



Provisional version
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More participatory democracy to tackle climate change

Report¹

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

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Summary

Tackling climate change is a momentous challenge which requires not only clear political engagement from the authorities but also the active involvement of citizens. Combining a top-down and a bottom-up approach would enhance citizens' trust in public decision-making as well its legitimacy, transparency, inclusiveness and responsiveness. It would also result in greater support for public action.

Amongst the forms of participatory democracy which can complement and enrich the work of representative institutions, citizens' assemblies are the best placed to harness the collective wisdom and allow citizens to reclaim the public space, providing the authorities with useful information on people's preferences and indications on how to reconcile a multitude of conflicting interests.

The report recommends that member States multiply opportunities for public participation in political decision-making. It also spells out the conditions that citizens' assemblies must satisfy to be relevant and credible and indicates how they can address the underlying systemic drivers of the climate emergency. Finally, the report recommends that the Committee of Ministers further develop its work in the area of participatory democracy.

¹ Reference to committee: Doc. 15048, Reference 4500 of 6 March 2020.

A. Draft resolution²

1. The 2015 Paris Agreement of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was signed by all 47 member Council of Europe member States, promotes stronger climate action, and along with a world-wide citizen movement, strongly driven by young people, has created political pressure and a momentum for more ambitious climate action throughout the world.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its Resolution 2210 (2018) on “Climate change and implementation of the Paris Agreement” stressing the importance of parliamentary action in taking strong national measures to promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement at all levels of governance, and calling on national parliaments to ensure that dedicated structures, mechanisms and resources are in place for stepping up national efforts on climate change.
3. Noting that the human-made climate crisis is also responsible for the upsurge in pandemics and zoonotic diseases, the Assembly reiterates its call for immediate action to prevent future catastrophic events. Climate change demands long term adaptation and changes in behaviour, production and consumption patterns and only informed and committed citizens will be able to show resilience and engage in a collective dynamic.
4. While protest movements have shown their strength, the positions voiced need an institutional structure to allow for sustainable, regular and impactful public participation. The Assembly strongly believes that representative democracy can be enriched by meaningful public participation, which also provides a credible response to citizens demands, in particular young people, to be more regularly involved in decision-making and in the debate on the ecological transition and the green recovery plan.
5. The Assembly therefore urges governments to combine a clear political engagement and top-down leadership with bottom-up, participatory governance, to tackle the urgency of the climate crisis and ensure meaningful contributions from citizens. Deliberative democracy can also provide an antidote to the resurgent threat of authoritarian regimes and reinvigorate democratic practices.
6. In this respect, stressing the need to increase citizens’ active participation and ensure further involvement of all people in the conduct of public affairs, the Assembly refers to its Resolution 1746 and Recommendation 1928 (2010) on “Democracy in Europe: crises and perspectives”, in which it called on all Council of Europe member States to establish participatory and deliberative mechanisms, such as citizens’ juries or conferences to facilitate citizens’ participation in decision-making on a public affair that is of urgent concern to them.
7. In line with its Resolution 2271 and Recommendation 2150 (2019) on “Strengthening co-operation with the United Nations in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and Resolution 2369 (2021) on “The Assembly’s vision on the strategic priorities for the Council of Europe”, the Assembly also reiterates its firm support to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16 “Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies”, which includes Target 16.7 “Ensure responsive, inclusive, and participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”.
8. The Assembly notes that citizens’ assemblies in particular represent a way to tap into the collective wisdom, restore trust in politics and allow citizens to reclaim the public space which has been taken over by social media. Citizens’ input can inform environmental action and provide governments with useful information on people’s preferences, the trade-off they are ready to make as well as public support for action.
9. To be relevant and credible, citizens’ assemblies should:
 - 9.1. base their work on reason, evidence, arguments, perspectives and different forms of knowledge and not be dominated by power, money or partisan logics;
 - 9.2. aim at reducing the excessive influence of interest groups and lobbies and select citizens randomly, paying attention to include all age groups, qualification levels, socio-economic differences and geographical distribution;
 - 9.3. ensure close co-operation with the scientific community to reach meaningful science-based decisions;

² Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 22 June 2021.

- 9.4. confront experts' views with vested interests and engage a wide range of stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, particularly youth NGOs, industry and environmental activists;
 - 9.5. generate a national debate to create a sense of empowerment and self-confidence as citizens, prepare for people's support of the proposed measures and put pressure on policymakers to implement the recommendations.
10. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the decision makers to give power to citizens' assemblies' recommendations and proposals and ensure that they are incorporated into the policy process, including via parliamentary committees.
11. The Assembly argues that a successful approach to climate change may require action far beyond what climate assemblies have proposed thus far and future citizens' assemblies need to address the underlying systemic drivers of the climate emergency. This involves *inter alia*:
- 11.1. being explicit on the need for ambitious systemic change;
 - 11.2. sharing with citizens the most pre-eminent available forecasts of climate impacts to explicitly illustrate the real consequences for people's lives globally;
 - 11.3. sharing all possible scenarios with a future-focused approach;
 - 11.4. designing a robust independent process, including procedures on key decisions, agenda set up, selection of experts and voting procedures;
 - 11.5. allowing citizens to influence the agenda, which enhances ownership and creativity, with the benefit of dissolving group polarisation;
 - 11.6. ensuring that citizens' recommendations are complemented by further expertise, cost assessments and evidence-based input;
 - 11.7. providing for an accountable follow-up, allowing citizens' assembly members to evaluate and provide input to any legislation that flows from their deliberations.
12. The Assembly believes that involving young people in decision-making processes addressing the climate crisis is of key importance and refers to the work of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, which is a living example of participatory democracy at European level and serves as a model to all member States embarking on participatory processes.
13. Referring to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and to the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, the Assembly calls on all Council of Europe member States to encourage continuous youth participation and citizenship education in schools and universities, communities and non-governmental organisations. This includes giving children and young people the right to participate in decision making processes, which are key to empowering them to participate in public life, foster critical thinking and engage in democratic practices.
14. Furthermore, the Assembly welcomes the European Union Conference on the Future of Europe, an open and inclusive exercise in deliberative democracy which seeks to engage citizens directly to help guide Europe's future direction and policymaking through a Europe-wide series of citizens' assemblies and panels, including multilingual digital platforms. As a follow-up to its joint debate on the environment and human rights, the Assembly should provide an input to the Conference to make the case for the universal legal recognition of the right to live in a healthy environment.
15. Finally, the Assembly underlines the potential to use public deliberation to tackle public policy problems that require the consideration of both values and evidence, and encourages all Council of Europe member States to embed deliberative processes in the policy cycle to facilitate the constructive reconciliation between a multitude of interests and worldviews.

B. Draft recommendation³

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its Resolution ... (2021), highlighting the added value of innovative democratic practices and enhanced citizens' participation and deliberation, which aim at deepening democracy and allowing for more effective responses to major policy dilemmas, in particular the climate crisis.
2. The enormous challenges posed by climate change and its unprecedented scale, character and impact, including distributive conflicts and necessary adaptations to social, economic, personal life, come at a time when democracies all over the world are fragile and citizens' trust in elected officials, institutions and experts is faltering.
3. The Assembly is convinced that citizens' participation and deliberation, in combination with representative democracy, can help provide public support, legitimacy, trust, empowerment, inclusion and equality, and facilitate the constructive reconciliation between multitude of interests. It also acknowledges that digital transformation opens up additional channels to promote citizen engagement and participation in public affairs and decision-making, thus strengthening democratic governance.
4. Bearing in mind that changes in production and consumption patterns imply a modification of our lifestyles that requires the participation of all, the Assembly strongly believes that only informed and committed citizens will be able to show resilience and engage in a collective dynamic with a view to ambitious environmental action.
5. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 5.1. building on the work of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), as well as on the 2018 Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on the participation of citizens in local public life and the 2017 Committee of Ministers' Guidelines for civil participation in political decision-making, encourages its competent steering committee to draw up a report on new forms of participatory democracy, with a view to sharing good practices amongst member States, and to take into account the present report as a contribution in the specific area of climate change;
 - 5.2. invites member States to promote effective means of enhancing citizens' competences for democratic culture, in particular through the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), with a view to empowering them, especially the young generations, to constructively tackle the environmental challenges;
 - 5.3. considers setting up, in co-operation with the European Union, a European-wide "Citizens' Assembly for Climate and the future of Europe", including citizens, experts as well as elected representatives at local, regional, national and European level, and discuss this proposal at the forthcoming World Forum for Democracy on "Can Democracy Save the Environment?", which will take place on 8-10 November 2021.

³ Draft recommendation adopted unanimously by the committee on 22 June 2021.

C. Introductory memorandum by Mr Papandreou, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. The climate change debate is of great interest not only for scientific and economic research and social and ecology activism but also for its implications on the functioning of democracy, which is why a motion for a resolution was tabled by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy in January 2020.

2. Some experts have argued that the response to the climate crisis should not follow the ordinary democratic path⁴ but should be treated as an exceptional situation, such as a war, requiring putting democracy on hold to effectively tackle it.⁵ On the opposite front, others claim that we need more and better democracy to tackle the climate crisis and advocate an upgrade of the democratic processes.⁶

3. The human-made climate crisis is responsible for the upsurge in pandemics and zoonotic diseases and immediate action is needed to prevent future catastrophic events. As the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, Wangari Matthai, put it “In a few decades, the relationship between the environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy and peace.”⁷

4. The current post-pandemic crisis management mode to “bring things back to normal” is the wrong answer, which is why we need to instill a sense of urgency in tackling the climate crisis along with the pandemic crisis.

5. Amid increasing pressure for climate action worldwide in the wake of the 2015 Paris Agreement⁸, processes of participatory and deliberative democracy are being called on, along with parliamentary involvement and scrutiny, to address public policy complexities, relaunch the social debate on the ecological transition and the green recovery plan, including citizens in decision-making and enhancing governance processes. This is particularly important in the case of climate policy that requires societal “buy-in” for tough policy decisions and public support for action.⁹

6. Participatory democracy and citizens’ assemblies in particular represent a way to tap into the collective wisdom and to restore trust in politics. They allow citizens to reclaim the public space, the “agora” which has been taken over by social media and digital giants, which influence politics through algorithms and provide a platform for disinformation, hatred, demagoguery, polarised conflict, and authoritarianism. These new forms of democratic participation can provide instead more democratic, just and appropriate responses to both the health and the environmental crises, which humanity is facing.

7. This trend is also reflected in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. According to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the so-called “decade of action” from 2020 to 2030 needs three levels of performance and one of them is “people action”.¹⁰ Moreover, Goal 16 also mentions the “responsive, inclusive, and participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”.¹¹

8. From a European standpoint, participatory budgeting programmes are already a reality especially at the local level. At European Union (EU) level, the 2009 Lisbon Treaty enhanced the role of citizens in decision making through European Citizens’ Initiatives, an important instrument of participatory democracy in the EU. Furthermore, in 2019 around 200 cities in the EU adopted the Eurocities Declaration on Citizens’ Engagement, which aims at enhancing the role of citizens in the decision-making process.¹²

⁴ Hickman, L., James Lovelock: [Humans are too stupid to prevent climate change](#), 29 March 2010.

⁵ Willis, R., [To tackle the climate crisis we need more democracy, not less](#), 9 March 2020.

⁶ Fritsch, M., Democracy, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice. *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*, p.30, 2015.

⁷ [The Nobel Peace Prize 2004 \(nobelprize.org\)](#).

⁸ The Paris Agreement, building upon the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016.

⁹ Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland, Deepening public engagement on climate change: lessons from the Citizens’ Assemblies, April 2020.

¹⁰ UN Secretary General remarks to the [High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#), September 2019.

¹¹ Jessica, Koski, Cleo, Claudia, & Piggot, [Making space: how public participation shapes environmental decision-making](#), October 2019.

¹² [50 cities sign Declaration on citizens engagement](#).

9. Already in 2010, the Parliamentary Assembly, in Resolution 1746 and Recommendation 1928 (2010) on “Democracy in Europe: crises and perspectives”, stressed the need to increase citizens’ active participation and ensure further involvement of all people in the conduct of public affairs. All Council of Europe member States were called on to establish participatory and deliberative structures, such as citizens’ juries or conferences to facilitate citizens’ participation in decision-making on a public affair that is of urgent concern to them.

10. At Council of Europe level, the final declaration adopted at the High-Level Conference on *Environmental protection and human rights* organised under the aegis of the Georgian Presidency in February 2020 called for “upgrading pan-European legal standards in light of current urgent environmental and climate challenges, to provide for more effective international co-operation, to anchor common approaches among Member States and to explore viable ways forward for further legal developments at both the national and European levels”.

11. The Assembly has embarked on the preparation of several reports to voice parliamentary concerns, as well as to guide and support efforts of the Council of Europe in this area.¹³ Meeting in New York on 11 December 2020, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Rik Daems, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres agreed to step up co-operation towards building a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and called for a paradigm shift to turn this from a policy issue into one of “binding principle”. The UN Secretary-General is expected to attend the Assembly debate on “The environment and human rights” in October, which will make the case for the universal legal recognition of the right to live in a healthy environment.¹⁴

12. My report is meant to be a contribution to the joint debate and intends to reflect on the relationship between participatory and deliberative democracy and climate change and to discuss trends and examples of participatory mechanisms in Council of Europe member States in relation to the climate crisis. What are the pros and cons of participatory democracy? How we can implement this democratic method to tackle the climate crisis effectively?

13. On 16 December 2019, the Sub-Committee on External Relations met in Rovaniemi, Finland, to discuss opportunities for international co-operation in the Arctic region and the political implications of global warming. Members agreed to step up the parliamentary contribution by proposing legislation and holding governments to account for their actions and for the implementation of laws and international commitments, and last but not least, by creating a bridge between people and institutions.¹⁵

14. On Monday 18 January 2021, I attended the round table on “Representative democracy against climate crisis” organised by the Sub-Committee on Public Health and Sustainable Development with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, as a joint contribution to the World Forum for Democracy, and discussed also aspects related to participatory and deliberative approaches.

15. The Committee held three hearings, which have greatly informed my report, on 15 October 2020 with the participation of Mr Thierry Pech, co-Chair of the Citizens’ Convention on Climate (France), on 4 February 2021, with the participation of Ms Helene Landemore, Associate Professor of Political Science at Yale University, Dr Gerd Leipold, Director of Climate Transparency as well as Ms Alice Bergholtz, Bureau member of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe (National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations – LSU), and most recently on 11 May 2021 with Archon Fung, Professor of Citizenship and Self-Government, Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

¹³ “Inaction on climate change – a violation of children’s rights” ([Doc. 14947](#)), Rapporteur: Ms De Temmerman (France, ALDE) – Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development; “The climate crisis and the rule of law: a baseline study” ([Doc. 14972](#)), Rapporteur: Ms Estrela (Portugal, SOC) - Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (Rapporteur for opinion: Mr Kleinwachter (Germany, EC/DA) - Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights); “Impact of armed conflicts on transboundary environmental damage” ([Doc. 15074](#)); Rapporteur: Mr Howell (UK, EC/DA) - Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development; “Anchoring the right to healthy environment: need for enhanced action by the Council of Europe” ([Doc. 15068](#)) and [Doc 15108](#)), Rapporteur: Mr Moutquin (Belgium, SOC) - Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development; “Climate and migration” ([Doc. 15113](#)) Rapporteur: Mr Fridez (Switzerland, SOC) - Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons; “Addressing issues of criminal and civil liability in the context of climate change” (Bureau decision), Rapporteur: Mr Altunyaliz (Turkey, NR) - Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights; “Addressing inequalities in access to environmental rights” (Bureau decision), Rapporteur: Ms Estrela (Portugal, SOC) - Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination; “Research policies and environment protection” (Bureau decision), Rapporteur: Mr Bech (France, ALDE) - Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media.

¹⁴ [Heads of UN and PACE: building a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment must become ‘a binding principle’ \(coe.int\)](#).

¹⁵ [‘What happens in the Arctic doesn’t stay in the Arctic’ \(coe.int\)](#), 17 December 2019.

16. The Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development and the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination are also looking into participatory aspects related to children and indigenous people participation in tackling the climate crisis, and I refer to their work for additional details.

2. Participatory and deliberative processes and climate action

17. Representative democracy remains the rule of thumb in most democracies around the world and in all Council of Europe member States. However, representation is always limited and approximative, and may have a negative impact on the successful implementation of policy in all strata of society. That is why an ever-increasing number of scholars tend to look at participatory and deliberative models and at the wisdom of crowds.¹⁶

18. As stressed by Professor Fung, the enormous challenges posed by climate change and its unprecedented scale and character, including distributive conflicts and painful adaptations to social, economic, personal life, come at the worst time, when democracies all over the world are fragile and citizens have lost trust in elected officials, institutions and experts, and do not believe the State is run for the benefits of all.¹⁷ Citizens' participation and deliberation can help by providing legitimacy and trust, information and equality.

19. With participatory democracy a certain level of decision-making power is delegated to the direct actions of citizens. While deliberative democracy aims at reaching consensus through public discussions, in participatory democracy citizens are decision-makers themselves.¹⁸ Some scholars are also discussing the idea of "open government", collective intelligence and the rule of the many.¹⁹

20. Deliberative democracy can be practical solution to many of democracy's ills. Democracy is under siege in most countries, where democratic institutions have low approval and face a resurgent threat from authoritarian regimes. Deliberative democracy can provide an antidote and can reinvigorate our democratic politics.²⁰

21. The modes of participation are constantly evolving, also through the impact that digitalisation has had on democracy and on people's communication means, allowing engaged citizens to partake in the public debate, in particular young people.

22. According to a recent study by the OECD, governments should consider drafting legislation or regulation that introduces requirements for deliberative processes and allows citizens to initiate a deliberative process on key issues. These can take many forms at all government levels and address many policy questions, in particular values-based dilemmas, complex problems that involve trade-offs, and long-term issues. The study identifies 12 models of deliberative processes, clustered under four types of purpose: informed citizen recommendations on policy questions; citizen opinion on policy questions; informed citizen evaluation of ballot measures, and permanent deliberative models.²¹

23. Speaking before our Committee, Professor Landemore argued that deliberative democracy was more likely to produce good solutions to collective problems than less inclusive, meritocratic or oligarchic processes.²² In her view, what mattered for group intelligence, more so even than individual competence, was how differently the people thought compared to each other. Therefore, random selection was the best way to maximize cognitive diversity.

¹⁶ [Do we need participatory democracy to save democracy?](#) 5 February 2020.

¹⁷ 2019 Global Attitude Survey, [Democratic Rights Popular Globally but Commitment to Them Not Always Strong | Pew Research Center.](#)

¹⁸ Lodewijckx, I., [What's the difference between deliberative and participatory democracy?](#), 14 November 2019.

¹⁹ Hélène Landemore, *Democratic reason: politics, collective intelligence and the rule of the many*, Princeton, 2012.

See also [The Political Scientist Hélène Landemore on Open Democracy | The New Yorker](#), 19 February 2020.

²⁰ James S. Fishkin, *Democracy when the people are thinking: revitalizing our politics through public deliberation*, Oxford University Press, 2018.

²¹ [Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave | en | OECD](#), 10 June 2020

²² She also pointed to the failure of the fuel tax in France, which spurred the Yellow Vest protests because the legislators did not anticipate the rage their tax would cause for people who were peri-urban and lower class.

24. Legislative power should be accessible to ordinary citizens via “open mini-publics”, large, deliberative, agenda-setting or legislative body of randomly selected citizens, which would also open to the larger public via crowdsourcing platforms, mediatisation, and occasional referendums, to tap into the full diversity of voices.²³

25. Academic interest in the democracy-environment nexus intensified in 1970s in parallel with the rise of modern environmental movements. In the 2000s, some researchers tried to reconcile liberalism and sustainability and to explore the relation between environmental protection and deliberative democracy.²⁴

26. In 2002, when I was minister of foreign affairs, the first online global poll on the environment was launched in conjunction with the UN Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September, involving 25 164 people from 175 countries. The results pointed to a lack of confidence in the ability of governments to handle important environmental problems.²⁵

27. In recent years, citizens’ assemblies are also a form of deliberative democracy, where a discussion and deliberation among a randomly selected group represent a key component of the decision-making process. They find their roots in ancient Athens, in the form of *agoras*, and in Renaissance Italy.

28. In the climate change policy area, a list of basic standards has been established to ensure that climate citizens’ assemblies are of high quality and have a democratic character.²⁶ In some cases, this experience has had the greatest effect on politicians, either as eye openers or as to the potential for progressive change in the attitudes and support of the public, which so often is used as an excuse for inaction.

2.1. *Benefits of public participation*²⁷

29. For governments, citizens’ assemblies can help to address politically contentious issues. They can increase the legitimacy of political decisions and actions. For participants, they can represent a unique learning environment and harness a sense of pride in contributing to national decision-making. Following are some further advantages of a participatory democracy approach:

- *Improved governance*: increased democratic legitimacy for and trust in institutions because of close links with citizens, improved reputations for public bodies, increased opportunities for active citizenship, and greater accountability of public bodies thanks to more effective information, dissemination and enhanced dialogue;
- *Better representation of the population*: the composition of citizens’ assemblies can be considered as representative of the local community as its members are randomly selected out of a pool of volunteers according to key parameters (e.g. age, gender, education and location); they better reflect minorities and thus give voice to the needs of all social groups, enabling elected officials to take stock of the climate measures which could be acceptable to the general public;
- *Greater social cohesion*: bringing diverse and sometimes hostile communities together, building relationships within and between different communities and social groups, strengthening and creating new networks that enable different interests to work together as a result of building more positive relationships, and increased equality of access to policy and decision-making processes;
- *Improved quality of services, projects and programmes*: ensuring public investment is based more on people’s expressed needs, enabling people to share in the responsibility for improving their own quality of life (e.g. health and well-being, or the local environment);
- *Greater capacity building and learning*: increasing understanding of public institutions and the way democracy works, building confidence and optimism among citizens, supporting the voluntary

²³ A report by the OECD titled the “Deliberative Wave” document more than 200 examples of such deliberative experiments around the world over the last twenty years. [Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave | en | OECD](#), 10 June 2020.

²⁴ Pickering, J., Bäckstrand, K., & Schlosberg, D., Between environmental and ecological democracy: theory and practice at the democracy-environment nexus. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 22(1), 3, 2020.

²⁵ [Global poll blames governments for environment \(euobserver.com\)](#), 2002. Back in 2003, the Greek EU Presidency (January – June 2003) also saw the launch of e-Vote, a bold initiative to enhance and expand e-Democracy across the European Union. Far from being ‘lost in cyber-space’, the opinions of interested citizens had a real impact on EU policymaking, see [e-Democracy for the European Union - George A. Papandreou](#), 30 June 2003.

²⁶ Center for Climate Assemblies, [What is a citizens’ assembly?](#).

²⁷ [UK Involve, Benefits and costs of public participation](#), June 2018; Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland, Deepening public engagement on climate change: lessons from the Citizens’ Assemblies, April 2020.

and community sectors by recognising their vital role in building the capacity of community and specific interest groups (especially disadvantaged and excluded groups).

- *Improved understanding of multi-layered perceptions of engaged publics on climate change:* this may contribute to creating more effective and connected modes of persuasion to communicate the urgency of the climate crisis and enhance environmental literacy nationally.

2.2. Costs and barriers for public participation

30. Monetary costs involve staff time (paid and unpaid), staff expenses, external consultants, fees to participants, expenses, training for staff and participants, administration, venue hire, communication, monitoring and evaluation fees. Among non-monetary costs figure: time contributed by participants, and skills needed for the new approach (taking time from the main job).

31. Risks include risks to reputation (from bad participatory practice), stress, uncertainty and conflict. A cost-benefit analyses might therefore be needed before embarking in any participatory exercise.

3. Examples of European citizens' assemblies on climate change

32. Citizens' assemblies have spread worldwide including in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Spain, and the United Kingdom, as well as in Australia, Canada and United States.²⁸ Following are a number of case studies to understand how they worked in practice over the past twenty years in a number of Council of Europe member States.

3.1. Poitou-Charentes Citizens' Jury

33. The French region of Poitou-Charentes in France hosts one of the oldest deliberative democracy assemblies in Europe,²⁹ which also has an international dimension with joint projects with Tuscany and Catalonia.³⁰

34. In 2008, the Citizens' Jury produced a report upon the request of the regional governors on how to fight climate change and greenhouse emissions. Instead of calling for volunteers, which might have created a sociological bias,³¹ jury members were selected randomly.

35. Key activities included training and information sessions to understand the complexity of the climate change challenge, hearings of experts, the election of majority and opposition representatives, the appointment of a "neutral third party", as well as a group of independent professionals and quality checkers.³²

3.2. Ireland Citizens' Assembly

36. More recently, the Irish Citizens' Assembly (*Thionól na Saoránach*) was set up in 2016 by parliament and consisted of a chairperson and 99 citizens randomly selected to be representative of the Irish electorate in age, gender, social class and regional spread.

37. It has already played a crucial role in contentious policy issues such as on abortion and same-sex marriage,³³ which paved the way for a successful referendum in favour of repealing the eighth amendment of the Irish Constitution.

38. In 2017, the Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change met for 4 weekends to listen to experts, groups' representatives and voted on the recommendations by ballot paper voting.³⁴ In the beginning, Irish climate

²⁸ Climate Assembly UK, the path to net zero. [Governments and parliaments around the world are increasingly using citizens' assemblies in their work.](#)

²⁹ Manoharan, A., & Holzer, M., *Active citizen participation in e-government: a global perspective*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, 2012.

³⁰ [Participatory Democracy Can Resolve Crisis.](#)

³¹ "Sociological bias" means the disadvantage of voluntary based participation is normally most graduated, well-skilled, the most used to discuss in public will be the members of the committee. Therefore, working women, unemployed person and low-qualified classes would not be heard during decision-making.

³² Region Poitou-Charentes, [Participatory Democracy in Region Poitou-Charentes](#), 2008.

³³ Coleman M., [Ireland's world-leading citizens' climate assembly. What worked? What didn't?](#) Climate Home News 2019.

³⁴ These were categorised under specific headings (overarching themes, transportation, energy, agriculture and food production, reduce/prevent waste/ prevalence of plastic, and taxation/ funding/ incentives).

change activists were sceptical about the functioning of this practice but were eventually surprised by the depths of the recommendations made.³⁵

39. The exercise was not without challenges, including the short timeframe for deliberation, which provided limited opportunities to engage with the breadth and depth of the climate crisis, and how the views of the wider public and interest groups were incorporated. 1 185 submissions were received by interest groups on the climate change topic (as a comparison over 12 000 submissions were received on the politically charged topic of abortion). It is obviously challenging to find a way to incorporate such a volume of submissions in the process.³⁶

40. The 13 recommendations agreed on climate change were significantly more radical than many expected and provided a rich source of data on environmental literacy in Ireland as well as lessons for public engagement in this area.³⁷ The final report concluded that the State must take a lead role on mitigation, recommended that government prioritise public transport spending over new roads, tax greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and stop subsidising peat extraction. Strikingly, 80% of participants said they would be willing to pay higher taxes on carbon-intensive activities.³⁸

41. It should be mentioned that the Assembly's recommendations just play an advisory role and the ultimate decision belongs to the government. The true test of whether the Citizens' Assembly has successfully contributed to strengthening Ireland's response to climate change will be seen in the uptake and implementation of the 13 recommendations in policy, and ultimately in Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions trajectory in the years to come.³⁹

3.3. French "Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat"

42. In January 2019, President Emmanuel Macron under the shadow of Yellow Vests protests announced the establishment of a "Grand débat", with a total budget of 4 million euro, involving an online forum, 21 citizens' assemblies and thousands of public meetings.

43. On climate change, for the first time in France, a panel representative of the diversity of French citizens, was directly involved in the preparation of the law. The Citizen's Convention on Climate's mandate was tasked to define a series of measures that would allow to achieve a reduction of at least 40% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (compared to 1990) in a spirit of social justice.

44. The Convention brought together 150 people, all drawn by lot and representing the diversity of French society. The plenary sessions were streamed on the Convention site.

45. Speaking before our Committee on 15 October 2020, the Convention's co-Chair, Mr Pech, stressed that independent leadership and moderation as well as hearings with independent experts allowed for an objective and transparent debate. Eventually, it was capital that policy makers would support the process and commit themselves to finding ways to implement the citizens' recommendations. He argued that the fact that the recommendations were issued by the citizens themselves, not by the politicians, made it easier to convince other citizens about their importance and their neutrality.

46. Members of the Citizens' Convention members were received by President Macron in June 2020. Of the 149 proposals put forward, the President decided to retain 146⁴⁰. Among them, the Convention proposed to amend the first article of the French Constitution by adding "the [French] Republic guarantees the preservation of biodiversity and the environment and fights against climate change."

47. In December 2020, President Macron confirmed his intention to submit a proposal to a referendum to enshrine climate and environment protection in the French constitution. "Constitutionally, [the proposed constitutional reform] will first have to pass through the National Assembly and the Senate and be voted with identical wording," subsequently "it will be submitted to a referendum" Macron affirmed, leaving the timeline for the referendum to be set by national lawmakers. Thus, according to the French President, the proposed

³⁵ [How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change](#). The Citizens' Assembly.

³⁶ Fenton S, Fenton S., [Are citizens' assemblies really the answer to the climate crisis?](#) 2019.

³⁷ Citizens' Climate Research Project, Dublin City University, funded by the Irish Environmental Protection Agency.

³⁸ [Recommendations on how the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change - The Citizens' Assembly](#).

³⁹ Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland, Deepening public engagement on climate change: lessons from the Citizens' Assemblies, April 2020.

⁴⁰ [Emmanuel Macron dit oui à 146 propositions de la Convention citoyenne pour le climat !](#).

reform of the constitution advanced by the citizens' assembly will be part of a draft climate bill, which translates about half of the convention's measures into law.⁴¹

3.4. *Climate Assembly United Kingdom*

48. Set up in 2019 by the United Kingdom House of Commons, Climate Assembly UK has over 100 members, who are representative of the UK population and are randomly selected. They met over 6 weekends in 2020 (including online meetings in April-May during lockdown) and heard balanced evidence on the choice the UK faces, discussed them and made recommendations about what the country should do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, on the basis of the "fairness" principle.

49. The altered schedule due to the Covid-19 pandemic included a brief opportunity to reflect on the impact of coronavirus on tackling climate change, which were published in the Climate Assembly's final report, with a view to influencing debate on the steps to recovery.⁴²

50. In September 2020, Climate Assembly UK handed its work back to the parliamentary committees with their final report, *The path to net zero*, issuing strong calls to parliament and the government to rise to the challenge of achieving the net zero target in a clear, accountable way. It called on government to "forge a cross-party consensus that allows for certainty, long-term planning and a phased transition" and stressed that "now is not the time for scoring party political points."

51. Many participants defined the experience an "awakening and life-changing event". The more challenging proposals included a tax on frequent-flyers, a ban on selling SUVs, and a cut in meat consumption, showing the benefit of a plant-based diet for the health and the environment, which is often overlooked.⁴³

52. There is no clear information about the approach of the government towards the final recommendations, which may probably have an advisory role,⁴⁴ and critics have highlighted the danger that government simply cherry picks measures that fit its position while ignoring more challenging proposals.⁴⁵

53. A [UK Institute for Government report](#) identified building and maintaining public and political consent as the defining challenge for achieving the 2050 net-zero target. The Climate Assembly model, on a larger scale, could serve as a significant way to do this, as part of a broader strategy for public engagement. The model has also demonstrated its potential to address complex policy problems on a national level and an official evaluation is due in 2021. 90% of the 110 participants were found to agree or strongly agree that similar assemblies should be used more often to inform governmental and parliamentary decision-making.⁴⁶

3.5. *Early lessons from the French and the UK citizens' assemblies experience*⁴⁷

54. Citizens' assemblies' experiments in different countries share some similarities. Both in France and in the UK, for instance, they were initiated in the wake of protests.

55. They follow a broadly standard format, which includes learning, deliberating and voting. Members are likewise selected by drawing and stratified sampling according to criteria, which are similar but not identical among countries, ensuring they reflect their country's population. Most assemblies are further split into smaller groups to analyse different topics. The framing question and objectives are diverse, in terms of the amount of, for instance, greenhouse gas emissions and the timeframe available.

⁴¹ [Guillot L., Macron announces referendum to add environmental protection to the constitution, Politico, 14 December 2020.](#)

⁴² [Climate Assembly UK's final report sets out a clear, internally consistent and timely path for reaching the UK's target of net zero emissions by 2050.](#)

⁴³ [It's awakened me: UK climate assembly participants hail a life-changing event | Climate change | The Guardian;](#) 31 December 2020.

⁴⁴ Buranyi, S., [A citizens' assembly on climate is pointless if the government won't listen](#), 17 April 2020.

⁴⁵ [Citizens' assembly: what we've learned about the kind of climate action the public wants to see \(theconversation.com\),](#) 18 September 2020.

⁴⁶ [Where next for the UK Climate Assembly? - Grantham Research Institute on climate change and the environment \(lse.ac.uk\),](#) 30 September 2020.

⁴⁷ Bouyé M., [Early lessons from France and the UK on the roles of climate citizens' assemblies and legislators to enhance climate action](#), *Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)*, 13 October 2020; [Getting Climate Citizens' Assemblies Right - Carnegie Europe - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#), 5 November 2020.

56. The budgets are not the same from one country to the next. For instance, the French *Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat*'s budget was nearly ten times the Climate Assembly UK's one, respectively 5.4 million euros versus 520 000 British pounds, therefore comparisons must be seen through this prism.

57. French civil society representatives had a formal, active role in shaping the agenda. The civil society representatives on the governance committee, so-called *Gilets Citoyens* (Citizen Vests), participated actively in determining the convention's framing question. They co-created policy measures with input from experts.

58. By contrast, the UK's Climate Assembly framing question was set by the UK's parliamentary committees, which focused on predetermined policy options developed by experts without input from the citizens' advisory panel.

59. In short, the French *Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat* was cast as a political chamber, whereas the Climate Assembly UK was a deliberative exercise to inform political chambers. French participants were encouraged to engage with politics. In contrast, the UK process was appointed as an apolitical, rigorous, and deliberative research process to inform policymaking. No individual members of the governing party were permeating the process with political power. The Climate Assembly UK's aim was to keep the participants as independent as possible, to maintain their representativeness of "ordinary" people.

60. In France, participants had more freedom to solicit outside input, to engage with their communities, members of parliament, experts as well as speak to the media, with the view to building collective intelligence and consensus to influence policymaking. They freely communicated between themselves without any third-party interference, had access to an online platform to increase engagement and attended multiple webinars to support the learning process and maintain momentum between sessions.

61. Many French participants started acting as *de facto* representatives, by speaking to the media on behalf of the whole Convention and gathering input from those they believed they were representing. In contrast, UK citizen participants were not encouraged to address the media and neither to do additional research on climate change topic in between sessions but had to be informed exclusively by relevant "balanced, comprehensive and accurate" information.

62. As a consequence, the French Convention generated a genuine national debate, as opposed to the Climate Assembly UK which was never intended to create one. In fact, according to a poll by Odoxa, the majority of the French population acknowledged and supported most of the 149 proposals, engendering a powerful mandate for change.⁴⁸

63. Furthermore, the Climate Assembly UK was well structured in its governance, while the French assembly adopted a more collective and self-organising approach. The UK process had precise, agreed-upon ground rules for participation, while the French process had none and trusted citizens to self-organise and self-regulate.

64. A key step, performed differently in the two countries, was the "compliance and duplication" check of the proposals with existing national and European legislation. In France, a legal committee only facilitated the draft proposals that were submitted for adoption without "any filter", as requested by the French Presidency.

65. Current researches are ongoing on whether citizens' proposals were somehow influenced by this committee and spurred citizens to further refine the proposed measures to avoid rejection. In the UK, upon the release of the report, the convening parliamentary committees served as a chamber of control.⁴⁹

66. Speaking before our Committee Professor Landemore acknowledged that French citizens were capable of co-creating the law, together with elected officials and experts, with advanced and sometimes radical proposals. However, she stressed that, despite the good intention, this remained a very top down and opaque governance approach and should have given citizens further control over the agenda and procedures.

67. Participatory processes design really matter. If designers don't trust the people, they constrain their sources, the structure of their conversations and responses. "After the fact" accountability, that is the ability of citizens' assembly members to evaluate and provide input to any legislation that flows from their deliberations, is also critical with a view to maintaining a dialogue between citizens, government or parliament. Without an

⁴⁸ [Les mesures de la Convention citoyenne séduisent les Français... à l'exception notable des 110 km/h - Odoxa](#), 25 June 2020.

⁴⁹ Bouyé M., [Early lessons from France and the UK on the roles of climate citizens' assemblies and legislators to enhance climate action](#), Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), 13 October 2020.

accountable follow up, the process may end up an empty exercise with little or no impact. Participation only works if it has a real impact on power.

4. Examples of public participation at European and international level

68. At United Nations level, an ongoing project to influence policymakers at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in 2021 aims at building a Global Citizens' Assembly. A virtual assembly composed of 1 000 people chosen by lottery from around the world will run for several months ahead of the COP26 discussions in November 2021. Although the assembly has no power to compel governments, supporters believe their recommendations will carry enough moral authority to influence policymakers.⁵⁰

69. Another meaningful example is the Peoples' Climate Vote, an initiative by the UN Development Programme published in January 2021. With 1.2 million respondents, this was the largest survey of public opinion on climate change ever conducted, spanning 50 countries covering 56% of the world's population. It provided policymakers with reliable information on whether people considered climate change an emergency, and how they would like their countries to respond, also in the context of a global pandemic.⁵¹

70. The European Union Conference on the Future of Europe, which European Commission Vice-President Ms Dubravka Šuica presented to our Committee on 30 March,⁵² aims at engaging citizens directly to chart a path forward, through a Europe-wide series of citizens' assemblies and panels, including multilingual digital platforms. The environment should figure high on the list of priorities and our Parliamentary Assembly could provide a concrete input to the Conference themes after the Assembly debate in October on *The environment and human rights*, which will make the case for the universal legal recognition of the right to live in a healthy environment.

71. At Council of Europe level, this year's ninth World Forum for Democracy, is also responding to world events. From November 2020 to November 2021 discussions have moved online, giving a wide range of stakeholders a chance to share throughout the year via webinars and online discussions. Each month touches on a different topic⁵³ focusing on Democracy and the environment and will culminate in November 2021 with the classic Forum in Strasbourg (dependent on the pandemic), where I hope to present my report.

72. Looking at the future, I welcome the suggestion that was made at the hearing of 4 February to create a European-wide "Citizens' Assembly for Climate and the future of Europe", with the participation of groups of citizens, experts and elected representatives, building on the past experience of citizens' assemblies and bringing in the media to create a European debate and narrative around it. I would encourage the Council of Europe and the European Union to join forces in this area.

73. Involving young people in decision-making processes is also key. The conclusions of the February 2021 meeting of the Council of Europe Joint Council on Youth's task force on greening the youth sector, which followed closely on the heels of a consultative meeting on *The climate crisis, young people and democracy*, stressed that young people's absence from decision-making processes on the climate crisis is of great concern to the young, who feel their future is in others' hands and are not fully included in tackling the climate crisis.

74. Allowing young people to take part in the response should represent a new standard of how to use participatory democracy as a tool for developmental progress. The Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe is a living example of participatory democracy at European level and serves as an example for all member States embarking in participatory processes.⁵⁴

5. Concluding remarks and recommendations

75. The 2015 Paris Agreement promoted stronger climate action and along with a world-wide citizen movement, strongly driven by young people, has raised awareness and created political pressure and a momentum for more ambitious climate action. Over the past years, protest movements have shown their

⁵⁰ [Global citizens' assembly planned to address climate crisis](#), *The Guardian*, 10 December 2020.

⁵¹ [The Peoples' Climate Vote | UNDP](#), 26 January 2021.

⁵² [Closer relations PACE/EP: the parliamentary contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe \(coe.int\)](#), 30 March 2021.

⁵³ [World Forum for Democracy: "12 Months, 1 Question" campaign \(coe.int\)](#).

⁵⁴ The Advisory Council on Youth is composed of 30 young European representatives of youth non-governmental organisations and networks from the 50 States party to the European Cultural Convention. The co-management system emphasises dialogue between young people and representatives of ministries and bodies directly, giving legitimacy to the Joint Council on Youth's decisions.

strength but the positions voiced need institutional structure to allow for sustainable, regular and impactful public participation.

76. Legal disputes over climate change issues have grown, with citizens appealing to the courts against government policies, as well as private companies', arguing for the State's duty to adequately protect the environment. The involvement of young people in these litigations, with the intention to hold governments accountable for the effects of climate change, is on the rise.

77. Over the past fifty years, democratic countries have responded better to the climate crisis, while non-democratic regimes have yet to show good leadership. Indeed, regular elections, freedom of expression, association and assembly, a dynamic civil society sector and political pluralism allow for new topics to be advocated and raised by political parties and by citizens themselves.

78. However, the Covid-19 pandemic is showing that, while a top-down approach seemed to work at the initial stage, as the pandemic continues, the adoption of more difficult adaptive behaviour needs the participation of all.

79. Unlike a pandemic, climate change is not a one-off crisis. It demands long term adaptation of our societies. All citizens need to make changes in their daily behaviour, production and consumption patterns, and only informed and engaged citizens can build resilience and harness collective capacity.

80. Governments need to combine a clear political engagement and top-down leadership with bottom-up, participatory forms of governance, to tackle the urgency of the climate crisis, clear away the politics of elitism, provide policy coherence and ensure meaningful contributions from citizens.

81. Representative democracy must be enriched by participation also to credibly respond to citizen demand to be more regularly involved in public decision-making. Participatory democracy can be expressed in many ways and is most profoundly driven by the impact digitalisation has had on democracy. New participatory opportunities are constantly embraced by engaged citizens to partake in the public debate, in particular young people.

82. One of them, citizens' assemblies, which are the focus of my report, have been described as "plugging a democratic gap", to unblock complicated and politically stuck issues. They can usefully involve those typically not actively engaged in the political process and can be a powerful educating process and a source of democratic legitimacy. They can also minimise the impact of conspiracy theories, fake news and the fear of political costs by policy makers. Key features should include:

- ensuring that assemblies remain non party-political events, not dominated by power or money or partisan logics. Instead they should be based on reason, evidence, arguments, perspectives and different forms of knowledge, be it local, technical, scientific, even emotional;⁵⁵
- to reduce the excessive influence of interest groups and lobbies, citizens should be selected randomly, paying attention to include all age groups, qualification levels, socio-economic differences and geographical distribution;
- ensuring close involvement of and co-operation with the scientific community to reach meaningful science-based decisions;
- experts views must be confronted with vested interests: citizens' assemblies should open to a wide range of stakeholders, including NGOs, industry, environmental activists, etc. They should not exclude the views of climate change activists or conservationists or people who contest aspects of climate policy, but they can help to filter out full-on climate change denial.⁵⁶

83. Citizens' assemblies' input can inform environmental action and provide governments with useful information on people's preferences and what trade-off they are ready to make.⁵⁷ Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the decision makers to give power to citizens' assemblies' recommendations and proposals and ensure that they are incorporated into the policy process in an appropriate manner, including via dedicated parliamentary committees, for output legitimacy. Both government and parliament should discuss the

⁵⁵ [Open democracy, How can citizens' assemblies be used to tackle climate change?](#), 9 May 2020.

⁵⁶ Climate home news, [Ireland's world-leading citizens' climate assembly. What worked? What didn't?](#), 27 June 2019.

⁵⁷ Climate home news, [Ireland's world-leading citizens' climate assembly. What worked? What didn't?](#), 27 June 2019.

assemblies' findings and transparently decide on an appropriate course of action, which may or may not include the possibility of a referendum.

84. Whether the climate citizens' assemblies will have a significant impact on climate policy will emerge only with time. Evidence reveals that they have had a significant and immediate effect on the climate policy context, especially in France and the UK. However, a successful approach to climate change may require action far beyond what climate assemblies have proposed thus far.⁵⁸

85. Future citizens' assemblies may need to go even further in addressing the underlying systemic drivers of the climate emergency. This involves *inter alia*:⁵⁹

- being explicit on the need for ambitious systemic change;
- sharing with citizens the most preeminent available forecasts of climate impacts, which should be presented in a tangible way to explicitly illustrate the real consequences for people's lives globally;
- sharing all possible scenarios with a future-focused approach;
- designing a robust independent process, including procedures on key decisions, agenda set up, selection of experts, voting, etc.
- allowing citizens to influence the agenda, which enhances ownership and creativity, with the benefit of dissolving group polarisation;
- ensuring that citizens' recommendations are complemented by further expertise, cost assessments and evidence-based input so as not to over-emphasise citizens' contributions or rely solely on their output;
- providing for an accountable follow-up, allowing citizens' assembly members to evaluate and provide input to any legislation that flows from their deliberations.

86. Citizens' assemblies should generate a national public debate to create a sense of empowerment and self-confidence as citizens, prepare for people's support of the proposed measures and put pressure on policymakers to implement the recommendations.

87. Governments should also consider investing in other forms of citizen-relevant education and outreach approaches, creating new forms of environmental citizenship, including the role of mass media and tailored education campaigns.

88. Examples of public participation at European and international level show the potential of extending participatory practices at a higher scale and our Assembly should actively engage with the EU Conference on the Future of Europe and provide an input on the environment and human rights as a follow-up to the October plenary debate.

89. The Council of Europe and the EU could also consider joining forces to set up a European-wide "Citizens' Assembly for Climate and the future of Europe" and I hope that the November World Forum for Democracy shall also discuss this possibility.

90. Special attention must be given to youth participation to make sure that young people are involved in decision-making processes addressing the climate crisis and directly affecting their future. The Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe is a living example of participatory democracy at European level and serves as an example to all member States embarking in participatory processes.

⁵⁸ Climate modelling is getting ever more accurate. The 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, focused on the possible consequences of climate change, studying the most vulnerable cities to coastal flooding and examining which parts can be saved. Had the data been shared, it would have brought widespread benefits by enhancing citizens' understanding of both the scale of the challenge and of the necessary response. [5 things we learned about climate change at Davos 2020 | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](#), 24 January 2020.

⁵⁹ [Getting Climate Citizens' Assemblies Right - Carnegie Europe - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#), 5 November 2020.

91. Referring to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education⁶⁰ and to the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture⁶¹, our governments should also encourage continuous youth participation and citizenship education in schools and universities, communities and non-governmental organisations. This includes giving children and young people the right to participate in decision making processes, which are key to empowering them to participate in public life, foster critical thinking and engage in democratic practices.

92. In its terms of reference for 2020-2021, the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) of the Council of Europe addressed the issue of participatory and deliberative democracy in the context of its work on democracy and technology. Its study on the impact of digital transformation on democracy and good governance provides a number of case studies drawn from the experience of Council of Europe member States and acknowledges that technology has offered a new range of tools for deliberative democracy, contributing to its growing importance as a complement to representative democracy.

93. Building on that work, as well as on [the 2018 Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on the participation of citizens in local public life](#) and the [2017 Committee of Ministers' Guidelines for civil participation in political decision-making](#), the competent steering committee should be encouraged to draw up a report on new forms of participatory democracy, with a view to sharing good practices amongst member States, and to take into account the present report as a contribution in the specific area of climate change.

94. Finally, the experience of participatory and deliberative democracy in several Council of Europe member States showcases the potential to use deliberation in other policy areas, such as security and migration and other debates on values-based dilemmas, complex or population-sized problems, which may also lead to possible constitutional revisions.

95. When citizens face and understand the policy complexity, they tend to have more nuanced and less radicalised opinions, which facilitates the application of the democratic method, the constructive reconciliation between a multitude of interests and worldviews, as well as public support for environmental action.

⁶⁰ [Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education \(coe.int\)](#).

⁶¹ [The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture \(RFCD\) \(coe.int\)](#).