



**RESHAPING EUROPEAN ADVANCES TOWARDS GREEN LEADERSHIP  
THROUGH DELIBERATIVE APPROACHES AND LEARNING**

**D 3.3 Report on capacity building**

[WP3 – Testing and validating innovative deliberative formats  
and tools]

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*REAL DEAL has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101037071. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.*

## Project Summary

REAL DEAL will stimulate a pan-European debate to reshape citizens' and stakeholders' active participation through deliberative processes around the European Green Deal (EGD). It brings together researchers and practitioners of deliberative democracy from a wide range of disciplines including environmental rights and the law of public participation, ethics and responsible innovation, gender studies and ecofeminism, psychology, geography, urban planning, and sustainability studies. It includes the EU's largest civil society networks advocating on the environment, climate, sustainable development, local democracy, and the European movement. It teams up with youth climate, social justice and women's organisations, SMEs, universities and research institutes, mobilising networks with thousands of CSOs, uniting millions of citizens and activating contacts with thousands of policymakers. In a large co-creation exercise, REAL DEAL will develop, test, and validate innovative tools and formats to propel deliberative democracy to the next level. It will test its innovations at citizens' assemblies for the transition in at least 13 countries. We will scrutinise pan-European formats ranging from digital deliberation through our online platform [www.realdeal.eu](http://www.realdeal.eu) to in-person processes such as an Assembly for a Gender-Just Green Deal and a pan-European Youth Climate Assembly. REAL DEAL will co-create a comprehensive protocol for meaningful citizens' participation and deliberation to work towards the objectives of the EGD. It will validate recommendations on how to design such processes and how they can be applied by European institutions, Member States, and civil society alike. Gender equality will be embedded into the project's DNA. It pays specific attention to the leave-no-one-behind principle, fostering the engagement of disenfranchised groups that are disproportionately burdened by environmental damage. REAL DEAL will develop a new model of environmental citizenship across Europe.

## Project Information

<b>Acronym</b>	REAL DEAL
<b>Title</b>	Reshaping European Advances towards green Leadership Through Deliberative Approaches and Learning
<b>Project ID</b>	101037071
<b>Funding Programme</b>	Horizon 2020
<b>Topic</b>	LC-GD-10-1-2020, European capacities for citizen deliberation and participation for the Green Deal
<b>Start and end date</b>	1 February 2022 – 31 January 2025
<b>Duration</b>	36 months
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.realdeal.eu">www.realdeal.eu</a>

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	EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU	EEB	Belgium
	ALLEANZA ITALIANA PER LO SVILUPPO SOSTENIBILE	ASviS	Italy
	ASSOCIATION DES AGENCES DE LA DEMOCRATIE LOCALE	AADL/ALDA	France
	CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY	CEU	Hungary
	CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK EUROPE	CAN EUROPE	Belgium
	DIALOGIK	DIA	Germany
	EUROPEAN MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL	EMI	Belgium
	GLOBAL CLIMATE FORUM	GCF	Germany
	FORENINGEN NYT EUROPA	NYT EUROPA	Denmark
	SOLIDAR	SOLIDAR	Belgium
	TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN	TUB	Germany
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	WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH	WR	Netherlands
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<b>Due Date</b>	31.7.2024
<b>Delivery Date</b>	26.7.2024
<b>Type</b>	R (Report)
<b>Dissemination</b>	CO = Confidential, only for members of the consortium, including the Commission Services.

## Document History

Version	Date	Description	Reason for Change	Distribution
V0.1	09/07/2024	Table of Contents	The Table of Contents was prepared and shared with the partners.	CO
V0.2	14/07/2024	First draft	The first draft was delivered for the internal review process.	CO
V0.3	22/07/2024	Internal review	The draft included suggestions and comments from the internal reviewers.	CO
V0.4	26/07/2024	Second draft	The draft integrated recommendations from the reviewers.	CO
V1.0	31/07/2024	Final draft	Final editing and check by the Project Coordinator	CO

## Table of contents

1	Introduction to Capacity Building .....	7
2	Capacity Building Before the Event .....	9
2.1	Workshop 1: Beginning with the result.....	9
2.2	Workshop 2: Purpose of deliberations .....	11
2.2.1	Purposes of participation.....	12
2.2.2	Formats of participation.....	13
2.3	Live Workshop in preparation of German Test Case: on moderation techniques .....	15
3	Review Workshop as ex-post Capacity Building .....	18
4	Moderation techniques.....	21
5	Further ongoing activities.....	22
6	Conclusion.....	22

## Executive summary

This report details the comprehensive capacity building initiatives undertaken within the REAL DEAL project to empower stakeholders involved in deliberative processes. It highlights the importance of effective citizen engagement in democratic societies and emphasises the role of capacity building in fostering inclusive and sustainable participation.

### Key Findings:

- Capacity building is essential for ensuring effective, inclusive, and sustainable deliberative processes. It equips stakeholders with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their roles more confidently.
- The capacity building programme should involve a structured approach, including needs assessment, planning, training, and evaluation.
- Gender equality and gender-responsive communication are crucial aspects of capacity building, promoting inclusivity and respectful dialogue.
- The program incorporated various activities, including online workshops, training on moderation techniques (focusing on Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication model), and evaluation mechanisms.

### Outcomes:

- Enhanced skills and knowledge among stakeholders for effectively participating in and organising deliberative processes.
- Increased inclusivity and fairness in discussions through a focus on respectful communication and gender equality.
- Improved quality and effectiveness of deliberative events through competent facilitation and management.
- Sustainable impact on democratic participation by empowering stakeholders (civil society organisations and practitioners, including project partners, third parties, facilitators, interested CSOs and researchers).

### The report is structured as follows:

- Introduction: Emphasises the importance of citizen engagement and capacity building in fostering effective deliberative processes.
- Capacity Building Before the Event: Details the two online workshops conducted before the participatory events.
  - Workshop 1: Focused on evaluation techniques for assessing inclusion, fairness, competence, and other crucial aspects of deliberative events.
  - Workshop 2: Discussed various engagement methods at different levels (policy formulation, program development, etc.) and distinguished formats of participation (dialogue, consultation, involving, etc.).
- Live Workshop in preparation of the German testcase: Describes a workshop held in Berlin focusing on effective moderation techniques based on Nonviolent Communication (NVC) principles.

- Review Workshop held in Budapest to reflect experiences with the test cases
- Furthermore, it presents activities around feminist moderation techniques

Overall, the REAL DEAL project's capacity building program demonstrates a commitment to strengthening democratic participation by empowering stakeholders and fostering inclusive and effective deliberative processes.

## 1 Introduction to Capacity Building

In contemporary democratic societies, the engagement of citizens in participatory and deliberative processes is pivotal for ensuring that diverse voices are heard, and that policy decisions reflect the collective will. Recognising this, a consortium of experts within the REAL DEAL project is undertaking a comprehensive initiative to organise capacity building activities aimed at stakeholders involved in the practical organisation and roll-out of experimental deliberative activities. This deliverable delves into the detailed plans and strategies for these capacity building activities, focusing on various stakeholders, including project partners, third parties, sub-contractors, volunteers, civil society, and research organisations. A particular emphasis is placed on building capacity around gender equality and gender-responsive communication.

Capacity building is a crucial element in any initiative aimed at fostering effective, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes, especially in the context of democratic processes and citizen engagement. It empowers individuals and organisations by enhancing their skills and knowledge, which is vital for stakeholders involved in deliberative processes as it enables them to perform their roles more effectively and confidently. For facilitators, moderators, and other stakeholders, capacity building activities provide opportunities for professional growth by teaching new techniques and methodologies that can improve their performance.

Capacity building promotes effective participation by ensuring that stakeholders, as well as citizens, are better informed and equipped to engage in deliberative processes. This leads to more thoughtful and meaningful discussions, resulting in well-rounded decision-making. It also ensures inclusivity, allowing all participants, regardless of their background or prior experience, to engage equally, thereby making deliberative processes more representative and democratic.

As the REAL DEAL project aims at promoting participatory methods beyond the project's life-cycle, sustainability of the capacity building is a major component. Moreover, by empowering local communities and stakeholders, capacity building enhances community resilience, making trained individuals and organisations better prepared to handle challenges and adapt to changes yet to come.

Gender equality is another critical focus of capacity building. Initiatives that focus on gender equality help ensure that all voices, especially those of women and marginalized groups, are heard and valued. Training in gender-responsive communication and practices helps reduce gender biases and promotes equality, fostering an inclusive and respectful deliberative process.



Furthermore, capacity building helps build trust and legitimacy. It promotes transparency by educating stakeholders about the processes and principles of deliberation, which builds trust among participants and the broader community. When stakeholders (here in the sense of organisers/conveners) are well-trained and informed, the deliberative process gains legitimacy as participants (and observers) are more likely to trust and accept the outcomes of the process when they see that it is conducted competently and fairly.

The general process of capacity building involves several key steps to ensure its effectiveness. The first step is a needs assessment, where a thorough evaluation is conducted to identify existing gaps in skills, knowledge, and resources among stakeholders. Engaging with stakeholders during this process provides valuable insights into their challenges and needs, ensuring that the capacity building activities are relevant and targeted.

Following the needs assessment, the planning and design phase involves setting clear and achievable objectives for the capacity building programme and developing a comprehensive strategy outlining the approach, methods, and resources required.

During the implementation phase, various training programs, workshops, and seminars might be conducted to build the required skills and knowledge among stakeholders. Developing and distributing resources such as the feminist moderation course support the training programs by providing valuable references for stakeholders during and after the training.

These phases of capacity building were used to design the workshops and further trainings and review sessions within the project. The general process was adapted to the specific settings and requirements of the project.

Besides the planning of the capacity building activities itself, evaluation is a critical component of capacity building as a learning tool. A comprehensive evaluation at the end of the program assesses its impact and effectiveness. This evaluation measures both the immediate outcomes and the longer-term effects on stakeholders' performance and engagement. The evaluation itself is not part of the capacity building in this report, however the criteria and indicators of evaluations were in fact incorporated into the capacity building, as these are giving guidelines for how to establish the process in the first place.

Thus, the 'why' of capacity building comes from capacity building being a vital component of any initiative aimed at enhancing democratic participation and citizen engagement. By empowering stakeholders with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources, capacity building promotes effective, inclusive, and sustainable deliberative processes. The steps involved in capacity building, from needs assessment to sustainability, provide a structured approach to ensuring that these initiatives achieve their desired outcomes and contribute to the overall health and resilience of democratic societies.

The following chapters detail the activities undertaken within the REAL DEAL project and can be structured into capacity building *before* the respective events (Chapter 2) as well as capacity building *after* the respective events as ex-post evaluation (Chapter

3). Further, moderation techniques training will be discussed in Chapter 4. Ongoing activities beyond the timeline of this deliverable will be discussed in Chapter 5

## 2 Capacity Building Before the Event

The capacity building was kicked-off with two online-workshops before the participatory events took place. Both workshops were conducted in autumn 2022. Aim of the workshops was twofold: to ensure a common grounding for all participatory exercises to follow and to foster a discussion on needs and further activities of capacity building.

Whereas the first workshop focused on evaluation techniques to ensure a coherent design of the participatory exercises, the second workshop aimed at discussing formats and options of formats.

### 2.1 Workshop 1: Beginning with the result

Capacity building works best if one starts to think from the result. This is why the focus of the first capacity building workshop was on the technique of evaluating participatory events. If we consider criteria and dimensions of participatory events, we can learn in planning and organising events in the best way possible. Evaluating such events involves multiple dimensions, including inclusion, closure, fairness, competence, transparency, and efficiency. To use these dimensions, a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria and methods is needed. We will look at these dimensions in more detail, and while doing so we will cross-reference to the experiences made within the project.

The composition of participants, or stakeholders, is a crucial aspect of *inclusion*. *Fairness* in this context is structural, ensuring that the selection of participants represents a diverse and balanced cross-section of citizens or stakeholders, including marginalised and underrepresented groups. Fair selection processes were discussed in detail during the workshop, involving random sampling and targeted invitations to ensure diversity. The composition of participants varies usually across events. In retrospect, while some events included a broad spectrum of stakeholders and/or citizens, others lacked adequate representation from marginalised groups. However, the awareness that this may happen and how to deal with situations like that was the core of the capacity building workshop discussions.

*Competence* is a key criterion, i.e. assessing whether participants possess the necessary communicative and issue-related proficiency to engage effectively. Building communicative competence is a task that is related to moderation techniques, as different methods can yield different results. Several different options to enhance competence can be established, which later on could also be observed during the project. The workshop participants further discussed how to ensure the communicative and issue-related proficiency, ensuring adequate communication skills. It became obvious during the workshop discussions that issue-related proficiency might vary between events, impacting the depth of discussions. Again, the aim of the capacity building is to raise awareness on these issues to justify them later.

The selection of topics and issues is another vital component of organising and conducting deliberative events. This process needs to be transparent, with clarity and openness about how topics and issues are chosen. Procedural fairness ensures that all participants have equal opportunities to suggest and prioritise issues. The events are supposed to provide clear information on the criteria and process for the topic selection and further framing, so that participants feel the process being transparent. In general, events that allow participants to propose and prioritise issues foster a sense of ownership and relevance.

In planning participatory events it is crucial to consider the scope of the events, encompassing the time range and spatial extension. The scope is later on evaluated for efficiency and procedural fairness. While efficiency considers the relationship between the scope of the event and the outcomes achieved, procedural fairness ensures that all participants have adequate time and resources to fully engage. The time allocated for discussions might vary, with some events allowing extensive deliberation while others being more constrained. Efficiency in time management often correlates with the quality of outcomes. Events with broader spatial scopes tend to address more diverse issues but facing challenges in achieving consensus (see next paragraph). During the capacity building workshop these dimensions were discussed again to ensure that for the planning of events conscious choices will have been made.

Closure involves the quality of procedures to reach final conclusions, the climate of discourse, the possibilities to raise and test arguments, and the management of consensus and disagreement: Fairness in procedures ensures they are inclusive and fair, while competence assesses whether participants have the necessary skills to reach informed conclusions. High-quality procedures, including structured deliberations and clear guidelines, facilitate fair and inclusive decision-making processes. Participants generally have the competence to engage in these procedures, though additional support in complex topics is sometimes necessary.

The climate of discourse needs to be fair and constructive, with procedural fairness ensuring all participants can contribute equally and transparency about rules and methods fostering a constructive climate. If events foster a fair and inclusive climate, it allows equal participation. Constructive dialogue is generally encouraged, and the capacity building discussions often focused on how to limit dominance by specific individuals. Clear communication of rules and methods contribute to a constructive and fair discourse environment.

The possibilities to raise and test arguments are critical, with competence ensuring participants can raise and critically test arguments, and procedural fairness ensuring all participants have equal opportunities to present and challenge arguments. Events might provide ample opportunities for participants to raise and test arguments. The level of critical engagement might vary, with more experienced participants contributing more effectively. Additional support mechanisms are sometimes necessary to ensure all participants can engage equally.

Managing consensus and disagreement is another important aspect, requiring procedural fairness to ensure fair management and competence in facilitators to

manage differing opinions constructively. Facilitators generally need to manage consensus and disagreement effectively, fostering a fair and respectful environment. Sometimes events might struggle with deep-seated disagreements, impacting overall outcomes. Competent facilitators are crucial in managing disagreements and guiding the group towards consensus, which was ensured further by the feminist moderation techniques course (see below).

As part of the capacity building, within the workshop, it was also discussed how evaluations are going to be conducted, i.e. how to assess the events with the criteria outlined above (and as discussed in the workshop). While planning an event it is necessary to think and plan already for its evaluation, i.e. time and space for interviews and other techniques need to be considered. For this reason, thinking about the evaluation of events during the capacity planning workshop, is a necessity to deliver high quality as well as comparable results.

The evaluation methods might include interviews with organisers, management teams, facilitators, participants, and key stakeholders, observations of communication and interactions, and self-evaluation by participants, as well as comparisons with other participatory projects. Interviews provide insights into the importance of clear objectives, robust planning, efficient resource allocation, and effective communication strategies. Direct observation offers insights into the dynamics of discourse, the effectiveness of facilitation, and the overall fairness of the processes. Self-evaluation by participants provides qualitative data on their perceptions of fairness, competence, and transparency. Preparing for these different options is essential for organisers of participatory events, as they need to prepare space and time for the evaluation team to fulfil their tasks.

In conclusion, evaluating participatory events with citizens is a multifaceted process that requires careful consideration of inclusion, closure, fairness, competence, transparency, and efficiency. To be aware of the evaluation criteria and indicators most commonly used and related methods to analyse the indicators, the capacity building workshop provided these insights long before the operational planning phase of the events itself, thus helping to ensure comparability among the events.

The capacity building workshop had the objective to make organisers of participatory events aware of the most important issues related to the planning of these events. During this first workshop, time was invested to clarify the common evaluation indicators and methods and to related these to the events in planning. Achievement of this workshop thus was the awareness on how to build participatory events generally and how to have comparable designs between the test cases of the project.

## 2.2 Workshop 2: Purpose of deliberations

Participatory methods are applied across various purposes (see below), each serving distinct objectives and stakeholders. The aim of the second workshop in capacity building was to discuss these different purposes in order to distinguish the mandate of a participatory event. If the mandate is unclear to participants, it will not be only frustrating but also unfair to participants.

Within the workshop, we took several steps:

1. We first discussed *criteria to distinguish different purposes* of participation as well as the respective actors (2.2.1)
2. We looked at different *formats* for these purposes. In this context, formats are understood as different set-ups of deliberation, as described below, and not to be confused with different formats of test-cases such as focus groups, Delphis (2.2.2)

With this set-up we wanted to provide an intensive overview on the scope and aim of participatory exercises.

### 2.2.1 Purposes of participation

The different purposes include policy formulation, programme development, project definition, and research activity. Each level requires tailored engagement strategies to effectively incorporate public input and ensure that resulting policies, programmes, projects, and research activities are responsive to the needs and perspectives of the broader community. The test cases within REAL DEAL were in most cases not going to that level of detail. However, planning participatory events always needs to consider the context, which is the purpose of the participation. The following purposes can be distinguished:

- **Policy Formulation:** At this level, engagement methods aim to gather insights and opinions from a wide range of stakeholders to inform the development of policies. This process often involves consultations, public forums, and advisory panels to ensure that policies reflect the collective interests and address the concerns of different societal groups.
- **Programme Development:** Engagement at the programme development level focuses on designing and refining programmes that address specific societal needs. This involves collaborative efforts between government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the public to develop programs that are effective, efficient, and aligned with community priorities.
- **Project Definition:** This level of engagement is concerned with the planning and initiation of specific projects. Methods used here include workshops, focus groups, and surveys to gather detailed input on project goals, scope, and implementation strategies from those who will be directly affected by the project.
- **Research Activity:** Engagement in research activities seeks to involve stakeholders in the design, implementation, and dissemination of research. This includes engaging with citizens, researchers, and industry experts to ensure that research questions are relevant, methodologies are appropriate, and findings are communicated effectively to all interested parties.

As a direct consequence of the purpose, participatory methods may include different societal groups. The primary groups involved typically include Civil Society



Organisations (CSOs), policy-makers, researchers, citizens, affected citizens, consumers, employees, users, and industry representatives. As already mentioned in the chapter on evaluation (2.1), the decision of who will attend the participatory event contributes to the aspects of inclusion. Task of the capacity building was to clarify different actor groups for the organisers to make an informed decision.

- **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):** These groups play a crucial role in representing the interests of specific communities or causes. Their involvement ensures that marginalised or underrepresented voices are heard in the engagement process.
- **Policy-Makers:** As decision-makers, policy-makers' involvement is critical to ensure that the insights and recommendations from engagement activities are translated into actionable policies.
- **Researchers:** Researchers contribute their expertise to ensure that engagement activities are grounded in robust evidence and that research findings are effectively communicated to the public.
- **Citizens and affected Citizens:** Engaging with citizens, particularly those directly affected by the issues at hand, ensures that the engagement process is inclusive and reflective of the needs and preferences of the broader population.
- **Consumers and Employees:** These groups provide valuable insights into how policies, programmes, and projects impact their daily lives and work environments, helping to shape more effective and user-friendly outcomes.
- **Users and Industry:** Industry stakeholders and users of specific services or products offer practical perspectives on feasibility, implementation, and potential impacts of proposed initiatives.

### *2.2.2 Formats of participation*

Besides the importance of looking at the purpose and the actors of participation, discussing formats itself was a crucial part during the capacity building workshop. The formats are many, so it is worth it structuring them according to their basic purpose. Again, the description of the formats is of general nature, as it served the organisers of specific participatory events within the project to develop ideas and strategies on how to plan their event. 'Formats' were presented in a wider sense (structured by purposes of formats), while in the project 'formats' was used in the sense of a specific format (design) of a deliberative event.

- **Dialogue** aims to improve the "two-way" communication between scientists, policymakers, and citizens to ensure a regular exchange of views. Even if not all these actors are present, the dialogue takes place between these actors in most cases, e.g. through scientific input to events and the respective feedback form participants. This format is essential for building mutual understanding and trust

among different stakeholders. It provides a platform for scientists to share their research findings and for citizens to express their views, concerns, and knowledge about the issues at hand. Regular dialogue helps to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and public perception, fostering a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives are valued and considered. By facilitating open communication, dialogue ensures that policies and decisions are informed by a broad range of insights and experiences, leading to more robust and inclusive outcomes.

- Consulting aims at obtaining public feedback for decision-makers on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions. This format is crucial for gathering specific input from stakeholders that can inform decision-making processes. Consulting methods include surveys, public meetings, focus groups, and online consultations. These approaches provide structured opportunities for stakeholders to contribute their opinions, preferences, and suggestions regarding proposed policies, programs, or projects. The feedback collected through consulting helps decision-makers to understand the potential impacts of their decisions, identify areas of concern, and refine their proposals to better meet the needs and expectations of the public. Consulting ensures that the decision-making process is transparent and responsive to the voices of those affected by the outcomes.
- Involving aims to work directly with the public throughout the engagement process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered in decision-making processes. This format goes beyond consultation by actively involving stakeholders in the development and evaluation of proposals. Involving methods include participatory workshops, co-design sessions, and collaborative planning meetings. These approaches enable stakeholders to contribute their knowledge and expertise, participate in problem-solving activities, and influence the design and implementation of solutions. By involving the public, decision-makers can ensure that their policies and projects are more closely aligned with the needs and values of the community, leading to greater acceptance and support for the outcomes.
- Collaborating implies partnering with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. This format is characterised by a deeper and more sustained involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Collaborating methods include joint working groups, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and advisory panels. These approaches facilitate shared decision-making, where stakeholders and decision-makers work together to explore options, assess their feasibility, and co-create solutions. Collaboration builds strong relationships among stakeholders, leverages their collective expertise, and fosters a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the outcomes. By collaborating, decision-makers can develop more innovative and effective solutions that reflect the diverse perspectives and interests of the community.
- Empowering happens when the involved participants acquire certain skills and knowledge in the process of engagement. This format focuses on building the capacity of stakeholders to participate effectively in decision-making processes.

Empowering methods include capacity-building workshops, training programs, and participatory action research. These approaches provide stakeholders with the tools and knowledge they need to engage confidently and competently in discussions, analysis, and decision-making activities. Empowering stakeholders enhances their ability to contribute meaningfully to the process and ensures that their voices are heard and valued. By building the capacity of stakeholders, decision-makers can create a more inclusive and equitable engagement process, where all participants have the opportunity to influence outcomes and shape the future of their communities.

- Direct decision takes place when final decision-making is in the hands of the public. This format represents the highest form of public participation, where stakeholders are given the authority to make binding decisions on specific issues. Direct decision methods include referenda, participatory budgeting, and citizen juries. These approaches empower the public to take control of important decisions, ensuring that the outcomes reflect the collective will and preferences of the community. By placing decision-making power in the hands of the public, direct decision processes promote democratic governance, accountability, and transparency. They also encourage active citizenship and foster a sense of responsibility and ownership among stakeholders.

Distinguishing these formats is essential for designing effective and inclusive participation processes that meet the needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. Each level of engagement - from dialogue and consulting to involving, collaborating, empowering, and direct decision - offers unique benefits and challenges. By understanding and applying these different levels of engagement, decision-makers can create more responsive, transparent, and democratic processes that lead to better-informed and more widely accepted outcomes. Engaging stakeholders at appropriate levels ensures that their voices are heard, their knowledge is valued, and their contributions shape the decisions that impact their lives and communities.

## 2.3 Live Workshop in preparation of German Test Case: on moderation techniques

On 20 May 2024, a workshop was held in Berlin focusing on effective moderation techniques for participatory events. The workshop aimed to enhance the skills of moderators in managing participatory processes, ensuring productive and inclusive engagements. A key focus of the workshop was on communication strategies inspired by Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model, which emphasises empathetic listening and clear, compassionate expression. This chapter provides an overview of the workshop, the methods discussed, and the key takeaways for enhancing moderation in participatory events.

The primary objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Equip moderators with effective communication tools based on Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC).



2. Enhance moderators' abilities to create safe and inclusive environments for participants.
3. Develop strategies for managing conflicts and fostering constructive dialogue.
4. Share best practices and practical tips for facilitating participatory events, specifically in regard to the German test case in Berlin.

Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication is a communication framework designed to improve understanding and cooperation among individuals. NVC is based on four key components:

1. Observations: Stating what is happening without judgment or evaluation.
2. Feelings: Expressing how we feel in relation to what we observe.
3. Needs: Identifying the underlying needs that are connected to our feelings.
4. Requests: Making specific, actionable requests to address our needs.

By focusing on these components, NVC aims to foster empathy and mutual respect, creating a foundation for effective and compassionate communication.

NVC is specifically helpful as a moderation technique. Often in group discussions participants tend to communicate positions of a certain kind, e.g. pro or against something. However, while positions are only the outcome of any thought process, with participation we want to get deeper than this as we need to find common ground between differing positions. Thus, to observe what was happening in a discussion and to aim for the level of needs, as indicated by the shown feelings, is a key to work to the core. For example, if there is no consensus on implementing a specific measure during a climate-related participative exercise, it is worth it working on what is important to the participants on a level of needs in order to find similarities and create innovative solutions from there.

A fundamental aspect of effective moderation is creating a safe and inclusive space, where all participants feel valued and heard. The workshop emphasised the importance of establishing ground rules at the beginning of an event, such as:

- Respecting diverse opinions and perspectives.
- Allowing everyone a chance to speak without interruption.
- Maintaining confidentiality of personal stories shared during the event.

Moderators were encouraged to model empathetic listening and to use NVC techniques to address any breaches of these rules, ensuring that the environment remains conducive to open dialogue.

Empathetic listening is a core component of NVC. It involves:

- Fully focusing on the speaker without planning a response.
- Reflecting back what the speaker has said to ensure understanding.
- Acknowledging the speaker's feelings and needs.

In relation to the above-mentioned objectives, empathetic listening opens the moderator to fully understand what was said and to not bring one's own judgement and thoughts into the process.

Effective moderators need to express themselves clearly and compassionately. The workshop highlighted techniques for using "I" statements to communicate personal feelings and needs without blaming or criticizing others. For example, instead of saying, "You are always interrupting," a moderator might say, "I feel frustrated when I'm interrupted because I need to ensure everyone has a chance to speak."

Conflicts may arise during participatory events, and effective moderation requires the ability to manage these situations constructively. The workshop provided strategies for using NVC to address conflicts, including:

- Identifying the root causes of the conflict by understanding the needs and feelings of all parties involved.
- Facilitating a dialogue where each party can express their perspective and listen to others.
- Working collaboratively to find mutually satisfying solutions.

In conflict resolution moderators might get stressed themselves. Thus, NVC is again a tool to manage one's own stress. Even without communicating it to the participants, moderators can work with the four steps simply to clarify their own state of mind and what would be good to do next.

Encouraging active participation from all attendees is crucial for the success of participatory events. The workshop discussed methods for engaging quieter participants and ensuring that dominant voices do not overshadow others. Techniques included:

- Directly inviting quieter participants to share their thoughts.
- Using small group discussions to give everyone a chance to contribute.
- Rotating speaking opportunities to prevent monopolization by a few individuals.
- Having participants in small group settings first write their thoughts on cards with subsequently are pinned on a wall by the moderator, ensuring that all voices in the group were heard.

The workshop on moderation techniques for participatory events provided valuable insights and practical skills for moderators. The key takeaways include:

- Empathy and Active Listening: Empathetic listening is essential for understanding participants' perspectives and fostering a collaborative environment.
- Clear Communication: Using "I" statements and making specific, actionable requests helps to prevent misunderstandings and reduce conflicts.
- Conflict Resolution: Addressing conflicts with empathy and a focus on underlying needs can lead to constructive solutions and maintain group harmony.

- **Inclusive Participation:** Actively encouraging participation from all attendees ensures diverse perspectives are heard and valued.
- **Safe Environment:** Establishing and maintaining a safe space is critical for open and honest dialogue.

This workshop on moderation techniques, with a focus on Marshall Rosenberg's Non-violent Communication, provided moderators with essential tools and strategies for enhancing participatory events. By applying these methods, moderators can create more inclusive, empathetic, and effective engagements, leading to better outcomes and more meaningful participation. Continued training and practice in these techniques will further strengthen moderators' abilities to facilitate successful participatory processes.

## 3 Review Workshop as ex-post Capacity Building

The review workshop, conducted on 19 June 2024 in Budapest, focused on evaluating the REAL DEAL test cases in participatory and deliberative processes (Task 3.4 testcases at national and EU level and on the European Semester). The objective was to reflect on what went well, what was learned, and what needs improvement. Such learnings are key elements for capacity building: learnings will be created through reflection and comparison between test cases across the countries. This chapter synthesises the good practices and lessons learned, focusing on six dimensions chosen for evaluation:

- topic selection/framing,
- recruitment,
- knowledge input,
- moderation techniques,
- outcomes/recommendations,
- and logistical/organisational issues.

The workshop aimed to conduct a retrospective on the undertaken participatory events to understand their successes and areas for improvement. This involved examining the procedures and outcomes of these events, identifying effective practices, as well as obstacles, and suggesting enhancements for future initiatives.

### **Topic Selection/framing**

Good practices in topic selection include choosing politically relevant topics developed in collaboration with decision-makers to ensure their significance for citizens. Pre-testing topics with citizens and ensuring that the topic target and format fit together are crucial. It is beneficial to allow citizens to set the agenda and to work with expert panels on topic selection. Linking topics and focusing on fewer, more impactful topics also contribute to more meaningful engagements.

### **Recruitment**

Effective recruitment strategies involve using external recruiting agencies with a dependable track record and providing incentives for participants. The timing of recruitment should be appropriate, i.e. recruitment takes usually longer than expected. For the recruitment process, participants should be given clear guidance on the content and format of the process. Maintaining an ongoing panel of citizens for participatory practices and having clear instructions for the recruitment agency are essential. Providing childcare does help in the recruitment process. With group Delphis, knowing the background of experts coming to group sessions is crucial.

### **Knowledge Input**

Before the event, knowledge input should be short, accessible, inclusive, neutral, diversified, and focused on both formats and topics. Formats such as videos, info-packs, discussions, testimonies, and webinars are effective. During the event, keeping participants informed with experts within groups or plenaries, using moderation techniques to balance knowledge differences, and leveraging input from other formats are important for effective knowledge input. A learning by participants of the workshop was also that participants should be given time to gather knowledge during the event, not only with written material beforehand. Generally, the preparation of knowledge material takes again more time and effort as expected.

### **Moderation Techniques**

Moderation should be clear about the mandate and objectives, create a safe space, and include fun in deliberation. Creative and empathetic approaches, sufficient time for discussions, professional moderators, and ritualised procedures for group work to feel safe and speak up are essential for effective moderation. Further, the number of moderators and co-moderators should be sufficient for the process, aiming at rather more than less moderators. A protocol on how to train moderators would be advisable as well to ensure high quality throughout the process.

### **Outcomes/Recommendations**

The clarity of how results will be used and appreciated is vital. There should be a meaningful and concrete follow-up on recommendations with policymakers. Focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of recommendations, allowing more deliberation time, and ensuring a co-creative process are crucial for effective outcomes and recommendations.

### **Logistical/Organizational Issues**

Reimbursement and appropriate catering are crucial logistical considerations. Responsibilities and tasks of the organising team should be decided early on, and future research should be conducted in natural places. Choosing the venue wisely, considering hybrid modes, visiting the venue beforehand, and preparing for accessibility (e.g., providing childcare) are important for effective logistics and organisation.

The review workshop highlighted several good practices and lessons learned in the realm of participatory and deliberative processes. Effective topic selection, recruitment strategies, knowledge input, moderation techniques, and logistical arrangements are crucial for successful participatory events. Moreover, understanding the various levels of engagement—from dialogue and consulting to involving, collaborating, empowering, and direct decision-making—ensures that participatory processes are designed to meet the needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. This was specifically considered

during the workshop discussions on different and similar objectives alongside the categories displayed above. By incorporating these practices and principles, future participatory initiatives can be more inclusive, transparent, and impactful, leading to better-informed and more widely accepted outcomes.

A specific emphasis during the workshop was set on the exchange of experiences made in the different countries and governance levels. This discussion was very helpful for all participants, as in the exchange of similarities and differences along these mentioned categories, learning and capacity building occurred.

## 4 Moderation techniques

As part of the capacity building activities of REAL DEAL (task 3.3), Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) developed an online interactive course on feminist moderation techniques. The primary aim of this course is to teach moderators of deliberative processes on how to set up safe and accessible spaces, as well as specific techniques on how to spot and challenge inequalities. The course provides theory, followed by scenarios and interactive quizzes, so participants can learn on their own.

Various online platforms that offer courses on moderation techniques, including LinkedIn, Coursera, and the FAO eLearning academy, were examined in desk research. This allowed starting brainstorming regarding the content and format for the course. Through a mapping process the major target group of the course was identified: the REAL DEAL partners and the test case facilitators. However, other users, such as those potentially interested in taking the course after the end of the REAL DEAL project were taken into consideration.

Comparing existing similar moderation courses and looking at respective relevant module topics including issues of feminism and diversity enabled WECF to develop a curriculum that covers key aspects of feminist moderation techniques, aligning with the aims of the REAL DEAL project. A first draft of the modules' content was developed with "Leyla Ali contributing illustrations". The content and illustrations were compiled, and WECF collaborated with relevant partners within the REAL DEAL consortium for feedback. This feedback was incorporated as various partners implemented the test cases.

While the course is ready-to-go, it still needs to be officially launched and promoted for use by partners and other interested parties. An effective use can only be guaranteed by upgrading the course from the current free version platform to a paid one, otherwise it is neither appealing for potential users nor for the consortium. The free version does not allow users to save their progress; this feature is available in a paid version allowing participants to take the course (about 2-3 hours) at their own pace. The paid version also automatically issues certificates to those participants who completed the final quiz. Furthermore, this upgraded version will provide valuable data on participants and allow the consortium to showcase the project's results and impact on stakeholders, in particular regarding their capacity for gender expertise.

**Overview** of **Course**  
(<https://iseazy.com/dl/a1db3da36964477798e524aa809e8b5a#/slide/AxbqKAtk3>)

### **Module 1: Welcome and Intro**

- Outline of course
- How to use the software
- What is feminist moderation?

### **Module 2: Creating safe and accessible spaces**

- Introduction

- Safe spaces
- Accessibility

### **Module 3: Feminist moderation techniques**

- Introduction and overview of key techniques
- Master suppression techniques
- Polarisation, echo chambers and sensitive topics
- De-escalation techniques and understanding emotionality

### **Module 4: Online Feminist Moderation**

- Introduction
- Online accessibility
- Inclusive discussions
- Safety and privacy

### **Conclusion and next steps**

- Conclusion
- Quiz
- Feedback form

## **5 Further ongoing activities**

Participants of the REAL DEAL summit in Budapest (19 – 21 June 2024), and specifically the participants of the internal review workshop were committed in continuing the dialogue and reflection on the participatory exercises. For this purpose, online-meetings during the autumn 2024 will be set-up.

The objective of these meetings is to engage in a shared dialogue with participants on the do's and don't's and the learnings they made with conducting the respective testcase. This ex-post capacity building is extremely helpful, as the country teams had similar conditions and could exchange ideas in a safe and non-judgmental way.

It is intended to offer three online sessions between September and December 2024.

## **6 Conclusion**

In modern democratic societies, engaging citizens in deliberative processes is crucial for ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard and that policy decisions reflect the collective will. Recognising this need, the REAL DEAL consortium conducted testcases on deliberative processes and included a capacity building programme in order to generate comparable and high-quality results. The capacity building aimed at actors involved in organising and implementing experimental deliberative activities, including project partners, third parties, sub-contractors, volunteers, civil society and research organisations, with a special emphasis on building capacity around gender equality and gender-responsive communication.



Capacity building is a vital component for fostering effective, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes, particularly in democratic processes and citizen engagement. It empowers individuals and organisations by enhancing their skills and knowledge, enabling them to perform their roles more effectively and confidently. For facilitators, moderators, and other actors, capacity-building activities offer opportunities for professional growth, teaching new techniques and methodologies that can enhance their performance.

Effective capacity building promotes meaningful participation by ensuring that involved actors and stakeholders, as well as citizens, are well-informed and equipped to engage in deliberative processes. This leads to more thoughtful discussions and well-rounded decision-making. It also fosters inclusivity, allowing all participants to engage equally, regardless of their background or prior experience, thus helping to make the processes more representative and democratic.

As the REAL DEAL project aims at promoting participatory methods beyond its lifecycle, the sustainability of capacity-building efforts is a significant focus. By empowering stakeholders, capacity building enhances community resilience, making individuals and organisations better prepared to handle future challenges and adapt to changes.

Gender equality is a critical focus of capacity building. Initiatives aimed at gender equality ensure that all voices, especially those of women and marginalised groups, are heard and valued. Training in gender-responsive communication and practices helps reduce gender biases and promotes equality, fostering an inclusive and respectful deliberative process.

Capacity building also helps build trust and legitimacy by promoting transparency and educating stakeholders about the principles of deliberation. When stakeholders are well-trained and informed, the deliberative process gains legitimacy, as participants and observers are more likely to trust and accept outcomes conducted competently and fairly.

The process of capacity building involves several key steps to ensure effectiveness. The first step is a needs assessment to identify gaps in skills, knowledge, and resources among stakeholders. This is followed by the planning and design phase, where clear objectives are set, and a comprehensive strategy is developed. The implementation phase includes various workshops. Evaluation measures the impact and effectiveness of the capacity-building program, incorporating feedback to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

Thus, capacity building is essential for enhancing democratic participation and citizen engagement. By empowering stakeholders with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources, capacity building promotes effective, inclusive, and sustainable deliberative processes. The steps involved in capacity building, from needs assessment to sustainability, provide a structured approach to achieving these goals and contribute to the overall health and resilience of democratic societies.

This report summarised the activities undertaken within the REAL DEAL project, structured into capacity building before the event, as ex-post evaluation, and ongoing activities beyond the timeline of this deliverable.



The capacity-building initiative began with two online workshops in fall 2022, aimed at ensuring a common grounding for all participatory exercises and fostering discussions on needs and further capacity-building activities.

Workshop 1: Focused on the evaluation of participatory events, this workshop addressed dimensions such as inclusion, closure, fairness, competence, transparency, and efficiency. Participants discussed the importance of diverse and balanced representation, fair selection processes, and the need for adequate communicative and issue-related proficiency.

Workshop 2: This workshop focused on distinguishing levels of engagement methods and their application across various levels, including policy formulation, program development, project definition, and research activity. The workshop emphasised tailored engagement strategies to ensure that policies, programmes, projects, and research activities are responsive to the broader community's needs and perspectives.

The workshop in Berlin focused on effective moderation techniques for participatory events, with a key focus on Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model. The workshop aimed to equip moderators with communication tools to create safe and inclusive environments, manage conflicts, and foster constructive dialogue.

The retrospective workshop in June focused on evaluating the REAL DEAL test cases, reflecting on successes, lessons learned, and areas for improvement. The workshop examined dimensions such as topic selection, recruitment, knowledge input, moderation techniques, outcomes/recommendations, and logistical/organisational issues.

Key takeaways included the importance of effective topic selection, recruitment strategies, knowledge input, moderation techniques, and logistical arrangements. The workshop emphasised understanding various levels of engagement: from dialogue and direct decision-making to designing inclusive and effective participatory processes.

As part of the capacity-building effort, Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) developed an online interactive course on feminist moderation techniques. The course aims to teach moderators how to set up safe and accessible spaces and challenge inequalities. Modules cover topics such as creating safe spaces, key moderation techniques, and online feminist moderation.

Participants committed to continuing the dialogue and reflection on participatory exercises through online meetings in autumn 2024. These meetings aim to engage participants in shared discussions on best practices and lessons learned, providing a platform for ongoing capacity building and improvement.

By incorporating these practices and principles, future participatory initiatives can be more inclusive, transparent, and impactful, leading to better-informed and widely accepted outcomes.

Thus, the REAL DEAL project's capacity building initiatives have yielded several significant outcomes that demonstrate the effectiveness of the structured approach employed throughout the project. This following section interprets the main results,

highlighting the impact on participants and stakeholders, the quality of deliberative processes, and the broader implications for democratic engagement.

## **Enhanced Skills and Knowledge**

### **1. Empowerment through Training:**

The capacity-building activities have significantly empowered stakeholders by enhancing their skills and knowledge. Through structured workshops and training sessions, participants gained confidence and competence in their roles within deliberative processes. The focus on effective communication techniques, such as Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC), has equipped moderators with the tools to manage discussions constructively, fostering a collaborative and empathetic environment.

### **2. Inclusivity and Fairness:**

The emphasis on gender equality and gender-responsive communication has promoted inclusivity and fairness in deliberative processes. By training stakeholders to recognize and address gender biases, the project has ensured that all voices, especially those of marginalised groups, are heard and valued. This approach has led to more balanced and representative discussions, reflecting the diverse perspectives within the community.

## **Improved Quality of Deliberative Events**

### **1. Effective Moderation Techniques:**

The adoption of NVC principles in moderation has been a cornerstone of the project's success. Moderators trained in these techniques were able to create safe and inclusive spaces, manage conflicts effectively, and encourage active participation. This has resulted in more meaningful and respectful dialogues, where participants feel valued and heard.

### **2. Structured Evaluation and Feedback:**

The comprehensive focus on evaluation indicators developed during the project has allowed for continuous improvement of deliberative events. By assessing various dimensions such as inclusion, fairness, competence, and efficiency, the project has identified best practices and areas for enhancement. This iterative process of evaluation and feedback has ensured that each event builds on the lessons learned from previous ones, leading to progressively better outcomes.

## **Sustainable Impact on Democratic Participation**

### **1. Long-Term Capacity Building:**

One of the key strengths of the REAL DEAL project is its focus on sustainability. The capacity building efforts are designed to have a lasting impact, promoting participatory methods beyond the project's lifecycle. By empowering local communities and stakeholders, the project has enhanced community resilience, preparing individuals and organizations to handle future challenges and adapt to changes.

### **2. Building Trust and Legitimacy:**

The transparent and inclusive approach to capacity building has helped build trust and legitimacy in the deliberative processes. Well-trained and informed stakeholders and participants are more likely to trust and accept the outcomes of these processes. This trust is crucial for the legitimacy of the decisions made, as participants and observers perceive the processes as fair and competent.

## **Key Outcomes and Recommendations**

### **1. Quality and Effectiveness of Deliberative Events:**

The focus on effective moderation and inclusive communication has improved the quality and effectiveness of deliberative events. The adoption of best practices and continuous feedback has ensured that events are well-organized, fair, and inclusive, leading to better outcomes and recommendations.

### **2. Comprehensive Protocol for Participation:**

The development of a comprehensive protocol for meaningful citizens' participation and deliberation is one of the significant achievements of the project. This protocol provides a valuable framework for designing and implementing deliberative processes, ensuring that they are inclusive, transparent, and effective.

## **Broader Implications for Democratic Engagement**

### **1. Setting a Precedent:**

The REAL DEAL project has set a precedent for how capacity-building initiatives can enhance democratic participation. The structured approach, emphasis on inclusivity, and focus on sustainable impact provide a valuable model for other initiatives aiming to promote citizen engagement in democratic processes.

### **2. Promoting Participatory Methods:**

By demonstrating the effectiveness of participatory methods, the project has made a strong case for their broader adoption. The positive outcomes achieved through the REAL DEAL project highlight the potential of deliberative democracy to enhance policy decisions and reflect the collective will of the community.

### **3. Contribution to Democratic Resilience:**

The enhanced skills and knowledge gained through the project contribute to the overall resilience of democratic societies. Well-informed and empowered stakeholders are better equipped to engage in democratic processes, making these societies more robust and adaptable to future challenges.

The REAL DEAL project's capacity-building initiative has successfully enhanced the skills and knowledge of stakeholders, improved the quality and effectiveness of deliberative events, and promoted sustainable democratic participation. The structured approach, focus on inclusivity, and commitment to continuous improvement have yielded significant outcomes, setting a valuable precedent for future initiatives. By fostering a culture of meaningful citizen engagement, the project has contributed to the overall health and resilience of democratic societies, ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard and valued in the decision-making process.

