat.de](https://www.buergerrat.de) (a project of the professional association Mehr Demokratie), which documents participatory and deliberative democracy, particularly in Germany, for the report on the Bundestag discussion on the proposed recommendations: <https://www.buergerrat.de/aktuelles/bundestag-diskutiert-buergerrat-empfehlungen/>.

<sup>95</sup> Baily, J. (2023), "The democratic quality of European citizens' panels (Conference on the Future of Europe)", *CEVIPOL Working Paper* (1), pp. 2-35. (<https://doi.org/10.3917/lcdc1.231.0002>), Oleart, A. (2023), "The political construction of the 'citizen turn' in the EU: disintermediation and depoliticisation in the Conference on the Future of Europe", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, pp.1-15 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2023.2177837>).

<sup>96</sup> Galende-Sánchez, E. (2025), "The EU's depoliticised approach to deliberative democracy and its implications for climate policy: The case of the Conference on the Future of Europe", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 33(3), 873-889 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2025.2457662>); Demidov A. et al. (2023), "Assessing the European Citizens' Panels: Greater ambition needed", *Observatory Report*, EU Democracy Reform Observatory, 6 September 2023, 24 p.

<sup>97</sup> European Commission, *Conférence sur l'avenir de l'Europe : Transformer une vision en actions concrètes* [Conference on the Future of Europe: Turning a vision into concrete actions], COM (2022) 404 final, 17 June 2022.

<sup>98</sup> Caluwaerts, D. and Reuchamps, M. (2023), "Evaluating citizens' assemblies: Criteria, methods and tools", in M. Reuchamps et al., *De Gruyter Handbook of Citizens' Assemblies*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, pp. 239-256 (<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110758269-020>).

The assembly also offers an interactive and participatory digital platform, which aims to enable the wider public to make proposals and also to comment on and discuss the assembly's work ([forum.assembleeclimat.brussels](http://forum.assembleeclimat.brussels)). However, as in the two previous cases, media coverage remains modest, limiting the visibility of these mechanisms in the Belgian French-speaking public sphere.

In the German-speaking Community, there is a high level of transparency thanks to the official platform ([buergerdialog](http://buergerdialog)), which brings together in one place final reports, working documents, expert presentations, summaries and meeting minutes. This is reinforced by *Bürgercafés* (citizens cafes), informal exchanges between citizens, elected representatives and assembly participants, which foster local engagement and the circulation of ideas. The model stands out for its ability to make processes visible in a structured, lasting and accessible way. However, despite relatively significant regional media coverage, the work is generally not widely known elsewhere in the country.

Citizens' conventions in France have put in place an ambitious transparency mechanism. All sessions are broadcast live or can be watched on demand, and a central platform hosts proposals, interim reports, written contributions and videos from experts. All recommendations are published, as are the government's responses. However, this transparency has sometimes been marred by confusion surrounding the president's promise of "no filters", which was later qualified, contributing to some disillusionment among participants – as was the case with the Convention on Climate<sup>99</sup>.

In the Vorarlberg region of Austria, transparency is more modest. The processes, which are very short and local in scope, produce summary reports that are often available on the state's website or the dedicated platform, but there is no systematic broadcasting of the debates. This is due in part to the pragmatic and ad hoc nature of Austrian citizens' councils, which are designed primarily as spaces for rapid mobilisation around specific issues.

In Germany, the *Bürgerräte* organised by the Bundestag enjoy a degree of transparency: documents are accessible, final reports are published, and recordings of plenary sessions are available. The website [buergerrat.de](http://buergerrat.de) also brings together a wealth of information on regional deliberative experiments, as well as what is happening abroad. The methods are clearly explained, and the educational materials made

available to participants are often shared publicly. As for media visibility, it is difficult to say as the approach at the federal level is so recent.

At the European Union level, the citizens' panels organised as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe benefit from significant transparency efforts. A dedicated digital platform has been created ([citizens.ec.europa.eu](http://citizens.ec.europa.eu)). The sessions are generally broadcast live, translated into several languages, and the recommendations published in a summary format in multiple languages. The Commission has invested in visual and educational tools to make the discussions accessible to the general public. However, this procedural transparency contrasts with the perceived opacity surrounding how the recommendations are taken into account in the decision-making process, in a complex institutional system where the links between participation and legislation remain difficult to trace. While European citizens' panels have sometimes garnered some media attention, this is far from substantial.



The transparency of deliberative mechanisms varies considerably depending on the context. **In most cases, there is extensive access to documents, videos and interactive platforms, and even to external contributions.** However, others remain more discreet or depend on local dynamics. Transparency is not limited to the dissemination of information: it also involves **openness to researchers, the media and non-participating citizens.** It is a **key factor in legitimacy**, but its scope depends largely on the ability of institutions to **connect visible procedures with meaningful consideration of citizens' work.**

### 3.4.2 External evaluation

Independent evaluation of deliberative mechanisms **varies considerably across the cases examined.** In the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region, institutions collaborate with academic teams, notably that of Min Reuchamps (UCLouvain), who is himself regularly invited to serve as an academic member of support committees. These researchers conduct rigorous evaluations, combining direct observation of sessions, qualitative interviews, participant surveys and analysis of the political and institutional effects of the recommendations. Although not yet published, this work has been shared verbally and highlights several

<sup>99</sup> Guibert, G. et al. (2021). Summary note from the association La Fabrique écologique, [Quelles leçons de la Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat. Une](http://Quelles leçons de la Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat. Une)

[initiative salutaire à renouveler, mais avec des modalités à redéfinir](#) [What lessons from the Citizens' Convention on Climate. A worthwhile initiative to be repeated, but with terms to be redefined], 33 p.

strengths, including the quality of the exchanges, the diversity of participants, and compliance with deliberative norms. It also highlights some limitations, such as uneven understanding of complex issues, tensions resulting from the simultaneous presence of citizens and elected representatives on certain committees, and insufficient time allocated to certain phases of the process<sup>100</sup>.

**In both regions, evaluations are generally coordinated by support or follow-up committees set up when the mechanism was designed.** Researchers are regularly involved, which ensures both methodological proximity to the field and a degree of objectivity in the process. These committees are in principle responsible for setting up systematic evaluations and publishing reports, which helps to embed evaluation within the governance of the mechanisms. Access to the reports and data is nevertheless limited in Brussels<sup>101</sup> but can be available in Wallonia<sup>102</sup>.

The permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium has also been the subject of in-depth scientific evaluations by Min Reuchamps' team, which has been heavily involved in designing and monitoring this institutionalised model. This research highlights the robustness of the system, its capacity for self-reform and its ability to gradually integrate recommendations into parliamentary proceedings. It also highlights the balance sought between citizen autonomy and institutional supervision. **These evaluations have concrete effects: they are used to adjust certain rules over time, in a spirit of institutional learning.** For example, since 2023, the threshold of signatures required for a group of citizens to initiate a citizens' assembly has been removed. Furthermore, **since 2024, the German-speaking Parliament must propose at least one topic per year for debate in a**

<sup>100</sup> Vrydagh, J. et al. (2021), ["Les commissions délibératives entre parlementaires et citoyens tirés au sort au sein des assemblées bruxelloises"](#) [Deliberative committees between parliamentarians and citizens selected at random within the Brussels assemblies], *CRISP Courrier hebdomadaire*, 2492, 65 p.; Reuchamps, M. (2024). ["L'institutionnalisation à travers la singularité de la mixité et la participation des parlementaires ? Contexte international et premiers enseignements des commissions délibératives ?"](#) [Institutionalisation through the uniqueness of diversity and the participation of parliamentarians? International context and initial lessons from deliberative committees?], Proceedings of the symposium Commissions délibératives : l'innovation démocratique à la sauce bruxelloise [Deliberative committees: democratic innovation Brussel-style], Brussels, French-speaking Parliament of Brussels.

<sup>101</sup> Vrydagh, J. et al. (2021), note no.100.

<sup>102</sup> B. Derenne, G. Grandjean, C. Parotte, Reuchamps M., ["Rapport et recommandations suite à la première commission délibérative organisée par le Parlement de Wallonie"](#) [Report and recommendations following the first deliberative committee organised by the Parliament of Wallonia], University of Liège, 8 May 2024, 15 p.

<sup>103</sup> Niessen, C., Reuchamps, M. (2019), note no.51; Niessen, C., Reuchamps, M. (2022), ["Institutionalising Citizen Deliberation in Parliament: The Permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community of](#)

**citizens' assembly.** These adjustments illustrate the mechanism's ability to evolve through continuous evaluation, which is integrated into the functioning of the model. It should be noted that although there does not appear to be public access to these evaluations, the researchers involved have published work based on their observations<sup>103</sup>.

The French case presents a slightly different dynamic. While national citizens' conventions, such as the Convention on Climate, have been relatively open to the media and researchers, no systematic mechanism for external scientific evaluation has been put in place by the institutions. However, **this openness has led to a wealth of academic output**, particularly around the Convention on Climate, which has been the subject of in-depth analysis of the process's internal tensions, the effects of participation on randomly selected citizens, the dynamics of legitimisation and, of course, the constraints on the actual political impact of the recommendations<sup>104</sup>. This work has been supplemented by reports from the governance committee and evaluations conducted by the ESEC, which have focused mainly on the methodological conduct of the process and compliance with the established framework.

In Germany, **the early iterations of the Bürgerrat were evaluated by university teams**, including those from the universities of Potsdam and Wuppertal<sup>105</sup>. Their work focused on the quality of the deliberations, the experience of the citizens and the degree of political attention paid to the results. These evaluations informed the gradual refinement of the mechanisms, particularly in the structuring of the follow-up processes, the selection of experts and the way in which recommendations were formulated to make them more politically actionable.

[Belgium", Parliamentary Affairs](#), 75(1), pp. 135–153 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsaa056>); Macq, H. and Jacquet, V. (2023), ["Institutionalising participatory and deliberative procedures: The origins of the first permanent citizens' assembly"](#), *European Journal of Political Research*, 62, pp. 156–173 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12499>).

<sup>104</sup> Giraudet, L. et al. (2022), ["Co-construction in deliberative democracy: lessons from the French Citizens' Convention for Climate"](#), *Humanities and Social Science Communication*, 9, 207 (<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01212-6>); Courant, D. (2020), ["Des mini-publics délibératifs pour sauver le climat ? Analyses empiriques de l'Assemblée citoyenne irlandaise et de la Convention citoyenne française"](#) [Deliberative mini-publics to save the climate? Empirical analyses of the Irish Citizens' Assembly and the French Citizens Convention], *Archives de Philosophie du Droit*, 62, pp. 485–507 (DOI:10.3917/apd.621.0500); Fabre et al. (2021), ["Who Are the Citizens of the French Convention for Climate?"](#) (halshs-03265053).

<sup>105</sup> Kirby N., Freier A. N., Renn O., Lietzmann H. J., Scheidemantel K., Döring M. (2021), ["Evaluation des Bürgerrats Deutschlands Rolle in der Welt: Abschlussbericht der wissenschaftlichen Evaluation"](#) [Evaluation of the Role of Germany's Citizens' Councils in the World: Final Report of the Scientific Evaluation], Institute for Democracy and Participation Research (IDPF) at the University of Wuppertal, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) Potsdam, 55 p. (DOI: 10.25926/hjqy-x361).

In Vorarlberg, Austria, evaluations remain sparse and fragmentary. As citizens' councils are generally organised at the local level, feedback is most often provided by the municipalities themselves, or sometimes by local NGOs. A more formal external evaluation, carried out jointly by Kairos and the European Institute for Public Participation (EIPP), was published in 2012 and translated into English<sup>106</sup>. Since then, no systematic evaluation mechanism has been put in place at regional level. This partly reflects the flexible and ad hoc nature of Austrian *Bürgerräte* but also limits opportunities for continuous improvement.

Finally, at the European Union level, the citizens' panels organised as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe have not yet been the subject of published external scientific evaluations. Some internal Commission reports exist, but they focus mainly on logistical and organisational aspects. The political effects of the panels, their ability to influence decisions or shape public opinion, have not yet been rigorously and independently evaluated. However, a number of researchers are beginning to examine the symbolic significance and democratic promise of these supranational processes, which pose specific challenges in terms of transparency, follow-up and representativeness in a complex institutional system<sup>107</sup>.



Overall, it appears that only a handful of cases have a systematic evaluation embedded within the mechanism itself or strongly encouraged by the institutions. **The lack of independent evaluation in other cases, particularly at the European level or in lighter-touch mechanisms such as those in Vorarlberg, hinders the development of comparable quality standards and the consolidation of deliberative democracy as a credible pillar of decision-making processes.**

<sup>106</sup> Ministry of Life and Office for Future-related Questions (Austria), Kairos, EIPP (European Institute for Public Participation) (2012), [Wisdom Councils in Austria: Final Report Accompanying Evaluation](#), 35 p.

<sup>107</sup> Bailly, J. (2023), note no.72; Costello, A. (2024), ["Citizens' preferences and the future of Europe: a case for the 'five scenarios' as deliberative entry-](#)

[points in mini-publics"](#), *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 32(4), pp. 1228–1241 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2024.2348148>); Oleari, A. (2023), note no.95.

# 4 Towards a Luxembourg model

This analysis does not seek to answer the question of whether it is appropriate to institutionalise a deliberative mechanism at the national level. **Rather, its purpose is to identify the characteristics of the model that would be best suited to Luxembourg's specific circumstances.**

From this perspective, the foreign experiences analysed do not offer a ready-made solution: they share common characteristics but also display notable differences. Everywhere, citizens' assemblies are consultative, based on random selection, focus on issues prior to decision-making, and rely on deliberative processes facilitated by facilitators and experts. They meet standards that are now well established.

However, behind this relative homogeneity, each mechanism is in fact *sui generis*, designed to respond to specific institutional, social and political contexts. **To be accepted and sustainable, democratic reforms must be adapted to the ecosystem in which they operate.**

**This requirement also applies to Luxembourg.** As such, the recommendations drawn from the assessments of the *Klima-Biergerrot* and the *Biergerkommitee Lëtzbuerg 2050* serve as a basis for calibrating the options according to Luxembourg's specific characteristics.

This section therefore identifies the structural issues that the Chamber of Deputies could address should it wish to establish a permanent deliberative body. The analysis focuses on these structural dimensions, which are key to defining a Luxembourg model, dealing only secondarily – and partially – with the organisational issues already addressed in section 2.2.3.

Finally, it highlights important points to consider, in light of past experiences and best practices in citizen deliberation, should Luxembourg wish to establish a permanent mechanism.

## 4.1 Inventory of options and decision-making factors

In this section of the paper, we will raise the following questions:

Which institution(s) should be responsible for establishing and organising the permanent deliberative mechanism?

At what stage(s) of the policy-making cycle should the deliberative mechanism be used?

Who can trigger a consultation via the deliberative mechanism?

Who can participate in consultations within the deliberative mechanism and according to which criteria?

How should the recommendations be followed up?

What legal basis should be used to establish a permanent deliberative mechanism?

The answer to each of these questions will be divided into three parts. First, the options will be briefly presented through the lens of the foreign cases analysed in the previous section. Next, the various choices available to the Luxembourg parliament will be set out. Finally, the scientific and empirical justifications in favour of the solution deemed most appropriate for the Luxembourg context will be presented, particularly in light of the recommendations drawn from the evaluations of the *Klima-Biergerrot* and the *Biergerkommitee Lëtzbuerg 2050*<sup>108</sup>.

### 4.1.1 Who can establish a permanent deliberative mechanism and organise consultations?

Although at national level, parliaments often drive the institutionalisation of deliberative mechanisms, some permanent models have also been promoted by the executive, such as the European Commission or regional governments (e.g. the federal state of Vorarlberg in Austria or the Brussels-Capital Region in Belgium). In addition, the case studies show that the coordination of such mechanisms may be provided either by the institution that launched the initiative or by a third-party public body, such as the ESEC in France. The latter case is particularly interesting: although the impetus comes from parliament – and is also supported by the executive – the practical

<sup>108</sup> The justifications for the options are based on empirical analyses and observations conducted by R. Kies and E. Paulis. Some of these results are taken from publications by these authors, already cited in this research.

organisation of the deliberation is entrusted to an independent public institution responsible for coordinating citizen consultations at national level.

In the Luxembourg context, two options can be considered:

### 1. A centralised model under the Chamber of Deputies

Luxembourg could take inspiration from the German model, in which the Bundestag has set up a department within the parliamentary administration dedicated to coordinating citizens councils. **In this configuration, parliament is both the initiator, coordinator, and recipient of outputs from citizens' assemblies.** This department is responsible for the administrative and logistical coordination of the assemblies, supervising relations with external service providers, collaborating with the group of parliamentary rapporteurs and the scientific board, and external communication.

### 2. A model coordinated by an independent public body

Another option would be for **the initiative to come from the Chamber of Deputies, while implementation would be entrusted to an independent public body specifically dedicated to citizen participation.** This model has been adopted in France, where the ESEC coordinates citizens' assemblies, and in Austria (Vorarlberg state), where the *Büro für Freiwilliges Engagement und Beteiligung* (FEB) is responsible for this task. These bodies receive requests for citizen consultations (from parliament, the government or other institutions) and organise them.

**A model based on this second option seems particularly suitable for Luxembourg**, for several reasons. It could take the form of a new independent body dedicated to citizen participation, or the powers of an existing body, such as the Economic and Social Council (ESC), could be strengthened.



### Open and unrestricted power of initiative

A **neutral institution**, possibly modelled on the Ombudsman, would allow not only parliament, but also the government and potentially citizens, to submit requests for consultation. This approach would align with current practice in Luxembourg: several ministries have already organised citizen consultations on major issues. Among the most recent are the *Klima-Biergerrot* (2022) launched by the

Ministry of State, the *Biergerkommitee* (2021–22) by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, and the consultation on pension reform (2025) by the Ministry of Health and Social Security. In addition, this allows **all requests** to be assessed **on an equal footing**.



### Efficiency and economies of scale

Organising a citizens' assembly is a complex, lengthy and costly process: defining objectives, methods and partners, selecting participants, supervising deliberations, following up on recommendations, etc. Centralising these tasks within a single organisation makes it possible to standardise methods, bring certain skills in-house, and build lasting partnerships with external service providers. This translates into significant gains in terms of time, cost and quality.



### Experience and professionalisation

The regular holding of deliberative processes, supervised by participation specialists, ensures a **high level of methodological quality**. This reinforces the **credibility of the process among political decision-makers, civil society and the general public**.



### Independence

When the institution initiating the consultation (parliament or government) is also responsible for organising it, there is a **risk of bias or political pressure**, particularly in the handling of recommendations. This risk is reduced if consultations are supervised by **an independent body that guarantees the impartiality of the process**.



### Accessibility and visibility

Today, citizen consultations are often ad hoc, poorly coordinated and based on varying methodologies, which undermines their visibility and harder to understand. A **single, identifiable body using clear and standardised procedures would make the system more accessible to citizens, the media, researchers and political actors alike**.

The choice of institution responsible for organising a permanent deliberative mechanism is crucial to its legitimacy, quality and sustainability. While some countries entrust this task directly to their parliament, others favour independent public bodies.

For Luxembourg, the latter option seems promising, as it would make it possible to **extend the power of initiative to other actors, pool resources, guarantee a rigorous methodology and enhance the transparency of the process**. It would also **make the system easier to understand and access**, while consolidating its **independence from immediate political interests**.

#### 4.1.2 At what stage of the policy-making cycle should the deliberative mechanism be used?

In the cases analysed in the previous section, the choice has generally been to involve citizens at an early stage of the decision-making process. They are consulted in order to inform future policy decisions on a given topic. However, only in the German-speaking Community of Belgium do citizens also **participate upstream, helping to determine the topics to be deliberated**.

While it is accepted that participatory mechanisms do not allow for direct decision-making, **they could, in theory, also be used downstream to evaluate the public policies implemented**. Although this evaluative function is not the main objective of the mechanisms observed, some of them nevertheless offer citizens the opportunity to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made and to assess the extent to which they have been taken into account.

Three main functions can therefore be envisaged for citizens' assemblies:

##### 1. Agenda-setting

In this case, the consultation aims to **identify the issues on which political decisions need to be taken**. This is the model adopted by the German-speaking Community of Belgium, where the permanent citizens' council (*Bürgerrat*) is responsible for proposing topics to be addressed by future citizens' assemblies.

##### 2. Consultation prior to decision-making

This **involves gathering citizens' opinions on a specific issue before a decision is made**. This function is by far the most common, including in the model used by the German-speaking Community of Belgium, where citizens' assemblies debate topics selected by the permanent citizens' council.

##### 3. Ex-post evaluation

This function is less commonly adopted. It aims to **involve citizens in the evaluation of existing public policies**. Although concrete examples remain limited and often experimental, interest in this approach is growing. Several proposals along these lines have been put forward, notably within the framework of the Citizens' Convention on Climate in France.

Each of these models could serve as inspiration for Luxembourg, which could combine all the functions described above. Nevertheless, given the novelty of the mechanism, **a gradual approach would be recommended, initially focusing on consultations organised prior to important political decisions**. **Subsequently, the scope of consultations could then be gradually expanded towards greater citizen involvement in setting the political agenda and even in evaluating public policies**.

This **gradual approach** has several advantages:



##### Ease of implementation

The introduction of a new participatory mechanism requires a significant investment on the part of the institution implementing it. It is therefore advisable to **start with a simple, well-defined system, such as that of the Bundestag, rather than a more complex model such as that of the German-speaking Community of Belgium**, which involves multiple layers of citizen involvement and substantial administrative resources.



##### Easy to understand for the public and the media

Participatory processes must be easy to understand if they are to build public support. This **requires clear communication, but above all a clear institutional design**. Overly complex systems involving multiple actors and stages risk discouraging citizens and hindering external communication. Conversely, **a simple and transparent model – such as the e-petitions in Luxembourg – encourages engagement**.



### Direct response to the needs of policy makers

**Consultation prior to decision-making is of practical value to policymakers**, as in most cases they are responsible for identifying the issues to be put to consultation. The aim is clear: to enrich the decision-making process with citizen expertise, complementing that of experts and civil society actors.



### Enhanced political acceptability

In our representative democracies, the legitimacy of power always depends on elections. The introduction of new participatory mechanisms must not be perceived as challenging this principle, but as a complementary process aimed at strengthening democracy. This is why deliberative mechanisms must remain consultative, at least initially, and be gradually ramped up, conditional on political consensus at each stage.

The stage at which deliberative mechanisms are used in public policymaking is a **strategic choice that determines their effectiveness and acceptability**. Examples from Europe show that such mechanisms are most often mobilised at an early stage to inform decision-making on political issues identified by institutions.

For Luxembourg, a gradual approach appears most appropriate: starting with upstream consultations that are simple to implement, easy for the public to understand and directly useful to decision-makers. With this strategy the legitimacy of the mechanism could be gradually strengthened without upsetting existing institutional balances. However, a gradual evolution towards a model that would also include the possibility of evaluating existing policies should not be ruled out.

#### 4.1.3 Who can initiate a consultation via the deliberative mechanism?

The choice of who can initiate and submit citizen consultations depends on several factors. A key consideration is the degree of openness that one wishes to give to these consultations. Should the power of initiation be reserved solely for parliament, or should it be extended to other actors, such as the government, organised civil society, or even citizens

themselves? The options range from a centralised model, controlled exclusively by the legislature, to a more open model that allows various actors to introduce topics for debate. A system restricted to parliament has the advantage of allowing greater control over the subjects submitted for consultation. However, it is highly likely that other institutions or organisations would also wish to benefit from such a tool to consult the population on their own initiative. The proliferation of uncoordinated consultation processes at national level, carried out by different institutions and based on disparate procedures, would risk creating confusion that would undermine the clarity and attractiveness of the mechanism as a whole.

Several options are possible, depending on the desired degree of openness, from the most restrictive to the most inclusive. For each level of openness there is a set of conditions of acceptability that need to be analysed, particularly in terms of potential support from different social categories.

##### 1. Parliament-only initiation

A first model, in which only parliament may initiate a consultation, can be found in Germany, where only the Bundestag has the right of initiative in this area. The topics to be submitted for consultation are proposed by parliamentary groups and validated by a vote in plenary session. This model reflects a strictly representative conception of democracy, where not only decisions but also the setting of the public debate agenda are the sole responsibility of the elected authority.

##### 2. Power of initiative extended to the government

A second model allows for the power to initiate a consultation to be extended to the government, as is the case with the ESEC in France or in the state of Vorarlberg in Austria. In France, the prime minister can refer a matter to the ESEC to organise a citizens' convention on a topic of general interest, in which case the ESEC is obliged to implement the process. In Vorarlberg, the regional government can also initiate a consultation process, which is then taken over by the competent body, the FEB.

##### 3. Power of initiative extended to civil society

A third possibility is to extend the right of initiative to organised civil society. Often, this extension is implicitly assimilated to extending the right of initiative to citizens: citizens can submit a collective request, which allows associations or collectives to act as spokespersons. However, some mechanisms offer a specific channel for civil society organisations. This is

notably the case with the ESEC, whose members, internal committees or president can propose a topic for debate. The proposal is then submitted to the ESEC Bureau, which decides on its admissibility. Similarly, Austrian citizens' councils can be consulted by local authorities.

#### 4. Power of initiative extended to citizens

Finally, the most open approach is to allow citizens themselves to submit a request for consultation. This model is in place in several of the mechanisms analysed, notably through the petition or initiative mechanism. In Belgium, citizens can initiate a mixed deliberative committee by means of a petition gathering 1,000 signatures in Brussels-Capital and 2,000 in Wallonia. At the ESEC in France, a national petition with sufficient signatures (e.g. 150,000) can also lead to a citizens' convention, subject to approval by the Bureau. In Vorarlberg, 1,000 signatures are sufficient for a request to be examined, but only resident Austrian citizens can participate. Another option is to entrust the power to set the agenda to a permanent citizens' council, as in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, where this council is responsible, among other things, for selecting the topics to be discussed.

In Luxembourg, a choice will have to be made between a strictly parliamentary model and a model that is more open to other public institutions, civil society and resident citizens. A gradual approach would seem to be the most appropriate.

Initially, it would be appropriate to confer a joint right of initiative on parliament and the government, according to defined terms, drawing on the experiences that have been observed.

In a second stage, this right could be extended to citizens through the e-petition system, a well-established and widely recognised instrument. It could thus be envisaged that an e-petition reaching a certain threshold of signatures would trigger not only a public debate, as is already the case, but also a citizens' consultation on the issue.

Such a gradual approach has several advantages.

  Gradual evolution for greater acceptability

This allows for greater political acceptability: initially reserving the initiative to institutional actors would avoid any potential feeling of dispossession on

the part of elected representatives, who are attached to their mandate. Immediately opening up the process to all actors could provoke institutional opposition, which would be detrimental to the sustainability of the mechanism and its acceptance by politicians. If it is opened up to citizens at a later stage, the processes could gain even greater social acceptability and legitimacy among the population.



#### Inclusion of residents

A gradual approach can enhance inclusiveness. In a country such as Luxembourg, where nearly half of the residents are foreign nationals and do not have national voting rights<sup>109</sup>, it may be appropriate to explore other channels of political participation. Offering residents, at some point, the opportunity not only to participate in citizens' assemblies, but also to submit topics for debate through official channels, would represent significant democratic progress.



#### Synergies between e-petitions and consultations

Finally, the synergy between e-petitions and citizen consultations should be exploited. E-petitions are currently the most visible and accessible channel for engaging with decision-makers. The link between the two mechanisms would provide a natural transition between spontaneous citizen input and the establishment of formalised deliberative processes.

The question of who may initiate a citizens' consultation is central to the design of deliberative mechanisms. The models analysed show great diversity, ranging from a parliamentary monopoly to a broader approach involving the government, organised civil society, citizens or even an autonomous citizen body. Each model reflects a different balance between institutional control and democratic openness. While an exclusively parliamentary model allows for greater control over the political agenda, a gradual opening up – particularly through already legitimised tools such as e-petitions – represents a pragmatic compromise for Luxembourg. It would allow for the gradual involvement of citizens, without upsetting representative institutions, while strengthening the participation of foreign residents in democratic life. Such an approach would

<sup>109</sup> See the statistics cited in note no.11.

promote both institutional acceptability and social inclusiveness.

#### 4.1.4 Who can participate in a consultation within the framework of the deliberative mechanism?

The question of who participates in deliberative mechanisms and how they are selected is key. The answer affects both the quality of the debates and the perceived legitimacy of the process in the eyes of the population and the politicians who will have to respond to the recommendations made. The analysis highlights several options to consider.

##### 1. Composition

There are two main approaches. The most common is to involve only citizens **selected at random**. Another option, which is less common but promising, is to set up **mixed assemblies, combining around one-third parliamentarians and two-thirds citizens**. This format aims to promote better coordination between citizen deliberation and political decision-making by directly involving elected representatives in the discussions.

##### 2. Number of participants

Formats vary considerably depending on the objectives. Some assemblies have **only 20 to 50 members, while others involve up to 150 to 160 participants**. An intermediate format (**between 40 and 100 participants**, as in the Belgian regional models) often seems appropriate, striking a good balance between diversity of viewpoints, quality of deliberations and logistical feasibility. It is recommended that the number of participants be **adjusted according to the complexity and scope of the topic being addressed**.

##### 3. Participant selection procedure

In mechanisms that include only citizens, selection is carried out everywhere by means of **a two-stage democratic lottery**: a **random draw** from population registers, followed by **stratification according to socio-demographic quotas** (age, gender, place of residence, education, language, etc.) to ensure a diversity of profiles. **In multilingual contexts, such as Brussels, language is an important criterion**. All the mechanisms analysed are also **open to foreign nationals**, although nationality does not generally appear to be used as a selection criterion. One notable innovation is the consideration of participants' opinions on the subject under discussion. To date, only the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region

has explicitly included this criterion in its permanent citizens' assembly on climate. The aim is **to avoid bringing together only like-minded people and to ensure a diversity of attitudes towards the topic under discussion**.

**In mixed assemblies, the selection of parliamentarians is based on their membership of committees dealing with the topics under discussion**, but this is far less formalised than the selection of citizens.

In Luxembourg, one of the first challenges is to address composition. Mixed models such as those developed in French-speaking Belgium offer advantages, particularly in terms of political awareness. **However, initially, it seems preferable to opt for simpler, better-known formats with which the institutions have more experience**. The introduction of mixed committees could be considered at a later stage, as **participatory practices become more institutionalised**. This caution is all the more justified in Luxembourg, where the small number of members of parliament means that care must be taken not to overload the parliamentary agenda.

For the purposes of a model suited to Luxembourg:

- selection would be based on **a democratic lottery**, including both socio-demographic criteria and indicators of attitudes on the topic to be discussed, to ensure a genuine plurality of opinions;
- the **resident population** could form the core target audience, with **some inclusion of cross-border workers**;
- the number of **participants could be flexible and adjusted according to the objectives and the topic being discussed**, with a preference for a format of around 50 to 100 participants, which would allow for a balance between the quality of the discussions and representativeness.

The advantages of this approach are as follows:



##### Cost control

**Adapting the format (duration, number of participants) to the scope of the topic makes it possible to limit expenditure while increasing opportunities for consultation**. Large-scale mechanisms such as the Citizens' Convention on Climate (France) or the *Klima-Biergerrot* (Luxembourg) can be reserved for complex, cross-cutting issues, while shorter formats are sufficient for targeted topics.



## Enhanced legitimacy

The legitimacy of the mechanism depends in part on the transparency of the participant selection process and the ability to demonstrate that a diversity of opinions has been taken into account. This requires, firstly, a **rigorous selection method and, secondly an independent, public evaluation** of the participant selection process, as well as of the conduct and results of the consultations.



## Inclusive participation

To truly reflect Luxembourg society, it would be advisable to **ensure the participation of groups that are often under-represented**. This could involve:

- lowering the minimum age for participation to 16;
- ensuring fair representation of foreign residents and cross-border workers;
- ensuring the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups.

These conditions would help to create a favourable environment for consultations to play a meaningful role in strengthening representative democracy in Luxembourg.

**The composition of deliberative mechanisms is a key issue in ensuring their legitimacy and effectiveness.** A format composed exclusively of **citizens selected at random** would seem preferable in Luxembourg at first, due to its simplicity, its proven effectiveness and the small number of MPs available.

Participant selection could be based on a **stratified democratic lottery, taking account of socio-demographic criteria and attitudes towards the topic to be discussed, and include the entire resident population, with the possibility of opening it up to cross-border workers.**

A format of **50 to 100 people** would allow a balance to be achieved between **diversity, deliberative quality and cost control**. Lowering the minimum age to 16 and including

foreigners and disadvantaged groups would further enhance representativeness.

**Ultimately, mixed assemblies could be considered**, but a gradual ramp-up would be preferable to ensure institutional and public support.

### 4.1.5 How should the recommendations be followed up?

Consultative processes are by nature "consultative", but their credibility and legitimacy are often judged by their impact on decision-making. **If this impact is invisible, limited or indirect, they risk being perceived as useless, costly or superfluous**<sup>110</sup>.

However, direct impact on decisions is not the only criterion for legitimacy. These processes are primarily intended to enrich public debate on a given issue and to better inform citizens and decision-makers about the issues at stake and the diversity of viewpoints. Ultimately, decisions rest with policymakers, who have to deal with multiple constraints: partisan pressures, voter expectations, civil society demands, media positioning, etc.

**To ensure effective follow-up of recommendations, it is essential that they are visible and integrated into the decision-making process through a formalised and public procedure.** Each recommendation should be examined individually within predefined timeframes, and citizens should be able to check on progress at any time. Ideally, this would involve:

- an online update of information;
- a public event dedicated to follow-up (as in the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, one year after the proposals are submitted).

Although such practices are well established in most of the cases studied, there are still differences of opinion as to whether additional interaction between citizens and policymakers should be added between the submission of recommendations and the final decision on their fate. **The key question is whether to organise an additional mixed deliberative stage bringing together citizens and decision-makers to**

<sup>110</sup> See in this regard: Jacquet, V. and Van der Does, R. (2020), note no.77 and Goovaerts, I. et al. (2025), note no.103.

discuss and, where appropriate, refine the recommendations.

The cases analysed suggest two possibilities.

## 1. Recommendations without intermediate mixed deliberation

The first approach, **which is the most direct and widespread, is the one adopted by the Bundestag**. The recommendations made by the 160 citizens of the citizens' council (*Bürgerrat*) are submitted to parliament and presented in plenary session by randomly selected members of the *Bürgerrat*. They are then forwarded to the relevant committees for consideration.

These committees may, for example:

- propose that the plenary simply take note of the recommendations;
- formally endorse the recommendations via a resolution;
- initiate legislation based on the recommendations; or
- request that the federal government (*Bundesregierung*) examine their feasibility and, if appropriate, implement them through legislation or regulations.

In all cases, the follow-up action is at the sole discretion of the members of parliament.

**A slightly more participatory model is that of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium.** During the committee review, a delegation from the citizens' assembly is invited to present the recommendations at a public meeting. The policy makers then deliberate internally (committees and ministers) to formulate their opinion and decide on what action to take on the recommendations. Around one year later, a public follow-up meeting is held to present:

- the measures implemented;
- those that have been modified;
- and those that have been abandoned, with explanations.

This type of procedure also exists within the **mixed committees** of the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region, where exchanges between citizens and policy makers have already taken place upstream, during the drafting of proposals.

## 2. Recommendations with intermediate mixed deliberation

Another, more participatory, approach involves citizens – and possibly other actors – in an intermediate phase between the submission of recommendations and the political decision, in order to review them collaboratively.

A particularly interesting example is that of the citizens councils (*Bürgerräte*) in **Vorarlberg**. In this model:

- The recommendations are presented publicly at a **citizens' cafe** (*Bürgercafé*), bringing together the wider public, policy makers and representatives of the public administration, who can discuss them and suggest improvements.
- Next, a **resonance group**, made up of representatives from the public administration, elected representatives and other institutional actors, assesses the feasibility of the proposals, maintains dialogue with the public authorities and oversees their possible implementation.

This **approach, which is both more participatory and pragmatic, encourages the adaptation of proposals to institutional realities**, thereby increasing their chances of being implemented. However, it also carries a **risk**: if the proposals are subject to too much influence or modification, **the members of the citizens' council may feel they have lost ownership of their work**.

## Which model for Luxembourg?

Initially, the Chamber of Deputies could draw inspiration from a **combination of the models used by the Bundestag and the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium**.

**Phase 1 – Presentation in plenary session:** The recommendations from the citizens' council would be presented and discussed in plenary session by members of that council chosen at random.

**Phase 2 – Committee work:** The same proposals would then be examined by the relevant parliamentary committees at meetings in which citizens who took part in the consultation would also participate.

**Phase 3 – Public follow-up:** As in most of the cases analysed, detailed follow-up would be ensured for each proposal. Approximately **one year after their submission**, a public meeting bringing together

representatives of the citizens' council, parliament and government would be held to present and explain:

- the measures implemented;
- those that had been modified;
- those abandoned, and the reasons for doing so.

If, after several years, **scientific evaluations** show that this mechanism does not produce sufficiently useful or impactful proposals, it would then be possible to add **an intermediate mixed-deliberation phase**, based on the Vorarlberg *Bürgerräte* model.

Such an approach has several advantages:



**Easy for the public and media to understand:** As citizen consultations are still relatively unknown in Luxembourg, both among citizens and politicians, it would be advisable to start with a simple process that is easy for the media and the general public to understand. A more complex structure could undermine public support.



**Cost control:** Introducing an additional deliberation phase before the political decision would require the organisation of additional sessions, entailing organisational costs for the administration and increased mobilisation of members of parliament. Such an increase in resources would be justified only if scientific evaluations showed that the initial recommendations did not take sufficient account of administrative, political and economic constraints.

**A simple, clear and easily understood follow-up model**, inspired by the Bundestag and the Parliament of the **German-speaking Community of Belgium**, could be envisaged for Luxembourg. It would consist of three stages:

- **presentation of the recommendations in plenary session** by members of the citizens' council;

- **examination in committee**, with citizen participation;

- **detailed public follow-up**, including a meeting one year later to evaluate the implementation, modification or abandonment of recommendations.

An intermediate mixed-deliberation phase should be avoided at the outset to **maximise understanding by the public and the media** and to **control costs**. Such a phase could be considered subsequently if evaluations show that the recommendations are ineffective or have little impact.

#### 4.1.6 What legal basis should be used to establish a permanent deliberative mechanism?

The international models reviewed reveal a range of norms serving as the legal basis for the institutionalisation of deliberative mechanisms. These reflect varying degrees of institutionalisation associated with legal norms of differing force, offering greater or lesser flexibility. Thus, **the higher the norm serving as the legal basis is in the hierarchy of norms, the more likely the institutionalised mechanism is to be sustainable**, as the norm would be less easily subject to change<sup>111</sup>.

The existing legal basis models in the foreign examples presented are listed **below in order of strength of the legal norm**.

The model adopted by the Vorarlberg region corresponds to a high degree of institutionalisation, as the **regional constitution** **enshrines the principle of participatory democracy**<sup>112</sup>. The procedural framework for citizens' councils is laid down in the **directive adopted by the regional government**, which is explicitly grounded in the aforementioned constitutional provision. This regulatory act does not have the force of law and is only binding on the administration, which is responsible for implementing the *Bürgerräte* (convening and holding citizens' councils)<sup>113</sup>. Thus, the principle of an institutionalised citizens' council appears to benefit from constitutional protection, whereas the procedural rules for its

<sup>111</sup> See in this regard: Besch M., *Normes et légistique en droit luxembourgeois* (Norms and Legislative Drafting in Luxembourg Law), Vademeicum, Promoculture, Larcier, 2019, pp. 20–21. According to the author, "The higher an act is in the hierarchy of norms, the more its wording is, in principle, supposed to be general and abstract, and the longer and more complex its drafting procedure, requiring the involvement of a larger number of bodies and more elaborate decision-making procedures." Due to the parallelism of procedures, the higher a norm ranks in the hierarchy, the more

its amendment must, in principle, follow a longer and more complex procedure similar to that required for its adoption.

<sup>112</sup> Article 1, paragraph 4 of the Constitution of Vorarlberg.

<sup>113</sup> Information obtained from Ms Yvonne Wolf, administrative manager of the citizens' councils for the state of Vorarlberg, whom the authors would like to thank.

implementation are more easily modified, given the regulatory nature of the norms governing it.

In France<sup>114</sup> and Belgium (with regard to the deliberative mechanism of the German-speaking Community and the permanent Citizens' Assembly on Climate of the Brussels-Capital Region)<sup>115</sup>, the mechanisms put in place have norms that **have the force of law**.

The institutionalisation of deliberative mechanisms may also be based on a **provision in the rules of procedure of a legislative assembly**<sup>116</sup>. This is the case, for example, with the common rules of procedure of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region and the Joint Assembly of the Common Community Commission (Article 25/1) and the rules of procedure of the French-speaking Parliament of Brussels (Article 42ter). In both examples, the key role played by legislative assemblies in initiating the deliberative process fully justifies the amendments made to their rules of procedure.

Finally, in Germany, citizens councils are established on a temporary basis through **specific parliamentary resolutions**. The resolutions of the Bundestag are essentially political in nature and are **not legally binding**<sup>117</sup>.

All these options can serve as a source of inspiration for Luxembourg. However, **the choices made by each of these states, both at national and regional level, are dictated not only by politically expedient considerations, but also by constitutional requirements specific to each case**. The same

applies to Luxembourg: the options available are justified by requirements specific to its legal system.

**Firstly, with regard to the option of enshrining the principle of participatory or deliberative democracy in the constitution**, this could indeed be considered under the conditions set out in **Article 131 of the Luxembourg Constitution**<sup>118</sup>.

Today, the principle of representative democracy is explicitly enshrined in **Article 2, first paragraph, of the Constitution**. This article provides that the Grand Duchy "is governed by a parliamentary democracy", a concept interpreted as being synonymous with representative democracy<sup>119</sup>. However, this constitutional enshrinement of representative democracy does not exclude any other complementary forms<sup>120</sup>. Moreover, the Constitution in force provides for forms of exercising political rights that fall within the scope of participatory democracy, such as reasoned proposals for the purpose of legislating (Article 79) or the right of petition (Article 82).

The fact that the principle of participatory or deliberative democracy is not enshrined in the constitution would not prevent the adoption of a lower-level norm institutionalising a deliberative mechanism.

**A second option would be to adopt a law establishing a deliberative mechanism.** In reality, recourse to the legislative route is not merely optional, but a **requirement: if the mechanism aims to include the participation of non-Luxembourg citizens, this procedure is essential**. In accordance with **Article 10(2)** of the Constitution, the exercise of

<sup>114</sup> Citizens' conventions are based on the organic law on the ESEC. Organic laws, enshrined in Article 46 of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, are intended to describe the organisation or functioning of public authorities. According to the interpretation of the French Constitutional Court, their scope and purpose are limited by the Constitution (Constitutional Council, Decision No. 87-234 of 7 January 1988, *Finances sociales*, Rec. p.26, ECLI: FR: CC: 1988: 87.234.DC) and must be referred to the Constitutional Council before their promulgation (Constitutional Council, Decision No. 2009-579 of 9 April 2009, *Finances sociales*, Rec. p.84, ECLI: FR: CC: 2009: 2009.579.DC). See also: Gicquel J., Gicquel J.-E., *Droit constitutionnel et institutions politiques* [Constitutional Law and Political Institutions], 31st edition, 2017-2018, Précis Domat, LGDJ, p.819.

<sup>115</sup> See footnotes nos. 50 and 56. In the Belgian legal system, ordinances and decrees have the force of law. Like ordinary laws, these norms must comply with constitutional rules, but they do not need to comply with norms that are inferior or of equivalent value. Before being promulgated, they must be referred to the legislation section of the supreme administrative court (*Conseil d'Etat*), which must rule on their constitutionality. It should be noted that in the legal system of Belgium, a federal state, the "hierarchy of norms is multiplied" in the various federal, community and regional legal systems, but norms having the force of law are equivalent to each other. See: Delpéree F., *Le droit constitutionnel de la Belgique* [Belgium's Constitutional Law], Bruylants, LGDJ, 2000, pp. 90-91, pp. 98-101 and pp. 194-195.

<sup>116</sup> The rules of procedure of a parliamentary assembly constitute its "internal law". They are generally classified as internal measures, i.e. measures whose purpose is limited to the internal framework they organise and whose recipients are the persons dependent on that framework. In the case of a parliamentary assembly, the recipients would certainly be the members of the assembly and its staff, but also anyone else who is present on its premises

(members of the government and their staff, or any other visitors). See in this regard: Avril P., Gicquel, Gicquel J.-É., *Droit parlementaire* [Parliamentary Law], 7th edition, LGDJ, 2023, pp. 27-29.

<sup>117</sup> See in particular the entry "Entschließungsantrag" in the glossary available on the Bundestag website. In general, a parliamentary resolution refers to a text adopted by a parliamentary assembly outside its legislative activity. Although there is a wide variety of resolutions, making their definition sometimes complex, it is widely accepted that a resolution does not constitute a law. In this regard, see in particular: Preuvot P., *Les résolutions parlementaires, instruments de la fonction tribunitienne du Parlement français*, [Parliamentary Resolutions, Instruments of the Tribunician Function of the French Parliament], Bibliothèque parlementaire et constitutionnelle, Dalloz, 2025, pp. 19 et seq.

<sup>118</sup> In accordance with Article 131 of the Constitution, the constitutional revision law must be passed by a qualified majority of two-thirds of the votes of the members of the Chamber of Deputies, without the possibility of proxy voting. The provision provides for two successive votes within an interval of at least three months, the last vote being replaceable by a binding referendum.

<sup>119</sup> Commission on Institutions and Constitutional Revision, Proposal for the revision of Chapters I, III, V, VII, IX, X, XI and XII of the Constitution of 17 November 2020, commentary on the articles, doc. parl. no. 7700, p. 15: "The concept of 'parliamentary democracy', which expands on that of 'democratic state' in Article 1, is synonymous with 'representative democracy', setting out the rules that will define the place of the Chamber of Deputies within the constitutional institutions; it does not exclude consultative referendums as provided for in the current Constitution" (emphasis added).

<sup>120</sup> *Idem*.

political rights by non-Luxembourgers falls within the exclusive domain of the law<sup>121</sup>. The same applies if the deliberative mechanism chosen entails creating a dedicated body, which could be likened to the creation of an administration (**Article 50, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Constitution**)<sup>122</sup> or a public institution (**Article 128, paragraph 1** of the Constitution)<sup>123</sup>.

Finally, a last option would be **institutionalisation through an amendment to the rules of procedure of the Chamber of Deputies**. For the reasons outlined above, such an option can only be complementary to the institutionalisation of the deliberative mechanism by law. In addition to the argument concerning the aspects covered by the domain reserved for the law, because the scope of the rules of procedure of a parliamentary assembly is more limited in terms of both its purpose and its addressees<sup>124</sup>, only the procedural and organisational framework of the deliberative mechanism could be included in the rules of procedure of the Chamber of Deputies<sup>125</sup>.

Thus, **a law would be the recommended legal basis for institutionalising a deliberative mechanism**. Indeed, more than a recommendation, this is a **constitutional requirement** that is necessary due to the aspects falling within the domain reserved for the law.

Three options are possible:

**Constitutional enshrinement:** The principle of participatory or deliberative democracy could be enshrined in the Constitution, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 131. Although the current Constitution only enshrines representative democracy (Article 2), it does not exclude other complementary forms, such as the right of petition (Article 82).

**Institutionalisation by law:** This option is not only possible but required if the mechanism includes non-Luxembourg citizens (Article 10, paragraph 2), or if it involves the creation of an administrative body (Articles 50 and 128). **Legislation thus constitutes the appropriate legal basis, ensuring both the legitimacy and the permanence of the mechanism!**

**Adaptation of the internal rules of the Chamber of Deputies:** This option can only be ancillary to the law. It would make it possible to regulate organisational aspects, particularly where the Chamber plays a specific role in citizen consultations or in coordinating petitions.

In conclusion, while constitutional enshrinement would provide greater assurance, **only legislation currently constitutes a legally binding and sufficient framework for establishing a deliberative democracy mechanism in Luxembourg**.

<sup>121</sup> According to Article 10, paragraph 2 of the Constitution: "Without prejudice to Article 64, the law may confer the exercise of political rights on non-Luxembourgers." See in this regard: Besch M., note no.111, p.33.

<sup>122</sup> Besch M., note no.111, p. 34.

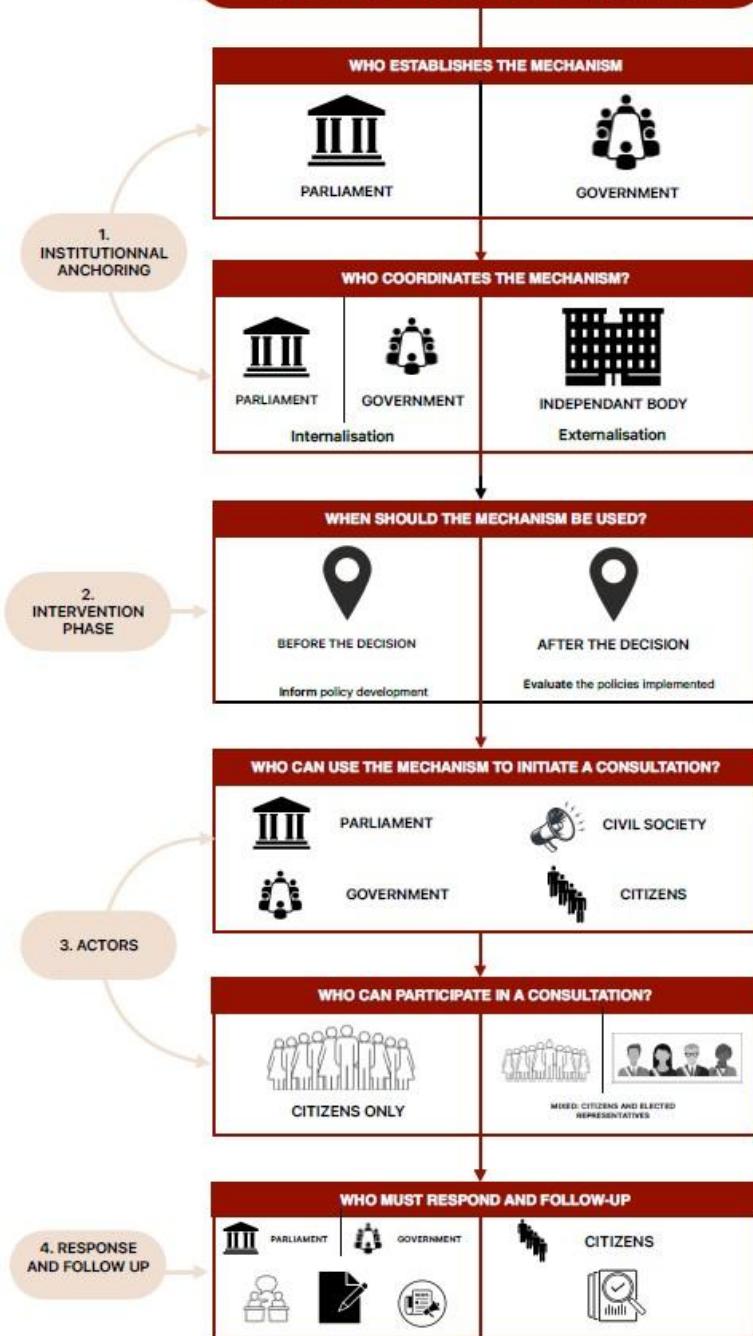
<sup>123</sup> According to Article 128, paragraph 1 of the Constitution: "The law may establish public institutions, which have legal personality and are placed under the supervision of the State." While the creation of a public institution requires a legal basis, its appropriateness is a matter for the sovereign discretion of the legislature. See in this regard: Gerkrath J., *Les*

*établissements publics en droit luxembourgeois* [Public Establishments in Luxembourg Law], Legitech, 2023, pp. 119.

<sup>124</sup> On the scope of a parliament's rules of procedure, see the explanations under note No.116.

<sup>125</sup> In accordance with Article 68, paragraph 2 of the Constitution, which states: "The Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies shall determine the implementing measures of the law concerning its organisation." (Emphasis added).

## TOWARDS A LUXEMBOURG MODEL: OPTIONS TO CONSIDER



## 4.2 Towards successful institutionalisation: points to consider

The combined experience of the *Klima-Biergerrot* (KBR) and the *Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050* (BK) provides a rich empirical foundation for considering the long-term institutionalisation of deliberative mechanisms in Luxembourg. While these two assemblies have demonstrated their democratic potential, making them permanent will require the implementation of robust conditions of legitimacy, inclusiveness, procedural efficiency and political impact. This section proposes a framework structured around the three key phases of the deliberative process, which represent the three dimensions inherent in political legitimacy: *input*, *throughput* and

*output*<sup>126</sup>, while highlighting specific points to consider at each stage.

**These elements could constitute standards for any citizens' assembly that might be conducted under a future permanent mechanism.**

PHASE OF THE DELIBERATIVE PROCESS	KEY OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTCOMES EXPECTED
INPUT	Ensure diversity and inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusive recruitment: random selection and targeted outreach campaigns</li> <li>- Multilingual and accessible materials</li> <li>- Transportation, childcare and participation allowances</li> </ul>	Fair engagement of all social groups, free from economic or linguistic barriers
THROUGHPUT	Procedural and deliberative effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting clear and prioritised objectives</li> <li>- Permanent, neutral professional facilitators</li> <li>- Diversified information: balanced experts, small groups, multilingual formats, supervised self-organisation</li> </ul>	Structured, inclusive, transparent and productive deliberation processes
OUTPUT	Consideration, follow-up and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Official public response to recommendations</li> <li>- Discussion in the Chamber of Deputies and integration into policymaking</li> <li>- External evaluation, feedback to citizens and decision-makers</li> </ul>	Credible recommendations, integrated into policies and evaluated for continuous improvement
COMMUNICATION	Ongoing communication (throughout the three phases)	<p><b>Establishment of a centralised, multilingual, interactive platform connected to public policy and the general public ("participation hub")</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Before: awareness-raising and social openness</li> <li>- During: highlighting key moments, transparency of debates</li> <li>- After: multimodal dissemination of reports and policy follow-up</li> </ul>	Enhanced legitimacy, increased participation, better public understanding, improved citizen engagement

<sup>126</sup> The "input-throughput-output legitimacy" framework, developed in political science by Scharpf among others and later adapted by Schmidt, allows the different sources of legitimacy of a political system or institution to be analysed. "Input legitimacy" refers to the idea of governing by the people. Legitimacy here derives from citizen participation, representativeness and the ability of decision-makers to respond to citizens' preferences, for example through free elections, referendums or citizen consultations. "Throughput legitimacy" emphasises the quality of internal decision-making processes, i.e. governing with good procedures. It is built on transparency, accountability, administrative efficiency, inclusiveness and compliance with rules, and is reflected in clear procedures, fair deliberation and the absence of corruption. Finally, "output legitimacy" corresponds to governing for the

people, i.e. basing legitimacy on the results and performance of public policies. It is measured by the ability of institutions to produce tangible outcomes such as reducing unemployment, protecting the environment or ensuring economic stability. In summary, 'input' refers to who participates, 'throughput' describes how decisions are made, and 'output' indicates what concrete results are produced. See: Scharpf, F. W. (1999), *Governing in Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198295457.001.0001>) and Schmidt, V.A. (2013), "Democracy and Legitimacy in the European Union Revisited: Input, Output and 'Throughput'", *Political Studies*, 61: 2–22 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2012.00962.x>).

## 5 – Conclusion

At the end of this in-depth analysis, it is clear that Luxembourg already possesses several solid foundations on which to build a permanent citizen participation mechanism, attached to the Chamber of Deputies. Far from being a leap into the unknown, such an initiative would be part of a broader European trend towards democratic renewal, responding to a dual imperative: strengthening the legitimacy of representative institutions and opening structured channels of citizen expression within the policymaking process.

The landscape of participatory experiments in Luxembourg – whether local or national – shows a notable shift towards more structured and inclusive formats, particularly through the *Klima-Biergerrot* and *Biergerkommitee Lëtzebuerg 2050* pilot projects. These experiments have demonstrated the technical and social feasibility of citizens' assemblies, while highlighting the importance of their coordination with representative institutions and their rigorous methodological framework.

The comparative analysis of institutionalised deliberative mechanisms abroad confirms that the introduction of such a model is by no means utopian. Whether it be the permanent citizen dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, the deliberative committees in Brussels and Wallonia, or the French citizens' conventions, all these experiences show that citizen deliberation can be integrated into public action on a long-term basis, provided that certain fundamental principles are

upheld: independence, representativeness, transparency, follow-up and political responsiveness.

Furthermore, both citizens and political actors in Luxembourg seem generally favourable to strengthening participatory democracy through deliberative channels. The *Smartwielen* survey reveals that the majority of political parties are open to the idea of making citizens' assemblies a permanent feature, while the population, when informed, views them as a legitimate and credible means of amplifying their voice in public debate.

However, the success of such an undertaking depends on several conditions: clear institutional anchoring, inclusive representativeness, a well-structured deliberative framework, transparency, and follow-up or continuous evaluation for collective learning purposes.

In a country marked by significant demographic diversity and unequal access to channels of political representation, a permanent deliberative institution could play a fundamental role in democratic inclusion. Not only would it strengthen the legitimacy of the representative system, it would also help to build citizen consensus around complex or polarising issues.



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# 7 Appendix: Table of Comparative Data

Country	Belgium	Belgium	Belgium	Belgium	France	Austria	Germany	European Union
Level	Regional	Regional	Regional	Regional/Community	National	Regional	National	Supranational
	Brussels-Capital Region	Walloon Region	Brussels-Capital Region	German-speaking Community		Vorarlberg		
Description	Deliberative committees	Deliberative committees	Assembly on Climate	Permanent citizen dialogue	Citizens' conventions	Citizens' councils	Citizens' councils	Citizen panels
Launch date	2019	2023	2022	2019	2019	2006 (institutionalised in 2013)	2023	2021
Organising institution	Parliament	Parliament	Government	Parliament	ESEC	Government (through FEB)	Parliament	European Commission
Legal basis	Rules of procedure	Rules of procedure	Ordinance	Parliamentary decree of the German-speaking Community	Organic law	Regional constitution + directive of the state government	None ( <i>ad hoc</i> parliamentary resolution)	No legal status
Power of initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliamentarians</li> <li>• Citizens (1,000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliamentarians (simple majority)</li> <li>• Citizens (2,000)</li> </ul>	• Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens' Council</li> <li>• Parliament</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESEC</li> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Parliament</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> <li>• Citizens (petitions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Parliament</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> <li>• Citizens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliamentarians (group or 5% of members)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Commission</li> </ul>
Participants	48 to 60 (citizens + elected representatives)	40 (30 citizens + 10 members of parliament)	65 to 100 citizens	25 to 50 citizens per assembly	150 citizens	20 to 50 citizens	160 resident citizens (aged 16+) random	150 EU citizens
Selection method	Stratified random draw	Stratified random draw	Stratified random draw	Stratified random draw	Stratified random draw	Stratified random draw	Stratified random draw	Stratified random draw
Typical duration	2 to 3 weekends	5 days + follow-up	3 to 6 months (1 weekend/month x 5)	3 to 6 months + follow-up over 1 year	6 to 9 months	1.5 days + follow-up over 2 months	3 to 5 months	3 main sessions
Expense allowance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Selection of experts	Pluralistic selection by a	Pluralistic selection (but	Pluralistic selection (but	Pluralistic selection by the	Pluralistic selection by	Pluralistic selection (but	Pluralistic selection by	Pluralistic selection by the

	support committee with the possibility of suggestions from citizens	relatively vague selection procedure)	relatively vague selection procedure)	citizens' council and overseen by the follow-up committee	the ESEC with the possibility for citizens to request hearings	relatively vague selection procedure), with the possibility of citizens making suggestions	the external operator, no possibility for citizens to make suggestions	Commission, no possibility for citizens to make suggestions
<b>Obligation to respond and follow up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-up by parliamentarians</li> <li>Follow-up session with citizens 6 months later</li> <li>Follow-up provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debate in committee</li> <li>Debate in plenary session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 responses from the Government (3 and 12 months)</li> <li>Monitoring and ministerial questions by the follow-up committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory reasoned response from parliament and government via three parliamentary sessions (presentation, response and implementation)</li> <li>Follow-up monitored by a citizens' council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasoned response from government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debate on recommendations in decentralised citizens' cafés</li> <li>Mandatory written response from the sponsor</li> <li>Monitoring of implementation by a resonance group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliamentary debate on the report and recommendations, but no formal obligation to follow up or implement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal obligation to respond and rather vague follow-up procedure</li> </ul>
<b>External evaluation</b>	Integrated and systematic scientific evaluation	Integrated and systematic scientific evaluation	Integrated and systematic scientific evaluation	Integrated and systematic scientific evaluation	No integrated and systematic scientific evaluation, but open to researchers	Ad hoc and non-systematic scientific evaluation	Integrated scientific evaluation (systematic aspect to be considered in the long term)	No integrated and systematic scientific evaluation
<b>Estimated cost</b>	Not published, but informal estimate ~€150,000/committee	Not published	Not published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€90,000/year (fixed costs for citizens' council)</li> <li>€50,000–150,000/assembly</li> </ul>	Convention on Climate: €5.9 million / end of life: €4.2 million	€10,000–30,000/council	Not available	Not available

Scientific Unit



**Chambre  
des Députés**  
GRAND-DUCHÉ  
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