



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

### D4.1 Synthesis report

WP4 – Perspectives for the future: development of a comprehensive protocol for stakeholder and citizens' engagement and deliberation

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## 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 to 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

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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
	TRILATERAL RESEARCH	TRI IE	Ireland
	WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH	WR	Netherlands
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## Executive summary

This synthesis report was prepared for the EU-funded REAL DEAL project. In the project, participatory sessions with citizens and stakeholders have been organised in 13 European countries. This report analyses these sessions using 14 criteria for meaningfulness.

The ambitious goals of the European Green Deal (EGD) to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent in the world, asks for an active engagement of citizens, stakeholders, and experts in decision-making processes. There are various ways in which people can be included for this purpose. Many different formats are used at the local, regional, national, and pan-European level to include the perspective of citizens, stakeholders, and experts in decision-making processes. As each format has its own goal, target group, advantages, and disadvantages, there is not one format that fits every situation. The following four formats have been tested in the REAL DEAL project:

- **Focus groups** for the involvement of structurally excluded groups.
- **Citizen assemblies** as a way to include randomly selected citizens in deliberative sessions.
- **Roundtables** for bringing together various stakeholder groups.
- **Delphi panels** to structurally include experts' opinion on the subject at hand.

These formats were tested in 13 European countries at sub-national and national level. In addition, deliberative events were organised at the pan-European level. Also, combinations of formats were tested. All participatory sessions focused on three topics highly relevant for the EGD: food & agriculture, green finance, and mobility. This synthesis report describes the evaluation of the application (and combinations of) of these formats based on 14 evaluation criteria (see Box 1). These evaluation criteria derived from earlier work in the REAL DEAL project.

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| - (potential for coming to) Common understanding | - Interests of future actors    |
| - (potential) Effect on policymaking             | - Interests of non-human actors |
| - Efficiency                                     | - Meaningfulness                |
| - Empowerment                                    | - Privacy                       |
| - Equity   | - Representation                |
| - Fairness                                       | - Responsiveness                |
| - Inclusion                                      | - Transparency                  |

*Box 1 14 evaluation criteria*

The evaluation was carried out to assess what works best under which conditions. For this purpose, research questions have been formulated (see below). Questionnaires, interviews, filled-in documents, and observations were used to collect data. The data generated were validated during the REAL DEAL summit and in a Delphi panel. The key take-aways in relation to the formats, evaluation criteria and research questions are described below. The key findings of this evaluation will be used for the development of a protocol that provides guidance and tools for organising inclusive, deliberative processes for decision making.

### Key takeaways on the evaluation of the formats

All formats and combination of formats mentioned above were first evaluated. The findings were then reviewed across formats. For each format, **different criteria worked out best and different criteria are considered to be most relevant**, as seen in Table 1. This table shows that for every format, criteria that are seen as one of the most important, also worked out best. Other criteria that did not work out that well, like (potential) effect on policy making, efficiency, and interests of non-humans or future actors, were not the (main) focus point for most sessions and require more specific attention to be incorporated.

Table 1 Criteria that are most relevant and that worked out best according to the evaluation (for each format in alphabetic order)

Format	Most relevant criteria	Criteria that worked out best
Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>- Equity</li> <li>- Inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>- Inclusion</li> <li>- Meaningfulness</li> </ul>
Citizen assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion</li> <li>- Representation</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>- Fairness</li> <li>- Inclusion</li> </ul>
Roundtable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairness</li> <li>- Representation</li> <li>- Responsiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairness</li> <li>- Inclusion</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>
Delphi panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (potential to come to) common understanding</li> <li>- Representation</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (potential to come to) common understanding</li> <li>- (potential) effect on policy making</li> <li>- Fairness</li> </ul>
European deliberative event	<i>(as these events can take many forms and have different goals, the most relevant criteria can differ)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equity</li> <li>- Fairness</li> <li>- Meaningfulness</li> </ul>

Members of a Delphi panel were asked to comment on initial findings of the evaluation in the synthesis report. They were asked what they considered to be the most relevant criteria for participatory sessions. Unanimously, they selected the criteria (in random order) inclusion, transparency, and empowerment. According to these Delphi panel members, independent of what type of participatory, deliberative session is organised, these three criteria are the most relevant to take into consideration in order to organise a meaningful session.

#### Reflection on evaluation criteria

The 14 evaluation criteria mentioned above were used to evaluate the participatory sessions. During the analysis, it became clear that **some criteria overlap** to a certain extent, like inclusion, fairness, and equity. However, the researchers consider it important to stick to the initial list of the 14 criteria as all criteria cover a different crucial aspect of meaningful citizen and stakeholder participation. And, as these are **theoretical criteria**, another step needs to be made in order for them to be **applied in practice**.

#### Research questions

The REAL DEAL project was guided by research questions, on which a reflection is given in this report. The first research question asks what are the most suitable formats, methods and tool that can help to overcome the potential conflict between valuing democratic principles and respecting planetary boundaries. The evaluation shows that this tension is not noticed in the participatory sessions that are organised. However, to ensure that this tension does not come up, it is important to **include various perspectives**, also perspectives that are considered to be extreme. Furthermore, it is highly relevant that there is **enough space for people to disagree** with each other to ensure that minority views are respected. In this project, Delphi panels are combined with citizen assemblies to specifically address this aspect. Furthermore, the evaluation findings show that **citizens feel more prepared when results of a Delphi panel are shared** with them. Additionally, it was observed that **context is highly relevant** as the perception of citizens on climate policies and nature protection differed considerably. It is therefore important that people who are most affected by policies related to the EGD have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making processes.

The second research question aimed at finding out how to assure that representatives of disadvantaged groups are an integral part of participatory processes, and how conflicting

positions can be fairly integrated. **Specific formats, like focus groups**, can be used to include disadvantaged groups in society. When this is done, it is crucial to ensure these **participants are heard and respected** and that their perceptions are documented. When other formats, like citizen assemblies or roundtables, are used, it is crucial to ensure there is a **critical mass of structurally excluded people**. This can be done, for example, by oversampling.

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## List of acronyms/abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CCA	Climate Citizen Assembly
EGD	European Green Deal
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
REAL DEAL	The project, 'Reshaping European Advances towards green Leadership through DELiberative Approaches and Learning'
RRI	Responsible Research and Innovation
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
WP	Work Package

Table 2 List of acronyms/abbreviations

## Glossary of terms

Term	Explanation
Deliberation	The term deliberation refers to the style and procedure of decision-making and is independent from who is deliberating. For a discussion to be called deliberative, it must rely on a mutual exchange of arguments and reflections rather than on decision-making based on the status of the participants, sublime strategies of persuasion or socio-political pressure. Deliberative processes should include a debate about the relative weight of



	each argument and a transparent procedure for balancing pros and cons.
Participation	The term participation refers to different mechanisms and processes for members of the public to represent their interests, express opinions and exert influence in policymaking, decision-making and other official processes. Participation is often based on legal frameworks granting rights to participate.
Participatory session	In this report, the term 'participatory session' or 'session' is used to refer to the various participative and deliberative sessions that were organised.
Focus group	The goal of focus groups is to represent all values and preferences in proportion to their share in the affected population. The difference between this and roundtables is that focus groups tend to take the form of group interviews, and participants of focus groups are lay citizens. In the REAL DEAL project, focus groups aim to specifically include people from structurally excluded groups.
Citizen Assembly	The term citizen assembly (CA) is utilised as generic term for all participatory institutions which brings together an inclusive group of lay citizens who deliberate together on a public issue so as to exert a public influence. Here, random sampling is essential to ensure that citizen assemblies are descriptively representative.
Roundtable	The main objective of roundtables is to represent values and preferences in proportion to their share in the affected population. Stakeholders participate in deliberations where the ideal outcomes are to find win-win solutions or find solutions in which at the minimum, nobody's interests is violated.
Delphi panel	In Delphi panels – also named Group Delphis – a group of selected experts come together for one or two days to discuss a topic in a formalised format, identify pros and cons regarding the options proposed, and rate them on different scales.
Citizen deliberative event	A deliberative event can be many things. In this report, when references are made to 'deliberative events', this is describing events that were organised with the aim of testing innovative methods, or with the aim to include citizens in debates around financial topics of the European Semester. The difference between these and citizen assemblies is that in these events, no random selection took place.

Table 3 Glossary of terms

# 1 Background to the synthesis report

The European Green Deal (EGD) is one of the most ambitious policy frameworks of the European Union (EU). This framework, which aims to make the EU the first climate-neutral region of the world, outlines many changes that need to happen for the EU to become climate neutral. These drastic changes do not happen by only changing policies or laws, their achievement also depends on the (early) involvement of citizens. However, the trust of citizens and confidence in European institutions is low, with an average of 49% in 2023 (Eurostat, 2024). Some policies of the EGD are being criticised by specific stakeholders, such as the Farm to Fork policies that led to protests amongst European farmers (Malmström, 2024). Besides that, so-called ‘soft-Euroscepticism’ is increasing, which refers to those who are concerned about the way European integration is developing (European Commission, 2023).

Actively engaging citizens and stakeholders in transitions like the EGD could ensure for more trust in governmental institutions, whilst improving the quality and relevance of decision-making (Bidwell & Schweizer, 2021), which is a prerequisite for achieving a fair, just, and effective transition (Huttunen et al., 2022). While there have been some experiments with citizen deliberation or participation at the national and at EU level, there is no systematic application of citizen participation and deliberation in the context of the EGD in EU decision-making processes yet. Advocates of deliberative democracy argue that deliberative processes “provide the best chance of finding effective and legitimate climate policies” (Lenzi, 2019, p.313). Especially because various EGD policies potentially lead to a polarisation in society, citizen participation and deliberation can therefore function as instruments to cope with these effects. The EGD provides an opportunity to deploy innovative formats, methods, and tools for citizens’ and stakeholders’ participation and deliberation in decision-making processes.

The REAL DEAL project aims to reshape citizens’ and stakeholders’ active participation and deliberation for the green and just transition by developing, testing, and validating various formats, methods, and tools to propel deliberative democracy. The eventual goal of the project is to develop a protocol (guidelines + toolkit)<sup>1</sup> for meaningful citizens’ participation and deliberation that includes recommendations on how to design and structure deliberative and participatory processes in the context of the EGD. This deliverable is part of Work package 4 (WP4) and describes the outcome of Task 4.1: “Prepare a synthesis report about stakeholder and citizen deliberation for the EGD”. The goal of this task is to collect the insights from other WPs and to provide a practical review of the various formats and combination of formats that have been tested in the project.

The project is built around six work packages (WPs) with their own focus. WP1 provided a state-of-the-art assessment of deliberative and participatory approaches that are relevant to the EGD. WP2 creates and mobilises pan-European stakeholder networks and a European Civil Society Forum for the green and just transition. In WP3, innovative deliberative formats, methods and tools were tested and validated in test-cases at EU and national level. WP4 works on the development of a protocol for citizens’ deliberation and participation in the context of the EGD. WP5 focusses on dissemination of the projects’ results, communication, awareness-raising and capacity building, and the task of WP6 is project management. All these WPs are linked and work together to achieve the goals of the REAL DEAL project.

## *Box 2 Description of Work packages REAL DEAL project*

<sup>1</sup> The protocol that will be developed in REAL DEAL will include a guideline and toolkit for organising meaningful participative or deliberative processes. In this report, references to this document will be made with ‘Protocol’.



Task 4.1 builds upon the assessment of deliberative and participatory approaches as performed in WP1 and the participatory sessions as organised in WP3, which are the subject of evaluation for Task 4.1. A comprehensive and integrative overview of the lessons learned will be given and will serve as a basis of the development of the protocol.

The overall goal of the activities performed under Task 4.1 is to increase our understanding about what works under which conditions when aiming to contribute to meaningful stakeholder and citizen participation and deliberation in the context of the EGD. In that light, an evaluation strategy was developed, and the formats that were tested in WP3 were evaluated.

Section 1.1 in this Chapter 1 provides a theoretical background on deliberative democracy and section 1.2 describes and justifies which formats are tested in this project. Section 1.3 outlines the research questions. Chapter 2 describes the methodological approach for the evaluation of the formats that were tested in various participatory sessions. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the participatory sessions that are organised in WP3, which were the subject of evaluation for this synthesis report. Chapter 4 reflects on the key findings of the evaluation of the formats. A description of how the data is validated is given in Chapter 5. The synthesis of findings is provided in Chapter 6, where the lessons learned throughout this evaluation are reflected on. The next chapter, Chapter 7, reflects on the limitations of this study, whilst Chapter 8 provides final conclusions.

## 1.1 Theoretical background on deliberative democracy

The term deliberation refers to the style and procedure of decision-making and as such is independent of who are deliberating (Stern & Fineberg, 1996; Chambers, 2003; Renn, 2008). For a process to be called deliberative, it must rely on a mutual exchange of arguments and reflections rather than on decision-making based on the status of the participants, subliminal strategies of persuasion, socio-political pressure, or following policy advocacy goals. Deliberative processes should include a debate about the relative weight of each argument and a transparent procedure for balancing pros and cons (Habermas, 1989; Tuler & Webler, 1999; Webler, 1995; Dryzek et al., 2019; Bächtiger & Beste, 2017). Scholars consider deliberation as a “mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern. Defining it this way minimizes the positive valence that is associated with the word ‘deliberation’ itself, so that we can then speak of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ deliberation without ‘bad deliberation’ inherently being a contradiction” (Bächtiger et al. 2018, 2). Seen this light, deliberative democracy is be considered any practice of democracy that foregrounds deliberation as a key element of democracy. Deliberation is first and foremost a style of exchanging arguments and coming to an agreement on the validity of statements and inferences. This does not mean that participants of deliberative processes need to reach an agreement on specific policies or outcomes. Rather, the argument is that participants recognize the validity of truth claims, e.g. against the backdrop of scientific evidence, but also personal experience. Using deliberative formats does not necessarily include stakeholders or public involvement. Deliberation can be organised in closed circles (such as the political systems in ancient Athens), as well as in public forums. Such deliberative processes practiced within highly restricted subsets of societies (e.g., only men or representatives of certain ethnic, political, or religious factions) have been the norm for centuries and continue to be the status quo (Niemeyer, 2014).

The combination of deliberation and democracy requires that the bodies in which deliberation takes place are legitimised by democratic principles, such as fairness, thoroughness, diligence, educational and substantive nature (Habermas, 1996, Fishkin, 2011), and due processes. Deliberative democracy conceptualises governance as “effective, inclusive, and transformative communication encompassing citizens and policymakers” (Dryzek et al. 2019,

1). Democratic deliberative forms of exchange can be organised in parliaments, ministries, parties, and committees if they have a clear democratic mandate in the locally recognised forms of democracy. The 1990s saw a strong deliberative turn in democracy and democratic theory (Dryzek, 2000) in which democratic legitimacy is based on the ability to participate in effective deliberation. Deliberative democracy should be pluralistic, embracing the necessity to communicate across differences without erasing differences, thus adhering to criteria, such as inclusivity, transparency, fairness, and others, which scholars consider key for ensuring good quality of deliberative and participatory processes (OECD, 2022). Thus, deliberation should be pluralistic, not only aiming for consensus, but a mutual recognition of the legitimacy of different values judgements held by the participants, and strive for meta-consensus (Curato et al., 2017).

The opportunity for engagement by all sectors of society in governance is called participatory. A distinction can be made between rights-based processes which recognize that all of society has a stake in the success of transformation processes associated with the EGD, yet specific collective or individual societal actors have a greater stake in certain policies than other actors. The participation of these actors in decision-making processes is often backed by formal, legal processes. In addition to these rights-based processes, deliberative and consultative processes strive for citizen and interest group engagement that is less strictly defined in regulation (Stec et al. 2023). Democracy should not be reduced to electoral accountability of those in government. Today, the challenges to representative democracy bring attention to other democratic qualities such as participatory, strong, discursive, communicative and welfare democracy (della Porta, 2019). Two main pillars of representative democracy (delegation and majoritarian voting) have been in tension with other democratic qualities (such as creating multiple opportunities for participation beyond elections). The main critique of majoritarian decision-making is that it may jeopardise the rights of minorities and provides no logical base for assuming that majority-held preferences may also be wiser (della Porta, 2019).

If, in addition to being democratic, deliberative, and participatory, the process of decision making also provides genuine opportunities for participation from the full spectrum of social demographics affected by the issue being deliberated (e.g., structurally excluded and historically discriminated members of society), then it can be considered inclusive and representative as well (Chwalisz, 2021; Fishkin, 2018). Various conceptualisations of meaningful participation exist within the academic literature on citizen participation and deliberation in environmental policy. For example, Knops and Vrydagh (2023) note, "far from being just another 'crisis' that needs to be solved, climate change is a direct threat to democracy" (Knops and Vrydagh, 2023, 212-213). While "citizens climate assemblies" (CCA) help overcome the current paralysis within the political system (i.e. myopic focus; captured by vested interests; difficulty translating climate science into policy etc). Within REAL DEAL, the focus is on ecocentrism, biocentrism, ecomodernism, ecofeminism, environmental pragmatism, environmental citizenship, environmental rights, and environmental justice (see Ryan et al., 2022 and Ryan et al., 2023). The article by Ryan et al. (2023) describes criteria for meaningful participation and deliberation that derived from studying these frameworks. The next chapter will further elaborate on these criteria.

Scholars suggest using the term deliberative participation when referring to the combination of deliberation and public involvement (Bohman, 1997a; Cohen, 1997; Warren, 2002; Chambers, 2003; National Research Council, 2008; Atlee et al., 2009; Renn, 2008, 2004; Renn & Schweizer, 2009; 2020). Scholars posit that deliberative participation within democracy is required for four major tasks:

1. Deliberative processes are needed to **define the role and relevance of the different forms of knowledge**, including indigenous and anecdotal knowledge (Lavazza & Farina, 2021) for making informed choices on how to reach the major objectives of the EGD (such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution).

2. Deliberation is needed to **elicit informed preferences** about policy options and priorities based on a discourse on expected consequences, underlying values, interests, and visions of the future.
3. Deliberation is needed to **explore the most appropriate way of dealing with uncertainty** and to set efficient and fair trade-offs between too much or too little regulation (i.e., agreement on handling uncertainty).
4. Deliberation needs to **address the wider concerns** of the affected groups and the public at large, particularly if the means to reach the goals of the EGD are highly contested.

## 1.2 Implications for innovation and testing of formats for deliberative democracy

Based on a critical reflection on these findings, the REAL DEAL consortium decided on several overarching take-aways for implementation of the formats in WP3. These decisions and take-aways are the result of Task 1.4, which had the objective to propose a selection of formats, methods, and tools for citizen and stakeholder participation and deliberation for implementation, operationalisation and testing in WP3. First, a survey was conducted amongst the consortium members to assess deliberative and participatory formats and methods and tools facilitating their implementation. Second, a 2-day online workshop was hosted for all consortium members to discuss and jointly decide on specific formats for citizen and stakeholder participation and deliberation for further consideration and potential operationalisation in WP3. Based on the assessment of deliberative and participatory formats in the survey and the workshop, the consortium arrived at the following key take-aways.

Context: Workshop participants agreed on the importance of considering the local or national context for selecting formats of deliberative and participatory approaches in support of the EGD, supported by adequate methods and tools. Context plays a role with regards to multi-level governance and connectivity between governance levels. It also plays a role with regards to conflicts, stakeholders, different problem framings and the (often iniquitous) distribution of risks and benefits of policies across society and societal groups.

Thematic focus: Contextual constellations change with the thematic focus. Participants agreed that a narrower focus on Green Finance, traffic/mobility, and food/agriculture should be considered as the REAL DEAL project proceeds with the aim to limit variability to a manageable level for testing formats and tools in WP3.

Inclusion of structurally excluded societal groups: Extra effort should be put into mobilisation and inclusion of structurally excluded or under-represented societal groups. This should go hand in hand with creating safe spaces and room for in-depth discussions.

Citizen participation: Active engagement and participation of the non-organised public is considered key for reaching the objectives of the EGD both with regards to an involvement in decision-making processes, as well as follow-through and support of policies relating to the sustainability transition. However, token participation must be avoided. In that regard, citizens should especially be given some leeway in the problem definition phase (but not only in this phase) as their everyday experience provides valuable insights into the complexity of issues concerning the objectives of EGD and related policies.

**Stakeholder engagement:** Stakeholder consultation and engagement is considered an important mechanism for leveraging support for the EGD. However, in processes in which both citizens and stakeholders are included, specific attention should ensure that stakeholders do not dominate the discussion as, when differentiated from “lay” citizens, they are often highly trained and loquacious individuals. It should be noted, however, that stakeholders can also include local governments, organized labour, indigenous groups, not all of which are highly trained and loquacious. In this regard, the intention is to distinguish between professional civil society representatives, e.g. NGO and CSO representatives, and other participants who might be less well versed in conversing in such settings.

**Role of the facilitator/moderator:** Different styles of moderation might be appropriate for various contexts, audiences, and topics. Irrespective of context, a key requirement is that the moderator creates safe spaces for free and uncoerced deliberation.

**Combination of formats:** There is no one-size-fits-all format, method or tool that would be applicable in all contexts for each topic related to the EGD. Therefore, attention must be paid to the specific requirements of the different process phases, i.e., the information phase, the capacity building phase, the deliberation phase, and the decision-making phase. A modular design should be considered for implementation with the aim of having methods and tools run in parallel or in a sequential design for different phases (information phase, capacity building, discussion phase, decision phase).

Based on earlier work in the project (Schweizer et al., 2022; Stec et al., 2023), four major requirements were formulated that must be addressed in REAL DEAL. To address these, one specific format has been chosen to address each requirement in the sessions organised in WP3. Unsurprisingly, the four requirements partly overlap with the four tasks of deliberative democracy mentioned above.

1. **Focus groups** for the **inclusion of marginalised societal groups**: Extra effort should be put into mobilisation and inclusion of vulnerable, marginalised, or under-represented social groups. This should go hand in hand with creating safe spaces and room for in-depth discussion.
2. **Citizen assemblies** for **non-organised public participation**: Active engagement and participation of the non-organised public is considered key for reaching the objectives of the EGD both with regards to their involvement in decision-making processes, as well as with regards to follow-through and support of policies relating to the sustainability transition. However, token participation must be avoided. In that regard, structures for participation should be made in such a way that citizens are given the space to express themselves and that their input is fairly considered as their everyday experience provides valuable insights into the complexity of issues concerning the objectives of EGD and related policies.
3. **Roundtables** for **stakeholder engagement**: Stakeholder consultation and engagement is considered an important mechanism for creating leverage in support of the EGD. However, attention should be paid in concrete processes that more loquacious individuals do not dominate the discussion.
4. **Delphi panels** for **expert input**: The sustainability transitions posited by the EGD are complex dynamic processes with multiple systemic interdependencies, as exemplified by, e.g., the energy-water-food nexus that cuts across various implementation domains of the EGD. Thus, expert input is an important element for analysing the various potential impacts of policies. However, this does not imply that experts should make political choices about the trade-offs between policies.

The consortium is aware that not one of these formats can address all the challenges associated with facilitating the sustainability transformations stipulated by the EGD in isolation. Hence, the consortium implemented a modular approach rooted in the tradition of analytic-

deliberative discourse which implies iterations between stakeholder focussed and citizens focussed modules interspersed with expert inputs.

### 1.2.1 What are the presuppositions of each format?

Perspectives on deliberation and participation are influenced by philosophical traditions or “schools of thought”. Discerning the origins of these perspectives on deliberative participatory processes serves as a heuristic for making informed decisions about selecting methods, formats, and tools for implementation. The literature review conducted in Task 1.2 (Schweizer et al., 2022) points towards six schools of thought on how participatory processes can be framed and purposefully deployed to foster and sustain deliberative and participatory democracy (see also reviews in Renn & Schweizer, 2009, 2020; Bidwell & Schweizer, 2021).

*Table 4 The six concepts of stakeholder and public involvement and their salient features based on Renn and Schweizer (2009)*

Concept	Main objective	Rationale	Formats and methods
Functionalist	Improvement of quality of decision output	Representation of all knowledge carriers, integration of systematic, experiential, and local knowledge	Delphi, workshops, hearing, inquiry, citizen advisory committees
Neo-liberal	Representation of all values and preferences in proportion to their share in the affected population	Informed consent of the affected population; Pareto-rationality plus Kaldor-Hicks (win-win solutions)	Referendum, focus groups, negotiated rulemaking, mediation
Deliberative-Rational Discourse	Competition of arguments with respect to criteria of truth, normative validity, and truthfulness	Inclusion of relevant arguments, reaching consensus through argumentation	Discourse oriented models, citizen forum, deliberative jury
Anthropological	Common sense as ultimate arbiter in disputes (jury model)	Inclusion of non-invested laypersons representing basic social categories such as gender, income, and locality	Consensus conference, citizen jury, planning cell
Emancipatory	Empowerment of less privileged groups and individuals	Fostering agency of those who suffer most from environmental degradation and systemic inequalities	Action group initiatives, town meetings, community development groups, science shops
Post-modern	Demonstration of variability, plurality, and legitimacy of dissent	Acknowledgment of plural rationalities, no closure necessary, mutually acceptable arrangements are sufficient	Open forums, open space conferences



### 1.2.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups find their origin in the neo-liberal school of thought where the objective is to represent all values and preferences in proportion to their share in the affected population (Renn and Schweizer 2009). However, focus groups set a different focus than roundtables. Focus groups take the form of group interviews, which includes following an interview guide with open ended questions, involving a small number of demographically predefined participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The participants are asked about their perceptions, attitudes, opinions, and beliefs regarding the topic under investigation. They are encouraged to interact and explore participants' beliefs, opinions, and views with each other.

The focus on a predefined demographic group allows for a deep dive into the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs around a policy issue and that are specific to this group. In this regard, focus groups are especially valuable for needs assessments and evaluation of policies from the viewpoint of that specific group. Focus groups used for deliberation can support unpicking complex issues of sentiments, dependencies, and needs, especially where sensitive topics are concerned. This requires the moderator to maintain the discussion and to make sure no one can dominate the deliberation.

The same set of criteria inspired by the neo-liberal school of thought applies to focus groups as to roundtables. However, the emphasis with focus groups is on creating a safe space for participants to disclose and share their viewpoints, even when doing so casts them in a less favourable light. Rather than stressing negotiation and bargaining amongst (relatively powerful) actors, this format aims to elicit the true values and preferences in the affected population.

### 1.2.3 Citizen Assemblies

Citizen assemblies are inspired by the concept of deliberative-rational discourse. This concept is mainly influenced by Habermasian discourse theory (Apel, 1992; Benhabib, 1992; Brulle, 1992; Cohen, 1997; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Webler, 1995; Webler & Renn, 1998, pp. 48–57). Discourse theory and discourse ethics advocate for more inclusiveness for legitimate and sustainable political decision making. Scholars Renn and Webler proposed a normative theory of public participation based on a revision of Habermas's (1979, 1984, 1987, 1991, 1992) concepts of the ideal speech situation and communicative competence (Renn, 1992; Renn & Webler, 1998; Webler, 1995). Renn and Webler emphasize the two meta-principles fairness and competence. According to them, fairness refers to the opportunity for all interested or affected parties to assume any legitimate role in the decision-making process, whereas the competence criterion refers to "the ability of the process to reach the best decision possible given what was reasonably knowable under the present conditions" (Webler & Tuler, 2000, 568).

Moreover, Habermasian discourse theory specifies four criteria for a process of deliberation (Habermas, 1984, 1987, Schweizer 2008). Table 5 gives an overview of how these discourse criteria correspond with citizen assemblies.

*Table 5 Assessing citizen assemblies according to discourse criteria*

Criteria discourse theory	Explanation	Citizen Assemblies
<b>Representative</b>	All potentially affected actors should be able to participate.	Random selection of a stratified sample of citizens
<b>Free from external coercion</b>	The participants should be autonomous from external	Citizens have full autonomy during the process

	pressures and considerations during the process.	
<b>Open to all knowledge claims</b>	The participants should be free to bring forth all arguments that they deem relevant.	Deliberation allows participants to reflect on their values and weigh new information from experts and briefing materials in dialogue with their peers.
<b>Free from internal coercion</b>	The participants should be autonomous from internal pressures and considerations during the process.	Skilled facilitation allows for an open and fair debate

Citizen assemblies that specifically address environmental issues, are often called climate assemblies, or climate citizen assemblies (CCAs). In this report, however, only the wording citizen assembly is used as all citizen assemblies that are organised are compared to one another, without making a distinction between the ones that specifically focus on climate issues and the ones that are devoted to another, related, topic like food policies.

### 1.2.4 Roundtables

Roundtables find their origin in the neo-liberal concept. In this school of thought, the main objective of deliberation is to represent all values and preferences in proportion to their share in the affected population. In this understanding, deliberation is framed as a process of finding one or more decision option(s) that optimizes the payoffs to each participating stakeholder. The concept emphasizes bargaining power and balancing individual interests which both come to bear in negotiations. Hence, the two ideal outcomes of negotiations are to find a new win-win option that is in the interest of all or at least does not violate anybody's interest (Pareto superior solution), or to find a compensation in which the winner could pay to the loser to the effect that both sides are at least equally satisfied with respect to the two choices: the situation before and after the compensation (Kaldor-Hicks solution) (Renn and Schweizer 2009, p.178-179).

The neo-liberal school of thought sparked methodological developments, e.g., the ProCAT approach (Raiffa 2002) and the Harvard model (Fisher and Ury 1981), which provide guidance for negotiating processes. Formats belonging to the neo-liberal school of thought can be evaluated based on six criteria (Schweizer 2008, 269). These criteria, and how the format of roundtables addresses these criteria, is seen in Table 6.

*Table 6 Assessing roundtables according to discourse criteria inspired by the neo-liberal school of thought*

Criteria neo-liberal theory	Roundtable
Analysing the status quo	The facilitator makes sure that all relevant parties are represented. The moderator aims for a thorough and transparent analysis of the status quo with the participants at the beginning of the participatory session.
Identifying the underlying problem	The moderator analyses the problem/conflict together with the participants.
Setting goals	The participants reveal the true goals underlying their positions towards specific policies.
Exploring interests	Win-win options can be identified through the mapping of interests
Opening up the solutions space	This asks for creativity on the side of the moderator

Weighing consequences	The moderator and the participants agree on ethically acceptable criteria for impact assessment.
Finding trade-offs	The moderator needs to find fair and acceptable trade-offs between policy options.

### 1.2.5 Delphi panels

Delphi panels originate from the functionalist school of thought. In this perspective, participatory exercises are intended to provide input (knowledge and values) from different constituencies to decision-making processes. The main objective is to avoid missing important information and perspectives, and to ensure that all relevant knowledge repositories are represented in the process (Renn and Schweizer 2009). Participation is, therefore, seen as a process of getting all the problem-relevant knowledge and values incorporated within the decision-making process. The overarching goal of Delphi panels is to collect knowledge from experts about the future development of a given issue, e.g. a technology, its policy implications, and potential impacts.

Key features of the Delphi panel are structured information gathering and iterations as well as feedback to participants regarding scores of previous rounds. Usual outcomes of Delphi panels are expert consensus with converging views or two factions of incommensurable views amongst participants. Hence, the final outcome of Delphi panels is not necessary expert consensus, but rather an improved understanding of the lay of the land.

### 1.2.6 Deliberative events

Besides well-known formats described above, several sessions have been organised that focused on using innovative methods, like art-based methods, or including citizens in financial topics of the European Semester. These sessions have been organised with two aims: 1) to find ways to discuss topics that are not familiar for most people. This was done with the organisations of deliberative events in which the European Semester was discussed, the yearly cycle of socio-economic policy coordination within the EU. Innovative methods were also tested with the aim to 2) organise deliberations on pan-European level. As these sessions did not use the strict format of a citizen assembly, citizen jury, or another format but used elements of these formats, these sessions are referred to as deliberative events.

### 1.2.7 Combination of formats

The diversity of concepts and background philosophies is one of the reasons why participatory processes are so difficult to evaluate in terms of overarching evaluative criteria (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Tuler & Webler, 1999; Rowe et al., 2004). Although some of these formats can be combined and integrated, there are at least differences in priorities. It is obvious that within the functionalist school of thought the main evaluation criterion is the quality of the output, whereas the models inspired by postmodernism and emancipatory schools are not interested in output but rather in the changes that were induced in the minds of the participating people (raising awareness and emancipation). Given this mix of models driven by different concepts many participation analysts and practitioners have advocated hybrid models that combine elements of different models. One of these models is the “analytic-deliberative” approach that has been advocated by the US (Stern & Fineberg, 1996; National Research Council, 2008) which has the aim to involve citizens, experts, and stakeholders in decision-making processes on complex issues where conflicting values and knowledge systems exist (Peterson St Laurant et al., 2020) (for more, see Schweizer et al., 2022).

## 1.3 Research questions



The REAL DEAL project is guided by three main research questions. These are:

1. What are the most suitable formats, methods, and tools that can support us to overcome and resolve the potential conflict between preserving openness and democratic sovereignty in our governance institutions and processes, while at the same time ensuring that implemented actions respect planetary boundaries that have been accepted as credible by science and politically codified in the EGD?
2. How can we assure that representatives of marginalised or disadvantaged groups of society are an integral part of participatory processes and how can a fair and adequate integration of different and sometimes conflicting positions be accomplished?
3. Which processes link the various vertical governance levels in the policy arenas of the EGD and how can they be sustained? How can local, regional, national, and European governance levels be addressed by innovative forms of deliberative democracy in an integrative and mutually productive manner?

The third question will not be addressed in this synthesis report. The focus on vertical governance levels is not covered by the participatory sessions organised in this project as this was not doable given the time and resources available. The first two questions, however, are leading in this report. As described above, no single format can provide an answer to these questions, which is why several combinations of formats are made and tried out in European countries.

## 2 Methodological approach for the evaluation

To prepare the synthesis, an evaluation strategy was developed which guided the evaluation of all participatory sessions that were organised in the light of the REAL DEAL project. An evaluation is a systematic process of assigning value to a certain object that is investigated (Hofmann et al., 2020). While an evaluation is necessary to research what works under which conditions, there are also issues connected to conducting evaluations as evaluating is complex, value laden and there is not one generally agreed-upon evaluation strategy (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Hofmann et al. (2020) suggest three steps for designing an evaluation strategy. These steps, as described in this chapter, are as follows:

- 1) define effectiveness, or meaningfulness and determine evaluation criteria (paragraph 2.1).
- 2) operationalise the methods for evaluation (paragraph 2.2).
- 3) conduct the evaluation and interpret results (paragraph 2.3).

Furthermore, an elaboration is given on data validation (paragraph 2.4).

### 2.1 Criteria for evaluation of the (combination of) formats

As Rowe and Frewer (2004) argue, it is needed to first produce a definition of how “effectiveness (or success, quality, or whatever synonym one wishes to use)” is understood. In the context of REAL DEAL, the key term to define is ‘meaningfulness’ in relation to citizen participation and deliberation. As the work in task 1.1 showed, depending on which perspective you consider (e.g., ecofeminism or ecomodernism), a description of meaningful citizen participation and deliberation will significantly differ. Acknowledging these differences, REAL DEAL developed the following, quite general, working description of meaningful citizen participation and deliberation:

*Meaningful citizen participation and deliberation ensures the integration of civil society input obtained from organised interest and value groups and the input of non-organised citizens.<sup>2</sup>*

In the evaluation of what formats work best under which conditions, the focus is on the process of the participatory sessions, not that much on the outcomes of the sessions as there is no possibility to do a long-term evaluation. An important aspect is the context in which the processes take place. What contextual conditions influence the meaningfulness of participatory or deliberative sessions?

To be able to evaluate the meaningfulness of the participatory sessions where the formats and combination of formats were tested, evaluation criteria were defined (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021). These criteria allow to create a framework for evaluation. The basis for these evaluation criteria was developed in the WP1 of the REAL DEAL project, just like this work provided input for the formulation of the specific questions for the interviews and questionnaires. The development of the evaluation criteria and the interview and questionnaires questions was an iterative process, as can be seen in Figure 1. Several tasks in WP1 were devoted to identifying

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<sup>2</sup> The way the term ‘meaningfulness’ is described here shows how this concept is understood for the project as a whole and how the goal of the project and specifically this task is defined. Please note that one of the evaluation criteria described in the next chapter is also ‘meaningfulness’. Meaningfulness as an evaluation criterion, however, has another focus and focusses more on how a process can be seen as meaningful for participants.

and developing criteria for meaningful stakeholder and citizen participation and deliberation. Reports developed in WP1 were assessed to identify these normative criteria, so that they could be transformed into evaluation criteria. Besides that, Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) frameworks were assessed, and a gender lens was applied. These inputs into the D4.1 evaluation criteria are discussed in more detail below.

The criteria had a normative character, meaning that they describe what is seen as desirable and undesirable actions from a specific point of view. However, these criteria were not ready-to-use evaluation criteria for this task. Some needed to be operationalised to make them applicable for this study and other criteria turned out to be out of scope and were therefore not considered. The normative criteria were also input for the questions that were used in interviews and questionnaires. All normative criteria are explained in the paragraphs below. The final evaluation criteria that were decided upon are described in the next paragraph.

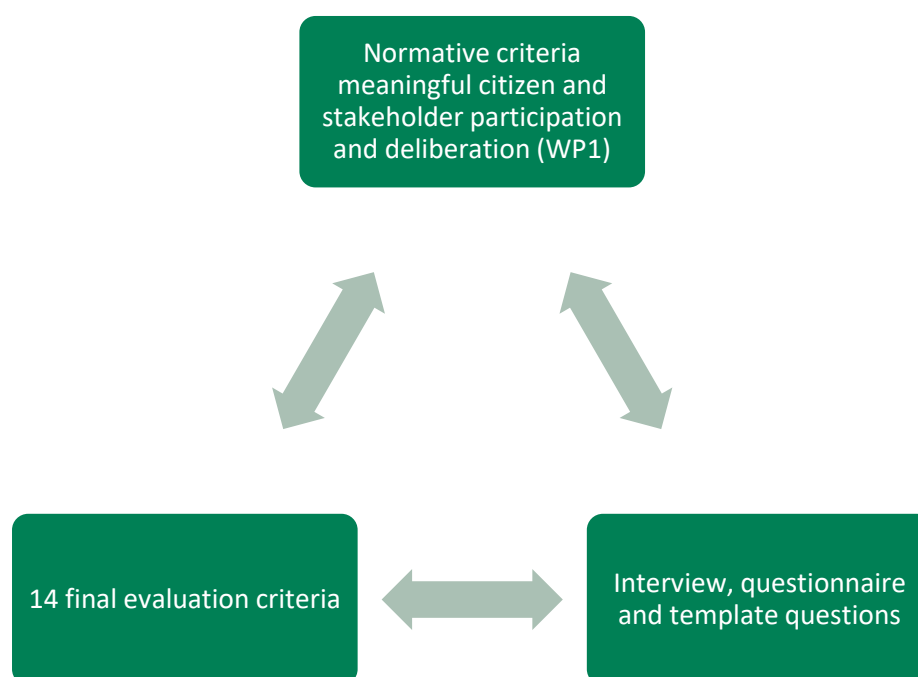


Figure 1 Schematic illustration how the normative criteria were used to formulate evaluation criteria and questions

### 2.1.1 The 14 final evaluation criteria

Table 7 describes the 14 evaluation criteria that were formulated for this synthesis task. The first column describes the criteria, and the second column describes the definition of this criteria that is used in this study.

Table 7 Definition of the 14 evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria	Definition
<b>(Potential to come to) common understanding</b>	The extent to which participants have a shared understanding of a topic and the extent to which the topic is understood from different perspectives. This reflects on questions whether all information on the topic and on the session itself is well-understood by participants (Schroeter et al., 2016).
<b>(potential) Effect on policy making</b>	This refers to whether the participatory session has a genuine impact on policies or the policy making process (Rowe & Frewer, 2004, p. 88). Because of the short-term nature of the project, the

	evaluation criterion refers to potential impact, as the true long-lasting impact cannot be assessed.
<b>Efficiency</b>	Efficiency refers to the extent to which a process is cost-, time- and resource-effective. This reflects the results in a comprehensive way, by addressing outputs, outcomes, and impacts (OECD, 2021).
<b>Empowerment</b>	Empowerment refers to the extent to which people or groups have the capacity to participate in decision-making, make choices, and to transform these choices into desired actions (Glucker et al., 2013). It is about strengthening or (re)gaining power to make decisions.
<b>Equity</b>	Equality refers to treating everybody the same. However, due to, amongst others, different privileges, characteristics, and living conditions, people have different needs, opportunities and encounter different barriers. Equity recognises this unique position people have and acknowledges that everybody might need something else to reach an equal outcome (Ryan et al., 2022).
<b>Fairness</b>	Fairness relates to the extent to which interests and values of all participants have been considered in the process. Are all participants who are in the room enabled to contribute? This criterion reflects the opportunity that all affected parties have to obtain a legitimate role in decision-making processes and the extent to which there was a major effort to come up with fair and balanced solutions.
<b>Inclusion</b>	Inclusion refers to whether all participants have the opportunity and the ability to equally contribute to the process in a meaningful way. It refers to the composition of the participants (who is actually invited and included in the event), and about the perspectives that are covered (Renn & Schweizer, 2009). It is about making all people feel valued. The structures in which a participatory process takes place must be inclusive for participants to feel heard and valued. An inclusive process accounts for power imbalances.
<b>Interests of non-human actors</b>	The extent to which the value of nature has been considered. In a process in which the interests of non-human actors – nature, animals, ecosystems – are considered, arguments are not only made from an anthropogenic perspective, but a more holistic perspective is considered.
<b>Interests of future actors</b>	The extent to which the value of future (human) generations has been considered. In a process in which the interests of future actors are considered, the perspective of future human generation, as well as of future non-human generations, is considered. Arguments that are given and recommendations that are formulated do not only focus on the short-term but instead also focus on long-term perspectives.
<b>Meaningfulness</b>	The extent to which participants feel their engagement has been meaningful to them. This can differ for each person, as one might find something meaningful that others do not consider to be meaningful. It can cover both the process as well as the outcome of the session.
<b>Privacy</b>	The extent to which the participants' information is anonymous and collected and handled in a careful and safe way. Personal and sensitive data should only be accessible for approved parties and the privacy of participants should be respected from the recruitment till after the session took place.
<b>Representation</b>	In a representative process, the participants of the process are a representation of the population that is affected by the issue that is

	being discussed or they are a representation of the ‘wisdom of the crowd’. In some instances, it can be appropriate to account for an over-representation of specific groups of participants, for example people that are structurally excluded, or those who talk less (or get less space to share their vision) (Hofmann et al., 2020).
<b>Responsiveness</b>	The extent to which the local context and participant needs are taken into consideration and incorporated into the planning and execution of participatory sessions.
<b>Transparency</b>	Transparency refers to whether all information and communication on the purpose, process, expectations, and outcomes of the participatory session to participants is always clear and transparent during the session (Hofmann et al., 2020).

At first, another criterion was added, which was ‘Ethics’. However, ethics is a broad criterion that cannot be captured by one definition itself but instead is covered by various other criteria, like inclusion and privacy. Therefore, it was decided not to work with this criterion anymore.

Furthermore, it was noticed that various criteria have commonalities, like inclusion and equity. However, these criteria have another focus and angle that offers something different for the evaluation. Therefore, the evaluation team feels that they are useful to consider as separate criteria in the evaluation.

The paragraphs below provide a short description of the various criteria that were consulted to formulate the evaluation criteria as described in Table 7. These criteria can all be found in Appendix 1: Criteria for meaningful citizen participation and deliberation. In this Appendix, tables are added describe the criteria, the reason why they were in- or excluded in the evaluation, to which evaluation criteria they were connected, and which question(s) used in the interviews, questionnaires and templates are connected to this criterion. For this last part, the questions, it is indicated in what way the question is asked (questionnaires, interviews, or in a template), to whom (participants or organisers of the sessions) and when (before, after, or two months after the session) these questions are asked. When the criteria about meaningful citizen participation and deliberation in the EGD are not within the boundaries of this project, there is no link made to the evaluation criteria and to a question(s).

### 2.1.2 Criteria based on deliverable 1.1

Based on structured literature reviews carried out for deliverable 1.1, different criteria for meaningful citizen participation and deliberation in the EGD were reviewed. Eight approaches from different philosophical schools were considered: ecocentrism, environmental pragmatism, biocentrism, ecofeminism, environmental citizenship, ecomodernism, environmental justice, and environmental rights. This deliverable concluded with 16 criteria for meaningful citizen participation and deliberation (seen in Table 40 in Appendix 1, divided in five themes:

- Be aware of power imbalances
- Promoting and ensuring inclusiveness
- Work with and protect nature
- Collaborating with Bottom-up Activism and Cultivating Environmental Citizenship
- Transitioning the Economic Model to a Green Economy

These criteria were meant to function as ethical and normative boundary conditions for implementing citizen engagement in the context of the EGD (Ryan et al., 2022). This is why these criteria had a normative character. It was not possible to include all these criteria in the evaluation of the participatory sessions organised in the REAL DEAL project. For example, some criteria described propositions for policy makers, like what role they should take on in deliberative processes. As the sessions organised in the REAL DEAL project were not

organised or assigned by politicians, and they did not have a (formal) role in most sessions, it was not relevant to integrate this in the evaluation.

### *2.1.3 Additional criteria based on deliverable 1.2*

Deliverable 1.2 (Schweizer et al., 2022) describes participatory and deliberative formats, methods, and tools relevant for the EGD. It provided a theoretical grounding to the work done in the project in terms of deliberative democracy and deliberative participation. This deliverable builds upon the normative criteria developed in deliverable 1.1, and also adds other criteria on Inclusion, Closure, Output and Process. The development of these criteria was based on existing academic literature, not on practical actions undertaken in the project.

According to Renn and Schweizer (2009), inclusion and closure are two components that shape participatory and deliberative processes. Inclusion refers to what citizens or stakeholders to include, the selection of themes and the timeframe in which the process takes place. It determines who is legitimised to partake in the deliberation. As described in deliverable 1.2, if six inclusion criteria are met, participants of processes start to trust in each other and have confidence in the process. These six criteria are described in Table 41 in Appendix 1.

Closure is about reaching the final product, like a statement, set of recommendations, or agreement. Furthermore, the management of disagreement and the opportunity to raise arguments during the process can be seen as closure. Six criteria for closure are described, as seen in Table 42 in Appendix 1. These criteria reflect what is needed for participants to feel encouraged to contribute to the process and to the final product (Renn & Schweizer, 2009).

Furthermore, deliverable 1.2 also describes outcome and process criteria. These criteria were identified based on a literature study to participatory or deliberative processes. Outcome criteria refer to the value of the outcomes of participatory or deliberative processes. Various participants may have different ideas about the outcome of the participatory or deliberative process, which is why it is important to specify in advance what the goals are. Eight criteria are specified in Table 43 show what outcome-related criteria need to be specified in the beginning of a participatory or deliberative process. Process criteria indicate the value of participatory or deliberative processes themselves. These eight quite general criteria, as described in Table 44, are for consideration during the participatory or deliberative process.

In deliverable 1.2, the comment was made that these general criteria needed to be nuanced to be used for the evaluation in REAL DEAL. This reflection and reasoning are described in the tables in Appendix 1.

### *2.1.4 Additional criteria based on deliverable 1.4*

Deliverable 1.4 describes how decisions were made on which formats were to be tested in REAL DEAL. Besides that, the deliverable describes 16 objectives that are associated with deliberative and participatory processes in the context of the EGD. These objectives are based on the previous work in REAL DEAL tasks. With this, these 16 objectives aimed to provide an overview of prerequisites for meaningful citizen participation and deliberation. These 16 objectives, and the reasoning of in- or exclusion in the final evaluation criteria, can be read in Table 45 in Appendix 1.

### *2.1.5 RRI principles*

The goal of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is to consider effect and impacts of research and innovation on society, and to align research and innovation with the values, need and wishes of society. The aim is to do research and create innovation 'with and for society'



and hereby to reduce the distance between research and society (Seus et al., 2022, p.6). RRI principles have been relevant throughout the REAL DEAL project. The RRI principles have been used in the shaping of the evaluation criteria, to check if the evaluation criteria also complied to the RRI factors.

RRI requires processes to be (RRI tools, n.d.):

- 1) diverse and inclusive – being sensitive to biases, include diverse voices and make results beneficial to a wider community,
- 2) anticipative and reflective – purposes and possible implications of the study and its outcomes. Envision all possible strategies and methods.
- 3) open and transparent – share objectives, methods, and results, and inform about potential conflicts of interests.
- 4) responsive and adaptive to change – be responsive to changes and external inputs, adapting plans to changing social values and expectations.

These principles have been considered throughout the whole REAL DEAL project, and are included in the evaluation criteria:

- Diverse and inclusive: a gender lens is applied throughout all steps of the REAL DEAL project. One of the tools that helped with this is the gender glossary that is developed for REAL DEAL. Furthermore, the 'leave no one behind' principle was applied as well, which means that specific attention is paid to including those who have been structurally excluded in the past.
  - Included in evaluation criteria inclusion, equity, representation, empowerment, fairness.
- Anticipative and reflective: by combining various formats, new strategies for citizen and stakeholder participation and deliberation have been tried out to engage citizens and stakeholders with the EGD.
  - Included in evaluation criteria no specific evaluation criterion is connected to this aspect of RRI.
- Open and transparent: the concept of transparency was considered, mainly connected to transparency of the session and the goals of the session for the participants.
  - Included in evaluation criterion transparency.
- Responsiveness and adaptive to change: in the organisation of the participatory sessions, the local context was a main point of consideration. This determined how the sessions were designed, what methods were used and how the connection with experts and policy makers was made.
  - Included in evaluation criterion responsiveness.

## 2.2 Data collection

Various data collection methods were used, all with their own target audience, as Figure 2 shows.

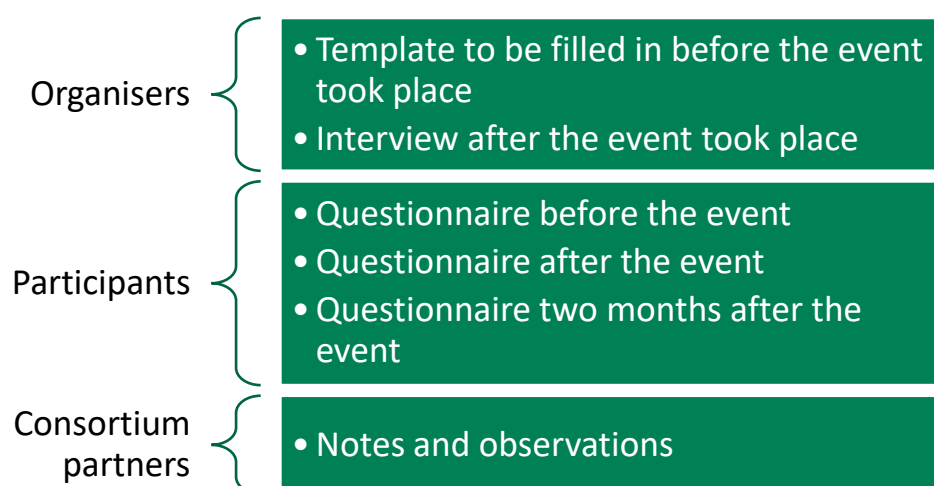


Figure 2 Various data collection methods used for the evaluation

All specific questions that were asked to participants and organisers of participatory sessions were derived from the criteria from WP1. Based on these criteria, as can be seen in the tables in Appendix 1, various questions were formulated to be used in the evaluation. This list of questions was complemented with more general questions the research team formulated, like how is the topic communicated to participants, and what are lessons learned for the organisation of such a participatory session? Besides this, a session was organised with the consortium partners at a joint meeting. In this meeting, the interview and questionnaire questions were listed, and consortium partners were asked if 1) they missed specific questions, and 2) what questions they thought were most relevant or important for the evaluation. This exercise did not result in many new questions, but some existing questions were sharpened or specified by the consortium partners.

### 2.2.1 Data collection from organisers

The sessions were organised by combinations of different types of actors, namely:

- local democracy experts on the one hand (i.e. process specialists, professional organisations for conducting participatory methods),
- policy specialists ((local) environmental NGOs)
- guidance by REAL DEAL partners

The citizen assemblies were organised by local democracy experts, and the content preparation was supported by the (local) environmental NGO. Other participatory sessions were conducted by Real Deal partners (CSOs), i.e. content specialists, who often sought support from democracy experts (and/or hired moderators).

Before each participatory session, the organisers of the sessions were asked to fill in a template with information on the design of the session. This included questions like what the purpose is, how the participants were recruited, and in what way the context was taken into consideration. After each session, the organisers were asked to partake in an interview. The interview was held online with one or two of the researchers working on this evaluation. The organisers were asked, amongst other, if they felt all participants could equally participate, how closure was reached, and what will be done with the outcome of the session. Again, the questions asked during this interview derived from the evaluation criteria. The interview lasted for about one hour and the interviews were recorded for documentation of the answers. Reports of the interviews were made and sent back to the interviewees to ask for their approval and suggestions for improvement.

The template with the questions for organisers, as well as the interview guide can be found in Appendix 2: Templates and interview guide.



### 2.2.2 Data collection from participants of the sessions

Besides receiving feedback from the organisers on how they thought the participatory session went, participants were also asked for their feedback. The initial idea was to ask participants for their feedback by means of a questionnaire at three moments: right before, directly after, and two months after the session. However, due to planning issues it was not possible to provide all participants with a questionnaire two months after the session. Some sessions took place in the end of May or June, and the analysis started in beginning of June as well. The questions that were asked to the participants also derived from the evaluation criteria, as described in the previous paragraph.

### 2.2.3 Data collection from consortium partners

Basing evaluations solely on the responses of participants and organisers, brings along the risk for biases in the evaluation (Rowe & Frewer, 2004, p.96). At some sessions, consortium partners of the REAL DEAL project were present. In these cases, they were asked to share their observations with the evaluation team to try to lower the biases.

Table 8 shows what data was available for every participatory session. It shows how many participants filled in each questionnaire for every session, whether an interview had been done with the organisers and whether a template had been filled in by the organisers.

Note that for the Delphi panels, it was decided not to send out the first questionnaire because quite often the list with participants was only final shortly before the Delphi panel took place, which did not give them enough time to fill in the questionnaire. Also, the questions which were asked in the first questionnaire to participants of the other sessions were not that applicable for the Delphi panel members. An example of the questions used in the questionnaires can be found in Appendix 3: Examples of questionnaires used.

Table 8 Number of participants that filled in each questionnaire

Country	Format	Online/ in person	Total # participa nts	Tem plate	Interv iew	Other docs	# Q before	# Q after	# Q 2 month s after
Austria**	Focus group	Both		Yes	Yes	-	-	-	-
Denmark *	Deliberative event	In person		Yes	Yes	Observations	19	8	8
European level	Deliberative event	In person		Yes	Yes		29	26	2
European level	Deliberative event	In person		Yes	Yes		35	29	-
European level	Deliberative event	In person		Yes	Yes		38	19	-
Germany	Delphi panel	Online		Yes	Yes		-	6	-
Germany	Citizen Assembly	In person		Yes	Yes		47	24	-
Greece	2 focus group	In person		Yes	Yes		15	13	
Greece	Citizen assembly	Hybrid		Yes	Yes		53	43	
Greece	Roundtable	In person		No	Yes				
Hungary Eger	Roundtable	In person		No	Yes	-	12	12	-

Hungary Hajdub	Roundtable	In person		No	Yes	-	11	11	-
Hungary Szeged	Roundtable	In person		No	Yes	-	15	15	-
Hungary Pecs	Roundtable	In person		No	Yes	-	13	13	-
Hungary national	Roundtable	In person		No	Yes	-	-	-	-
Ireland**	Focus group	Both	24	No	Yes	-	-	-	-
Italy	Deliberative event	Online		Yes	Yes		-	33	24
Italy + Denmark	Deliberative event	In person		No	Yes	Observations	-	-	-
Lithuania	Roundtable	In person		Yes	Yes		18	15	7
Lithuania	Roundtable	In person		Yes	Yes		12	11	7
North-Macedonia	Delphi panel	Online		Yes	Yes	Two interviews Delphi ambassadors, extra interview with organisers	-	7	-
North-Macedonia	Citizen assembly	In person		Yes	Yes	Extra interview with organisers after half of the sessions	69	30	24
Poland	Delphi panel	Online		Yes	Yes		-	11	-
Poland	Citizen assembly	In person		Yes	Yes	-	57	50	-
Serbia	Roundtable	In person		Yes	Yes	Observations shared by moderator	32	32	18
Serbia	Citizen assembly	In person		Yes	Yes	Observations	75	75	-
Spain	Roundtable	In person		Yes	Yes	-	29	29	8
Spain	Roundtable	In person		Yes	Yes	-	14	14	3
Ukraine	Focus group 7/02/2024	In person		Yes	Yes	-	6	6	4
Ukraine	Focus group 12/03/2024	In person		No	Yes	-	9	7	3
Ukraine	Roundtable 15/03/2024	In person		Yes	Yes	-	8	5	6
Ukraine	Focus group 30/03/2024	In person		Yes	Yes	-	7	7	5
Ukraine	Focus group 3/04/2024	In person		Yes	Yes	-	7	7	5

\* In Denmark, a different questionnaire was used by the organisers, reasons for this were not provided.

\*\* As the focus groups in Austria and Ireland already took place before this evaluation task started, the participants were not provided with a questionnaire.

### 2.2.4 Research ethics

This section discusses how research ethics aspects related to data collection have been practically addressed during organised participatory sessions and activities by focusing on personal data protection and confidentiality.

All participants of the participatory sessions were provided with an information sheet explaining the goal of the REAL DEAL project. This was part of the informed consent that participants submitted before participation in the sessions. This material has been prepared and submitted in a way that could ensure that received consent was voluntary, informed, and unambiguous. To this aim, due attention obviously had to be given to the wording, framing, and timing of consent form submission.

Consent has been received before the starting of any activity. These consent forms were accompanied by information sheets on the project. These documents were carefully translated in the language of participants and of the countries where the sessions have been organised, using language as accessible as possible. In most cases, the translation was done by the organisers of the sessions. In some cases, this material has been provided on paper, and in other instances it has been provided digitally through EUSurvey. Participants were given the proper time at the start of each session to read the consent form and accompanied material. Overall, ensuring informed consent has hence entailed the implementation of specific activities before, during and after organised events.

More specifically, employed information sheets and consent forms have been part of a single document that has generally consisted of four sections. The first section explained the REAL DEAL project activities. The second section described the project research aims and how personal data would have been collected, anonymised, stored and destroyed (no later than five years after European Commission final payment) in accordance with GDPR requirements. The proper consent form, the third section, described the adopted personal data disclosure options and the signatories' rights. The last section included two specific sections where signatories could respectively accept or decline additional disclosure options (e.g. concerning whether they agreed to be photographed, the inclusion of their own name in the list of contributors to REAL DEAL, etc.) and in the end they had to report their name, organisation (if applicable), signature and date and place of signature.

When participants of the sessions were asked to fill in questionnaires, they were deliberately asked not to fill in their own name. Instead, they were asked to fill in a nickname or a pseudonym. This was done to ensure anonymity. As none of the questions in the questionnaire referred to personal details, the results are not traceable to the actual participants. The participants were asked to remember the pseudonym they used and use the same one for the second, and in some cases third, questionnaire. In this way, the way one person changed their ideas during the time could be traceable. However, given the large amount of data, and the fact that quite some people forgot the pseudonym they used, individual responses were not compared to each other.

## 2.3 Data analysis

After data collection, the data analysis was done in two ways: qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative data from the Likert-scale questions in the questionnaires were analysed using Excel and R. The other data was analysed by making use of Atlas.ti software. Figure 3 shows what data were used for quantitative or qualitative analysis.

## Qualitative analysis

## Quantitative analysis

☐ Interview transcripts

☐ Answers to closed questions (Likert scale) in questionnaires

☐ Filled-in templates by organisers

☐ Answers to open questions in the questionnaires

*Figure 3 Qualitative and Quantitative analysis*

### 2.3.1 Qualitative analysis

In a qualitative analysis, the goal is to “explain or make sense of the inquiry, [...] [by eliciting] meaning from the data, in a systematic, comprehensive and rigorous way” (Smit, 2002, p.66). In this analysis, the researcher searches for commonalities and differences and for categories that are discussed. In all research it is important for the researcher to be aware of their biases as the researcher “operates between multiple worlds while engaging in research, which includes the cultural world of the study participants as well as the world of one’s own perspective” (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p.1410). As a researcher in qualitative research interprets the words of the participants of the study, it is crucial to be aware of one’s biases. The researchers involved in this qualitative analysis had different backgrounds in terms of country of residence, profession, and educational background. This helped to be aware of biases and to try to avoid biases in the qualitative analysis of the study.

All documents were uploaded in Atlas.ti., which is a qualitative coding software that allows one to assign codes to parts of a text. A codebook was created, which consisted of more general codes like ‘topic’ and ‘number of participants’, and of the evaluation criteria which each were added as a code. When started with the analysis, everyone would do one of the same documents, so that the style of analysis could be compared. With this, consistency was ensured. All researchers involved in this task coded the documents of the country they were assigned to. In the end, all these codes of all documents were gathered, which formed the basis for the analysis.

For every format, one or two people were designated to do the analysis based on the codes. For each evaluation criterion they analysed the data and described their interpretation of the results for that format. Specific attention was given to similarities and differences between sessions in different countries.

### 2.3.2 Quantitative analysis

The analysis was conducted in two key steps. The first step aimed to support the qualitative analysis and explore quantitative data trends by generating various charts. These included: (i) question-specific histograms to visualize overall responses to each item in the format-specific questionnaires; (ii) Likert charts to display the distribution of responses across different formats; (iii) tables summarizing key statistical metrics (e.g., minimum, maximum, mode, mean) for each event; and (iv) lists of all open-ended responses corresponding to specific questions.

In the second step, responses to similar or identical questions across different formats were compared. To facilitate this, questions from various formats were categorized into themes (e.g., satisfaction with the outcome of deliberative events, satisfaction with event moderation). Likert plots were then generated for each category to provide initial insights into potential similarities and differences between formats from the participants' perspectives. This comparative approach aimed to highlight notable trends or discrepancies as a complement to the more in-depth qualitative analysis. Due to the project's primary focus on the qualitative analysis and considering the varying data quality and sample sizes across event formats, the quantitative analysis was confined to interpreting the Likert charts.

The dataset for this analysis included questionnaire responses from all events with data available by the cut-off date of July 21, 2024.

Statistical outputs, including tables, histograms, Likert charts, and additional tests were conducted using R, with the Likert plots generated via the Likert Package in R.

## 2.4 Validation of the findings

Two steps have been undertaken to validate the findings from the participatory sessions: a presentation at the REAL DEAL Summit and a Delphi panel organised by the REAL DEAL project. This paragraph will shortly describe the way these validation sessions are organised, the results of the presentation at the Summit and the Delphi panel are described in Chapter 5.

### 2.4.1 Summit

On the 19<sup>th</sup> till the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, a REAL DEAL Summit was organised in Budapest. One of the sessions at this Summit was devoted to the Synthesis report. At the time of the Summit, no complete analysis had been done yet as some of the sessions only took place days before the Summit. During the synthesis session, some preliminary findings related to six evaluation criteria were presented to the public by two of the researchers who also conducted the interviews with the organisers of the participatory sessions. For each evaluation criteria, a question that came up during the data gathering and initial analysis processes was asked to the attendees of the Summit and they were asked for their reflection. In groups of three to five people, attendees discussed these questions and wrote their answers on post-its. Furthermore, some of them presented their ideas and perspectives plenary. A summary of the results of these discussions can be found in paragraph 5.1.

### 2.4.2 Delphi panel

On July 11-12 the REAL DEAL project organised a Delphi panel to comment and validate the findings of the reflection on the REAL DEAL participatory sessions. The participants were 14 (mostly) European experts from the fields of deliberative democracy, democratic innovation, participatory approaches, environmental policy (in the European context). A summary of the results of the Delphi panel is given in paragraph 5.2. This Delphi panel is not one of the Delphi panels that is evaluated in this project, but instead purely focused on validating the findings of the evaluation. This Delphi panel is therefore not included in Table 9 that describes all sessions organised in this project.

## 3 Participatory sessions

For the synthesis report, all participatory sessions that were organised by WP3 were evaluated. Table 9 provides a short overview of the various sessions that are organised in WP3 of this project.

*Table 9 Overview of all participatory sessions organised in WP3 (see next 2 pages)*

Country	Method	Topic	Geographical level	Date	Online /offline	# participants
Austria	Focus group	Food and Agriculture	National	08/08/2023, 27/07/2023, 14/09/2023	Both	34 (3 focus groups with 34 participants in total)
Denmark	Deliberative event	European Semester	Pan-European	14-15/12/2023	In person	38
European level	Deliberative event	European Citizens Deliberation Forum on the Green Transition	Pan-European	10/02/2024	In person	85
European level	Deliberative event	Feminist Festival: A Citizens deliberation on the Green Transition	Pan-European	20/04/2024	In person	75
European level	Deliberative event	Wild Talks: A Citizens deliberation on Nature and Biodiversity	Pan-European	15/06/2024	In person	85
Germany	Delphi Panel	Addressing necessary changes in current economic practices and consumption patterns for a socio-ecological transformation	National	20-21/05/2024	Online	16
Germany	Citizens Assembly	Sustainable consumption and climate-friendly economy	Regional	7-8-9/06/2024	In person	60
Greece	Focus Group	Intergenerational Equity & Environmental Social Justice: Perspectives of young people from Greece	National	23-24/05/2024	In person	14 (divided over 2 groups)
Greece	Citizen Assembly	Intergenerational justice and the European Green Deal	National	8-9/06/2024	Hybrid	62
Greece	Roundtable	Funding the Green Transition in Cities - Center and Periphery	National	17/05/2024	In person	16
Hungary	Roundtable	Sustainable catering at schools	4 roundtables on regional	29-30/04/2024	In person	80 (5 Roundtables with 80



			level, one on national level			participants in total)
Ireland	Focus group	Food and Agriculture	National	08/06/23, 10/06/23, 13/06/23, 21/06/23	Both	24 (4 focus groups with 24 participants in total)
Italy	Deliberative event	European Semester	Pan-European	19/04/2024	Online	100
Italy+Denmark (Rome)	Deliberative event	European Semester	Pan-European	7/05/2024	In person	11
Lithuania	Roundtable	Well-being economy	Regional	6/11/2023	In person	18
Lithuania	Roundtable	Micromobility in the city	Regional	20/11/2023	In person	12
North-Macedonia	Delphi panel	Air pollution and related issues	Local	2/7/2024	Online	13
North-Macedonia	Citizen Assembly	Air pollution in Skopje	Local	9/02/2024; 23/02/2024; 8/04/2024; 22/03/2024; 5/04/2024; 19/04/2024	In person	50-55 per session
Poland	Citizen Assembly	Food policy in Poland	National	18/5 - 15/6/2024	In person	58 in the first weekend and 52 in the second weekend
Poland	Delphi panel	Practical and strategic aspects of the food chain in Poland	National	7-8/05/2024	Online	16
Serbia	Roundtable	Food & Health	National	4/12/2023	In person	40
Serbia	Citizen assembly	Food labelling in Serbia and possible alternatives	National	13-14/04/2024	In person	70
Spain	Roundtable	Urban mobility	National	23/11/2023	In person	29
Spain	Roundtable	Rural mobility	National	25/11/2023	In person	17
Ukraine	Focus groups	Household waste sorting, deliberative democracy and the environment and climate change (2 focus groups)	Local	7/08/2024, 12/03/2024, 30/03/2024, 03/04/2024	In person	30 (between the 6 and 9 participants per focus group)
Ukraine	Roundtable	Deliberative democracy and the environment: learning and teaching	Local	15/03/2024	Online	10



## 4 Key findings

Chapter 2 described how data gathering, and the analysis of data is done. Chapter 3 described the various participatory sessions that are part of the analysis. This chapter now describes to the analysis of the different formats that are tested in this project: Focus groups (4.1), Citizen assemblies (4.2), Roundtables (4.3), Delphi panels (0), and Deliberative events (4.5). After this description, the analysis of the combination of formats is given (4.6). The analysis approach is described in detail in the methodological chapter (chapter 2) of this report.

Each paragraph starts with a small description of the format and with a table that indicates what sessions of that particular format were organised. After that, an analysis of each evaluation criteria is given. Each paragraph concludes by answering several overarching questions.

### 4.1 Analysis focus groups

In the REAL DEAL project, the main goal and task of the focus groups was to include marginalised societal groups. As such, extra effort should be put into mobilisation and inclusion of marginalised and under-represented social groups. This should go hand in hand with creating safe spaces and allow room for in-depth discussions. In the REAL DEAL project, the focus group format has been designed and set up in different countries and dedicated to different themes, in particular food and agriculture, waste management, climate action and intergenerational justice.

*Table 10 Overview of focus groups organised in REAL DEAL*

Country	Topic	Dates	# and type of participants per session	Remarks
Ireland	Food and Agriculture	08.06.2023 10.06.2023 13.06.2023 21.06.2023	24 participants in 4 sessions (3 online, 1 in-person)	Addressed food, health, and agriculture, emphasising women's roles in farming and environmental aspects
Austria	Food and Agriculture	25.07.2023 27.07.2023 14.09.2023	34 citizens, split into 3 focus groups with varying demographics (men academics, women academics, non-academics)	Focused on groups including men and women with and without higher education, covering various aspects like food and agriculture, and intergenerational social justice
Ukraine	Household Waste Sorting	07.02.2024 12.03.2024 30.03.2024 03.04.2024	6-8 participants focusing on household waste sorting	Issues connecting to the European Green Deal and local issues like the Lviv rubbish crisis
Greece	Intergenerational equity and	23.04.2024 24.04.2024	14 participants aged 18-30	Intergenerational Equity and Environmental Social Justice:

	Environmental Social Justice		across two focus groups (students and young professionals)	Perspectives of young people from Greece.
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### 4.1.1 Criteria analysis Focus Group

#### (potential to come to) Common understanding

Common understanding among participants was facilitated through initial presentations and structured discussions in various focus groups. In Austria, these presentations helped equalise participants' knowledge, leading to more informed discussions (AustriaFG-Interview). Similarly, in Greece, professional moderation fostered a shared understanding, although varying levels of participant knowledge presented challenges (GreeceFG-Interview). Ireland's diverse group dynamics made it difficult to reach a common understanding, with some participants dominating the conversation (IrelandFG-Interview). In Ukraine, moderators ensured clarity regarding the focus group's purpose, but external disruptions hindered seamless communication (UkraineFG1-Interview).

The main challenges specific to reaching a common understanding faced across the focus groups formats were dealing with varying levels of prior knowledge among participant and external disruptions affecting the flow of the discussions.

Some differences need to be highlighted such as in the focus groups in Austria and Greece that managed to create a more common understanding through structured presentations and professional moderation.

Ireland and Ukraine on the other hand faced more challenges due to group dynamics and some external factors.

#### (potential) Effect on policy making

The focus groups' ability to inform future policy making hinged on the insights and recommendations generated. However, the true impact of these insights depends on the deliberative format's context, its integration into political processes, and the willingness of policymakers to implement the findings. This, however, could not be assessed in this project.

In Austria, the focus groups identified challenges regarding recruitment of the participants and suggested alternative strategies, potentially informing future policy on citizen engagement. In Greece, the discussions on social justice and practical thinking in climate policies could provide valuable insights for policy makers, especially regarding youth perspectives. In Ireland, the focus groups underscored the importance of gendered perspectives in farming and food sovereignty, about which the ministry of agriculture will be informed. In Ukraine, the recommendations for better communication channels between authorities and residents, such as the use of mobile applications, have potential policy implications for waste management and public engagement. The organisers plan to integrate the outcomes of the focus groups in advocacy on national and local level.

The organisers of the focus groups in Greece and Austria did not have plans to inform policy makers on (the outcomes of) the focus groups. As the outcomes of focus groups only reflect the perspectives of a limited group of people, it can be questioned to what extent this could really influence policy making.

#### Efficiency

Efficiency varied across focus groups. Evidence shows that while some groups managed to adapt quickly to external challenges, others struggled with recruitment and representation issues. Future groups should consider streamlined recruitment processes and more dynamic moderation techniques to enhance efficiency.

In Austria, the recruitment process was found to have some inefficiencies, with difficulties in attracting sufficient participants. Financial incentives were suggested as a means to improve efficiency.

Greece's efficiency was compromised by differing group dynamics, necessitating extended discussions to ensure inclusivity.

In Ireland, the use of multiple formats (online and in-person) was efficient in gathering a range of perspectives, but the overall process was hindered by unequal representation and moderation issues.

In Ukraine, efficiency was affected by external factors such as air raid alarms, yet the focus group managed to start with minimal delays and maintained structured discussions.

## Empowerment

Empowerment of the participants of the focus groups was achieved by valuing participants' contributions and encouraging active involvement. In Austria, inclusive discussions ensured that participants felt their opinions were valued (AustriaFG-Interview). Greece's focus groups empowered participants by creating a safe space for expressing views, although internal moderator biases posed some limitations (GreeceFG-Interview). In Ireland, participants felt empowered knowing their voices could impact policy, despite some scepticism (IrelandFG-Interview). Ukraine's friendly environment and structured rules facilitated active participation, contributing to a sense of empowerment (UkraineFG1-Interview).

In all countries, one of the main challenges was to overcome participants' scepticism about the impact of their contributions. It was also difficult to ensure that all participants feel equally empowered to contribute.

In Austria and Greece, the focus groups successfully empowered participants through inclusive discussions and professional moderation.

In Ireland and Ukraine more challenges were faced due to some scepticism and external disruptions.

## Equity

Equity was a key consideration, with efforts to ensure diverse representation and equal participation opportunities. Austria's focus groups included various age groups and men and women with non-academic and academic background, aiming for balanced discussions (AustriaFG-Interview). Greece's focus groups incorporated youth perspectives, although they were not fully representative of the entire Greek youth population (GreeceFG-Interview). Ireland struggled with achieving equal participation, as some voices dominated discussions (IrelandFG-Interview). Ukraine's focus on inclusivity and friendly environment aimed to ensure equal participation, although logistical challenges persisted (UkraineFG1-Interview).

The main challenges across the focus groups in the different countries were to ensure equal participation in discussions and to achieve representative diversity among participants. According to the participants that filled in the questionnaires<sup>3</sup>, people were treated equally

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<sup>3</sup> It has to be mentioned that the questionnaires for the focus groups were only filled in by participants of the Ukrainian and Greek focus group. The participants of the Austrian and Irish focus group did not fill in any questionnaires due to planning issues.

during the focus group. As Figure 4 shows, all who filled in the questionnaires believed people participants were treated equally.

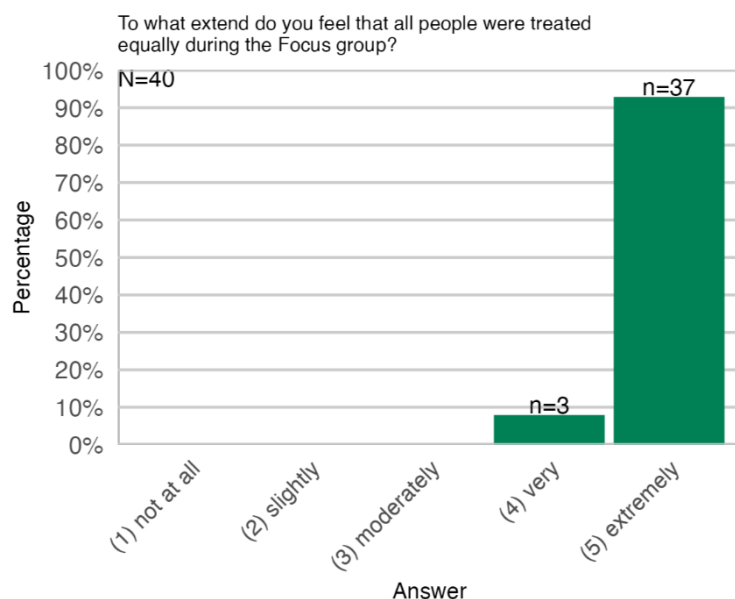


Figure 4 - Histogram Focus group 'To what extent do you feel that all people were treated equally during the focus group?'

It can be underlined that Austria and Greece achieved better equity through structured inclusion efforts, for instance with adjustments and expanding recruitment efforts, organising hybrid sessions, encouraging people to speak or to express themselves, etc.

In Ireland the organisation of the focus groups faced some challenges with some dominant voices affecting equity amongst participants.

## Fairness

Fairness was a key focus, with efforts to ensure all participants had equal opportunities to contribute. In Austria, free-form discussions were conducted to include all voices (AustriaFG-Interview). Greece's professional moderators aimed for balanced participation, though internal biases were reported by the organisers themselves (GreeceFG-Interview). Some participants mentioned that the focus group was a "healthy and non-discriminatory discussion context with the opportunity to hear all participants equally" and that there was time for all participants (GreeceFG-Questionnaire2). In Ireland, some moderation issues led to unequal speaking opportunities, highlighting the need for more assertive facilitation (IrelandFG-Interview). Ukraine's moderators emphasised on inclusivity, working on creating safe spaces to encourage participation (UkraineFG1-Interview). Ukrainian participants endorsed this, as they indicated that "no opinion was criticised or condemned" (UkraineFG1-Questionnaire2), and "everyone could express themselves" (UkraineFG4-Questionnaire2).

The main challenges in the text countries consisted of ensuring equal speaking opportunities for all participants. Addressing internal biases within moderation teams was also a difficulty that was only partially addressed.

In Greece and Austria, the structured moderation led to more balanced participation. Focus Groups in Ireland faced significant challenges in maintaining fairness, with some participants dominating the discussions.

## Inclusion

Inclusion efforts were evident across all focus groups. Austria included diverse age groups and women and men with academic and non-academic backgrounds, persons who are usually not engaged in deliberation processes (AustriaFG-Interview) to ensure broad representation. Greece's focus on youth engagement also aimed at including previously disengaged groups (GreeceFG-Interview). Ireland faced challenges in including marginalised groups due to logistical barriers (IrelandFG-Interview). Ukraine's random selection aimed for broad inclusion, though finding participants was challenging (UkraineFG1-Interview).

Regarding inclusion in the test cases, the main challenges consisted of, first of all, overcoming logistical barriers to inclusion and secondly, ensuring diverse representation.

The main differences are that Austria and Greece achieved better inclusion through structured efforts. Ireland and Ukraine, on the other hand, faced more challenges due to logistical and external factors.

### **Interests of future actors**

Future actors' interests were considered in the focus groups. Austria included discussions about long-term impacts on future generations (AustriaFG-Interview). Greece's focus on intergenerational justice inherently addressed future actors' interests (GreeceFG-Interview), although the group approaches and dynamics were very different. Ireland explicitly discussed future generations, emphasizing sustainable farming and environmental protection (IrelandFG-Interview). Ukraine's discussions on waste management aimed at preserving the environment for future generations (UkraineFG1-Interview).

Overall the main challenge of the discussions was to include a long-term perspective. Austria, Greece, and Ireland explicitly and structurally included future actors' interests. Ukraine's focus on environmental preservation also implicitly considered future actors.

### **Interests of non-human actors**

Consideration for non-human actors varied. Austria's focus groups did not explicitly address non-human interests. Greece's discussions on environmental justice implicitly considered non-human actors (GreeceFG-Interview). Deliberations in Ireland explicitly included interests of representatives of non-human actors, such as the animal rebellion movement (IrelandFG-Interview). Ukraine's discussions on waste management implicitly considered non-human actors by focusing on environmental preservation (UkraineFG1-Interview).

### **Meaningfulness**

The focus groups generally provided meaningful engagement opportunities for participants. Ensuring equal participation and follow-up actions can enhance the meaningfulness of future discussions.

In Austria, the focus groups facilitated free discussions and allowed participants to contribute meaningfully, though the lack of participants was a limitation.

In Greece, the meaningfulness was evident in the safe space provided for discussions and the value given to all viewpoints, despite the challenges in comparing different group dynamics.

In Ireland, participants felt their opinions were valued, though there were issues with some monopolisation of discussions and unequal speaking times. The desire for follow-up meetings and measures indicated a meaningful engagement.

In the Ukraine, participants engaged in discussions on real-world problems and suggested practical solutions, reflecting meaningful participation. Some indicated that the discussions

were successful and relevant, and that it was a “meaningful conversation” (UkraineFG4-Questionnaire2).

### Privacy

Privacy was generally respected by ensuring anonymous participation and confidential handling of data. In some countries audio-recordings were not used, relying on notes to preserve participant privacy and reduce inhibition. In Greece safe spaces were provided for open discussion, ensuring all viewpoints were respected without personal identification. In Ireland some issues of equal participation and confidentiality in group settings were faced, which affected the perceived privacy among participants.

The main challenges were maintaining privacy while ensuring detailed documentation. Balancing transparency and privacy was difficult, especially in discussions involving some sensitive/conflicting topics.

### Representation

Representation aimed to reflect diverse societal views and represent people that are usually not or less represented in the policy discourse. Austria included various demographics, aiming for balanced representation (AustriaFG-Interview). Greece’s focus on youth perspectives, though not fully representative, aimed to reflect a segment of society (GreeceFG-Interview). Representation in Ireland was questioned by the facilitators themselves due to the focus group approach’s limitations (IrelandFG-Interview). Indeed, the problem and limit of the focus group was that marginalised or structurally excluded groups were not necessarily well represented because of many barriers that were not solved at the time of the deliberations. These limitations included accessibility issues as participants had to travel to Dublin for the in-presence meeting, the aim to reach out to parents and especially mothers who had to deal with caretaking tasks, and the goal to include unemployed people for whom travelling to can be an even bigger challenge. Ukraine aimed for representative views through diverse participant selection (UkraineFG1-Interview).

In all focus groups, achieving fully representative groups, recruitment barriers and logistical issues remained a challenge.

When participants of focus groups were asked to what extent they felt that they represented a specific societal group, a majority of the participants mentioned that they did not feel this way, as can be seen in Figure 5. This is a surprising result as the focus groups were intended to focus on including people from structurally excluded groups. However, the participants themselves did not see themselves this way.



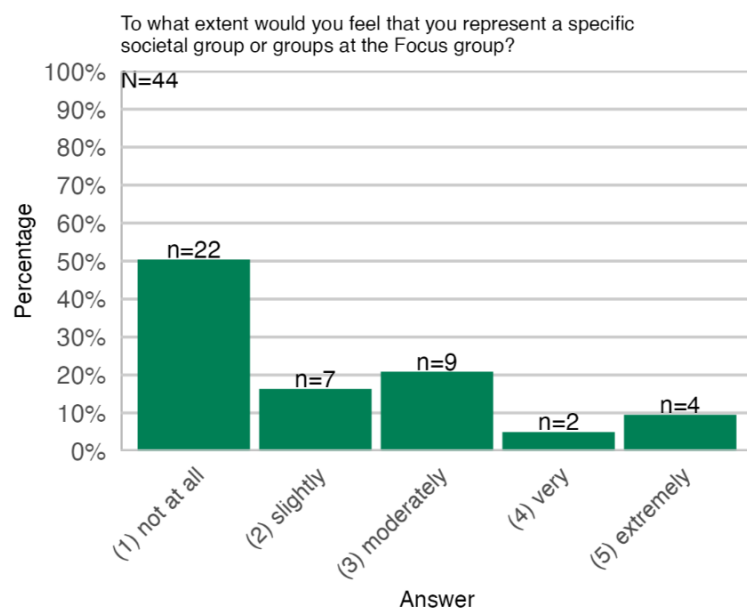


Figure 5 - Histogram focus group 'To what extent would you feel that you represent a specific societal group or groups at the Focus group?'

## Responsiveness

Overall, the focus groups demonstrated responsiveness by adapting formats and methods to suit participant needs and contexts. Challenges remain in ensuring complete representation and adjusting recruitment strategies for future focus groups.

In Austria, the focus groups showed high responsiveness in terms of including diverse age groups and women and men with different education levels, though recruitment was complex. Compared to some focus groups in Ireland that were organised only in-person, adjustments were made to include online and hybrid formats to cater to different needs.

In Greece, moderators provided a safe space and extended discussions to ensure all viewpoints were valued. However, the differences in the group dynamics posed challenges in maintaining a uniform responsiveness.

In Ireland, the formats included both online and in-person meetings. The hybrid sessions reflected responsiveness to participants' availability and preferences.

In the Ukraine, despite recruitment difficulties, the focus groups maintained a high level of responsiveness by creating a friendly environment and adjusting to participants' needs. Specific measures were undertaken to ensure a safe space for the participants in times of war.

## Transparency

Transparency in the focus groups was strived for through clear communication of aims, objectives, and procedures to participants. In Austria, participants were informed about the discussion rules and objectives beforehand, fostering an open environment for dialogue (AustriaFG-Interview). In Greece, the organisers and facilitators of the focus groups ensured transparency by detailing the focus group's structure and goals and the intend to include all voices, although internal biases were mentioned due to limited external moderators (GreeceFG-Interview). Indeed, the moderators were from the same network that organised the focus groups and this did not guarantee full neutrality or may have not allowed external inputs and opinions (the organisers themselves recognised this limit). The organisers of the



focus groups in Ireland emphasised the importance of participants knowing their voices would be valued and considered in policy making, though some doubts persisted regarding the actual impact (IrelandFG-Interview). The approach of the focus groups in the Ukraine allowed to set clear rules and objectives, and participants appreciated the open discussion atmosphere (UkraineFG1-Interview).

The main challenges were to ensure that all participants clearly understood the objectives of the focus groups and their contributions' impact on policy, especially in Greece, Ukraine, and Ireland. While most Ukrainian participants were satisfied with the information provided to them, for some the goal of the project, their role in the focus group, or what would be done with the results of the focus group was not clear (UkraineFG2-Questionnaire1). Overcoming scepticism about the process's effectiveness in influencing policy has been experienced as a challenge in Ireland, which also relates to the policy making criteria.

The main differences are that Greece and Austria had more structured transparency mechanisms, while Ireland faced challenges in convincing participants of the transparency and efficacy of the process.

#### **4.1.2 Reflection across criteria Focus Group**

In the next section, the reflection of the authors of this report are given on several themes that transcend criteria.

##### **a) To what extent was context important in this format?**

The societal, political, and cultural context played a crucial role in shaping the focus groups in each country, influencing the selection of topics, the level of participant engagement, and the overall dynamics of the discussions. Significant differences and similarities were observed across the focus groups, reflecting the unique socio-political environments of each country.

In Austria, the focus groups included a diverse range of participants, both academic and non-academic, and addressed a variety of issues such as food and agriculture, as well as intergenerational social justice. In contrast, the focus in Greece was primarily on the perspectives of young people regarding intergenerational social justice in environmental matters, with an additional emphasis on green financing. In Ireland, the discussions centered on food, health, and agriculture, with particular attention to the roles of women in farming and environmental concerns. These discussions were framed within the context of both national and European food and agriculture policies and strategies. Meanwhile, in Ukraine, the focus was on household waste sorting, which was linked to the European Green Deal and local issues, such as the Lviv rubbish crisis, and aligned with the national strategy on climate action and communication.

Despite these differences, the focus groups shared several commonalities. All groups engaged in concrete discussions and actionable solutions on environmental and social justice issues. They also encountered challenges in recruitment and made efforts to create a safe space for participants to express their views.

The data underscores the varied experiences and outcomes observed, which were shaped by the distinct socio-political contexts of each country. This diversity is intrinsically linked to the topics selected for discussion, which were influenced by local priorities and challenges.

##### **b) To what extent did offline/online have any influence on the implementation?**

The influence of offline and online formats varied significantly across the focus groups, with each format offering distinct advantages and challenges. Online formats notably enhanced inclusivity, particularly benefiting individuals such as persons with disabilities or parents at home with children, by providing them with greater access and flexibility.

In the offline focus groups, the experiences differed by location. For instance, in Ukraine and Ireland, face-to-face interactions fostered dynamic discussions but were not without logistical challenges. In Ukraine, these challenges included disruptions from air raid alarms, while in Ireland, travel-related issues posed difficulties for participants.

In contrast, the online focus groups presented their own set of outcomes. In Austria, hybrid sessions were employed, which allowed for broader participation; however, these sessions highlighted certain limitations, particularly in effectively engaging marginalized groups. Specific examples further illustrate these dynamics: in Austria, focus groups were conducted in a variety of formats—one online, one in-person, and one hybrid—each reflecting a unique set of experiences and challenges. Meanwhile, in Ireland, the off-online sessions encountered difficulties in achieving fair representation, primarily due to issues with participants' availability.

**c) To which extent was the purpose of including relevant marginalised/disadvantaged groups achieved?**

The inclusion of structurally excluded groups was only partially successful, with varying degrees of achievement observed across different countries. The data from these countries reveal a range of outcomes, underscoring both the successes and challenges encountered in the effort to include disadvantaged groups.

The challenges faced included recruitment complexities, logistical barriers, and difficulties in reaching marginalized groups. However, important learnings emerged from these efforts: financial incentives were identified as a potential means to enhance participation, and the importance of targeted recruitment was underscored.

For example, in Ireland, there was an effort to include women in farming, but significant barriers were encountered, such as travel difficulties and the demands of care duties. In contrast, Ukraine successfully ensured gender balance among participants and included individuals with diverse professional and life experiences.

**d) To what extent was the selection of the specific 'marginalised' group a relevant choice in relation to the topic of the session? Why/why not? (e.g., why this marginalised group, and not another marginalised group?)**

The selection of the marginalised groups was both logical and challenging. For instance, while including young people in Greece was pertinent for discussions on intergenerational equity, it encountered motivational differences and specific issues.

Although the selection of structurally excluded groups was a logical choice, its effectiveness varied due to contextual factors and recruitment barriers. The challenges encountered underscored the need for improved strategies and incentives to effectively reach certain groups.

For example, in Austria, despite expanding recruitment measures, there were still difficulties in securing a sufficient number of participants. Similarly, in Ireland, although efforts were made to include diverse perspectives on food and farming, travel constraints and care duties limited broader inclusion.

### e) Which 3 criteria worked out best from the perspective of the organisers and participants? And why?

The three evaluation criteria below reflect what criteria worked out best according to the information provided by the participants and organisers of the sessions. This is subject to interpretation of the authors of this paper.

*Table 11 Three criteria that worked out best for the focus groups*

Rank	Criterion	Justification why this criterion worked out best in relation to the format
1	Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensured open discussions and valued all viewpoints.</li> <li>- Example: Greece's focus on creating a safe space for young participants to express their views.</li> </ul>
2	Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective use of presentations/inputs/preparation and discussions to level knowledge.</li> <li>- Example: Austria's effective framing presentation at the beginning of sessions.</li> </ul>
3	Meaningfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Addressed relevant local issues, enhancing participant engagement, impact awareness</li> <li>- Example: the desire for follow-up meetings in Ireland.</li> </ul>

### f) How was closure<sup>4</sup> reached in the focus groups, and what can we learn from it? (e.g., was there voting, consensus, no at all, other)

The methods employed for concluding discussions varied, encompassing approaches such as voting, reaching a consensus, or, in some instances, not having a formal closure at all.

The process exhibited certain positive aspects, particularly the effective summarisation of discussions related to Ukraine, which significantly contributed to the clarity of the proceedings.

However, challenges were also observed. In some groups, the absence of a structured closure resulted in discussions remaining unresolved, thereby impacting the overall effectiveness and meaningfulness of the dialogue.

From these observations, it is evident that a structured approach to closure is crucial. It not only ensures that discussions reach clear and definitive outcomes but also enhances the satisfaction of the participants involved.

### g) Overseeing all observations about the focus groups, what other relevant insights emerge?

The significance of financial incentives, along with the application of targeted recruitment strategies, are some of the key issues. Equally essential is the need for enhanced facilitation training, which allows moderators to manage discussions effectively, ensuring a smoother exchange of ideas.

<sup>4</sup> As described in the methodology section, closure refers to reaching the final product, like a statement, set of recommendations, or agreement. Furthermore, the management of disagreement and the opportunity to raise arguments during the process can be seen as closure.

Several lessons emerged from the focus groups. One of the key takeaways is that fostering diverse and representative participation needs more creative and inclusive approaches. Additionally, the effectiveness of focus groups can be greatly improved by clearly communicating the moderation style and incorporating structured closure methods.

These insights provide a comprehensive understanding of focus group dynamics across various contexts, pinpointing essential learnings and offering valuable suggestions for future improvements.

In terms of knowledge sharing, the introduction of presentations at the beginning of sessions played a crucial role in leveling the knowledge among participants. Communication within these settings was primarily verbal, yet, at times, it was supported by modeling and written materials to facilitate understanding.

When considering recruitment strategies, it is evident that expanding outreach and exploring alternative methods are critical. Financial incentives were identified as a practical tool to attract participants and enhance engagement.

Moderation techniques could also be refined. Ensuring that the moderation style is clarified and communicated to participants in advance helps set expectations. Furthermore, moderators should be equipped with the skills to interject and guide discussions more effectively. Encouraging quieter participants to contribute their views in writing also promotes a more balanced dialogue.

Inclusion and representation were areas of concern, highlighting the need to secure a more representative sample of the population. Barriers faced by marginalised groups, such as accessibility issues and care responsibilities, must be seriously addressed and tackled. Targeted recruitment strategies should be employed to engage groups that have previously been disengaged from these discussions.

To maintain engagement and participation throughout sessions, a blend of communication methods, including the use of visual aids and modeling, is advised. For longer sessions, providing breaks is crucial to sustain participant focus. Additionally, ice-breaking activities can be implemented to help participants feel more comfortable and encourage open discussion.

The importance of feedback and closure cannot be underestimated. Offering summaries and follow-up information to participants fosters a sense of inclusion and ensures transparency. Achieving closure through consensus or voting, where relevant, helps to conclude discussions effectively. It is also important to address participant feedback promptly, which builds trust and encourages continued involvement.

Translating discussions into practical recommendations ensures that participants feel their contributions are meaningful and capable of influencing policy. Maintaining momentum and providing follow-ups on the outcomes of their discussions are key to sustaining their engagement over time.

Lastly, the use of financial incentives emerged as a potential strategy to boost participation rates, suggesting that material rewards can have a positive impact on recruitment and retention in focus group settings.

### General reflection

For the REAL DEAL project, focus groups were organised with the aim to include people from structurally excluded groups in decision making processes. The analysis showed that the inclusion of marginalised or disadvantaged groups was only partially achieved, with varying

degrees of success across countries. Recruitment complexities, logistical barriers, and limited reach to these groups were common challenges. Financial incentives and targeted recruitment strategies were suggested to enhance participation. Furthermore, additional insights include the need for better facilitation training and attention for the value of effective communication styles. These lessons highlight the need for innovative and inclusive approaches to ensure diverse and representative participation, structured closure, and meaningful engagement in future focus groups.

## 4.2 Citizen Assembly

The main aim of citizen assemblies is to have a deliberation session with a representative group of citizens in order to provide a set of recommendations for decision makers. In these assemblies, participants are given the opportunity to learn about the topic through information that is provided by them by experts on the topic. Usually, citizens discuss in small groups where they exchange ideas and develop recommendations.

In the REAL DEAL project, citizen assemblies were organised as they have the power to address specific issues that are important to the public with a representative group of people, and because it aims to create opportunities for fair and open discussions. As citizen assemblies usually are quite big, attention-grabbing events, they can put pressure on decision makers to follow-up with the recommendations.

*Table 12 Overview of citizen assemblies organised in REAL DEAL*

Country	Topic	Dates	# and type of participants per session	Remarks
Serbia	Food labelling in Serbia and possible alternatives – road to healthy and environmentally friendly diets	13 and 14 April 2024	70 participants.	National focus.
Germany	Sustainable consumption and climate-friendly economy	7 and 8 June 2024 (1,5 days)	60 participants.	Sub-national focus. The first day focused on knowledge building.
Poland	Food policy in Poland – how to ensure that by 2030 food consumption in Poland is of high quality and produced in an environmentally friendly way?		65 people were invited. In the first session, 58 citizens joined. In the second session 52 people.	National. The first weekend was for knowledge input, the second weekend was for deliberation.
North Macedonia	Air pollution in Skopje	The citizen assembly was spread	In total 65 citizens participated but	Sub-national focus.

		over 6 Saturdays between February 17 <sup>th</sup> and April 27 <sup>th</sup> 2024.	they did not all attend each session. Approximately 50 to 55 people joined per session.	Combination with Delphi panel that took place before the assembly.
Greece	Intergenerational justice and the European Green Deal	8-9 June 2024	62 participants	National focus.  Combination with Roundtable and Focus group that took place before the assembly. The assembly was hybrid; in person for the people from Attica (half of the participants), online for the others.

### 4.2.1 Criteria analysis Citizen Assembly

#### (potential to come to) Common understanding

In order for citizens to get a common understanding of the topic at hand, information on the topic was shared with participants beforehand, in very different ways. For Greek participants, a two-hour preparatory webinar was given by researchers and this presentation was sent to the participants. In Serbia, people were sent an information booklet a week before the citizen assembly and were given a printed version upon arrival at the hotel. The booklet was designed in cooperation with several experts. The organisers observed that participants used it as reference during the citizen assembly but they were not sure how many actually read it. That is why they considered having “an info session [...] for the next citizen assembly instead of expecting people to do their homework. [...] It can be like half an hour reading session. Like we don't expect anybody has read this material. [...] We read it together. And that may be a way to ensure an equal or more balanced information. Maybe somebody read it two weeks ago and maybe somebody read it on their way to the hall. So, in order to control for that difference, maybe we will try next time to do this equal session in the beginning” (SerbiaCA-Interview-13).

Some people did criticise the booklet, which indicated that they reflected on the material they were given (SerbiaCA-Interview-15). Besides the booklet, a panel of four experts joined the second half of the first day to provide answers to questions. The moderator mentioned during the session that “experts are there to serve the citizens, not the other way around. They are here to help the citizens formulate recommendations” (SerbiaCA-Observations-5).

In North-Macedonia, during the assembly meetings, presentations were given by experts. The experts were also present during the drafting of recommendations to “advise whether these recommendations are possible and guiding them in the process on the financial aspect. [...] One of the tasks of the experts was to see if it was possible, or maybe we should lower the expectation, or give a longer deadline” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Interview-20). The organisers of the session mentioned that the experts “were not allowed to give ideas [...] they were just there to make the recommendations more understandable” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Interview-17).

Both in Germany and in Poland, the first half, respectively one day and one weekend, was devoted to sharing knowledge input. In Germany, several methods were used: first participants



received more general information in written form. Then they had an exhibition of the results of the Delphi panel, plus they were given a presentation with slides and videos on the issue. In Poland, presentations were given by experts and in between the first and second assembly weekend, there were webinars in which more information was shared on the topic.

During most citizen assemblies, participants agreed to a large extent on the content that was being discussed. In North Macedonia, there were some small arguments and disagreements but in general most people agreed. The same was the case in Poland and in Serbia. In Poland, the organisers noticed that in developing recommendations, people already thought about the voting process that would happen later. While drafting recommendations, the participants did not include the most controversial ideas, but instead thought about the common goal and formulated recommendations that were more likely to be accepted. In Serbia, people agreed on the topic and on the recommendations and therefore the organisers decided that the voting that was planned was not needed. Participants also mentioned that they agreed “which means that we don’t deviate too much in our thinking when it comes to our country” (SerbiaCA-Quesstionnaire2-53).

In general, the participants of the citizen assemblies mention that they were happy with the openness of the discussions they had. The organisers of the citizen assemblies also underline this. For example, in Germany the organisers mentioned that they were “surprised that climate can be discussed in a good and friendly manner (...) [as] many people said that that information on climate in media is overdramatised” (GermanyCA-Interview-17).

### **(potential) Effect on policy making**

The citizens assemblies were all organised in different countries and therefore in different political environments. This influenced the (potential) effect the citizen assemblies had on policy making. Also, the purpose and therefore the output of the citizen assemblies varied. Most citizen assemblies were devoted to drafting recommendations for policy makers, with the exception of the German one, as this was truly organised for research purposes. The effect on policy making was therefore not a goal for the German citizen assembly.

It is important to notice that the citizen assemblies were not commissioned by the local or national governments. While politicians were informed or invited, the assemblies were not recognised by the governments. In Poland, however, the citizen assembly was recognised by the government which, according to the organisers, “was huge for our foundation and for Polish democracy, as it was [...] the first citizen assembly that was recognised by the government. The previous one was not recognised by the previous government that was in place at that time.” (PolandCA-Interview-18)

During some of the citizen assemblies, politicians were present. In some assemblies, like in North Macedonia, the politicians gave presentations and also “told how important these events are to have a better future for everyone” (NorthMacedonia-InterviewExtra-40). In Serbia, several politicians participated in a panel discussion in which they reflected on the questions raised by participants. These were all politicians from the opposition, some of which had a personal connection with the organisers. These politicians were interested to be involved and to collaborate. The plan was also to send the recommendations to different parliamentary groups and political parties, “so they can actually push that on the agenda” (Serbia-Interview-35).

According to the organisers of the North-Macedonian citizen assembly, the level to which policy can be influenced heavily depends on the way the recommendations are drafted, as the vocabulary of citizens might not match the vocabulary of politicians. This can complicate the ability to influence policy making.



## Efficiency

The main narrative is that the organisers of the citizen assembly agreed that the citizen assemblies were worth the time, money, and effort. Often, the struggle was a lack of capacity or budget, which restricted the organisers in several ways. In Poland, the citizen assembly took place over four days. Preferably, the organisers would have organised five days to be able to invite a diverse range of stakeholders to present during the citizen assembly. But the budget only allowed for four days.

The recruitment process of participants required a significant amount of budget and of capacity. In North-Macedonia, the organisers wanted to personalise the invitations, but this took too much time.

After all citizen assemblies, participants said that they wanted the citizen assembly to last longer.

## Empowerment

For all citizen assemblies, the vision of both the participants and of the organisers was that the participants learned a lot on the topic being discussed. In the questionnaire, 85% of the participants from North Macedonia, Serbia, Poland, and Germany indicated that they felt more informed about the topic of the citizen assembly after the citizen assembly took place<sup>5</sup>. 18 of the 65 North Macedonian participants explicitly mentioned that the presentations by experts helped them to draw conclusions on the topic. To ensure that all participants had sufficient time to learn, answers from the experts on participants' questions were posted online.

In Greece, the organisers had the feeling that many participants changed their opinion through the knowledge that was shared, both by experts and by other participants.

However, for some participants, the knowledge input they got was not enough or sufficient. One of the North Macedonian participants said it was incomprehensible for them that the citizens had to make recommendations, instead of the experts (NorthMacedonia-Questionnaire2-8), and another one said that they felt they "did not have the knowledge at the level of the experts to be able to make the maximum contribution despite a strong desire to help..." (NorthMacedonia-Questionnaire2-6). In Poland, participants had indicated by the organisers that they would have liked to have more presentations. In Serbia, a few participants would have like to ask more questions to the experts.

In Poland, there was some confusion after the educational meeting when participants mentioned that they thought it was strange that experts are not likeminded in their opinions. They wondered how they could give recommendations when even experts cannot agree. When results of the Delphi panel were shared in the second weekend, it was mentioned that it is normal that experts are not on the same side regarding certain questions. Also, it was mentioned that experts did agree on certain topics, so "participants could see that deliberation is something natural, also for academics. It opened up the space for participants to deliberate." It was shared with participants that society has to decide when there is a difference between the opinion of experts and politicians (PolandCA-Interview-23).

## Equity

Everybody lives in different circumstances has a different background, and therefore people have different needs to be able to reach the same result. Hereby, the intersectional perspective is relevant, as this describes that everyone has their own unique experience and therefore all factors that can marginalise people should be considered.

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<sup>5</sup> In Greece, this question was not asked to the participants.

### Organisation of sessions

All sessions were organised in the weekend because this would be the time where the least people would have work-duties. In North-Macedonia they noticed that some people needed to work in the weekend anyways and because of this needed to leave early or come a bit later.

The hybrid nature of the Greek assembly ensured a more equitable session. According to the organisers, usually only people from big cities are given the chance to participate in activities like citizen assemblies. Due to the hybrid nature of the session, people from all around Greece could participate (GreeceCA-Template-14). Participants from all over Serbia participated in the in-person citizen assembly in Belgrade. People that had to travel far, could also use their hotel room the night before the session.

In North-Macedonia, before every session the organisers would call all participants to get a confirmation on their attendance. Some participants also indicated specific needs they had, which the organisation could consider. For example, a few people mentioned that they took part in Ramadan and therefore required specific times in which they would want to have their dinner.

Amongst the participants, there may be people with care-taking duties. In most countries, this was not considered. In none of the countries, participants mentioned that they had issues with finding someone to cover their care-taking duties. However, it is highly likely that participants did not mention this as they were not explicitly asked for this. Because of this, they probably did not know this was something that they could express, or they did not feel the space to express their struggles related to care-taking duties.

The group sizes differed much in various citizen assemblies. In Serbia, for example, participants worked groups of 10 participants, while in Poland, they worked with rotating sub-groups of 6 people. According to the Polish organisers, this allowed people to express themselves more as they felt more comfortable with some people than with others. The Serbian organisers, on the other hand, mentioned that working in the same groups allows people to get more familiar with these people.

### During the session

To ensure that everyone felt safe, a safety person was appointed in Serbia. This was someone who was coordinating with the moderators but was not moderating herself. She presented herself to all groups in the beginning and had the role to be there in case someone had any issues or problems.

In Poland, the organisers mentioned that they saw that not everybody contributed as much as others in the beginning of the assembly. However, as the session proceeded, people felt like there was more space for them to contribute and they felt safer to speak up. There was a rotation system, so people found themselves able to talk to different sets of people in small groups of maximum 6 participants.

The way in which the sessions were set-up possibly did not allow for everybody to fully express themselves. Except for Germany, all discussions were done orally; no other forms of discussion were used, like drawing, writing, role play. Only in Germany, participants were asked to write their thoughts down on cards. Most knowledge was shared via presentations or by written documents. This addresses a specific group of people: those who are able to listen and digest oral presentations and those who are able to read. This might have affected who agreed to participate in the assemblies in the first place.

### **Fairness**

Four of the five citizen assemblies were fully moderated by professional moderators: Serbia, Poland, Greece, and Germany. The group sessions in North-Macedonia were self-moderated

by the participants. The professional moderators were external moderators, not working for the organisation that organised the citizen assembly, whose had a facilitating role: “All facilitators were focused on making space for people who did not make the space for themselves” (NorthMacedonia-Questionnaire2-45). In Serbia and Germany, there were training sessions for the (co-)moderators.

All organisers ascribed an important role to the moderators of the sessions in terms of living up to principles of fairness in terms of asking people who were more silent if they wanted to speak, and in valuing all viewpoints. The Serbian moderators saw that the younger people were not that engaged, including when they asked them specifically for their input. This is not seen in the feedback forms by the participants. Almost all participants of all citizen assemblies indicated that they believe every participant was treated equally and fairly. In every questionnaire, there were one or two people who indicated that they felt some were favoured over others, as can be seen by the in total 8 people who indicated that people were not or moderately treated equally and fairly (Figure 6).

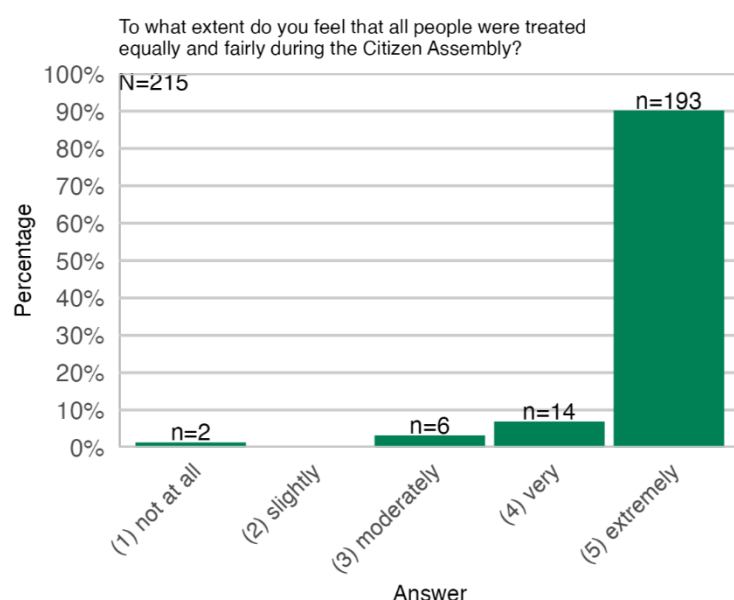


Figure 6 Histogram citizen assembly 'To what extent do you feel that all people were treated equally and fairly during the citizen assembly?'

Participants themselves also have a role to play in fairness principles. In Germany, groups themselves wrote down some rules for the deliberation, like “leave room for other people” (GermanyCA-Interview-16). The North-Macedonian citizen assembly took place over a longer period of time. The organisers noticed that the participants got more engaged as the sessions proceeded.

Participants in general felt that their viewpoints and the viewpoints of others were valued and considered by the moderators, as is seen in Figure 7 and Figure 8. Both histograms show that the participants of the citizen assembly in general felt that they and other were given the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments.

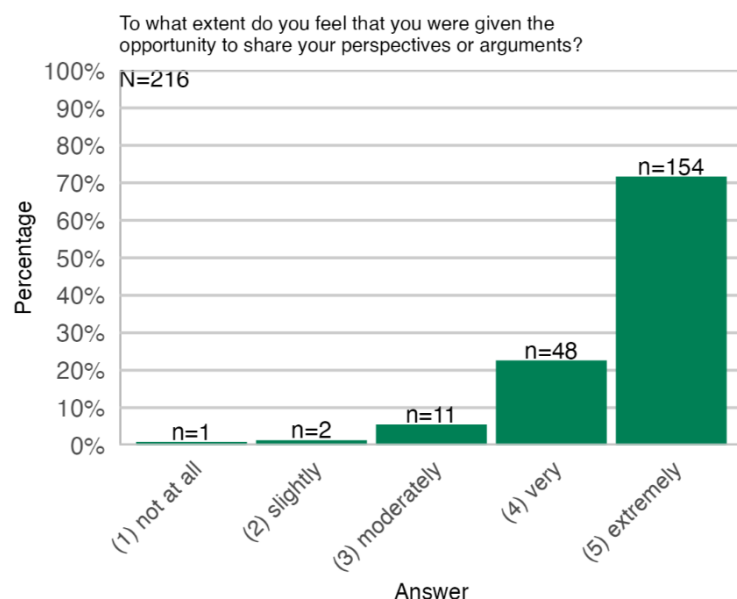


Figure 7 Histogram citizen assembly 'To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspectives or arguments?'

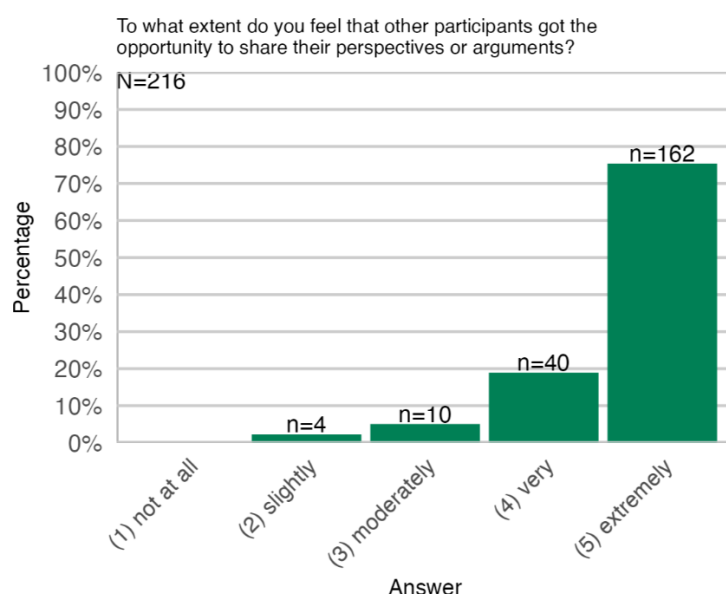


Figure 8 Histogram citizen assembly 'To what extent do you feel that other participants got the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments?'

## Inclusion

All organisers mentioned that they wanted to organise a citizen assembly that was as inclusive as possible. They all indicated different ways in which they tried to ensure this.

In North Macedonia, the participants were invited to help determine what knowledge needed to be integrated and what the focus of the sessions would be. The topic of air pollution in Skopje was set, but the specific sub-topics that would be addressed were left to be decided by the participants. In the first session, the participants could decide on the topic, as well as address experts they wanted to be invited. As most of the participants “come there with a mission, with ideas they want to make possible” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Interview-61), the organisers wanted to facilitate this by involving them in these issues. In the other citizen

assemblies, citizens did not have a say in this. It could be that this was easier to arrange for the North Macedonian citizen assembly because the sessions took place over a longer period of time. This meant that the organisers had more time to invite experts that the participants wanted to hear, compared to a citizen assembly of one weekend.

To be able to make the process inclusive, the organisers provided information material in North-Macedonia in various languages: Macedonian, Albanian, and English. However, some participants indicated that the spoken language was Macedonian, while some people might be more familiar with Albanian. The expert presentations were put on the website for everybody to see, but these were also only available in Macedonian.

Participants indicated that they valued exchanging with people from different ages, professions, ethnicities, and sharing different ideas.

In Serbia, at the end of the citizen assembly, after the panel discussion with decision makers, one person from all groups took the microphone to ask a question to decision makers. The participants in each group decided amongst themselves which person from their group would do this. Amongst the seven speakers, there was only one woman spoke out loud, who happened to be one of the moderators. The other six were all men and participants (58:13). The organisers of the citizen assembly were disappointed by that, as they asked participants to be sensitive to these issues. But they did not want to appoint people who did not want to speak. They did mention that it could have to do with the authoritarian political culture in Serbia (SerbiaCA-Interview-11).

On the other hand, they were satisfied with the share of women in the panels, seven out of eight. Their reflection on this was that women tend to accept invitations to work on a Sunday more than men, that women in Serbia are more open to discussions compared to men, and that some of the women in the panels were also appointed by their male directors (SerbiaCA-Interview-27).

To enlarge the possibility for people to participate, and to value their time and work, the participants were financially compensated for time and input. Panel members often got paid on an hourly basis.

### Interests of future actors

Some of the topics involved thinking about future generations and the future in general, like air pollution in Skopje. Other topics, like food labelling, might lend itself less for discussions on future generations. In Greece, the organisers mentioned that future generations were mentioned throughout the assembly a lot.

When participants were asked for their reasoning to partake in the citizen assembly, some people mentioned that they wanted to contribute to a better future for their children or future generations.

### Interests of non-human actors

Non-human interests, the interests of nature, animals, and the ecosystem, was not considered that much in the citizen assemblies. If it was discussed, this was mainly a side effect. Serbian organisers mentioned that this is also because people have other things on their mind: “They don't have money [for] school, they don't have money to pay for the healthy food, [so they do] not [want] to talk about organic food” (SerbiaCA-Interview-17).

Besides this, it the topics or the way the discussions were structured could also explain why the interests of non-human actors was not considered that much. The citizen assemblies in general consisted of dialogue sessions in groups, and presentations, but not that much in creative forms of discussions.

Only according to the North-Macedonian organisers, nature effects were included in what they called the ‘climate assembly’ “because air pollution affects every aspect of nature, from soil to water” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Interview-40). However, they also noticed that for the citizens involved it was difficult to think from the interests of non-humans instead of from their own perspective and interests: “It was kind of funny because all of the participants want a cleaner environment and public transportation, but they do not want to give up cars. As long as it doesn’t move you from your comfort zone” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Interview-47).

## Meaningfulness

For many participants, having influence on certain processes, like policy making, was very important. Almost all participants that mentioned something on policy making, hoped that their suggestions or recommendations would be adapted or at least considered. “I hope that your initiative can influence the making of certain decisions” (SerbiaCA-Questionnaire2-51). “I am completely satisfied, and I will be even more satisfied if at least 1/3 of the proposed recommendations are put into practice” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Questionnaire2-70). Some said that the participation process otherwise was not worth it: “participation is only worth it if things change.” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Questionnaire2-81) However, a few participants were unsure of the potential to influence policy and were hesitant to be optimistic about this.

For some, however, influencing policy making was not the only thing that would make them satisfied with the process. Them having the opportunity to discuss topics and having the feeling of being listened to, was already relevant for them: ‘I am not sure what the outcome of this event will be, but I am satisfied that our opinion was heard’ (SerbiaCA-Questionnaire2-58).

One participant of the Polish citizen assembly mentioned that for them the social aspect of the citizen assembly was crucial. When asking what motivated them to participate, they indicated that it is an “opportunity to participate in social life” (PolandCA-Questionnaire1). And after the citizen assembly, this person mentioned: “I spent the last years of my life in my apartment and with little contact with society. Here I returned to people.” (PolandCA-Questionnaire2) This shows that for some participants, the fact of being invited to a participatory session which is also a social event in which they can connect to other people is the biggest benefit.

## Privacy

Not much is shared regarding privacy as for the organisers, this was a basic feature for organising participatory sessions.

The only information that was shared is that it was a hurdle for the organisers of the North Macedonian citizen assembly that they could not receive the addresses of potential participants by the municipality (NorthMacedoniaCA-InterviewExtra-15). And in Serbia, the participants were asked to double fold the papers with the voluntary demographic information and put it in a box so that the organisation could not trace it back to people (SerbiaCA-Observations-6).

## Representation

For all citizen assemblies, a random selection process took place in which participants were invited. This fits the idea of a citizen assembly in which the participants should preferably be a group “that mirrors (...) society. The members of the assembly are set to represent the diversity of views and opinions among the general population” (PolandCA-Template-13). Criteria that were considered everywhere were age, gender, educational level, and place of residence. The way in which these criteria were considered differed. In Greece, they only considered two age groups (18 to 40 and 40+), while they considered more diversity in age groups in other countries. The participants of all sessions had to be above 18 years old, and



in North-Macedonia the organisers explicitly mentioned that the participants needed to have an ID and bank account, which eliminated people who are not official residents of North-Macedonia.

Despite efforts to reach a representative group of people, the organisers of most assemblies indicated that people from structurally excluded groups often were still not included. For example, Roma in North-Macedonia. Also, it was difficult to recruit young people and people with only primary education, the organisers from the Polish citizen assembly said.

The Serbian organisers mentioned that in terms of socio-demographics, they had a representative group. But in terms of interests in the topic, they probably had a group of over-interested people. That is likely because “people who want to come for 2 days, will always be more interested” (SerbiaCA-Interview-6).

When participants of the assemblies were asked if they represented a societal group, and if so which one, about 60% of the participants indicated that they represented a societal group. About 25% were not that sure about it, and about 15% said they did not represent a societal group. This can be seen in Figure 9. When people were asked what kind of societal group they represented, the answers varied greatly. Some were very specific, mentioning that they represented students who play sport, health workers, neurodiverse people, people who worry about their future, divorced people, cyclists, ‘male adults from rural regions who use social media’. Some others mentioned that they were the voice of the average citizen, the middle group, ordinary people, or ‘a typical Serb’.

In Germany, two participants indicated that the participants of the citizen assembly were not representative, but instead all came ‘out of a bubble’ (GermanyCA-Questionnaire2), meaning that they all had likewise perspectives and comparable positions in society.

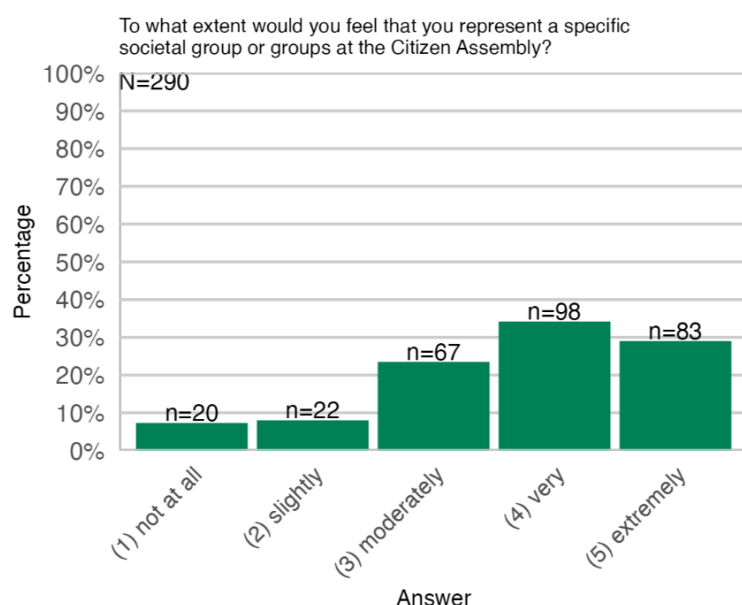


Figure 9 Histogram citizen assembly 'To what extent would you feel that you represent a specific societal group or groups at the citizen assembly?'

## Responsiveness



In determining which topic would be discussed at the citizen assemblies, the social, cultural, and political contexts were very relevant for the organisers. The REAL DEAL project earlier on identified three main themes for discussion in the deliberative sessions: food/agriculture, mobility/traffic, and green finance. Within these topics, the organisers could specify the topic they wanted to discuss.

In North-Macedonia, they chose to focus on a topic highly relevant for citizens of Skopje: air pollution. As not everyone has access to central heating, many people use wood or other materials to heat their houses, which is one of the big causes of the pollution in the air. During the citizen assembly, the organisers noticed that the topic of alternative energy was the most passionately discussed, as many people can relate to it (NorthMacedoniaCA-Interview-38).

Both in Germany and in Poland they decided to organise the citizen assembly after elections. In Germany, this was after the EU elections, and in Poland after the local, national and EU elections. In Poland the campaigns were very polarising according to the organisers, and participants said it was good that they could have deliberative discussions on the topic now. The same was noticed in Germany where participants said that the topic of climate is often overdramatised in the media in Germany, but they did not feel this happened in the citizen assembly.

Two of the countries in which citizen assemblies were organised, are not member states of the European Union: Serbia and North-Macedonia. In Serbia, there was pointed to the importance of considering this: “we are a non-EU country with policies and regulation that are not like an EU country and some views and opinions and way of work is completely different than in the EU and other developed countries. And our people are different by culture and tradition. [...] Even if the model is the same, it will not be same in our country and in other countries” (SerbiaCA-InterviewExtra-6).

As Serbia is also a post-conflict country, the organisers of the citizen assembly mentioned that Serbs tend to have a lack of trust in general. For the organisers, this was also noticeable in the conversations at the citizen assembly. Participants wondered how they could know food labels are accurate and how they could trust the information that was given to them. The organisers determined the topic, food labelling, together with experts on the topic. However, during the session it became quickly noticeable that participants wanted to talk mainly about food safety. The impression of the organisers was that “on a conceptual level, citizens that participated in this assembly were equating food safety with health. If the food is safe, therefore it's healthy. And opening the discussion: there can be safe food, but unhealthy for you would be another level. And then a third level would be, yes it can be safe yes, it can be nutritious, but is it good for the planet?” (SerbiaCA-Interview-29)

In Greece, the design of the citizen assembly was strongly influenced by the geographical context. As Greece is a country with many islands that lack a good interconnectedness, there is a big difference and inequality between people living in central big cities, and others living in the periphery. This is why the choice was made to organise a hybrid assembly in which people from all over Greece could participate (GreeceCA-Template-8).

## Transparency

For all citizen assemblies, the topic was shared with the participants beforehand. In Serbia, they deliberately did not share the specific topic in the recruitment phase as they wanted to avoid self-selection. The topic was shared only with the selected participants.

Few participants from all citizen assemblies mentioned that the goal or the information shared was unclear, or that they were unsure if the assembly was connected to a political party. Most participants thought their role during the citizen assembly was to exchange ideas, listening to others, drawing conclusions, or express their opinion. Two participants thought the goal of the

citizen assembly was to legitimise the recommendations given by the organisers or experts. In Serbia, some participants mentioned during the citizen assembly as well as in the questionnaire afterwards, that they were unsure if the experts were clear about their role and they felt that they did not really provide answers to the questions.

Before the citizen assembly took place, there was quite some unclarity about what would happen with the outcome. The graph in Figure 10<sup>6</sup> shows that almost 35% of the participants were only moderately aware of what would happen with the outcomes, and another 18% of the participants was unclear about this. Especially for the German citizen assembly, 25% of the participants was not at all aware of what would happen with the results. For the Polish citizen assembly, there was most clarity as 60% of the participants indicated that they were clear about what would happen with the outcome.

Figure 11 shows that there was much more clarity about what would happen with the outcomes of the sessions at the end of the citizen assemblies. Again, Polish participants were most clear about this, as 69% indicated that they were extremely aware of this, but the differences between the various countries were not that big regarding this question.

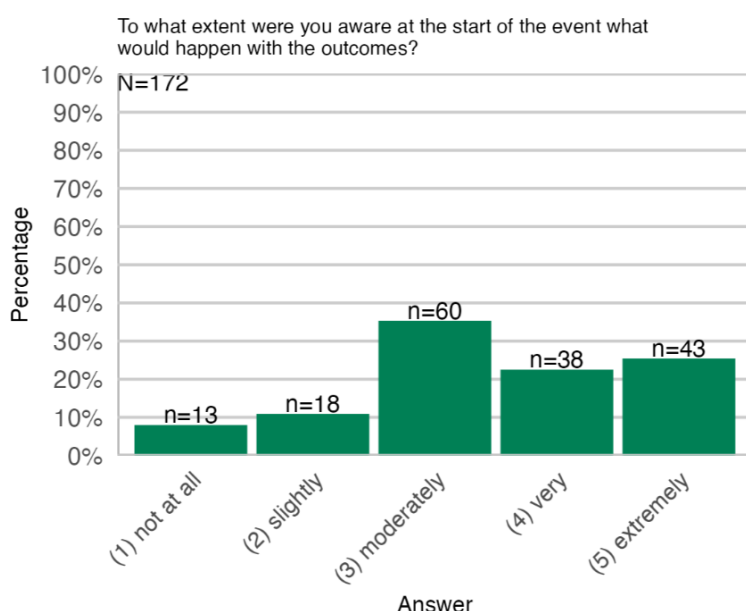


Figure 10 Histogram citizen assembly 'To what extent were you aware at the start of the event what would happen with the outcomes?'

<sup>6</sup> The questions displayed in Figure 10 and Figure 11 were not asked to the Greek participants.

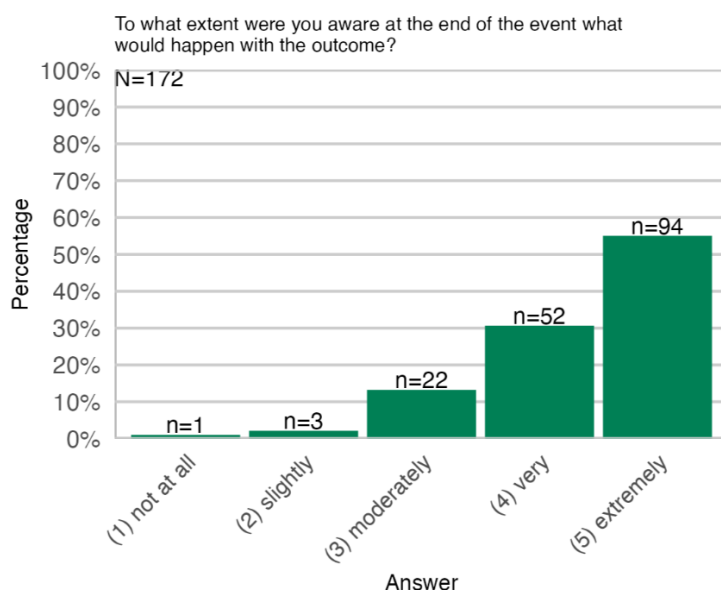


Figure 11 Histogram citizen assembly 'To what extent were you aware at the end of the event what would happen with the outcome?'

#### 4.2.2 Reflection across criteria Citizen Assembly

In the next section, the reflection of the authors of this report are given on several themes that transcend criteria.

##### a) To what extent was context important in this format?

For all citizen assemblies, the topic that was chosen to discuss was specific for the social, cultural, and/or political context.

Besides that, there is a different culture of deliberation in the various countries. The fact that citizen assemblies are organised is not obvious in every country, as the Greek organisers mentioned that “a lot needs to be done in order to first create a culture of social and political interests and participation, before institutionalising such a practice” (GreeceCA-Interview-34). In North-Macedonia, this was even the first citizen assembly even organised.

This was also seen in some of the answers the participants gave in the questionnaires in North-Macedonia. Not all participants were just as convinced of the need and use of citizen assemblies, or citizen deliberation for decision making in general. They felt that not citizens, but experts are in the position to formulate recommendations. Only a small minority thought this way, but it is still a relevant viewpoint to consider.

“I think we should work more with experts than with opinions of participants. More to be in the style of question and answers by the experts” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Questionnaire2-100).

“It was incomprehensible to me that we were being asked for some expert opinions and suggestions regarding the subject. We were each able to give an opinion from our professional point of view. While the experts knew the causes and solutions best” (NorthMacedoniaCA-Questionnaire2-8).

##### b) To what extent did offline/online have any influence on the implementation?

Except for the Greek assembly, all assemblies were organised fully in person. The Greece assembly was a hybrid one. As this would allow people from all over Greece to participate without having to travel far, it allowed for a more equitable session, according to the organisers. The Greek organisers mentioned that engaging participants with online tools is more demanding than engaging participants in person. Therefore, they attracted moderators with experience with hybrid sessions.

**c) To which extent was the purpose of collecting input from a randomly selected groups of citizens achieved?**

To a large extent, this goal was achieved for all citizen assemblies. To recruit participants, random selection was done everywhere. Stratified random selection was done in Germany and Serbia. This allowed for a representative group of people to be present.

Random selection does cost time and money, and it proved to be easier when a specific recruitment agency was contracted to do this. They have the capacity and experience with recruitment, something that does not come easily when this has to be done for the first time.

**d) To what extent was the random selection successful? Why/why not?**

Up to a certain extent, this was successful. However, still people from structurally excluded groups were often not included. For example, Roma in North-Macedonia were not included. Also, it was difficult to recruit young people and people with only primary education, according to the organisers from the Polish citizen assembly.

**e) Which 3 criteria worked out best from the perspective of the organisers and participants? And why?**

The three evaluation criteria below reflect what criteria worked out best according to the information provided by the participants and organisers of the sessions. This is subject to interpretation of the authors of this paper.

*Table 13 Three criteria that worked out best for the citizen assemblies*

Rank	Criterion	Justification why this criterion worked out best in relation to the format
1	Empowerment	Although the information provided was not enough for everybody, in general the people in the citizen assemblies indicated that they felt they learned a lot on the topic. This was both due to the information that was shared by experts, and also because of the conversations with other participants. Also, participants mentioned that they were happy they could express themselves and their opinions were considered as valid and important.
2	Fairness	Participants mentioned that they thought their contributions were fairly taken into consideration, as seen in Figure 7 and Figure 8.
3	Inclusion	In some citizen assemblies, participants could be involved in determining what experts needed to be included. Whenever necessary, translation was accounted for.

**f) How was closure reached in the citizen assemblies, and what can we learn from it?**

Most citizen assemblies were closed with a voting session on the proposed recommendations. The results of the voting differed:

- In North-Macedonia, for a recommendation to be included in the report, a majority had to vote in favour of the recommendation. For only 1 or 2 of the 33 recommendations, this was not the case.
- In Germany, all ideas were written down by participants on papers. Participants could express their favourites by adding dots on these papers.
- In Poland, participants could vote on the recommendations as well. During the assembly, participants could write their proposals for recommendations on a form. These proposals were brought to the subgroups on the tables to discuss in more detail. When formulating proposals, participants did not cover the most controversial ideas as they already kept in mind that the other participants also had to vote on these recommendations and that 80% of the participants had to vote in favour of the recommendation for it to be incorporated. 32 recommendations reached this threshold.
- In Serbia they planned to do an open voting since it was not a polarised topic. But since the recommendations that were drafted in the subgroups were much alike, the organisers decided that it was not needed to do a voting. Instead, they discussed all recommendations in a plenary session, where people could ask questions or indicate if they did not agree with a recommendation. All recommendations were agreed upon.
- In Greece they did not do an exact voting, but they asked whether there were objections to the recommendations. If there were any objections, another wording of the recommendations was made. Because of a tight schedule, people only opposed when they had major disagreements.

Voting turned out not to be useful in all sessions. When there already was a large level of agreement amongst the participants, it did not seem necessary to vote. Furthermore, when participants know beforehand that all participants have to vote for the recommendations, this can make them adjust their strategy and only formulate widely accepted recommendations. This can take away the creativity as well as more controversial ideas and increases the possibility that the recommendations that are drafted are not that new or innovative.

#### **g) Overseeing all observations about the citizen assemblies, what other relevant insights emerge?**

Several organisers observed that when thinking about the information they wanted to provide citizens, it is crucial to carefully consider what specific information you provide. In Serbia, they invited experts to think along in the design of the briefing materials. They deliberately did not only include scientists, but also included activists to ensure to have multiple points of view in the briefing material. But still they thought it would be needed to spend more time to frame the issue. Because, they mentioned, if they do not know enough about the topic, they can include experts, but they would not know enough about the quality of the arguments and what alternatives are to what the experts share. They would also need to have more time to become familiar with the attitudes in society towards the topic: “we need to know what citizens think about it, even though they don’t have enough information about it. We need to think what the civil society thinks about it, the politicians, oppositional politicians, and you know, all the parliamentary groups (...) and minority groups. And then you could have a complete idea about the topic and then you provide them information and deliberation, everything, and then you see what they will decide” (SerbiaCA-Interview-38).

Also, the way in which information is shared is crucial. In Poland they noticed that the educational weekend had quite an “academic type of education [as] someone was coming with a presentation with numbers and data” (PolandCA-Interview-15). Not everybody will be able to digest this information.

The Polish organisers noticed that participants needed some time to feel comfortable enough to share their opinions: “not everyone wanted to contribute, especially in the beginning. Later, they saw there was a space for them. (...) It is a process. It does not only depend on the set-

up but also on personal capacity and feeling of safety” (PolandCA-Interview-10). Even though they did not deliberately change the structure of the assembly, people grew in the assembly anyway. They got more comfortable to share, which needed some time.

Not for all citizen assemblies, a connection was made with media. In cases where no connection was made, some organisers pointed towards the relevance of making a connection to media, as this can be important in creating more impact.

### General reflection

The citizen assemblies were organised with the aim of having a randomly selected group of people discuss a topic in an informed way. To a certain extent, that worked out as planned as the citizen assemblies allowed randomly selected citizens to discuss with each other. Even though random selection was applied, there were still people from specific societal groups missing. Organisers specifically mentioned that they often failed in their attempt to include people from societal minority groups. It proved to be difficult to include a full representative group of people in these discussions.

The aim of having open discussions, free from external coercion, was reached according to most participants and organisers. A few participants, however, indicated that they believed their opinion, or the opinions of others, were not equally valued.

The idea of citizen assemblies is that it puts pressure on policy makers as it is a big event with status. As the citizen assemblies organised in this project are not part of a formal decision-making process, the true impact on policy makers is hard to evaluate.

## 4.3 Roundtables

Roundtables offer opportunities for organised stakeholders to deliberate on issues around the EGD.

The main objective of deliberation within roundtable formats is to represent all values and preferences in proportion to their share in the affected population. Deliberation according to some school of thoughts is framed as a process of finding one or more decision option(s) that optimizes the payoffs to each participating stakeholder.

The following chapter provides an analysis of the roundtables that occurred in different countries Lithuania, Spain, Serbia, and Hungary on the topics of well-being economy, mobility (urban and rural), food and health and sustainable catering at schools.

Table 14 Overview of roundtables organised in REAL DEAL

Country	Topic	Dates	# and type of participants per session	remarks
Lithuania	Well-being economy	6/11/2023	In person, 18	Regional focus
Lithuania	Micromobility in the city	20/11/2023	In person, 12	Regional focus
Spain	Urban Mobility	23/11/2023	In person, 29	National focus
Spain	Rural Mobility	25/11/2023	In person, 17	National focus
Serbia	Food & Health	4/12/2023	In person, 40	National focus
Hungary	Sustainable catering at schools	29-30/04/2024	Both online and in-person, 80 in total	5 roundtables, 4 regional, 1 national



### 4.3.1 Criteria analysis Roundtable

#### (potential to come to) Common understanding

In Serbia, the roundtable reached a consensus, with participants agreeing on the discussed topics (SerbiaRT-Interview). Lithuania's roundtables facilitated understanding among diverse participants, although some felt that there was not enough time for deeper insights (LithuaniaRT2-Questionnaire2). In Hungary, despite some disagreements, a matrix approach mapping the different deliberation arguments helped in reaching a common ground (HungaryRT-Interview). Indeed, during the national Roundtable in Budapest, distinctive disagreements on the concrete solutions and measures to be implemented from the economical side were identified, which made the deliberations difficult.

These disagreements were solved via a “matrix” (quote from the organisers), the organisers and facilitators writing on the one hand the advantages, on the other hand the disadvantages of concrete measures to be implemented.

When participants were asked two months after the roundtables to what extent they believed the roundtables led to more mutual understanding between the participants, the large majority agreed. This can be seen in Figure 12<sup>7</sup>.

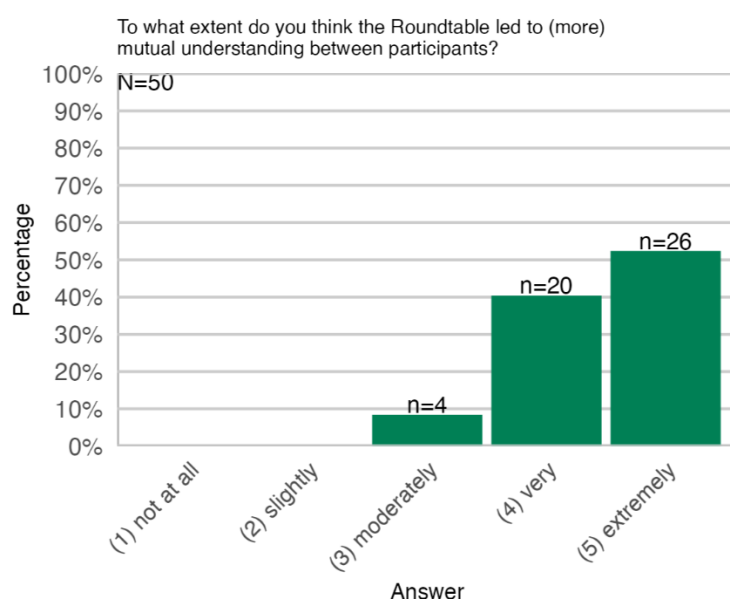


Figure 12 Histogram Roundtable ‘To what extent do you think the Roundtable led to (more) mutual understanding between participants?’

#### (potential) Effect on policy making

In Hungary, the roundtables were directly linked to policy changes in sustainable school catering (HungaryRT-Interview). The roundtable in Serbia also intended to influence future government actions. The discussions were focused around healthy and sustainable nutrition for children at pre-school and school, with the aim to formulate recommendations for the local government (SerbiaRT-Interview).

In Lithuania, the impact of the session on policy making was not entirely clear to the participants. One of the participants said they “criticised the fundamental aspect” as no

<sup>7</sup> Due to planning, the participants of the Hungarian roundtable were not asked to fill in a questionnaire two months after the event. The roundtables took place in June, one week before the analysis of questionnaires started.



“responsible officers were included” (LithuaniaRT2-QuestionnaireAfter). This while the organisers of the roundtable aimed to inform future policies on a well-being economy with the outcomes of the roundtable (LithuaniaRT1-Interview).

### Efficiency

The level of efficiency in the roundtables varied. In Spain and Serbia time and agendas were managed effectively (SpainRT1-Interview; SerbiaRT1-Interview). In Lithuania the organisers/facilitators faced some challenges with time management, impacting the depth of discussions (LithuaniaRT2-Interview). A more structured approach in Hungary helped maintain efficiency (HungaryRT-Interview).

### Empowerment

Empowerment was notable in Serbia, where participants felt their contributions were meaningful and respected (SerbiaRT-Interview). Some Serbian participants indicated that they became more familiar with the topic, got new ideas and were able to look at the topic from different angles (SerbiaRT-Questionnaire2-28; 29). In Lithuania, participants appreciated the opportunity to express their views but desired more clarity on the impact of their discussions (LithuaniaRT1-Interview). In Hungary, stakeholders felt empowered to propose changes to school sustainable catering regulations (HungaryRT-Interview).

In Spain, organisers noticed that sometimes it was difficult for participants to start a discussion when they have different backgrounds. Perhaps giving them more time to think about something beforehand would help the participants (SpainRT2-Interview).

### Equity

Equity was a strong focus in all roundtables. In Serbia, equal opportunities for discussions were highlighted by the participants of the roundtable. They highlighted some efforts of “interconnection” amongst stakeholders representative of the food chain instead of having separate sessions and the attempt to ensure gender balance and involve local people equally (SerbiaRT-Questionnaire2). The deliberations in Lithuania ensured diverse representation but the absence or lack of consideration of some minority groups was noted (LithuaniaRT1-Interview). One participant made a remark about the presentations, saying “when preparing visual material, you should also think about those who do not see so well” (LithuaniaRT2-Questionnaire2). This person did not indicate whether they or others could not see the visual that well, but the remark indicates that this was not accounted for in the presentation.

The roundtables differed very much in how many participants joined each roundtable. In Hungary, only about 12 to 15 participants joined, while in Serbia the roundtable had about 40 participants. In Spain, where there were 29 participants in the first focus group, small groups for discussion were created to ensure that more people would feel comfortable to speak up (SpainRT1-Template). Participants did not reflect on this specifically, but some did indicate that the acoustics could be improved and more time could be given.

In Hungary, efforts were made to include very different stakeholders (for example from private and public sectors) and ensure balanced participation. Participants could use various forms of communication, like writing, to express their opinion (HungaryRT-Interview).

### Fairness

Fairness was emphasised in Serbia, where (almost) all participants had equal opportunities to contribute (SerbiaRT-Questionnaire2). However, mention was made that speaking time was not fully equal, men speaking more than women. In Hungary, fairness was maintained through structured discussions and listing pros and cons of different viewpoints (HungaryRT-Interview).

In Lithuania, participants were asked to moderate the sessions themselves. One of the participants mentioned that this did not work out well, as there was one person dominating the discussion. Instead, an external moderator would have been better according to this participant. However, the other participants did not mention they missed an external moderator (LithuaniaRT1-Questionnaire2). This was also experienced by some participants in the first Spanish roundtable. In the second roundtable in Spain, there was a moderator for each group. According to the organisers, this moderator ensured balanced participation through fair repartition of roles and giving the possibility to each person to express itself via a world cafe session and several rapporteurs and moderators who never left the table, insuring fluidity, and consideration to each participant (SpainRT1-Interview). Participants mentioned that they were satisfied with the moderation and space given to people to express their opinion. This indicates that moderation by someone from the organisation, and not by one of the participants, was positively experienced by participants of the roundtables.

Still, the participants of the roundtables agreed to a large extent that the sessions were fair in the sense that the perspectives of all participants were considered equally, as seen in Figure 13.

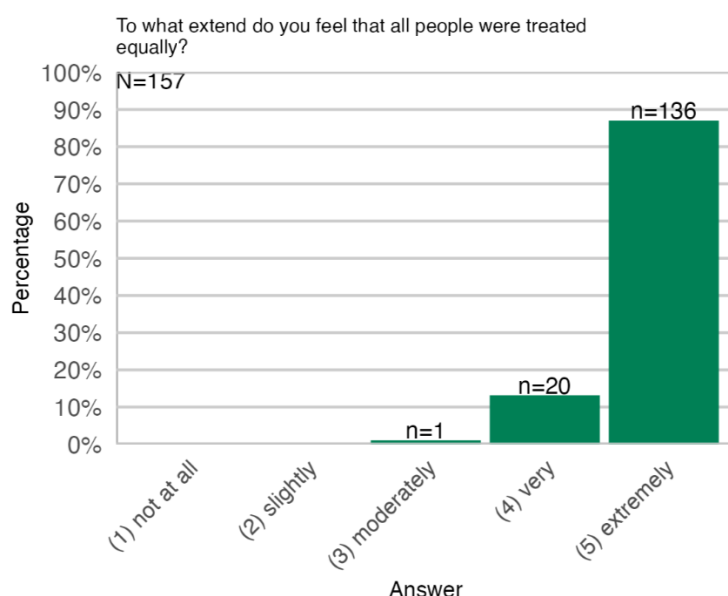


Figure 13 Histogram roundtable 'To what extent do you feel that all people were treated equally during the roundtable?'

### Inclusion

Inclusion was generally well-handled. The roundtables in Serbia included a wide range of stakeholders, including students and employees of the Eco-schools (SerbiaRT-InterviewExtra). The deliberations in Spain ensured diverse participation through structured methods (SpainRT1-Interview) and ensuring that local people and “normal” citizens were involved. The second roundtable in Spain took place at the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. In this light, some of the participants asked if one of the discussions at the table could be focussed on this matter, which was taken up by the organisers of the event (SpainRT2-Template-19). The roundtable in Lithuania focused on including diverse societal groups, although the organisers felt that some societal groups were underrepresented (LithuaniaRT1-Interview). In Hungary the stakeholders felt well included.

### Interests of future actors

Future generations were considered in discussions, particularly in Hungary, where the impact on children's health and sustainability was a key focus. This was ensured with the presence of some young-adults and children (HungaryRT-Interview). Lithuania also discussed future implications of current economic and environmental policies (LithuaniaRT1-Interview).

## Interests of non-human actors

This criterion was less emphasised across the roundtables. This shows that highly likely, the perspective of non-human actors was not taken into consideration that much. In Lithuania, discussions touched on environmental issues and future impacts (LithuaniaRT1-Interview).

## Meaningfulness

Organisers of the Roundtables in Serbia and Spain mentioned that they got feedback from participants saying that they found the discussions meaningful and impactful (SerbiaRT-InterviewExtra; SpainRTInterview). In Lithuania, while the content was valued, participants desired more clarity on the outcomes (LithuaniaRT1-Questionnaire1). In Hungary, the roundtables provided actionable insights (HungaryRT-Interview).

## Privacy

Not much has been specifically mentioned regarding privacy. Privacy was guaranteed by not disclosing participants' organisational affiliations in Lithuania, which helped create a neutral and open atmosphere (LithuaniaRT1-Interview). In Spain, privacy was respected, and participants felt comfortable to share their views openly (SpainRT2-Interview). In Hungary, the focus was on creating a safe space for open discussion (HungaryRT-Interview).

## Representation

Representation varied, with Serbia and Hungary achieving broader stakeholder representation (SerbiaRT-InterviewExtra; HungaryRT-interview). In Serbia, various people from local communities were present at the roundtable, next to experts and producers from Belgrade. Deliberately, no people from governmental institutions were invited as the organisers were afraid that these people would use the roundtable for their election campaigns (SerbiaRT1-Interview-5). Most participants were women, as the organisers mentioned that they “are a conservative country and some people (...) see healthy food [the topic of the roundtable] as a question for women” (SerbiaRT-Teamplate-12).

In Spain, the organisers reflected that “if we wanted to have people, the real ones with the real problems, (...) we had to do it on a Saturday morning” (SpainRT2-Interview-6). Furthermore, as dissemination of the session was done via digital media, this excluded the people who do not use digital media, especially older people. The Lithuanian roundtables had diverse but incomplete representation, but the organisers noted the absence of minority and disabled groups (LithuaniaRT1-Interview).

## Responsiveness

Responsiveness was seen in Serbia, where participants' feedback was actively considered (SerbiaRT- Questionnaires2). Lithuania's participants felt that their inputs were heard but desired more immediate impact (LithuaniaRT1-Questionnaire2). In Hungary, the organisation of the different participatory sessions ensured that the main issues, concerns and interests of the various local actors were addressed and participants felt that way (HungaryRT-Interview).

## Transparency

Transparency was generally well handled across different roundtables with clear communication about objectives and processes according to the participants. This is also visible in the graph in Figure 14 that shows that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the information that was shared regarding the roundtable. However, some participants in Lithuania expressed a need for more information and context before the roundtable (LithuaniaRT1-Questionnaire2), most of the low scores in Figure 14 also came from the Lithuanian roundtables. In Hungary, transparency was ensured through regular communication and clear agendas (HungaryRT-Template).

An interesting approach from one of the Lithuanian roundtables was that at the beginning of the deliberation, when participants did not disclose which from which organisation they came. Instead, participants solely introduced themselves as citizens or parents or how they consider themselves as human being. This, in this sense, was not transparent but the organisers noticed that it helped to relax the atmosphere of the roundtable and contributed to interesting results.

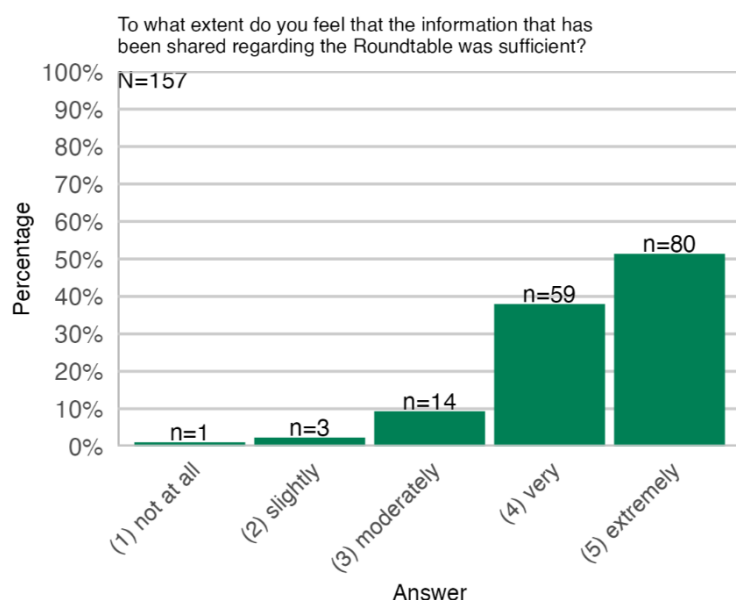


Figure 14 Histogram Roundtables 'To what extent do you feel that the information that has been shared regarding the Roundtable was sufficient?'

### 4.3.2 Reflection across criteria Roundtable

In the next section, the reflection of the authors of this report are given on several themes that transcend criteria.

#### a) To what extent was context important in this format?

Context played a crucial role in all roundtables. In Serbia, the local focus on health and food systems was pertinent (SerbiaRT-Interview). Lithuania's discussions on well-being economy were contextually relevant but broad (LithuaniaRT1-Interview). Hungary's focus on sustainable school catering was timely due to ongoing regulatory changes at regional and national levels (HungaryRT-Interview).

Different countries may have emphasised different themes based on their unique social, cultural, and political contexts.

The specific content of the quotations per country can reveal how organisers, facilitators, participants in each country framed their discussions and which contextual factors they considered significant. Moreover, the way some criteria were approached, discussed, and implemented in different countries might differ and diverge, reflecting local concerns and priorities.

The content of the quotations shows that participants often linked their feedback to their specific contexts. For example, Serbian organisers and participants stressed the importance of frequent sessions for better efficiency, possibly reflecting a context where ongoing dialogue

is crucial. Furthermore, in Serbia, the feedback indicates the importance of local stakeholder dynamics and representation.

In Hungary, some logistical challenges and different participant engagement levels highlight the influence of local context on the execution of the roundtable. In Lithuania, a stakeholder familiarity with the topic shows that local context, including prior knowledge and interest, was important. In Spain, some ethical considerations on inclusivity and reach out to people as well as constructive contributions underline the significance of local stakeholder perspectives.

Context significantly impacted the effectiveness and focus of the roundtables. The feedback reflects how local socio-political environments, stakeholder dynamics, and cultural nuances shaped the discussions and outcomes.

### **b) To what extent did offline/online have any influence on the implementation?**

Most of the roundtables were conducted face-to-face, which enhanced engagement and discussion quality. The data shows a higher and more intensive level of discussions, exchanges, and deliberations, due to face-to-face interactions in all instances. In Serbia, the face-to-face format helped in deliberative participation according to the organisers. In Lithuania it was found that personal interactions facilitated deeper understanding of the topic. Hungary's roundtables benefited from direct interactions among diverse stakeholders.

Overall, in-person interactions in all countries facilitated more dynamic and direct engagements.

Based on the provided data, several insights can be drawn regarding the influence of offline and online modes on the implementation of roundtables in Lithuania, Spain, Serbia, and Hungary. The following analysis of the quotations from the documents give a glimpse into how each mode affected the process.

In Serbia, the mention of face-to-face interaction suggests that offline meetings were considered essential for certain discussions. This could imply a preference for in-person engagement, potentially for better communication and interaction among participants.

In Spain, the organisers used a structured offline format like the world café method, which relies on physical interaction and collective notetaking, highlighting the effectiveness of face-to-face settings in fostering collaborative discussions. Similar to Serbia, the emphasis on face-to-face interactions points to the perceived importance of physical presence for productive roundtable sessions.

The benefits of direct physical presence are frequently mentioned, which likely facilitates better communication, engagement, and collaborative efforts.

Regarding the online mode, while not always directly quoted, the use of online methods was part of the organisational strategies. Virtual meetings in Lithuania and Spain allowed for broader participation but faced issues with technical accessibility and engagement depth. It can be concluded that online formats provided flexibility but sometimes at the cost of engagement quality.

The implementation of roundtables in the different countries significantly favours offline modes. The consistent reference to face-to-face interactions suggests that in-person engagement is viewed as more effective for achieving the objectives of these roundtables. The influence of the online mode appears minimal in comparison, indicating a clear preference for physical meetings in facilitating meaningful discussions and outcomes.

Additionally, the use of online methods and strategies to recruit and reach out to people showed some advantages and some limits. It made it easier to invite more people and to pass on the invitations more easily, but on the other hand it also highlighted the issue of digital divide in some cases, for example it was not easily possible to reach older people or some groups of the population.

### **c) To which extent was the purpose of collecting input from a range of stakeholders achieved?**

The collection of diverse inputs was moderately successful. Success varied by country, influenced by logistical and contextual factors.

In Serbia, a broad range of stakeholders were included. Structured methods in Spain facilitated very diverse input. Lithuania's approach included various social groups but faced some representation gaps. Hungary ensured input from different sectors and age groups.

*In details:*

Serbia mentions multiple stakeholder groups and their participation.

On inclusion, feedback indicate active participation from around 25 attendees and specific contributions from groups like Eco-School.

The post questionnaires also highlight challenges in moderation and ethical considerations, showing a reflection on stakeholder engagement.

In Hungary, high participation levels are mentioned, but logistical issues sometimes overshadowed discussions.

In Lithuania, there was a notable diversity among stakeholders, although the depth of their engagement varied. Participants generally felt they had opportunities to express their opinions, though there was a clear desire for more time dedicated to discussion. Feedback pointed to logistical improvements, particularly in extending discussion time and providing better contextualization and framing before the roundtable events.

In Spain, significant contributions from a wide range of stakeholders positively influenced the outcomes. Efforts to organize and select a diverse group of experts were evident, reflecting a broad stakeholder representation. The inclusion process was marked by detailed recruitment steps and positive feedback from attendees, suggesting effective inclusion. The feedback emphasized the organizational aspects and highlighted the need for a thorough analysis of the collected information, indicating a comprehensive engagement and data collection process.

### **d) To what extent was the selection of stakeholders relevant in relation to the topic? Why/why not?**

The selection of stakeholders across Spain, Serbia, Lithuania, and Hungary was both logical and relevant, demonstrating a structured approach to ensuring diverse representation. In Serbia, the roundtables aimed to encompass all aspects of the food chain by including all actors within the sustainable food sector. Similarly, the organizers in Lithuania focused on engaging a broad socio-economic range, though it was noted that some groups were



underrepresented. Meanwhile, the selection process in Hungary was specifically targeted towards stakeholders relevant to school catering.

In Serbia, the feedback highlighted a broad representation of stakeholder groups, with numerous references to the presence of diverse stakeholders. This diversity was essential in capturing a wide range of perspectives. The roundtables involved around 25 active participants, which suggests a satisfactory level of engagement. The inclusion of multiple voices was crucial in ensuring that different viewpoints were considered, thus enhancing the overall quality of discussions. However, the process of achieving a balanced representation posed challenges, particularly for the moderator, who found it difficult to ensure that all participants were heard. This difficulty underscored the effort to include varied perspectives, despite the inherent challenges in managing such diversity.

In Spain, the roundtables saw 29 and 30 participants, respectively, which indicates robust engagement. This number of participants suggests a healthy mix of stakeholders, sufficient to foster rich discussions while still being manageable. However, a drop-off in participation was noted towards the end of the sessions, with only 17 participants remaining from the initial group. This decline could imply challenges in maintaining engagement or the relevance of discussions for all participants.

Lithuania's approach was characterized by structured participation, as the documents detailed the expected number and types of stakeholders. This level of pre-planning was critical in ensuring that all necessary viewpoints were covered. The sessions in Lithuania maintained consistent participation numbers, which reflects well-organized roundtables that likely succeeded in maintaining stakeholder interest effectively.

In Hungary, the feedback from the roundtables suggested a methodical approach to stakeholder engagement. The detailed records indicated a focus on assessing the effectiveness of inclusion strategies, though some logistical issues impacted overall effectiveness.

Overall, the selection of stakeholders across these countries was logical and well-structured, as documented efforts were made to include a broad range of participants, ensuring that diverse perspectives were considered. However, challenges such as maintaining engagement and effectively managing diverse groups were noted, indicating areas for potential improvement in future sessions. The detailed planning and feedback mechanisms in place reflect a commitment to refining the stakeholder selection process, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of the roundtables.

#### **e) Which 3 criteria worked out best from the perspective of the organisers and participants? And why?**

The three evaluation criteria below reflect what criteria worked out best according to the information provided by the participants and organisers of the sessions. This is subject to interpretation of the authors of this paper.

*Table 15 Three criteria that worked out best for the roundtables*

Rank	Criterion	Justification why this criterion worked out best in relation to the format
1	Transparency	Clear communication and openness were crucial for trust and effective discussions, as seen in Serbia and Hungary.
2	Inclusion	Ensuring diverse participation enriched the discussions and outcomes, particularly in Serbia and Spain.

3	Fairness	Participants were satisfied with how much everybody could express themselves during the roundtables (with some small exceptions)
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#### **f) How was closure reached in the Roundtables, and what can we learn from it? (e.g., was there voting, consensus, no at all, other)**

Closure was generally reached through consensus, with some variations across the countries.

Consensus was common in all countries, fostering a sense of shared ownership and collective decision-making.

The voting was less common but used in specific instances to resolve disagreements.

Facilitator summaries were used, the moderators often summarized discussions to ensure all points were covered and agreed upon.

A structured approach to closure, combining consensus and facilitator summaries, ensured clarity and shared understanding.

#### **g) Overseeing all observations about the Roundtables, what other relevant insights emerge?**

Participation level and representation were key aspects of the roundtables, with an emphasis on the number of participants and the inclusivity of the sessions. These efforts aimed to achieve comprehensive representation by incorporating a wide range of stakeholders, which is essential for balanced discussions.

The challenges encountered during the roundtables included difficulties in moderation and maintaining inclusivity. Moderators faced specific challenges, such as managing discussions and ensuring equal participation, as highlighted by quotations. Ensuring that all voices, particularly those from less represented groups, are heard remains a significant challenge but is crucial for obtaining comprehensive feedback.

Ethical considerations also played an important role, with some feedback focusing on the conclusions drawn from the discussions within an ethical framework. The organization of the roundtables was frequently mentioned as feedback from the organisers and participants, underscoring the importance of logistical and procedural efficiency, as well as thorough preparation. Efficient organization directly impacts the success of the sessions, and clear planning and execution strategies are essential to accommodate all participants and facilitate smooth proceedings.

Positive contributions from entities such as Eco-School were noted, indicating that some participants were particularly valued for their input. Specific groups or organizations added significant perspectives to the discussions. However, moderators often struggled to manage and include all participants effectively, with balancing time and attention as well as motivation among participants being a recurring issue.

### **General reflection**

The roundtables demonstrated a certain commitment to inclusive discussions and participative sessions, though challenges in moderation, inclusivity, representativeness, and logistical management were common. Positive contributions from specific groups, such as Eco-

Schools<sup>8</sup> in Serbia, added valuable perspectives, while maintaining balanced participation remained a recurring issue.

In conclusion, the roundtables across these countries were generally successful in fostering mutual understanding, informing policy making, and ensuring meaningful participation, though there remains room for improvement in areas such as inclusivity, engagement, and logistical efficiency. The feedback underscores the importance of context, the preference for face-to-face interactions, and the need for clear communication and structured approaches in achieving the objectives of such deliberative processes.

## 4.4 Delphi panel

Delphi panel exercises are intended to collect relevant knowledge and values around a given topic from experts, that can serve as input in decision-making processes. The main objective is to avoid missing relevant knowledge and evidence (Renn and Schweizer 2009). A Delphi panel is usually organised in several iterative rounds whereby experts discuss and rank statements in small groups. In plenary their ranks are discussed (in particular where the scores show dissent), and the arguments are documented. Usual outcomes of Delphi panels are expert consensus with converging views or two factions of incommensurable views amongst participants. A Delphi panel can also result in areas of dissent, whereby the arguments for the dissent are clearly outlined and documented. Hence, the final outcome of Delphi panels is not necessary expert consensus, but rather an improved understanding (and documentation thereof) of the topic at hand.

In Table 16 below it is shown that in the Real Deal project, 3 Delphi panels<sup>9</sup> were organised: one in North Macedonia, one in Germany and one in Poland. In all these Delphi's, the input collected during the Delphi was used as input for the citizen assemblies that were organised afterwards.

*Table 16 Overview of Delphi panels in REAL DEAL*

Country	Topic	Dates	# and type of participants per session	Remarks
North Macedonia	Air pollution	February 7, 2024	13 participants The expert group was online Approximately half of the participants were from NGOs, the other half from research/university. One citizen participated as well.	Online
Germany	Addressing necessary changes in current economic practices and consumption patterns for a socio-ecological transformation	May 20&21, 2024	16 participants All participants were academics (different types of economists)	Online

<sup>8</sup> Eco-Schools have started initiatives to improve nutrition values appropriate for children and youth who are growing, as well as to raise awareness of those pre-school and school children on healthy food importance

<sup>9</sup> This does not include the Delphi panel that was organised by the REAL DEAL consortium itself to validate the findings of the REAL DEAL project. This Delphi panel has not been part of the evaluation.

Poland	Practical and strategic aspects of the food chain in Poland	May 7&8, 2024	16 experts, all academics/research institutes	Online
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#### 4.4.1 Criteria analysis Delphi panel

##### (potential to come to) Common understanding

The experts were selected because of their expertise. It was very clear how they were selected and how the organisers attempted to get a diversity of expertise in the (online) room. However, in the Delphi in North Macedonia it seems that there was some variety as illustrated by the point below:

“Some had very specific knowledge for some questions and hardly had any knowledge on other questions, but they were not trying to propose that they were knowledgeable on all questions” (49:45\_NorthMacedonia\_Delphi\_TemplateAfter)

“We had some highly esteemed professors, they knew, for example, the WHO guidelines and standards. And they were very explicit about that by pointing out that they were knowledgeable in their field of expertise. But when then come to something else like legislation on restricting coal burning in rural areas, they also did not pretend to be an expert on this issue as well” (North Macedonia template after)

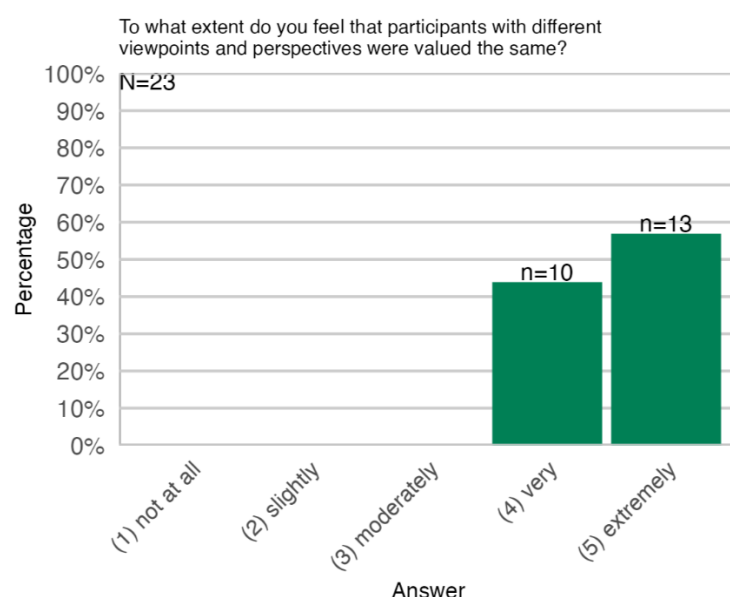


Figure 15 Histogram Delphi panel 'To what extent do you feel that participants with different viewpoints and perspectives were valued the same?'

Experts were listening to each other and they generally felt that all viewpoints were valued the same as seen in Figure 15. There were good discussions and points of confusion were clarified, after which the experts came to a joint understanding. About some issues they finally agreed (consensus), for other issues they disagreed in the end.

In Macedonia, consensus was reached about most topics, as experts brought in convincing arguments and others went along with this. For instance:

“We had a couple of disagreements in the beginning, but during the plenary one group had very powerful arguments or very good knowledge and then everybody went along with that assessment. For instance, some experts said we should invest more in wooden stoves that are more effective until somebody remarked that these stoves would be abandoned during the coming five year. Then everybody said: OK if that is the case, then it does not make sense to make them more efficient. “ (North-Macedonia-Interview)

There was diversity in the room in terms of perspectives, in the sense that there were also experts who stated that climate change is not induced by humans, for instance.

The organisers mentioned that the Delphi process was really useful to come to a common understanding and clarity on where experts agree and where they disagree on certain topics. In Round 1, there was confusion and disagreement but in the subsequent rounds) there was more agreement. Also, it was clearer why people disagree.

### **(potential) Effect on policy making**

In all three cases, the Delphi was conducted to get an expert overview of arguments, which was used as an input for a citizen assembly about a similar topic. In most cases the recommendations of the Delphi panels was input in the citizen assembly that was organised afterwards, and in that way were an indirect input for policy makers. They were not presented directly to policy makers. The effect of the Delphi on policy making was thus rather indirect, if it had an effect at all.

In Germany, there was no direct relation with policy making:

“During the event, concrete policies are discussed and rated. However, there is no direct policy influence in the country or at European level.” (20:19\_Germany\_BEFORE)

In North Macedonia the transfer of the results was reasoned to be as follows:

“The idea was to share the results from the Delphi group with the intersectoral working group on air pollution. Due to election time, this group shall not be functional until September 2024, when we could reinstate it and present the results. The group is consisted of ministry officials (relevant to air pollution) as well as other agencies, institutes and NGOs and is led by the Ministry of environment. The work of this group is also to propose legal amendments and policy improvements as well as concrete actions to prevent and minimise air pollution” (49:77\_North Macedonia\_After)

In general, the results from the Delphi indicate that the organisers see the impact of the Delphi less so on direct policy making but more so on the citizens (and their communities/social networks) who partake in a citizen assembly because they argue that citizens get really valuable information and knowledge from the Delphi that helps them to get an informed opinion about the topic.

### **Efficiency**

There was not much mentioned on this to base the analysis on.

The decision to go online may have to do with efficiency, because it is easier for people to participate in an online session as there is no travel time and less budget needed.

It seems that the Delphi's were all organised in a rush, and there was not sufficient time for the organisers to prepare it properly. For instance, the questionnaires and invitations were sent out rather late and not translated on time.

“We were now quite late in sending the questionnaire drafting, that should have been earlier. We did not involve them enough. It was a tight timeline.”(49:62\_NorthMacedonia\_After)

The advantage of the Delphi is that the group is split into smaller groups. It feels that the discussion in the smaller groups is efficient, more efficient than if you would have the big group together.

“When you keep together people from different fields and different perspectives it is very efficient because we were with a small group.” 48:12\_North Macedonia\_ambassador)

## Empowerment

There was limited mentioning of empowering practices, except that the exchange of argument had a learning effect in the group and from some experts to the other experts.

## Equity

There were some minor issues reported. One code was about the status differences between some of the experts (e.g. man/woman and professors/non professors or non-academics). It was argued that the academics were more dominant in the discussion than the non-academics, and that this may have been caused by a shyness of non-academics. Women were quite vocal (not less vocal than men).

Another code was about the accessibility of the report from the Delphi panel: it was reflected that the language may contain some jargon, which makes it less accessible to lay people.

## Fairness

In general, the participants were satisfied with the Delphi in the sense that they felt treated equally and fairly, as seen in Figure 16.

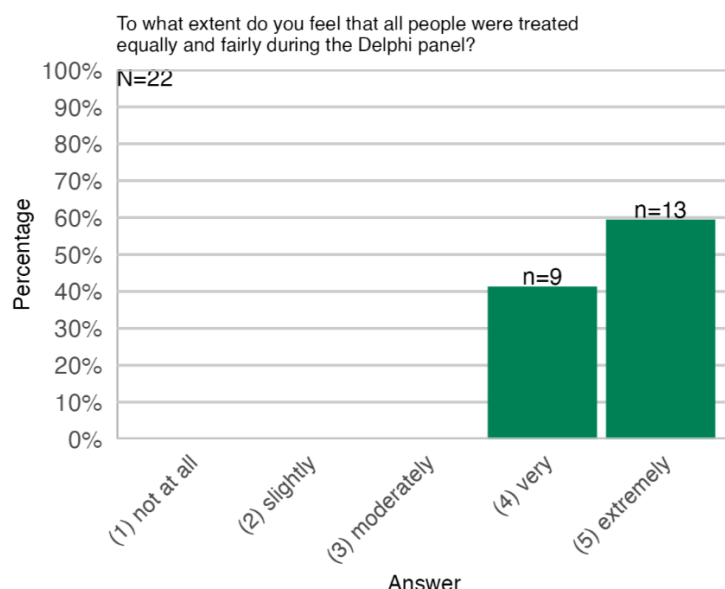


Figure 16 Histogram Delphi panel 'To what extent do you feel that all participants were treated equally and fairly during the Delphi panel?'

Groups that deviate from the 'average' got the time and opportunity to explain why they deviated. Some groups took more time than others to do so. But that is not necessarily fair or unfair. Moderators did realise this and tried to give equal opportunity to both sides of the story.



As there was no budget to cover the cost of experts to take part in this session, it was challenging to get all the originally envisioned experts and the desired number of experts to participate. (Macedonia)

But in Germany there was a small allowance for experts.

It can be assumed that people who are self-employed, or outside academia, or who have caretaking duties, may be less likely to accept such an invitation as they have the opportunity costs: if they spend a day on this they cannot do other things.

This topic did not come back in the Poland reflection.

### **Inclusion**

This criterion was not coded a lot, and only about the language. In case of North Macedonia apparently there were people speaking different languages and it was an issue whether the presentation and discussions and report should be translated to these different languages and there were not enough resources to do so.

### **Interests of future actors**

This was not mentioned explicitly. It was assumed that working on a more sustainable world would benefit future generations automatically. They were not included in the sampling of participants.

### **Interests of non-human actors**

This was not mentioned explicitly. It was assumed that working on a more sustainable world would benefit non-human actors automatically. They were not included in the sampling of participants.

In the Poland Delphi the discussion was also about welfare of animals. But not explicitly in the sense that the interests or perspectives of animals were represented in the Delphi.

### **Meaningfulness**

There is limited information available about how the experts experienced the Delphi panels and to what extent they experienced it as meaningful.

In Germany most participants were extremely or very satisfied with their participation.

Reflections from the organisers were really positive: they all said that the discussions were fruitful. Also, they mentioned that the Delphi process was useful to come to a common understanding and clarity on where experts agree and where they disagree.

### **Privacy**

Privacy was not discussed in any of the documents.

### **Representation**

There was a lot of attention paid to the diversity of expertise within the topics (e.g., in the German case different economic perspectives, and in the Macedonian case doctors, medical and mental and other health expertises).

In the case of North Macedonia, the team reflected afterwards that there may have been a bias towards pro-environmental viewpoints and less from more conservative or private sector perspectives:

“There was nobody close to industry; this is a little problem, and I think the answers also were very much in favour of, let's say, a pro environmental view.”(49:20\_NorthMacedonia-GD-TemplateAfter)

In the Poland case the organisers tried to get expertise ranging from different elements in the food chain (i.e. animal and plant production, transport/processing, retail and consumption).

In North Macedonia on air pollution, the organisers reflected afterwards:

“I would have tried to get more diversity among experts in terms of their general attitude towards climate change and environment. I do not want to have climate sceptics in there, I do not want to have anybody who denies that. But I think if we had one or two experts who were closer to industry or closer to conservative values. It was not represented so in that sense there was not a lot of conflict in the Delphi group“ (North Macedonia\_after).

### Responsiveness

All Delphi's were tailored to the 'local' context, that is the national context. So, for air pollution in North Macedonia, it was tailored to the health problems and difficulties to implement effective policies for instance. It was not clear why the topic of food chain was selected in Poland. The organisation mentioned that the topic was 'given' to them by the by REAL DEAL team. Even though the local organisation did not decide on the topic all alone, they made the topic fit for the context of Poland by providing information that was specific for the food chain in Poland.

In Germany the organisers reflected that the questions for the Delphi need to be really specific to generate meaningful discussions. This is an important point in relation to the combination of Delphi panel with other formats, as the discussions in a Roundtable or citizen assembly are generally far more generic. This was considered a challenge in the combination of Delphi with other formats (Germany\_after).

### Transparency

This criterion did not come back often in the discussions with the organisers and questionnaires with the participants.

From the reflections of the organisers, it seems that the participants were well informed about the objective and topic of the Delphi panels and also why they were selected to participate.

#### 4.4.2 Reflection across criteria Delphi panel

In the next section, the reflection of the authors of this report are given on several themes that transcend criteria.

##### a) To what extent was context important in this format?

There was no major difference in the experiences of the Delphi in Germany, Poland and North Macedonia. The organisers were equally satisfied with this format. The advantage that they mention of this format is the high quality of the discussion, the opportunity for all experts to express their view, and the time (although there was never enough time) and space that was provided through the method to gain new insights and change your view if you see reason to do so.

The Delphi in North Macedonia seemed to have a different selection procedure for experts, whereby more attention was paid to diversity of stakeholders (i.e. participants ranging from citizen, NGO, academia, private sector), while in Germany and Poland all experts were academics. In Germany, the diversity was sought in the type of expertise (different economic expertise within economy as common ground). In Poland they selected a broad list of experts

specialised in specific aspects of the food chain, such as consumption, processing and distribution, crop and livestock production, environment including climate, and general issues. Invitations were then sent out and 13 people responded positively.

One difference was the fact that in North Macedonia no allowance was given, while in Germany a small allowance was given to the experts. This resulted in the situation that in North Macedonia they struggled to find sufficient qualified experts. This decision was determined by the Real Deal project.

All Delphi's took place at the national level.

### **b) To what extent did offline/online have any influence on the implementation?**

One of the participants mentioned that they preferred in-person activities, while the Delphi panel they joined was an online Delphi panel: "I think it is better to talk face-to-face instead of internet. There were little technical problems. But you see better the face, how people react, if you have almost 20 people on your screen in general discussions, and in groups 4 people, there is a different type of emotion. A different type of activities. I prefer this kind of methodology is better to discuss face-to-face." (Poland\_after)

It is good to have a debriefing in the end of a face-to-face session. That is difficult to organise online. In the debriefing session the participants can comment on the process and the questionnaire, for example if they felt that some questions were missing or ill defined.

"Difficult to keep people's attention for several hours in an online meeting." (Germany\_after)  
"Conducting the event online allows greater flexibility for participants with care-taking duties." (Germany\_after)

"During the event, as it was an online event that lasted for 8 hours it was challenging to keep the energy at all times and active participation of all." (North-Macedonia\_after)

### **c) To which extent was the purpose of collecting input from a diverse range of experts achieved?**

For the Delphi this is not the most relevant criterion. The purpose is to have a good discussion among experts. In all cases, expert meant those working at universities or knowledge institutes. This is an interesting observation, as there are new developments in transdisciplinary research which indicate that expertise is not only present among academics, but also among indigenous peoples, lay-people, or those with experiential knowledge (e.g. patients in the case of medicines, or farmers in the case of agriculture). In this sense, the interpretation of experts was quite conventional. The positive effect of this (implicit) choice was that the Delphi's took place among people with similar communication styles, which facilitates high quality deliberations.

In the Delphi in North Macedonia there was more attention paid to diversity of stakeholders (i.e. participants ranging from citizen, NGO, academia, private sector), while in Germany and Poland all experts were academics.

In Germany and Poland, the diversity of views was sought mostly in the diversity of expertise that was solicited. In Germany, the diversity was sought in the type of expertise (different economic expertise within economy as common ground). In Poland they selected a broad list of experts specialised in specific aspects of the food chain, such as consumption, processing

and distribution, crop and livestock production, environment including climate, and general issues. Invitations were then sent out and 13 people responded positively.

**d) To what extent was the selection of these experts a logical choice? Why/why not?**

This is difficult to answer with the limited information at hand.

In North Macedonia no allowance was given, while in Germany a small allowance was given to the experts. This resulted in the situation that in North Macedonia they struggled to find sufficient qualified experts.

**e) Which 3 criteria worked out best from the perspective of the organisers and participants? And why?**

The three evaluation criteria below reflect what criteria worked out best according to the information provided by the participants and organisers of the sessions. This is subject to interpretation of the authors of this paper.

*Table 17 Three criteria that worked out best for the Delphi panels*

Rank	Criterion	Justification why this criterion worked out best in relation to the format
1	<b>Common understanding</b>	This is a key criterion for a Delphi because this is more or less the purpose of organising a Delphi panel. In the Delphis that were organised in the REAL DEAL project it seems that there was The very fact that a topic is discussed from different viewpoints (from experts) – if facilitated well - results in high quality deliberations whereby experts either understand why they disagree or agree with each other.
2	<b>Fairness</b>	Due to the facilitation of the Delphi panels, the small groups, and the commonality in language and background (mostly academics), all participants felt the space to raise their voice. A minor issue was that in one Delphi there was an allowance paid and in another one there wasn't, which may not be fair.
3	<b>Potential impact on policy</b>	All Delphi panels were used as input in the citizen assembly. The collected insights and arguments were thus used in a meaningful way and had influence on the discussions in the citizen assemblies.

Criteria like empowerment, inclusion and representation are less important for the Delphi panel because this format is not meant to empower certain actor groups, or include previously disadvantaged or marginalised groups or have a wide group of representatives from society in the room.

**f) How was closure reached in the Delphi panels, and what can we learn from it? (e.g., was there voting, consensus, no at all, other)**

A combination of voting and consensus, but mostly consensus or agree to disagree. First people rank their answer, then they discuss. In the end the rankings are not the most important, but the arguments in favour or against the question. This went very well in all cases.

Somehow the organisers were disappointed that there was not always a consensus. This is telling, as it makes clear that the organisers are implicitly looking for consensus and may implicitly steer away from dissent. However, the Delphi is not meant to get consensus per se.

### **g) Overseeing all observations about the Delphi panels, what other relevant insights emerge?**

There was a suggestion from a participant to have the facilitation of a Delphi panel from another organisation as the participants, to avoid biases:

“It is best if the facilitator is from another organisation than where the participants are from, because then they are more convinced about the method and unbiased facilitation”.  
(Poland\_organisers\_after)

The questions for a Delphi panel need to be really specific, while the discussions in a roundtable or citizen assembly are more generic. This is a challenge in the combination of Delphi panel with other formats (Germany\_after).

Selecting and recruiting the experts requires sufficient time (at least 3-4 months).

Time was always a challenge. In general, it is better to have less questions, and have really good questions, rather than having many questions that in the end may not be crucial. Experts can really spend a long time weighing out meanings of words, so this should be considered. From the experiences the organisers learned that having 2 or 3 rounds is good, and not more than 20 questions per round.

### **General reflection**

The Delphi panels were quite successful and useful input into the citizen assemblies. The format of a Delphi panel is appropriate to create more clarity before a citizen assembly about the available knowledge, the consensus among experts, and what areas where ambiguity prevails or where there is dissent. This helps to prepare citizen assemblies or other deliberative sessions with more diverse groups of stakeholders.

The principles of equity, empowerment, representation, creating space for future generations and non-humans are less relevant less relevant for a Delphi panel (in comparison with the other formats). This is because of the specific purpose to have a select group of experts discuss around a well-defined topic.

It remains key for the organisers to have the overview and network to be able to invite the ‘right’ experts, so that sufficient diversity is created in the Delphi panel to have meaningful deliberations.

## **4.5 European level events and European Semester**

Besides the formats described above, several deliberative events were organised on EU level, and in Denmark and Italy related to the European Semester. These events have some commonalities with citizen assemblies, but the great difference is that for these events, no random selection took place. The format tested in the EU level events was that of a mix of methods of citizen deliberation, with the aim of testing different methods. Despite the plurality of approaches to citizen deliberation, Deligiaouri and Suiter (2021) argue that ‘(..) there are constants [for events like these]: the need for public deliberation and citizen-centered decision making; the preservation of fair and reasonable, justified argumentation and equality among participants. In its essence, then, deliberative democracy is an effort to broaden democratic practices and deepen citizens’ engagement involving competent and reflective participation’ (Deligiaouri and Suiter 2021). Citizen deliberation should have concrete outcomes, and contribute to legitimising political governance.

These events and sessions, differently from sessions in other chapters, were exclusively designed and organised by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), which had a potential effect in the participants. They were not selected by random selection, but participants were chosen out of a pool of registrants based on criteria such as geographical diversity and gender balance.

After the deliberative sessions on the European Semester in Denmark and Italy, several participants of both sessions came together to discuss the sessions, recommendations they drafted, and preferred ways of inclusion with topics like these. As this session was quite different from all other sessions, and the goal of the session was also different, this session is not included in this analysis.

*Table 18 Overview of deliberative events organised in REAL DEAL*

Country	Topic	Dates	# and type of participants per session	remarks
Denmark	European Semester	14 December in the afternoon, and Friday 15 December 2023	First day; little more than 20 (23), second day little less than 20 (15?).	Besides that, three online webinars were organised (not mandatory).
Italy	European Semester	18 April 2024. 3 hours. Webinar was 2 hours	100 participants (citizens)	Online session
Belgium	European Citizens Deliberation Forum on the Green Transition	10 February 2024	85 participants attended, a few were from the organising Consortium partners, but most were chosen from the pool of citizens who registered online	Event's page: <a href="https://www.realdeal.eu/2402_citizens_deliberation">https://www.realdeal.eu/2402_citizens_deliberation</a>
Belgium	Feminist Festival: A Citizens deliberation on the Green Transition	22 April 2024	300 people applied, and around 100 were selected based on diversity criteria, with 75 attending	Event's page: <a href="https://www.realdeal.eu/240420_feminist_festival">https://www.realdeal.eu/240420_feminist_festival</a>
Belgium	Wild Talks: A Citizens deliberation on Nature and Biodiversity	14 June 2024	85 participants attended, including from the organising Consortium partners and speakers. 70 were chosen from the pool of citizens who registered online.	Event's page: <a href="https://www.realdeal.eu/2404_nature">https://www.realdeal.eu/2404_nature</a>



### *4.5.1 Criteria analysis European level events and European semester*

#### **(potential to come to) Common understanding**

Many participants expressed that the information provided prior to the event enabled them to be better prepared and feel more comfortable discussing the topics and participating in the exchange and developing proposals. The same view is extended to the information provided by the experts on the day of the event, which aimed at being comprehensive overviews of the relevant sub-topic (relevant facts, context, and any existing policies or solutions). Before the event, participants could deliberate in advance on the sub-topics of the events via the designated online platform and, in some cases, pick the topics they preferred from among a pool of topics, which was appreciated.

However, many others felt that the complexity of the topics chosen did not enable them to fully participate, also considering the time constraint and, sometimes, lack of guidance from facilitators:

"The topics selected for the group discussions were very interesting but they were also quite complex. Here I would suggest also having an interactive and visual presentation of the concepts/topics for participants. This way, we could have decided to select one block/part of the topic to discuss in the limited time we had. This would also have helped our thinking process while developing our contributions." (EU1-Questionnaire2-105)

As for the European Semester event in Denmark, the questionnaires reveal there was not a lot of interest in the preparatory webinars. However, organisers found they were a useful tool as "there were knowledge asymmetries in the group, so there was the possibility to get up to speed with the webinars. [...] On the first day of the session, we could elaborate on the learnings from the webinars [and] build on the knowledge gained. Overall, it worked really well with the webinars in the beginning and then the conference afterwards." (Denmark-Interview-2).

For the European Semester event in Italy, 10 days before the deliberative assembly, a webinar took place, which aimed at being a preliminary plenary session, where different topics were explained, such as the EU semester process and there was time for question and answer and debate between participants. However, participants mentioned the need for more knowledge and technical expertise.

There is diversity in how the participants perceived the discussions during the European events. As topics for improvement, some participants mentioned the fact that there was no facilitation in some smaller group sessions, others mentioned an instance where the facilitator did not step in (more detail can be found under the criterion "fairness"), and others mentioned the experts were also the facilitators.

About one third of the participants were very much satisfied with the discussion process, with hearing the perspectives and underlying morals that inform their viewpoints from a diverse range of countries and backgrounds: "I had brilliant conversations that did not always align with my perspective of the world, but these were the most enriching. I left the event with more understanding of why some participants like/dislike and prioritise certain policy recommendations and I think that is what I was more interested in" (EU1-Questionnaire2-202).

As for the European Semester event in Italy, the data shows there was no disagreement in viewpoints and positions, as participants tended to agree with each other. Consensus was reached by voting: "There were 18 proposals that were made in the separate groups. The plenary session voted on these 18 proposals. For all proposals, the majority voted in favour. The least majority was of 79% in favour. We let them the possibility not to vote; because maybe people do not have an idea on the issue" (Italy-Interview-19).

### (potential) Effect on policy making

Overall, the data shows that participants were unsure or confused about how the event would have an effect on policymaking before and during the event, and some remained unsure even after the event. This is made visual in Figure 17 and Figure 18 and by the following quote:

"Some people came to discuss citizen participation processes at European level (which was my case), others to put together proposals to be sent to the EU level. Having already taken part in a citizens' assembly on climate that lasted 8 months, I wasn't very enthusiastic about the idea of reproducing the same process, with the same limitations (lack of diversity, no fair distribution of the floor, lack of time) in just one day. In the case of the assembly I took part in, the proposals were debated with MPs, the government. Here, the destination of the proposals was less clear. It's not very motivating." (EU1-Questionnaire2-36)

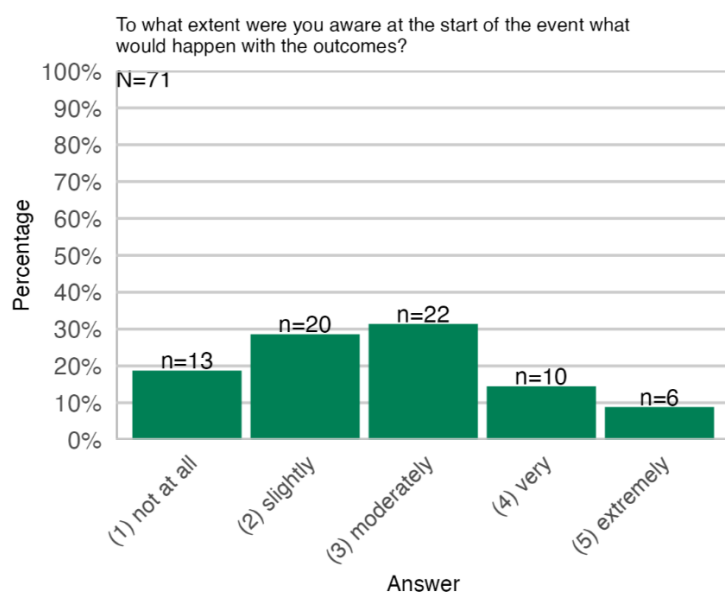


Figure 17 Histogram EU level event 'To what extent were you aware at the start of the event what would happen with the outcomes?'

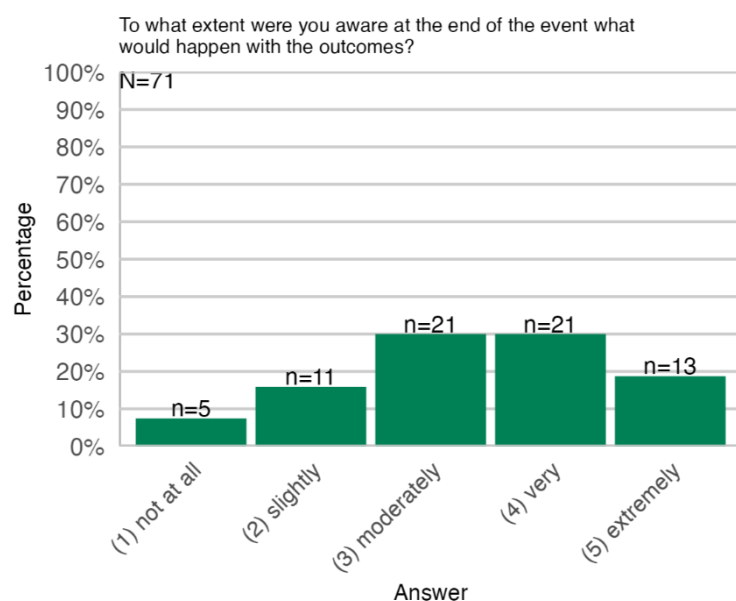


Figure 18 Histogram EU level event 'To what extent were you aware at the end of the event what would happen with the outcomes?'

Multiple participants expressed finding the events "lost time" once they realised the outcomes would not be shared with high level EU policymakers: "some people including myself were not sure what is the expected outcome of the group work. We were motivated to come up with recommendations to the EU, but it wasn't clear which mechanisms we are talking about, how are these recommendations would be put to use, would this be part of a REAL DEAL publication and so on. I think the information sharing around this could have been better." (EU2-Questionnaire2-65)

Some participants also expressed that they think the outcomes of the events are too broad/generic to be workable by policymakers.

As for the European Semester events in Denmark and Italy, the 18 recommendations that resulted from the event were shared publicly in a conference, but it is unclear whether the policy recommendations were given to policy makers or not.

## Efficiency

Multiple participants mentioned efficiency issues that could be improved, such as better time management, better explanation of what is the goal of the event, lack of knowledge of the topics of discussion by participants, better guidance in the discussions and their outcomes (with, once again, participants negatively reviewing the efficiency of the group discussion where moderation/facilitation was not present, namely the discussion being monopolised by some participants, discussion points and notes being unorganised and unclear, and some participants needing to take on the role of note-taker/moderator while not being prepared to do so – more details and quotes are available under the criterion "fairness").

A few participants mentioned that utilising already established methodologies and networks as important to efficiency:

"(...) it's essential to acknowledge the wealth of experience worldwide in facilitating participatory decision-making processes. Utilising proven and efficient facilitation techniques is crucial to build on these past experiences. Regardless of a facilitator's experience, providing a crash course on the workshop's content and methodologies is essential. This not only ensures consistency across all groups but also equips facilitators with a deeper understanding of the topic they are guiding." (EU1-Questionnaire2-199)

There is a consensus in the available data that dividing participants in smaller groups focused in one topic is productive.

As for the European Semester events in Denmark and Italy, the criterion efficiency only comes up three times in the Denmark questionnaires, and it shows time constraints were perceived as an issue by participants.

## Empowerment

For the European events, a factor that many participants mentioned hindered them was language barriers as the events took place only in English and many participants did not feel comfortable in their knowledge of the language:

"Because English is the second language for everyone it is important to constantly check if a contribution is clear and well understood. Because of an accent, use of terms, lack of vocabulary and speed of talking the value of a contribution is undermined. It might help if moderators summarize a remark and regularly check if everything is understood" (EU1-Questionnaire2-211). This was more specifically addressed in the second EU event, as elaborated more in the part on 'Inclusion'.

A predominant result is that participants appreciated learning and gaining knowledge from other participants, with most highlighting that as a positive aspect.

For the moderators/facilitators, the organisers provided them with a feminist moderation course, but the analysis did not yield further insights on this, except for a comment by a participant of the first EU level event who mentioned that it would be valuable to arrange a "support/preparation system for people who feel less comfortable (cf. social/gender/racial inequalities linked to public speaking). Saying that the place is a "safe space" is not enough to create the concrete conditions" (EU1-Questionnaire2-89). In the second EU level event, the organisers of the event arranged this by appointing a team of three people to be an awareness team. This is explained further in the 'Inclusion' paragraph.

To empower participants, some solutions proposed by participants were good guidance/facilitation and the sharing of more in-depth reading materials and other additional information relevant for the session and topics beforehand, as many participants are faced with concepts for the first time on the day. In order for them to make decisions on the topic at hand, they wanted to be well-informed.

## Equity

In the questionnaires analysed, some participants mentioned that they or other participants felt less comfortable participating in events like these, which can constitute a barrier to their full participation, and mentioned a support/preparation system to support these participants. In the session that lacked adequate moderation/facilitation, many participants pointed out the resulting inequality in participation, namely a negative gendered impact, with women being able to participate less than men.

However, most participants said that everyone was treated equally and given a chance to participate. Some participants manifested appreciation for the support during the event and their stay in general, as well as knowing there were facilitators, organisers, or safety coordinator in the case of the Feminist Festival around to help them if needed.

For the European events, accommodation was arranged by the organisers, and travel costs were reimbursed. However, participants had to be able to afford to cover these costs themselves upfront. Additionally, the reimbursements took a considerable amount of time to be processed to all participants, leaving many participants waiting a long time to be reimbursed.

The events took place over the weekend (Saturdays), therefore not interfering with most participants' jobs. Ostensibly actions were taken to support participants, as illustrated by this quote of one of the organisers of the second European event: "we also asked a question if they needed childcare or money to reimburse people to pay for childcare if they were to come. And it was frustrating because we asked the question but we could not actually do something about it. Childcare could not be financially compensated" (EU2-Template-17). "One person requested to bring a child along with them, and we asked what will happen with the child because if it is like a 7-year-old child in that environment it may not be ideal for them. But in the end, they managed to arrange it themselves. Where there were specific requests, we tried to deal with them" (EU2-Interview-18).

One participant remarked that they had lost their voice that day, so they had to type their inputs for another participant to read out loud, which was exhausting for them. This raises broader questions about tools and support given to people facing obstacles to their participation in a traditional discussion. A participant also raised concerns around the adequacy of the venue for participants with reduced mobility (for example, there were not enough seats available during the lunch), although accessibility needs were asked beforehand by organisers.

Efforts by organisers on equity are best demonstrated by this quote: "Most people did not indicate anything of specific accessibility means like translation. There were a few who needed Turkish interpretation, so we were having Turkish interpreters on standby. [...] But that participant did not show up. Credits to WECF in terms of inclusivity because Turkish people needed visas, and WECF provided VISA support letters to those participants. We tried to facilitate that as best as possible, but in some cases the visa applications were not approved on time. So, there is also this question of like is it just people living in Europe, or should all citizens be able to participate in the process?" (EU2-Interview2-15).

As for the European Semester event in Denmark, all moderators and facilitators had access to previous training, and the feminist techniques moderation course. Translation was provided when needed. As for the European Semester event in Italy, the organisers revealed that "We chose the online Assembly to put everyone living in Italy on an equal footing and to reduce the time commitment to encourage greater adherence to the initiative" (Italy-Template-9), and presented the online format also as a solution to ensure participants with child-care duties could participate. Organisers expressed that working with a strict policy cycle, such as the European Semester, does not allow for much creativity.

In general, the inclusion of various types of sessions, like artistic or expressive sessions, enabled participants with different needs and wishes to take part in the events in a way that was comfortable for them. However, still most discussions were based around talking. One of the observers recommended to use post-its, papers and markers the next time for people to write their thoughts down. This can help in clustering the thoughts of a group, and can make people who have less confidence to raise their voices feel more engaged. Most logistical aspects were conducive to equity, but there were some shortcomings (room with no noise cancellation, need to pay travel costs upfront).

## Fairness

Overwhelmingly, participants of the citizen deliberation events felt that every participant was listened to and encouraged to speak, and that there was a fair balance of speaking time and opportunities for participants, irrespective of how much prior knowledge on the topic they had. Most remarks show an attentive moderation of the sessions, with moderator noticing when a participant wished to speak or some had not had a chance to speak yet, and moderators being described as "helpful" and "fair". One participant also remarked that participants were given another chance to present the outcome of their session when they experienced technical issues the first time.

However, there were some different experiences in a specific session of the first European event, with participants remarking on issues with the facilitation of the session, which resulted on an imbalance in speaking time: "the moderator saw that some people hardly spoke, he did not much effort to directly ask them what they felt about the topic. The moderator should be more attentive to those who find it difficult to speak up" (EU1-Questionnaire2-81). Other participants of this session felt there was no facilitation at all. A specific evaluation of this session is best summed up by this participant's response:

"And please, please, self-organised groups don't regulate the floor fairly, with all the goodwill in the world. That requires 'rules' (e.g. timed speaking times) that are explained and consented to at the start of the process, and people to ensure that they are enforced. The discussions I experienced on Saturday were all about who shouted the loudest. There was no awareness of the inequalities in speaking time, and therefore of the inequalities between the different experiences around the table" (EU1-Questionnaire2-37).

This particular session generated a negative gendered impact, as explained by this participant: "Even though I'm a man I feel like the discussion was very male dominated, for the same reasons as above. Multiple men just jumped into the discussion at every possibility not leaving

room for more calm people" (EU1-Questionnaire2-123). Apart from the conversation being dominated by men, a participant also noted their disappointment that gender was not discussed in the relation to the broader topic of the session at all.

Participants also remarked on time constraints being a hinderance to an entirely fair event, as not all ideas and thoughts expressed could be developed or followed up on. One participant also expressed that, in one of the sessions, voting was used at certain point to decide on the outcome of their session, and this generated a feeling of "being left behind" for the people who did not agree with the majority.

As for the European Semester event in Italy, participants mostly felt that contributions by all participants were given equal value, and the moderator was described as "attentive". However, some participants experienced it different as illustrated by this quote: "I think the participants were not given a chance to express themselves and the facilitators played too strong a role by directing and deciding the meaning for them. The synthesis of the working group should have been left to the participants. In the end, it is not the facilitators who have to synthesise" (Italy-Questionnaire2-32). Some participants also expressed that the voting method adopted in this event did not give voice to the dissenting minority. In general, plenary voting does not seem to be appreciated as a method, as participants feel that a simple yes or no does not reflect the richness and nuance of their discussions. Without the nuance, either participants do not feel represented, or the recommendations become too general to be of use (i.e. the meaning gets lost).

The results seem to show that fairness is largely dependent on the presence and quality of the moderation/facilitation of a session, as the main factor. Figure 19 shows a really divided perception on whether discussions were dominated by some, with differences between the three different EU deliberative events. Participants of the first event were more positive compared to the participants of the other two events, showing that they thought less people dominated the discussions.

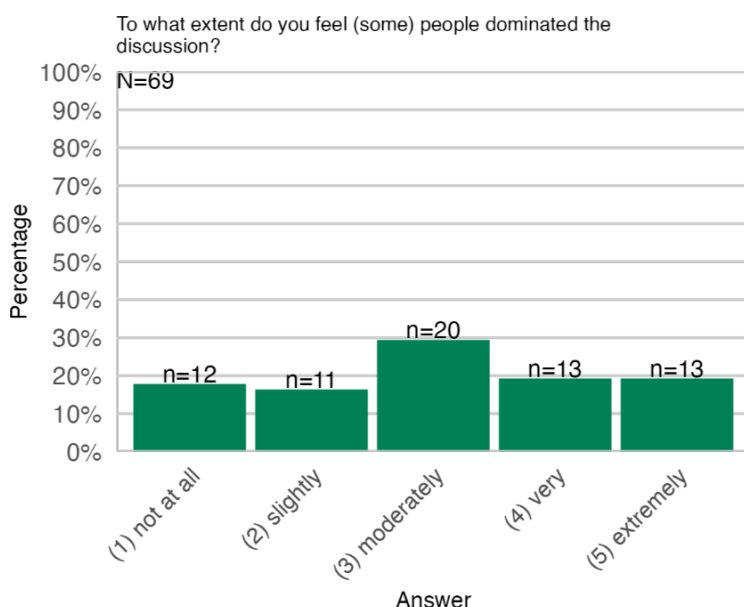


Figure 19 Histogram EU level event 'To what extent do you feel (some) people dominated the discussion?'

Regarding whether participants felt that the discussions were accurately reflected in the outcomes of the events, Figure 20, Figure 22 show that for the European events, participants moderately agree with this. The participants of the three events were about equally satisfied with this, with the participants of the second event being a bit more positive about how their



own perspectives were included in the final outcomes. As seen in Figure 21 and Figure 23, for the Italian event, participants were slightly more positive about this.

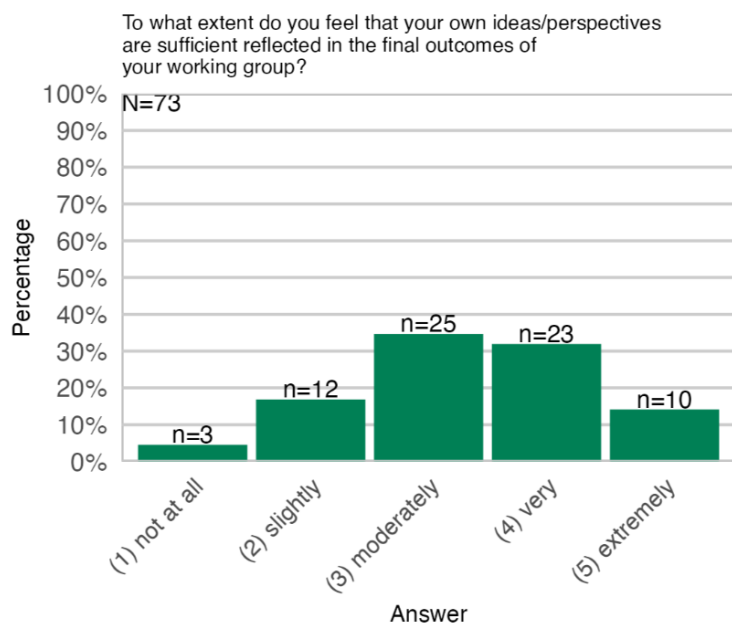


Figure 20 Histogram EU level event 'To what extent do you feel that your own ideas/perspectives are sufficiently reflected in the final outcomes of your working group?'

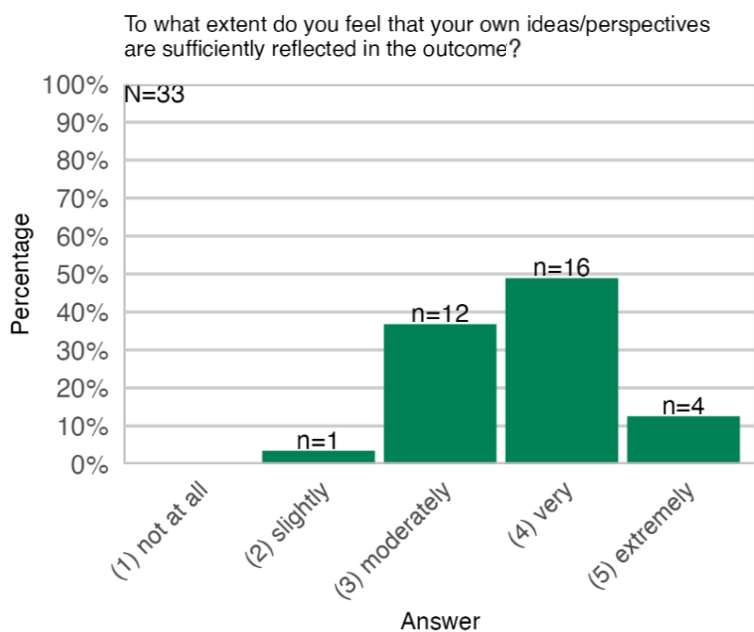


Figure 21 Histogram Italian event 'To what extent do you feel that your own ideas/perspectives are sufficiently reflected in the final outcomes?'

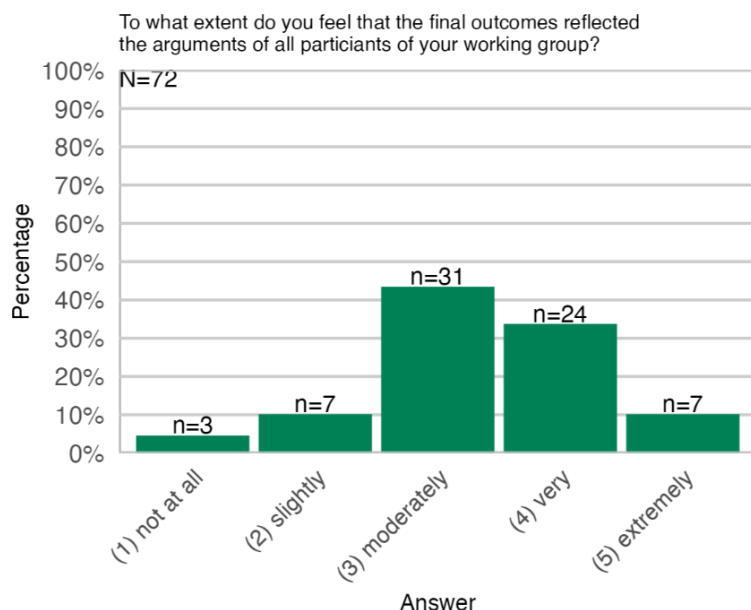


Figure 22 Histogram EU level event 'To what extent do you feel that the final outcomes reflected the arguments of all participants of your working group?'

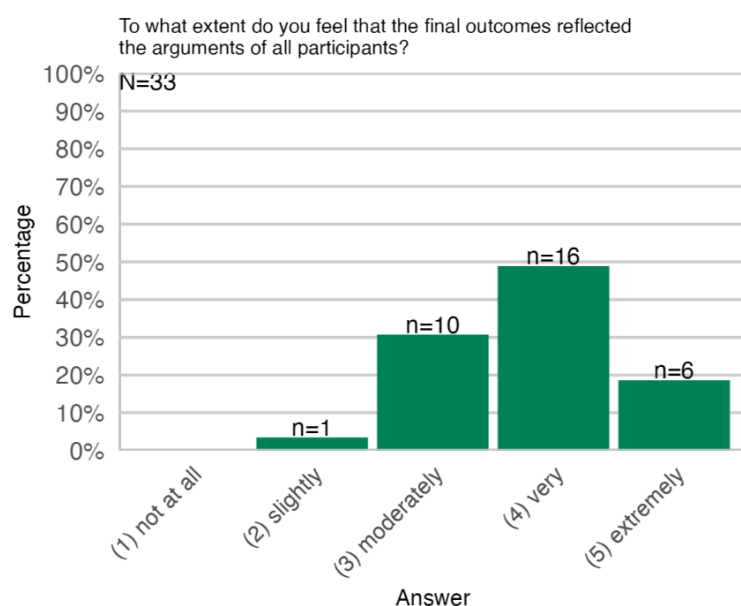


Figure 23 Histogram Italian event 'To what extent do you feel that the final outcomes reflected the arguments of all participants?'

## Inclusion

A few participants highlighted the diversity of the group of participants as a positive aspect, mentioning diversity of age, nationalities, and backgrounds expressly. However, some participants had another view, mentioning a lack of diversity, and also inequalities in speaking time which exacerbated inequalities between the different experiences of participants. When asked about the group they represent (voluntary demographic information question in questionnaire), some participants identified as persons of colour, and other as persons with a LGBT+ identity. Most participants were highly educated. One participant mentioned that

having many participants from the same country in the same discussion has a negative impact on including diverse perspective from all over the EU in the discussion.

As was the case for other indicators, participants from the event in which there was a session where moderation/facilitation was missing mentioned the negative impacts of this in inclusivity of the discussions, with a gendered impact. Language barriers also posed a barrier to inclusivity as the EU events were held in English. Some people expressed that they had difficulties with expressing themselves in English, and others mentioned that they found it difficult to understand others "because some spoke with such a strong accent and their English was not fluent. I saw participants writing down what they wanted to say and let Google Translate put their text in English and read that aloud, but that was very hard to follow. Interpreters would have been very welcome." (EU1-Questionnaire2-129). The second EU level event, the Feminist Festival, tried to address this issue by deliberately asking participants if they needed translators to be present at the event. In case participants mentioned they wanted translators, this was arranged.

In the Feminist Festival event, multiple participants voiced their appreciation for the emphasis on 'safe space' (room for explanation and clarification without feeling judged). Multiple participants reported feeling the space was safe and inclusive:

"I have never been in an event where hosts had not just created ground rules for participants, but also put a lot of emphasis in the ambition to 'make this event as inclusive as possible'. I feel many times, ground rules are mentioned but forgotten and in this event the moderators where constantly practising those rules they had mentioned at the start and done it in a way that made me feel super safe and like at home" (EU2-Questionnaire2-48).

In the Feminist Festival, there was a feminist format set up, including an awareness team to provide support to participants, which was appreciated and mentioned as a mechanism to incorporate in all events. From the analyses it seems that the awareness team was approached by and provided support to two participants with specific issues, but there is broader appreciation from participants that this mechanism was available.

An important aspect to keep in mind for participants with potential mobility restrictions, a participant expressed that they were unaware that there would be so much standing, which was challenging for them, and they would have requested access to chairs in all situations.

As for the European Semester events in Denmark and Italy, participants mention that simpler (rather than technical) language could have been used. Data seems to show that participants connected with each other across ages and backgrounds.

The analyses shows that different tools and methods of carrying out sessions are conducive to more inclusive participation, and the same is true for hands-on, attentive moderation/facilitation. A feminist format of the events, with safe space and an awareness team is conducive to inclusiveness. Barriers to inclusiveness were present, such as: language barriers, lack of diversity of participants in aspects such as nationality and education background – probable cause is selection method, which was not random selection but rather selection from a pool of people who had registered to participate, as well as geographical location of the events (Brussels).

### Interests of future actors

The analysis shows that, while both participants and organisers are mostly aware of the importance of holding deliberation events on environmental topics from a perspective of future generations/including the rights of future generations, it is unclear how future generations were included in any of the discussions, if at all. The topic of future generations was hardly mentioned in the questionnaire responses. The fulfilment of this criterion seems to require a

better understanding from participants of the topic beforehand, as well as a more targeted facilitation.

### Interests of non-human actors

The analysis shows that, while both participants and organisers are mostly aware of the importance of holding deliberation events on environmental topics from a non-anthropocentric perspective, it is unclear how the interests of non-human actors were included in the discussions, if at all. The event did have a presenter and expert moderator which was an expert on the topic of the rights of nature.

While participants state that they were informed about the rights of nature, which some expressed they found interesting, some did not fully understand the relation to the main topic of the event, or how to incorporate it in the discussions:

"The 'right of nature' was not very clear in its connection with the Green Deal but also when discussed in the working group session (we actually did not focus on it)." (EU1-Questionnaire-5)

However, in reply to the questionnaires, it is very apparent that many participants have a clear understanding, vision, and proposals which centre nature-based solutions and wildlife and biodiversity protection in environmental, energy, climate, or food policies. Nonetheless, it is unclear if or how these participants were able to express these ideas during the discussions.

The challenge was expressed regarding appropriate tools and method to enable discussions from a non-human/rights of nature perspective:

"We did not have the methods or background to back that up fully. An idea would be to combine deliberative methods with the non-human perspective. The interest of non-humans was present, but not explicitly specified. Could we combine an explicit aim to deliberate from the non-human perspective, but using those methods? " (EU3-Interview-17)

As for the European Semester events in Denmark and Italy, the interests of non-human actors are only mentioned twice and are best exemplified by this quote: "One of the policy recommendations was to give nature rights. It came upon in their own discussions, but that was not because we introduced something that made them think of this" (Italy+Denmark-Interview-10).

Policy discussions from the perspective of non-human actors/rights of nature was not central element in discussions. The fulfilment of this criterion seems to require a better understanding from all participants beforehand, as well as a more targeted facilitation on the topic.

### Meaningfulness

In general, participants found the events meaningful (using word such as "important", "exciting", "motivation", "valuable", "inspiring", "challenging", "enticing" and "encouraging"), as well as the chance to network with the other participants:

"Connecting with other voices, people, thoughts, and colours. It made me more curious about the entire green deal itself. Because of this, I am reading and following the Dutch agenda on the EU Green Deal closely. I am more aware of what I can do for my environment and community. I am also aware that we need more support for the marginalised communities to participate towards the Green deal." (EU2-Questionnaire2-110)

Multiple participants expressed that they learned a lot from the events, both from the experts and other participants and the discussions and results themselves:

"I heard different perspectives I do not often hear and I also got questioned or got my beliefs put into question. I learned about the rights of nature or from the expert on mobility. I also was

very pleased seeing the recommendations from other groups than mine." (EU1-Questionnaire2-221)

As for the European Semester events in Denmark and Italy, data shows participants found the events meaningful in the sense that it allowed them to connect with other participants, and network.

## Privacy

This topic hardly came back in the data; there are no specific questions geared towards this criterion. The observation that no-one mentioned something that could be related to their privacy may indicate that participants did not have any (negative) experiences related to their privacy, which is a good thing.

The only remark that was made in relation to privacy was the spontaneous 'voting' in one of the Brussels citizens deliberation events that took place. At the end the facilitator asked participant to vote for a specific statement. This was to get an idea of the general opinion in the room, whether most participants agree or disagree with this. The suggestion to vote openly like this was not appreciated by all participants, as they were asked to show their opinion in plenary and they were not prepared to do so. Some participants say that was the reason why they did not vote during that plenary session. This lesson was reflected upon by the organisers themselves afterward.

As for the European Semester events in Italy and Denmark, privacy was not mentioned.

## Representation

The analysis shows that multiple participants highlight that diversity in perceptions, contexts and backgrounds were represented in the event and in the discussions. Some had no prior knowledge on the EU Green Deal, climate or environmental policies or scientific knowledge on climate change, while many either worked on or studied these topics on some capacity.

For the European deliberative events, participants had an opportunity to express their interest in the different sub-topics before the deliberation, via the online platform. In one event, experts were brought in who had lived experiences on the topics of discussion. For the topic Food and agriculture this were farmers from Northern France. For chemical pollution it was an activist fighting against Tata Steel. And a shepherd came to provide input on the topic of wildlife (EU3-Interview-01).

As to how the representation of different people and groups was ensured, we have the following information. Potential interested participants could register themselves as interested in the event. After this, the organised tried to invite a diverse group of people, as described in this quote: "The aim was to get interested citizen to participate. Due to the constraints to do random selection, we had to do the recruitment through the existing networks we have. Not all of those people are 'just' interested citizens. Some of them were also working with NGO's. [...] This needs to be improved for the next time. [...] [G]o more grassroots; personal instead of professional network." As said here, it turned out that many people who registered were linked to CSOs or NGOs. It was difficult to filter them out. Also reaching marginalised groups turned out to be difficult: "Most of them [the participants] were highly educated, we were likely not succeeding in reaching more marginalised groups. We have changed the structure likely for the recruitment [of the following events]. The voluntary demographic information [...] now] is combined with the sign-ups. That gives a better overview of can we reach more marginalised groups" (EU1-Interview-3). Besides this, however, participants as well as organisers of all European events mentioned that there was a good diversity in the sense of country of origin.

As for the European semester events in Denmark and Italy, data shows that representation in age, profession and gender was somewhat present, but younger and older generations were not as well represented in Italy. In Italy, the choice for an online instead of in-person event was mostly due to ensuring representation from participants all over the country, even though some regions were not represented: "There were some regions with 0 participants, but those are the less populated regions. Most of the participants were women, 60%. Regarding the age, there were not so much from the youngest and the oldest category. Regarding the educational level, most people had a degree just below the master. Regarding the employment, 24% of the people are freelancers, and 24% were employed (not specified any further) and 19% were directors or managers" (Italy-Interview-8). In Denmark, the younger generation was better represented, which organisers believe is due to the fact that in Denmark the people who participated were from a CSO, not simply citizens. In Italy, participants mostly represent themselves as simply citizens.

Concluding, on the one hand, data indicates that the events represented and integrated the knowledge from participants with varied background, lived experiences, and identities. On the other hand, most participants seem to be highly educated and many were somehow already linked to the civil society space. Many other groups in society were underrepresented or not represented.

## Responsiveness

A participant expressed they wished the topics of discussion were more inclusive and covered more aspects (small businesses mentioned and impact on hand labourers expressly).

Participants also expressed the focus on social justice and racial justice was important. Participants could choose their preferred sub-topics for discussions through the online platform prior to the deliberation, using the online platform in the project. Multiple participants felt the examples and information given by experts was concrete and nuanced, and that it was valuable to bring their perspectives to the discussions:

"My key topic for discussion is gender aspects in the green transition. This topic coincided very directly with the workshop I attended. It was important for me to participate in providing my own comments, in particular, about the context in my country (Ukraine)." (EU2-Questionnaire2-41)

As for the European semester events in Denmark and Italy, the events were organised in the context of the European Semester, an established political process. The criterion responsiveness, however, only came up thrice in the data, making it difficult to draw any other conclusion on these events.

Figure 24 shows that while participants of the European events did have the opportunity to address topics in the online platform, many did not feel like they could influence the topic.



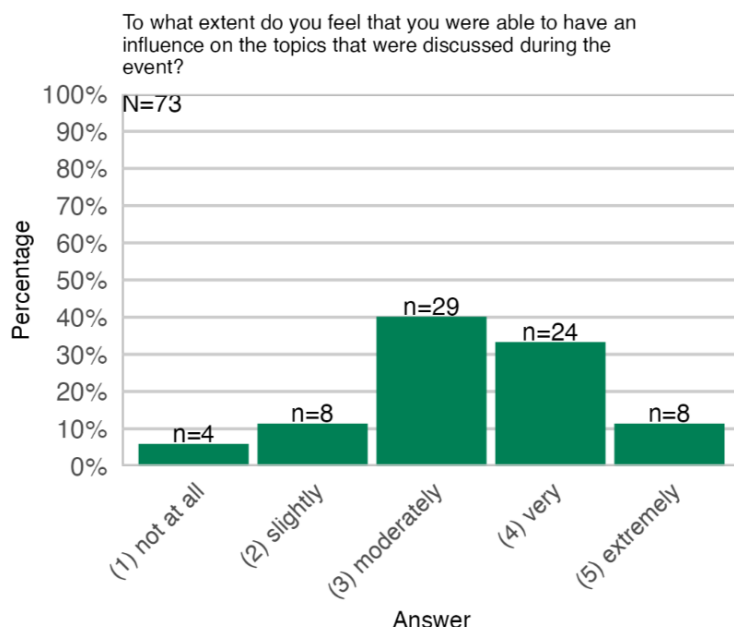


Figure 24 Histogram EU level event 'To what extent do you feel that you were able to have an influence on the topics that were discussed during the event?'

## Transparency

The results are similar across all three European deliberative events. About two thirds of the participants indicated that the purpose of the citizen deliberation events in Brussels was not clear to them. Neither was the actual process of topic selection, methods to be used, and how priorities were set. Mostly, the participants did not know what would actually happen with the recommendations. In about one third of the participants felt well-informed beforehand. Participants appreciated that there was information sent around before the events and moreover they appreciated that such events are being organised and the chance to participate and connect with other citizens.

It seems that participants with limited knowledge found the information quite overwhelming, while participants with more initial knowledge or pre-occupations about the topic at hand would have liked to have more detailed information. Multiple participants mentioned that a fact sheet or brief explanation of the topic(s) would have helped them enormously. Others suggested an online session beforehand to get up to speed on the topic(s).

For quite a number of participants it was not at all clear what the purpose of the events was, why and how the sub-topics were selected, and what would happen with the results after the deliberative event. This was beforehand but also afterwards.

Multiple participants found the information that was shared beforehand misleading. A quote to illustrate this:

"The information about the event was quite misleading: The invitation suggested that this was a conference where European citizens could make their voices heard at EU level on the Green Deal. Instead, it was then explained that the main objective was to test new ways of participatory democracy, without a real focus on results" (EU1-Questionnaire2-28).

This observation was also shared with a few others; for them it was confusing whether the purpose was to actually have influence on policymaking, or merely to test a method of citizen deliberation. For many participants the process was unclear beforehand. They were not sure what they were engaging in. During the panel session it became a bit clearer though. For

instance, many participants learned only during the discussions that they were supposed to come up with one recommendation and that there would be voting at the end.

Many participants had questions about the online platform. They had questions about how it worked, and did not understand that the topics that they would select on this platform would be prioritised during the face-to-face deliberation. The organisers appreciated the use of the platform as they liked that participants could engage beforehand, and influence the topics of discussion. However, it seems that the organisers did not fully succeed in clarifying the role of the platform to the participants. Generally, there seems to be a gap between the reflections of the organisers and the experiences of the participants.

As for the European semester event in Italy, multiple participants express lack of clarity in communicating/making understood what the purpose/ultimate goal of the event and its expected outcomes were. Some participants also said they were not informed beforehand what would be the topic of discussion in their working group, and they would have liked to know. As for the European semester events in Denmark, transparency was not mentioned.

#### *4.5.2 Reflection across criteria European events and European Semester*

In the next section, the reflection of the authors of this report are given on several themes that transcend criteria.

##### **a) To what extent was context important in this format?**

The context was very broad in the Brussels events (connected to EU climate/environmental policy, including mobility, food policy, rights of nature, chemicals, farming, social justice, circular economy, etc.) - the connection to current, ongoing, or potential EU policy was present in the events, mainly through the experts' presentations, topics of discussion and lived experiences of participants. The data shows there was diversity in the context of participants, both in terms of identity, professional background, age, and nationality. In contrast to national/local level events, the Brussels events were a culmination of many different contexts brought together.

##### **b) To what extent did offline/online have any influence on the implementation?**

The participation in the Brussels events was fully in person, with moderators and participants being present in Brussels. A few experts, who gave info sessions/presentations connected online.

Before the event, participants could vote for their preferred sub-topics for discussion on the REAL DEAL online platform (from among a pre-defined pool of topics): "I voted for four topics on the online platform and these were the same ones that were discussed on the day. So, I do feel like I influenced what we focused on." (EU1-Questionnaire2). Participants also received communications and information before the event. In some events, citizens could deliberate in advance on the sub-topics via the online platform: "We are using the online platform to share resources with the participants beforehand and to give them a space to engage in a debate on the topics we will discuss. They are also able to submit proposals with finalised recommendations, that we will vote on at the event. The online platform also outlines the process phase" (EU2-Questionnaire1)

However, the organisers were not sure how much participants actually looked at the material on the online platform.

"The engagement there [on the online platform] was quite low. It was not clear how many people looked at that beforehand." (EU3-Interview). Engagement in the online platform seems to have been relatively low – a clue as to why is perhaps the feedback from one participant, who expressed they did not really understand how they were supposed to engage beforehand in the online platform.

### **c) To which extent was the purpose achieved?**

The data shows that there were successes and challenges in achieving the purpose of the EU-level deliberative events. On challenges, there was an issue with facilitation in one event which impaired its purpose; there was an overarching difficulty in reaching marginalised persons and communities, as the overwhelming majority of participants in all 3 events were highly educated and able to front the travel costs to attend the event, and many could be considered stakeholders (belonged to CSO) and not citizens; organisers with limited capacity (mostly human resources – 1 person organised the first and last event practically alone); care obligations of participants (child care, older persons care, etc.) could not be addressed by organisers (financial compensation flagged as potential solution). On successes, all events had a gender balance; somewhat broad geographical representation; ethnic and age diversity; diversity of professional backgrounds; tested different methods of deliberation; reimbursed the travel costs of participants; managed to create a safe space; provided expert information and input to citizens on the topics of discussion; mostly good moderation/facilitation; feminist awareness team.

As for the European Semester events in Italy and Denmark, the purpose was to include participants in a pre-existing political process (the European Semester, so it was informed by a pre-existing context, topics and timeframe. While it was manifested by organisers and some participants that the technical level of the topics was a challenge for a group of participants with different levels of specialised knowledge, productive discussions were still possible, as well as informing participants about the European Semester process.

### **d) To what extent was the selection of participants successful? Why/why not?**

The available data shows conflicting results when it comes to the criterion representation. On the one hand, a lot of data indicates that the events represented and integrated the knowledge from participants with varied background, lived experiences, and identities, including people from marginalised groups. On the other hand, most participants seem to be highly educated, many are somehow already linked to the civil society space. Many groups in society were underrepresented or not represented.

The organisers said: "Citizen's recruitment was, for the first event initially, conducted through partners public channels and through partnerships with NGOs and other relevant networks. Citizens were able to sign up via an online registration portal (EUSurvey). Through the REAL DEAL Community and other networks, we recruited through social media or other public channels. A random selection was then be made of registered participants in excel. Over 200 individuals completed the registration form, of which 120 were sent invitations." (EU1-Template).

Differently from other test cases, the EU level events and the European Semester events did not use a selection method of random selection, but rather selected participants from a pool of interested candidates who registered manifesting their willingness to be part of the test cases.

**e) Which 3 criteria worked out best from the perspective of the organisers and participants? And why?**

The three evaluation criteria below reflect what criteria worked out best according to the information provided by the participants and organisers of the sessions. This is subject to interpretation of the authors of this paper.

*Table 19 Three criteria that worked out best for the deliberative events*

Rank	Criterion	Justification why this criterion worked out best in relation to the format
1	Fairness	A majority of participants and organisers noted the fair distribution of speaking time and space among participants, ensured by facilitation. The results seem to show that fairness (in terms of gender dynamics, representation of all views, balance between naturally extroverted or introverted people, etc) is largely dependent on the presence and quality of the moderation/facilitation of a session, as the main factor.
2	Equity	Many aspects of the organisation of the event and different kinds of sessions (some more traditional, some more artistic or expressive) made it so different participants with different needs and characteristics could take part in the event in a way that was meaningful/comfortable for them. Most logistical aspects were conducive to equity.
3	Inclusion	The analysis shows that different tools and methods of carrying out sessions are conducive to more inclusive participation, and the same is true for hands-on, attentive moderation/facilitation. A feminist format of the events, with safe space and an awareness team is conducive to inclusiveness.

**f) How was closure reached in the European events and events on the European Semester, and what can we learn from it? (e.g., was there voting, consensus, no at all, other)**

Closure in the Brussels events mostly took the shape of consensus/agreement in the different focus groups, with recommendations then presented to all participants in the plenary. In some instances, there recommendations were agreed via voting in the focus group settings, and there was also a spontaneous voting in the plenary in one event – the feedback from participants and organisers is that they felt uncomfortable and exposed showing their opinion in this way, and some refrained from voting at all for this reason: "During the drinks people felt a bit uncomfortable with the voting. I noticed they shared that like. 'But I did not agree, and even if I agreed I would maybe want to be anonymous.' So then with your phone that is the advantage again. So, the nuances you can give in your answer are easier with the phone application. But I heard some people saying, I on purpose did not vote because I don't want people to see deliberately what I think" (EU1-Interview)

The data also shows that in the consensus though dialogue, some participants felt that the whole scope of and nuances of the discussion were not adequately represented, and some opinions were left out: "In the FS group, in the end, people had to vote and people complained to be left behind when they not agreed." (EU1-After)

## g) Overseeing all observations about the European events and events on the European Semester, what other relevant insights emerge?

All relevant insights have been explained above.

### General Reflection

The EU level events and the European Semester sessions have some peculiarities compared to the other sessions, such as being organised by NGOs instead of academic or democratic experts, not utilising the method of random selection (or only to a certain extent), and (for the EU level events) gathering participants from many different countries. In general, the data shows that different deliberation methods were successfully tested, with well attended events and high satisfaction levels from the side of the participants, despite clear indications of some aspects that can be improved.

## 4.6 Analysis of combination of formats

Table 20 Overview of the combination of formats organised in REAL DEAL

Country	Combinations of formats that were tested		
	Format	Date	# participants
Serbia	1. Roundtable	4/12/2023	40
	2. Citizen assembly	13-14/04/2024	70
North Macedonia	1. Delphi panel	7/2/2024	13
	2. Citizen assembly	Between 9/2/2024 and 19/04/2024	50-55
Greece	1. Focus group	23-24/04/2024	14
	2. Roundtable	17/05/2024	16
	3. Citizen assembly	8-9/06/2024	62
Poland	1. Delphi panel	7-8/05/2024	16
	2. Citizen assembly	18-19/05/2024 and 15-16-06/2024	52/58
Germany	1. Delphi panel	25-26/05/2024	16
	2. Citizen assembly	7-8-9/06/2024	60
Hungary	1. Roundtables (regional)	29/04/2024	80
	2. Roundtable (national)	30/04/2024	

### a) What combinations were made and why?

As Table 20 above describes, various combinations of formats were made in the project. All different combination had a different rationale:

- Roundtables and citizen assemblies > Roundtables and citizen assemblies focus on different groups of people: on organized stakeholders and on the non-organised public respectively. By combining these two formats, it provides the opportunity to combine the perspectives of these two target groups.
- Delphi panels and citizen assemblies > in Delphi panels, a diverse group of experts of a topic share their knowledge. By combining this with citizen assemblies, this expert knowledge can be shared with non-organised citizens. The rationale behind this combination of participatory sessions was to give citizens the possibility to be informed from various perspectives.
- Focus groups and citizen assemblies > focus groups provide safe spaces for structurally excluded groups. The goal of combining focus groups with citizen assemblies was to share the perspective of structurally excluded groups with

participants of citizen assemblies so that they could also take this perspective into consideration in their deliberations.

- Roundtables on regional level and on national level > by combining roundtables on various governance levels, the aim was to include the regional perspective in national decision making.

Besides these combinations of various formats, in many countries multiple sessions of the same format were organized. For example, in Lithuania two roundtables were organized, just as in Spain. However, as these sessions did not really connect with each other, these sessions are not considered in this overview. In Hungary, the roundtables did interact, and therefore they are included in this analysis.

## **b) (How) was input from one format used in the other?**

In every country, the input from the various formats was shared in a different way, as is described in the parts down below.

### Serbia

In Serbia a Roundtable was organized in December 2023 on the topic of School Food. At that time, it was not known yet that a Citizen assembly would be organized in Serbia as well. To try to integrate the findings of the Roundtable in the Citizen assembly, one of the organisers of the Roundtable was invited as experts to the organisation of the citizen assembly. This person was also part of the expert panel during the citizen assembly. In this way, knowledge from the Roundtable could be integrated in the documentation that was given to the participants to prepare themselves for the citizen assembly. However, it proved to be difficult to further integrate the results of the Roundtable in the Citizen Assembly, as explained in more detail below.

### North Macedonia

With regards to the REAL DEAL project, a Delphi panel and a citizen assembly were organized on the topic of air pollution in Skopje. Before both took place, two focus groups were organized. These focus groups aimed to gather the experiences of energy-vulnerable citizens in a polluted part of the city of Skopje. The goal of combining this focus group with the citizen assembly was to allow the citizen assembly to start with a selection of topics that were relevant for energy-vulnerable citizens. The topics that were prominent in the focus groups were grouped in three topics.

The aim of the Delphi panel was also to structure the agenda for the citizen assembly, and to provide input for the citizen assembly. The idea behind this was that it would be good to share with citizens where experts they agreed upon and where they disagreed so that citizens have the arguments for both sides. Two so-called Delphi-ambassadors shared the findings of the Delphi panel in the citizen assembly. With the topics that were discussed at the Delphi panel, the organisers of the assembly could identify and prioritise the key-segments the assembly could focus on. They made use of a PowerPoint presentation, that was approved by both the REAL DEAL project as well as the organisers of the Delphi panel.

### Greece

The focus group and the Roundtable were both input for the citizen assembly. The focus group, which included youths between 18 and 30 years old, focused on Intergenerational equity concerning the EGD. The Roundtable, which focused on the topic 'Funding the Green Transition in Cities – Center and Periphery, had 16 participants from various backgrounds. The topic of the citizen assembly was the same as that of the focus group.



In the opening ceremony of the citizen assembly, a presentation was given by the organisers of both the Roundtable and of the Citizen assembly on the findings of their sessions. In this way, this input was “food for thought” for the citizen assembly participants.

### Poland

On the topic of food policy in Poland, both a Delphi panel and a citizen assembly were organized in Poland. The Delphi panel took place one week before the first weekend of the citizen assembly. In this educational weekend, a presentation was given by the organiser of the Delphi panel on the key opinions that most experts agreed upon. In this presentation, issues which the experts did not agree upon were also shared.

One of the participants share that they thought it was strange that the experts did not come up with one vision and expressed “how can we give a recommendation when even experts cannot agree on something?” (PolandDP-Interview). It was explained that it was not that strange that experts had different opinions, as they had different backgrounds. As it was also shared that experts did agree upon certain issues, “participants [of the citizen assembly] could see that deliberation is something natural also for academics. It opened up the space for participants to deliberate” (PolandDP-Interview-23). They explained that it is the task for participants to make these recommendations, especially when there are differences between experts and politicians.

### Germany

On the topic of sustainable consumption and climate-friendly economy, a Delphi panel and a citizen assembly were organized in Germany. They deliberately chose to focus on the same topic so that the results of the Delphi panel would be usable for the citizen assembly. In the formulation of the questions for the Delphi panel, the relevance and usability for the citizen assembly was considered. During the citizen assembly, it was explained to the participants what a Delphi panel is and what was discussed in the panel, the results were printed in a graphical way and were shared in the form of an exhibition, and a presentation was given in which the results of the Delphi panel were presented. In this presentation, attention was paid to the fact that the presentation was in understandable language for the citizen assembly participants.

### Hungary

Five regional roundtables and one national roundtable on the topic of sustainable school meals were organized in only two days. On the first day, five regional roundtables were organized. In all four municipalities in which the roundtables were organized, stakeholders were invited. The output of these regional roundtables was input for the national roundtable.

## **c) What went well and what was positive about organizing a sequence of sessions? (How similar were the experiences across countries?)**

In most instances, the input from other sessions was shared with the participants of the citizen assembly. In general, organisers of the citizen assembly were satisfied with this. They indicated that these presentations informed the citizens. The German organisers noticed that the citizen assembly participants seemed really interested in the results of the Delphi panel. In Greece, the organisers of the citizen assembly mentioned that the knowledge input that was given by the focus group did have some influence on the discussions the participants had. In the preparatory webinar there was no mention of climate change and its effects on human health. But in the focus group it was a pivotal issue. After a presentation on the outcomes of the focus group was given to the citizen assembly, health became an important issue for the participants of the citizen assembly as well. Organisers felt that people changed their opinion due to knowledge or viewpoints that were shared (GreeceCA-Interview-28).

In North-Macedonia, the two Delphi ambassadors were satisfied with their role in the citizen assembly. Both indicated that they shared the results of the Delphi panel, not only their own vision as experts. The organisers of the citizen assembly also indicated that the presentations these Delphi ambassadors gave were understandable for the citizens of the citizen assembly.

Because of the combination with the focus group, the perspective of energy-vulnerable people could also be included in the citizen assembly in North Macedonia.

Combining formats in some instances also directly helped in the organisation. In Poland and North Macedonia, the Delphi panel helped to structure the agenda for the citizen assembly. In Poland, various experts that were part of the Delphi panel were also invited to the citizen assembly. For the preparations of the Delphi panel, a lot of information on these experts was gathered. This ensured that a diverse group of experts, in terms of gender, geographical location, but also opinions, could more easily be invited to the citizen assembly.

#### **d) What challenges were faced while organizing and implementing different formats in combination with each other? Why did these challenges occur? (How similar were the experiences across countries?)**

Several challenges were encountered, that can be themed around organisation, alignment of topics, and knowledge sharing.

##### Organisation

In all countries, the sessions were organized by different organisations. Some organisers, like the ones in North Macedonia and Serbia indicated that this made the process more difficult as they were not fully aware of what the other session was focusing on and how this was organised. Furthermore, the timing of the sessions proved to be crucial for the connection. For quite some sessions, like the one in Germany, it was difficult to integrate details of discussions in the other event because the sessions took place only a short time after the other. More alignment between the organisers of the different sessions could ensure a better alignment of the timing and therefore possibilities of knowledge exchange.

An organiser of the Serbian roundtable pointed towards the relevance of the timing of organising events, as both the roundtables as well as the citizen assembly were organised in a time when there was no government. This made it more difficult to attract and invite decision-makers to participate to the events which was important because “if we want to change something, in policy or whatever, we needed them to be present and then continue after these events to work with them” (SerbiaCA-InterviewExtra-5).

##### Alignment of topics

Furthermore, an alignment of topics is crucial for the possibility to share knowledge. The roundtable in Serbia focused on School Food. The organisers of the Citizen Assembly, in collaboration with the REAL DEAL team, concluded that the citizen assembly should have a broader focus and therefore decided to focus on food labelling. Because of this, it was difficult to make the connection with the (results of the) roundtable.

##### Knowledge sharing

In general, the Polish citizen assembly organisers said, there was not enough attention for the Delphi panel presentations. This had to do with limited time they had for the citizen assembly, and with the nature of the Delphi panel: “after all, the Delphi panel is a bit like a questionnaire for experts. So the results are not so catchy” (PolandCA-Interview-24). Furthermore, the organiser of the German Delphi panel said that “the questions for the Delphi need to be really

specific, while the discussions in a roundtable or citizen assembly are more generic. This is a challenge in the combination of Delphi with other formats". (GermanyDP-interview).

In North Macedonia, two Delphi ambassadors shared the results of the Delphi with the citizen assembly. Preferably, the organisers of the Delphi said, citizens could ask questions to all participants of the Delphi panel. But logistically, that was very difficult to organize. The two Delphi ambassadors made use of a pre-made PowerPoint that was approved by the organisers of the Delphi panel and the REAL DEAL project, it cannot be said with full certainty that they indeed only shared the outcome of the Delphi panel. This, according to the organisers of the Delphi panel, can be considered a weakness: "we could not avoid that his colours are resolved the way that he personally receives it. I mean, it is a weakness, but we also cannot take out the personality of the process." They tried to cover this by making sure that the participants of the citizen assembly also had access to the report so they could look it up again. But as this was not translated in Albanian at the time of the citizen assembly, this was not fully accessible for everyone.

While paying attention to this in the preparation phase, the German organisers of both sessions noticed it was difficult to make the questions of the Delphi panel suitable for the group discussions at the citizen assembly. They said that "citizens did not have enough background knowledge to discuss these questions" (GermanyDP-Interview).

#### **e) To what extent do members of citizen assemblies feel better informed or better prepared for their judgment if they have access to the results of Delphi panel or roundtable?**

Participants of citizen assemblies in which results of Delphi panels were shared, were asked if this made them feel better informed or prepared. Figure 25 below shows that the majority of the people who answered this question, which were only people from North Macedonia and Germany, agreed with this statement. 33 out of the 51 indicated that they felt better or extremely better prepared. Only a small minority, 9 out of 51, did not feel better prepared. Differences were seen between the two countries, with the North Macedonian participants more at the edges of the scale (14% of the North Macedonian participants answered not at all, and 50% answered extremely) and the German participants more in the middle categories. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen factors this question was not asked to the participants of the Polish assembly.

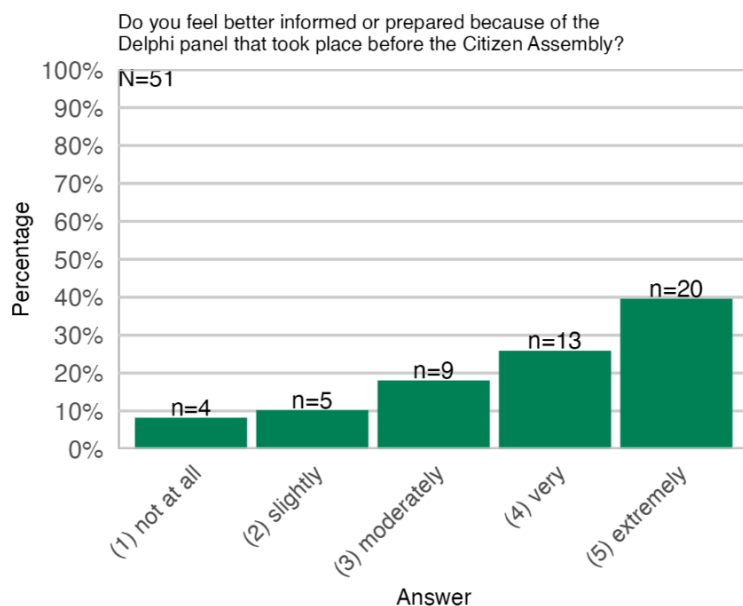


Figure 25 Histogram citizen assembly 'Do you feel better informed or prepared because of the Delphi panel that took place before the citizen assembly?'

When the participants of Delphi panels were asked if they thought connecting results of a Delphi panel to citizen assemblies or other formats was a relevant way of informing citizens, the majority agreed, as seen in Figure 26. One of the Polish Delphi panel members said that in their opinion “probably when it comes to public participation more compact and lighter format would fit better. Still disseminating results of the Delphi panel may be a good way of communicating to the public” (PolandCA-Questionnaire2).

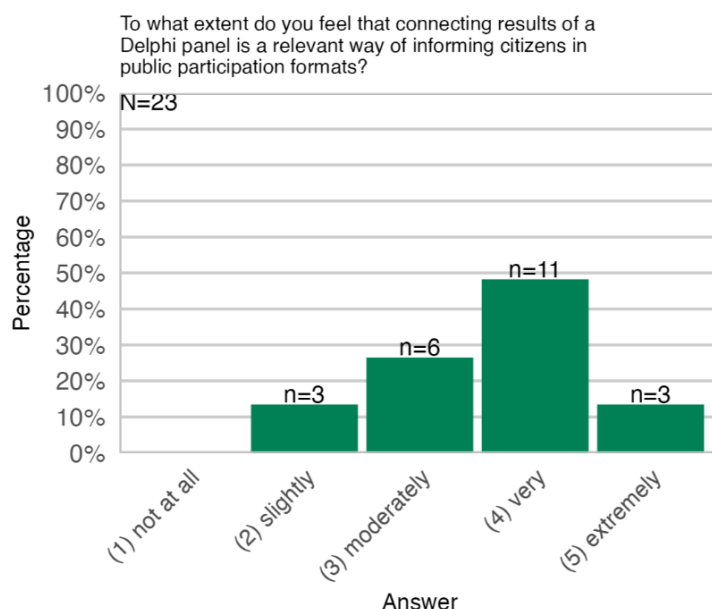


Figure 26 Histogram Delphi panels 'To what extent do you feel that connecting results of a Delphi panel is a relevant way of informing citizens in public participation formats?'

**f) To what extent do citizen assemblies and roundtables respect the input by marginalized groups via focus groups as legitimate and valuable input for their deliberations?**

There were only very few examples in the REAL DEAL project that elaborated on this. Therefore, it is not possible to draw a conclusion on this. There is only one example that elaborates on this, and that shows the input was respected and seen as legitimate. The organisers of the Greek citizen assembly saw that the participants of the citizen assembly considered the input of the focus group fairly. The topics that were brought up in the presentation of the results of the focus group were taken up by the citizen assembly participants in their discussions, while these topics were not considered before this presentation took place.

### **g) What other lessons are learned?**

Various organisers indicated that they would prefer to have more collaboration in the organisation of the sessions. As an organizer of the North Macedonian citizen assembly mentioned: “we had questions marks with the overall purpose of the Delphi panel. This was later clarified, but we could have saved stress if we were properly and timely involved”. Besides saving stress, it could also lead to more collaboration.

Instead of seeing it as two separate sessions that are connected, one of the organisers of the citizen assembly in North Macedonia said that “the two events should be seen as one”. This would make the collaboration easier. In Poland, first steps were taken to see it as one event as the results from both the Delphi panel and the citizen assembly will be included in one report that will be presented to the relevant ministry.

## **4.7 Analysis of quantitative results**

This section delves into the results of the quantitative analysis, focusing on the comparison of responses to similar or identical questions across various formats. This comparative approach aims to provide an overview based on the quantitative data, complementing the qualitative analysis that forms the core of this report. While the quantitative analysis plays a supporting role, its findings offer valuable insights that supplement the qualitative results.

The analysis draws upon a set of identical or similar questions from events representing the different formats – citizen assembly, EU deliberative events, focus groups, Delphi panels, and roundtables. These questions were posed to participants through questionnaires administered at three key points: before the event, immediately after the event, and three months post-event. To facilitate a comparative examination of the data from different formats, the responses to these questions are presented using Likert plots.

This analysis of the questionnaire data is categorized into four themes:

1. Participants' self-assessed event topic knowledge, perspectives, and societal representation (linked evaluation criteria: empowerment, representation)
2. Clarity and understanding of event purpose and process, role expectations, and shared knowledge (linked evaluation criteria: transparency, equity)
3. Perceived equal and fair treatment, opportunity to share, and valuation of different perspectives and viewpoints (linked evaluation criterion: fairness)
4. Participants' overall evaluations

### **Data basis**

The foundation of the quantitative analysis lies in the questionnaire responses collected from all events with available data as of the cut-off date of July 21, 2024. To ensure meaningful comparisons, only (similar or identical) questions used in at least three formats were considered for the Likert plots. Moreover, a minimum threshold of 15 total responses was set for a question to be included in the Likert plots.

Questions and response data from the European Semester events in Italy and Denmark were omitted from the analysis. The Danish event did not employ the standardized questionnaire design used in all other events, rendering its data incompatible. While the Italian European Semester event did utilize the standardized questionnaire design, the inclusion of data from a single event was deemed insufficient for a robust format comparison analysis.

### **Interpreting the Likert plots**

Each Likert plot comprises several Likert charts that visualize the percentage frequencies of the different response options, namely (1) not at all, (2) slightly, (3) moderately, (4) very, and (5) extremely, using distinct colors. Three key percentage values are displayed in each Likert chart: the cumulative percentage frequency of the "not at all" and "slightly" responses (bottom-2-box) on the left, the percentage frequency of the "moderately" response in the middle, and the cumulative percentage frequency of the "very" and "extremely" responses (top-2-box) on the right.

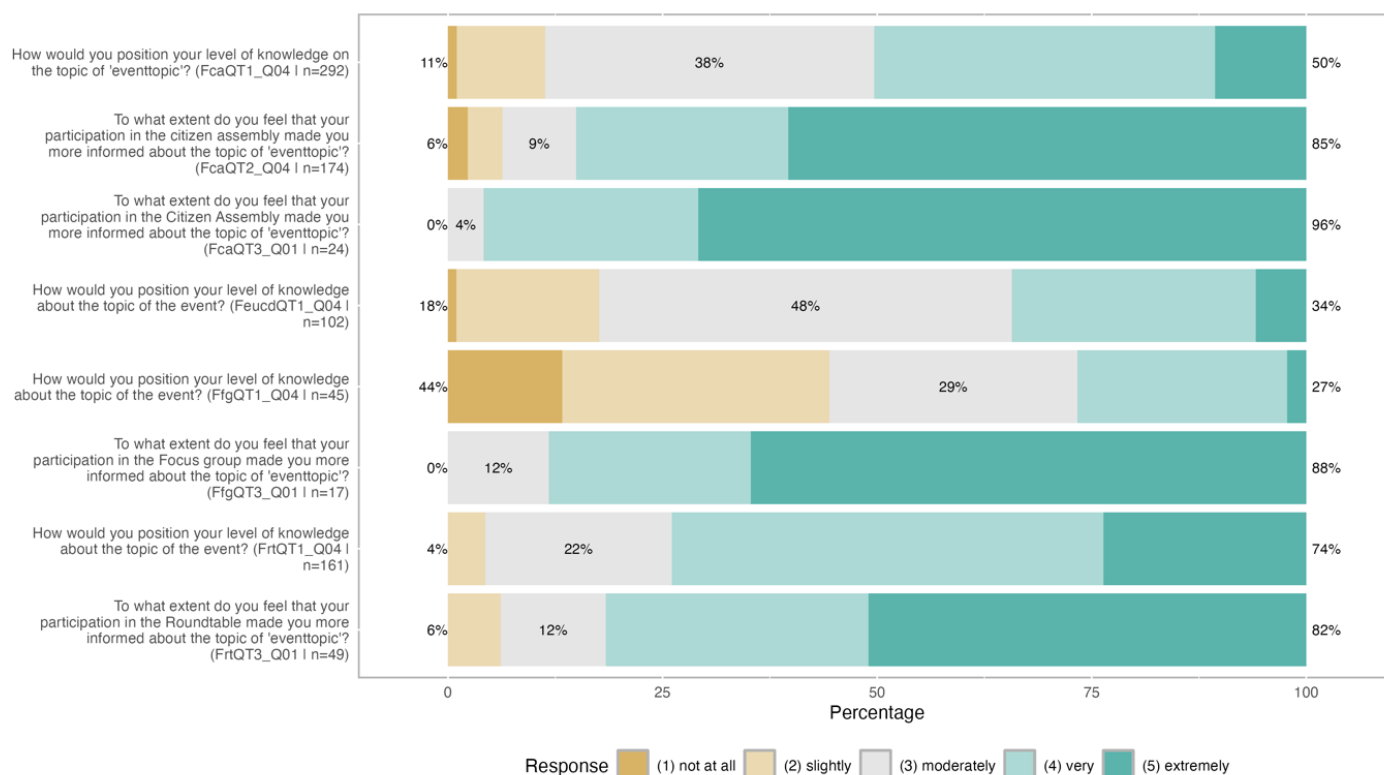
To the left of each Likert bar, the corresponding question is listed. The values in parentheses represent the question ID (e.g., FcaQT1\_Q04) and the total number of responses (e.g., n=292) for each question. The question ID provides information about the questionnaire in which the question was asked: It includes details about the format (Fca = Citizen assembly, Feucd = European deliberative event, Ffg = Focus group, Fgd = Delphi panel, Frt = Roundtable) as well as the timing of the questionnaire (QT1 = before the event, QT2 = directly after the event, QT3 = 2 months after the event) and the question number within the respective questionnaire. For example, the question ID "FcaQT1\_Q04" indicates that the question was asked in the Citizen assembly format (Fca), in the questionnaire before the event (QT1), and it was the fourth question (Q04) in that specific questionnaire.

#### ***4.7.1 Knowledge, perspectives, and societal representation***

The first category of questions explores participants' self-assessed knowledge about the event topic before and after the event, their perspectives and arguments concerning the event topic, and the extent to which they feel they represent specific societal groups prior to the event. These questions primarily focus on participant characteristics and dispositions, linking to the evaluation criteria of empowerment and representation.

Participants' self-assessed pre- and post-event knowledge about the event topic is illustrated in Figure 27. The Likert chart for the first question sheds light on citizen assembly participants' assessment of their event topic knowledge before the event (QT1). In contrast, the charts for Questions 2 and 3 reveal the degree to which they felt better informed about the topic immediately after (QT2) and three months after the event (QT3), respectively.





*Figure 27 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding participants' self-assessed pre- and post-event knowledge about the event topic*

Notably, responses to the post-event knowledge question (Questions 2, 3, 6, 8) consistently show a high level of agreement (82-96%) across all formats. However, responses to the question about pre-existing knowledge of the event topic (Questions 1, 4, 5, 7) exhibit greater variability, ranging from 27% to 74%. This suggests that the feeling of being better informed after participation is more likely influenced by various experiences during the events and may be less dependent on participants' self-assessed knowledge level prior to the event. The substantial variance in pre-existing knowledge levels may be attributed to event-, topic-, or recruitment-specific factors.

Participants' pre-existing perspectives and arguments about the event topic are depicted in Figure 28. Roundtable participants appear to have had the clearest understanding of the perspectives or arguments they intended to contribute (59%), followed by citizen assembly (41%) and participants of European deliberative events (30%). Focus group participants, on the other hand, demonstrated a relatively open approach, with only 25% having a very strong or extremely strong idea of the perspectives or arguments they would bring to the events.

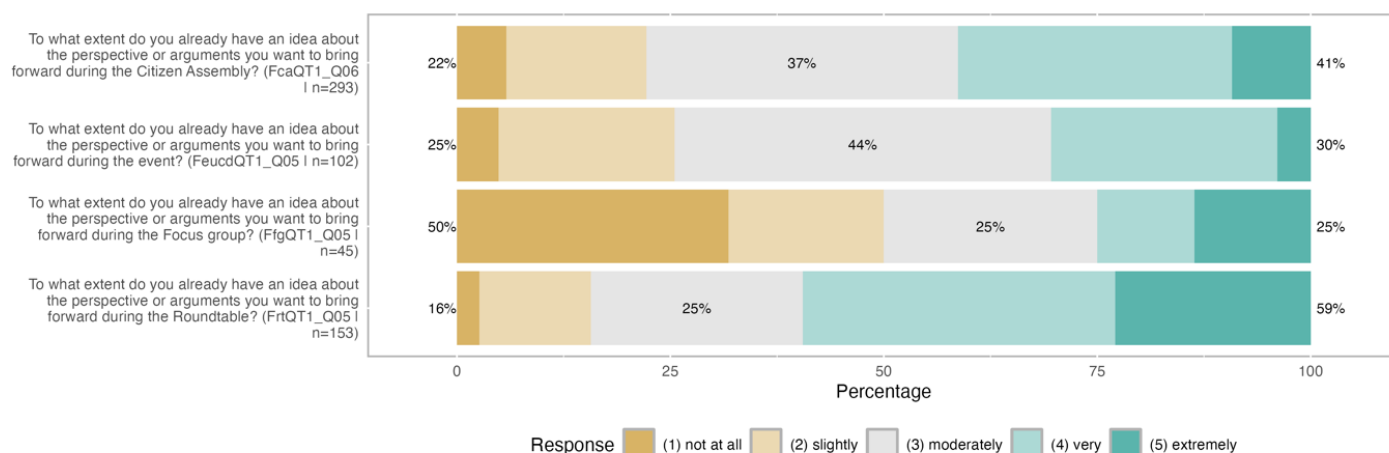


Figure 28 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding participants' pre-existing perspectives and arguments in regard to the event topic

The representation of specific societal groups, a concept linked to the evaluation criterion of "Representation" is addressed in Figure 29. The awareness of representing specific societal groups at the respective events was most pronounced among roundtable participants (73%), followed by citizen assembly (62%) and European deliberative event participants (52%). Strikingly, this awareness was remarkably low among focus group participants, with a mere 14% feeling they represented specific societal groups to a very high or extremely high extent. This stands out because the goal of the focus groups was to invite people from structurally excluded groups, so specific groups. Therefore, one could assume that these participants, more than other participants, feel that they represent a certain societal group.

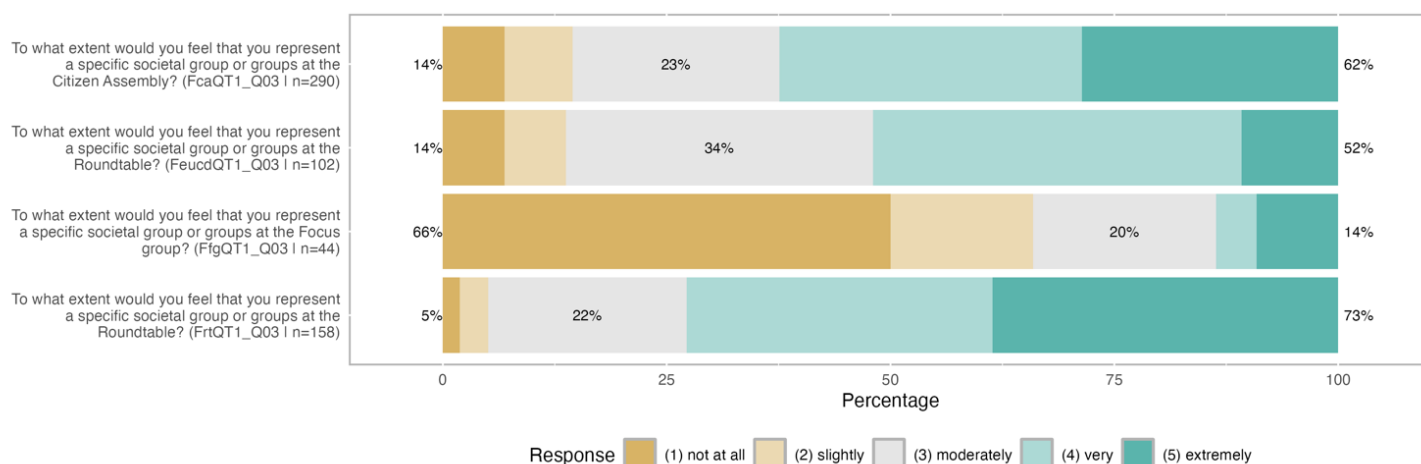


Figure 29 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding participants' representation of a specific societal group

#### 4.7.2 Purpose of the event, role expectations, and shared knowledge

The second category concentrates on participants' understanding of the event's purpose and process, their role expectations, and the comprehensibility of shared knowledge during the event. These aspects are connected to the evaluation criteria of transparency and equity.

Participants' grasp of the event's purpose and process is illustrated in Figure 30. The level of understanding appears to have been highest among citizen assembly and roundtable participants, with 90% and 89%, respectively, indicating that the information shared about the event was very or extremely sufficient. This proportion is slightly lower for focus group (85%), Delphi panel (78%), and European Deliberation events (67%). Interestingly, the perceived lack

of understanding increased during or after the event for some participants of European deliberative events.

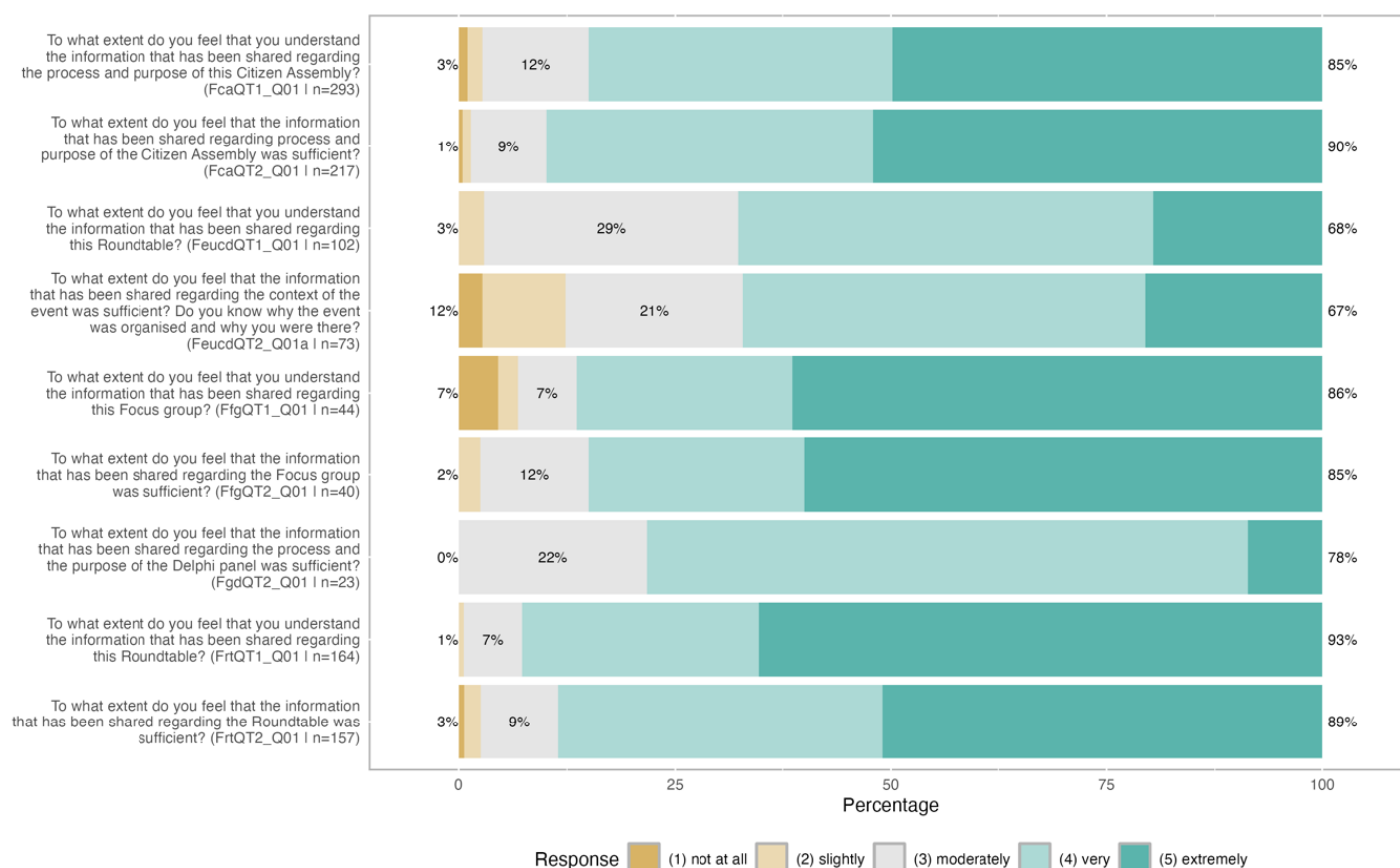


Figure 30 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding participants' understanding of the event's purpose and process

The clarity of role expectations from the participants' perspective is presented in Figure 31. Roundtable event participants demonstrated the highest level of understanding regarding their role in the respective format (86%), closely followed by Citizen Assembly and Focus Group event participants. In contrast, Citizen Deliberation participants exhibited a relatively high level of uncertainty about their role, with only 41% indicating that the role expectations were understandable and clear to them to an extremely high or very high extent.

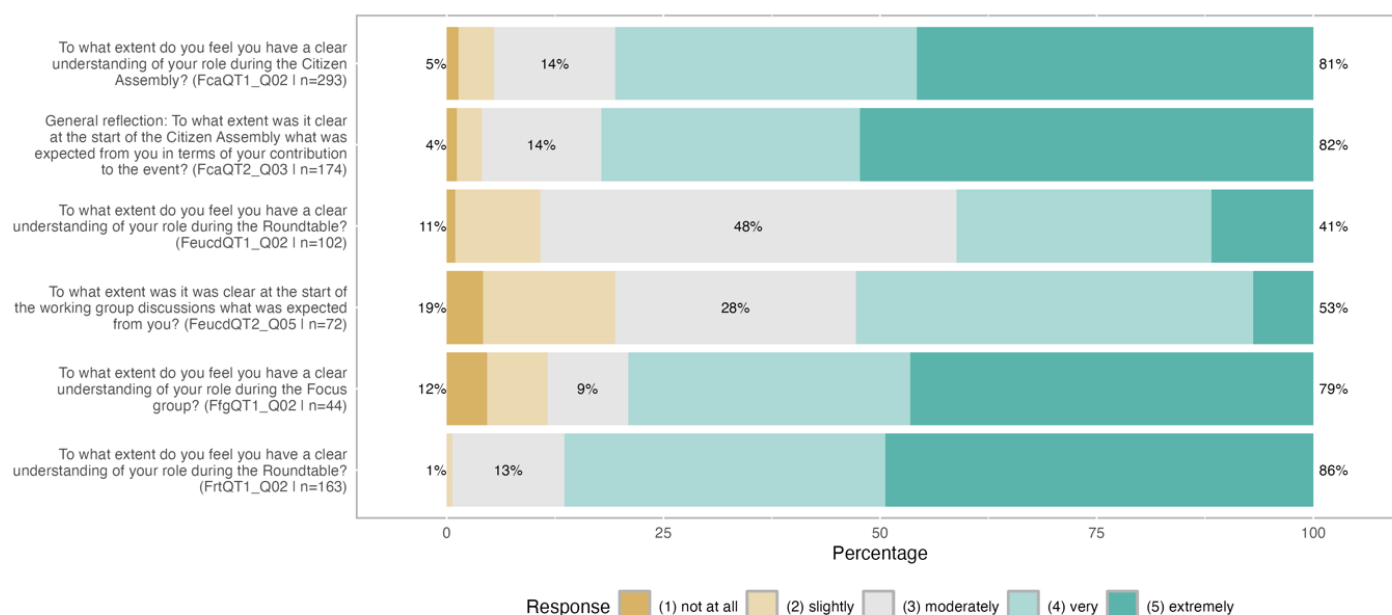
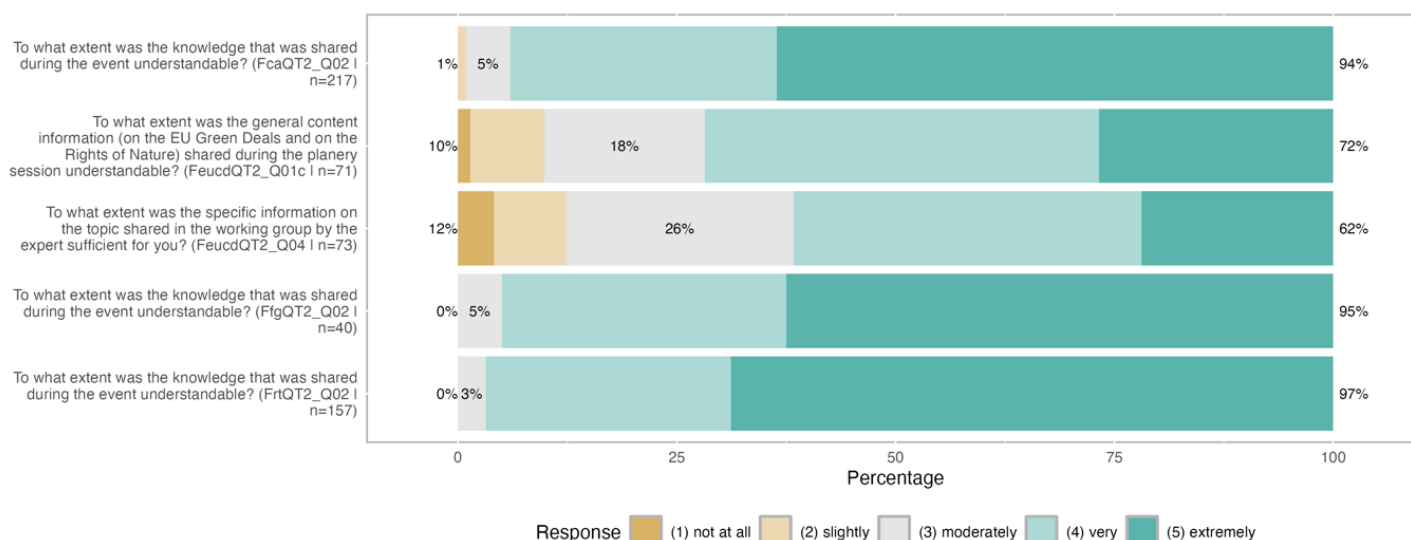


Figure 31 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding participants' clear understanding of their role during the events

Participants were also asked to evaluate the extent to which the knowledge shared during the event was understandable to them, a question that ties into the criteria of equity and empowerment (Figure 32). Roundtable participants gave the highest rating for the



comprehensibility of shared knowledge (97%), closely followed by participants of the focus groups (95%) and citizen assemblies (94%). In contrast, participants of the European deliberative events perceived the shared knowledge as less comprehensible (72%), especially in the working groups (62%).

Figure 32 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding the understanding of knowledge shared during the event

### 4.7.3 Equal and fair treatment, opportunity to share, and valuation of different perspectives and viewpoints

The third category encompasses questions related to participants' perceptions of equal and fair treatment, opportunities to share perspectives or arguments, consideration of all viewpoints, and fairness of the event outcome, all of which align with the evaluation criterion of "Fairness."

As depicted in Figure 33, nearly all participants of the citizen assemblies, focus groups, Delphi panels, and roundtables felt that all participants were treated equally and fairly during the events. However, this sentiment was slightly less prevalent among participants of the European deliberative events (81%).

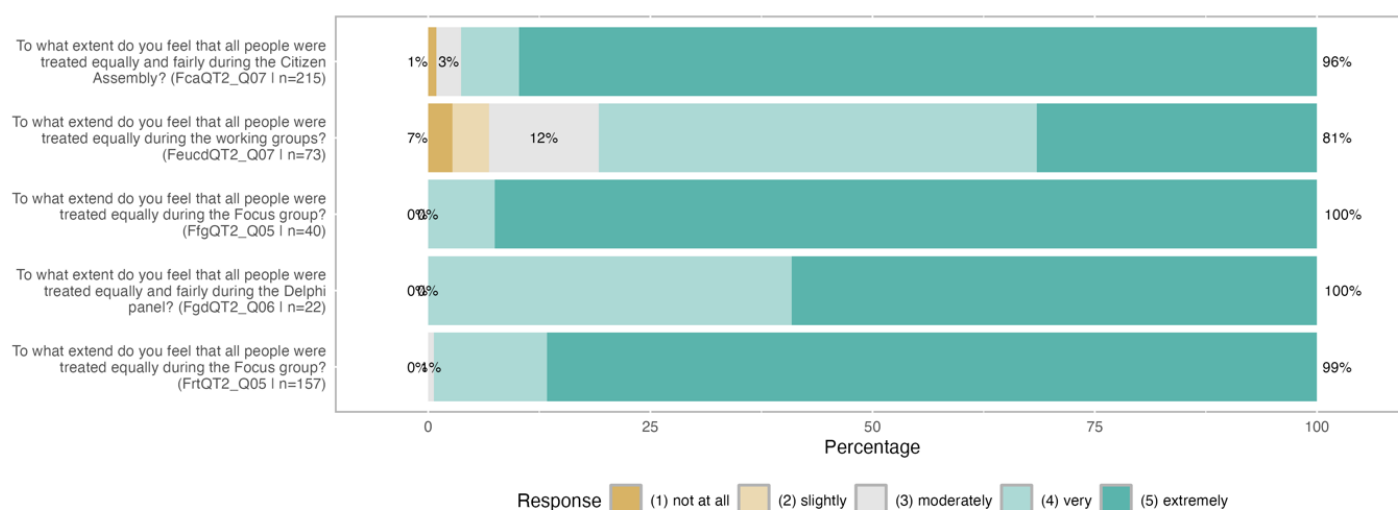
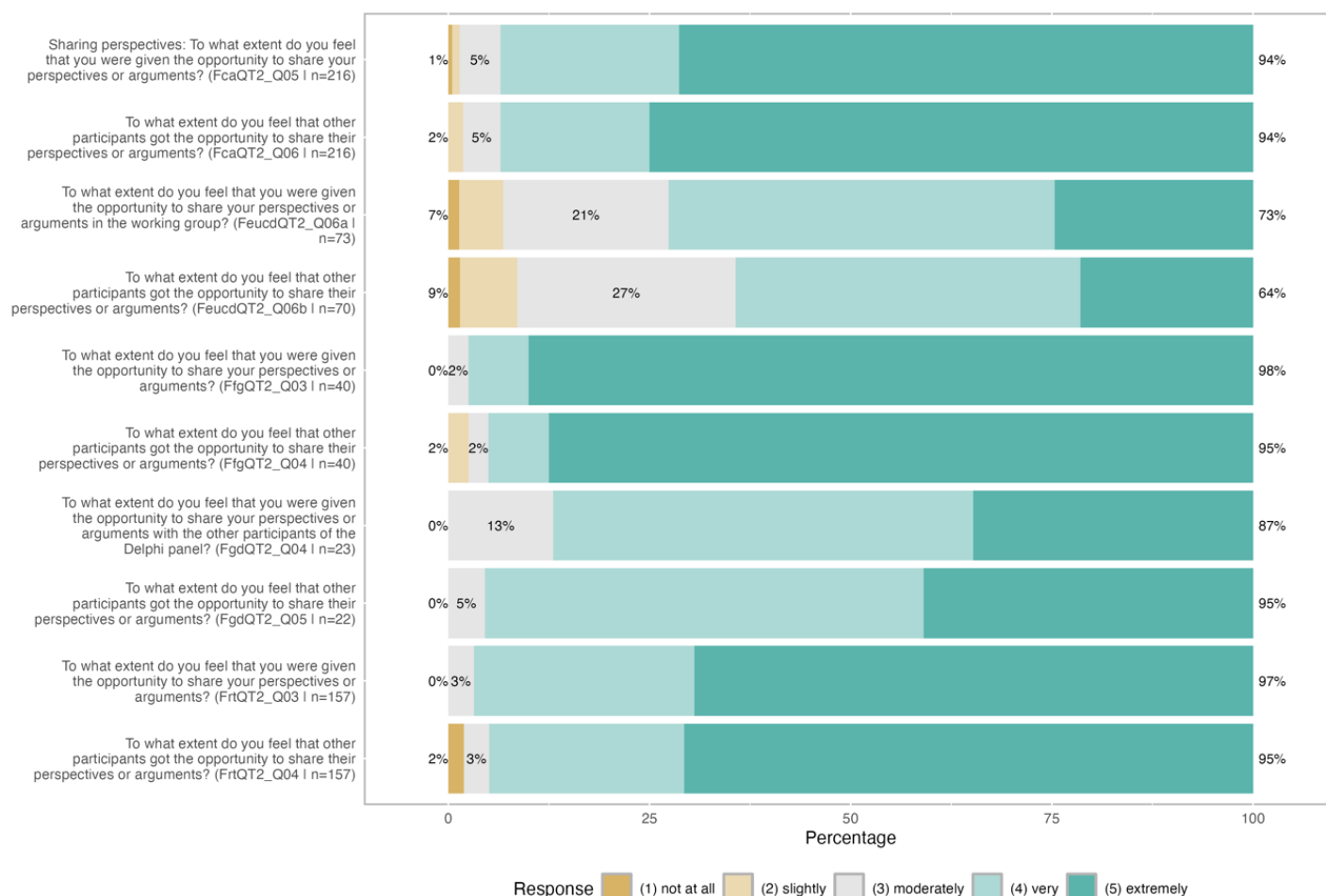


Figure 33 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding equal and fair treatment of participants during the event



*Figure 34 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding the opportunity to share different perspectives or arguments*

Figure 34 presents data on whether participants believed they and other participants were given sufficient opportunities to share their perspectives or arguments. This impression was shared by almost all focus group, roundtable, and citizen assembly participants, but it was less pronounced among Delphi panel and deliberative event participants.

The perception that all shared viewpoints were equally valued was most prominent in focus group events, as shown in Figure 35, followed by roundtable, Delphi panel, and citizen assembly events. The lower percentage for citizen assemblies (89%) could be attributed to the higher number of participants, which may make it more challenging to give equal weight to all presented viewpoints.



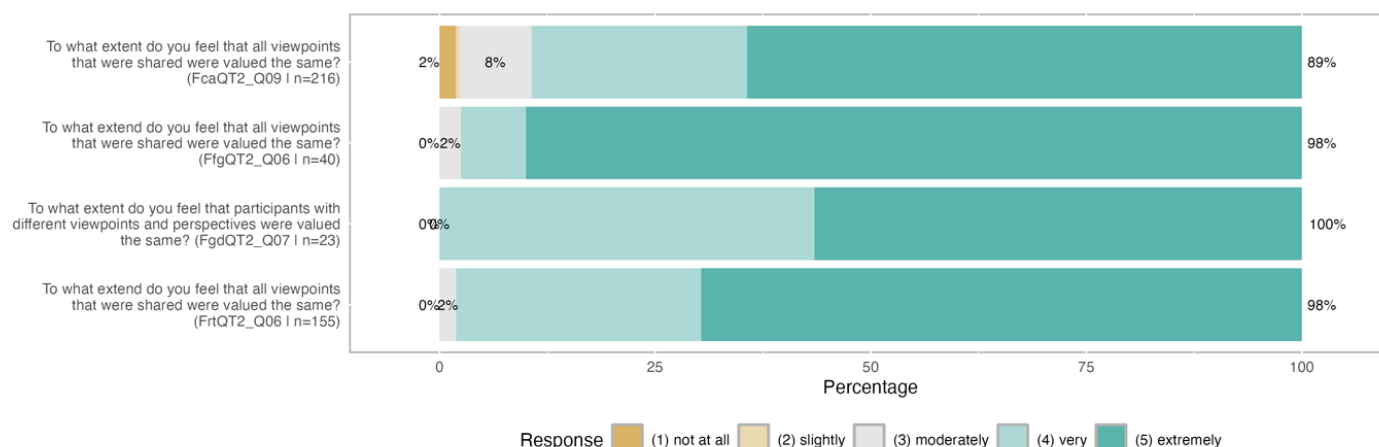


Figure 35 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding whether all viewpoints shared in the event were valued the same

Participants' views on whether the event outcome fairly represents all arguments raised are presented in Figure 36. Almost all roundtable (96%), focus group (95%), and citizen assembly participants (94%) held this opinion directly after the event. However, this sentiment was less prevalent among Delphi panel (77%) and deliberative event participants (56%).

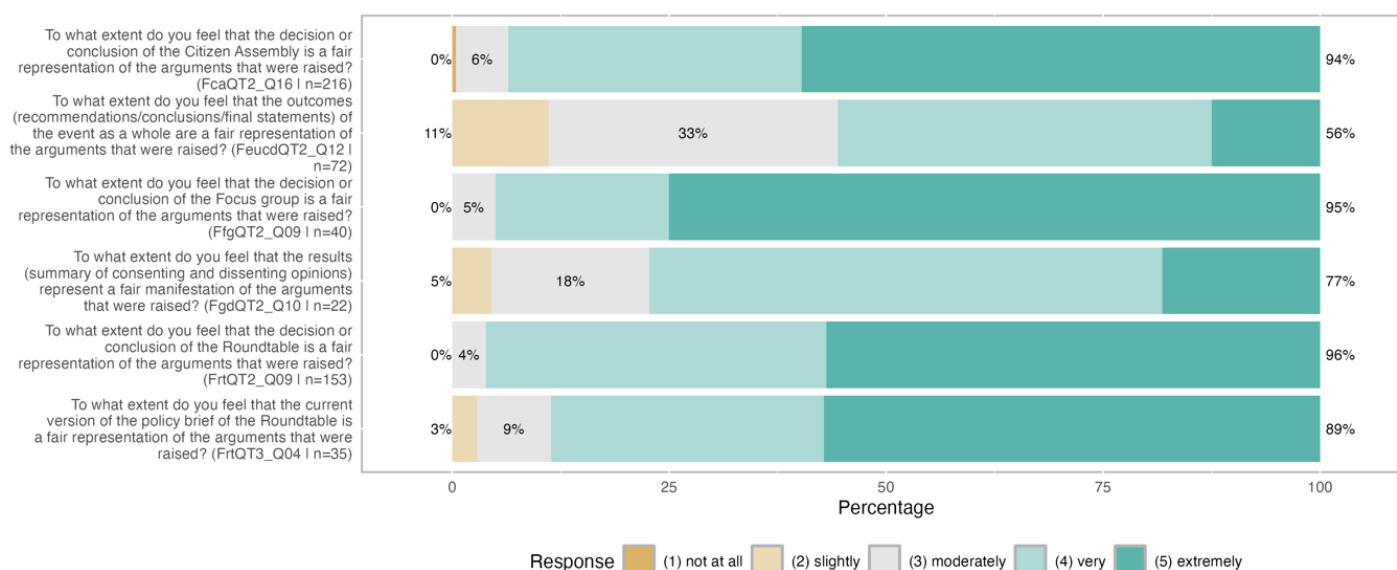


Figure 36 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding the outcome of the event being a fair representation of the arguments raised by all participants in the event

#### 4.7.4 Participants' overall evaluations

The final category focuses on questions related to overall evaluations from the participants' perspective, including satisfaction with the process or outcome, likelihood of recommending the format, and perceptions of the event's impact on fostering mutual understanding.

Figure 37 shows participants' overall satisfaction with the event process. Satisfaction was highest for the participants of citizen assemblies (96%), focus groups (95%), and roundtables (94%), while the Delphi panel participants, although rated the lowest, still were quite satisfied with a rating of 87%.

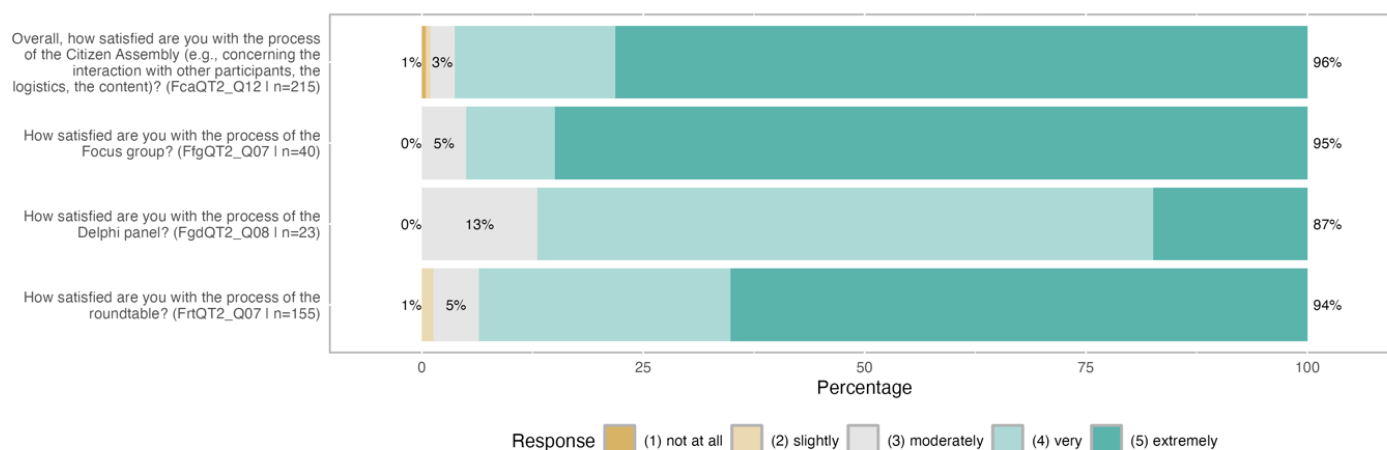


Figure 37 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding participants' overall satisfaction with the process of the event

Figure 38 presents data on participants' overall satisfaction with the event outcome. Participants of focus groups expressed the highest level of satisfaction (98%), followed by those of citizen assemblies (92%) and roundtables (91%). Delphi panel participants' satisfaction with the outcome was moderate (70%), while participants of the deliberative events reported the lowest level of satisfaction, with only 44% being very or extremely satisfied with the outcomes of these events.

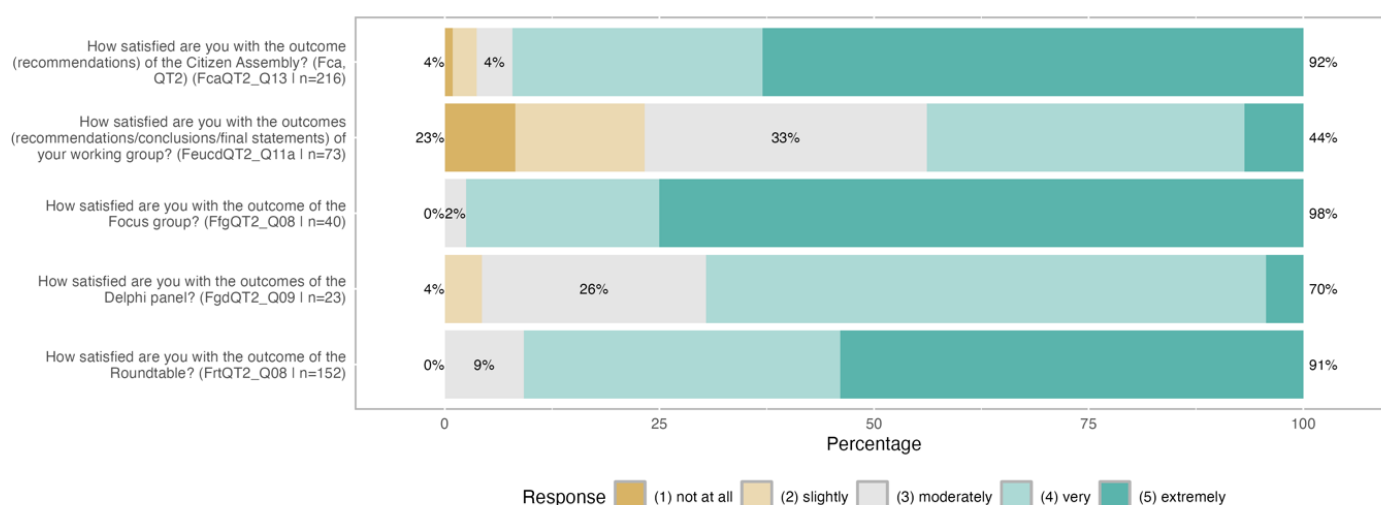
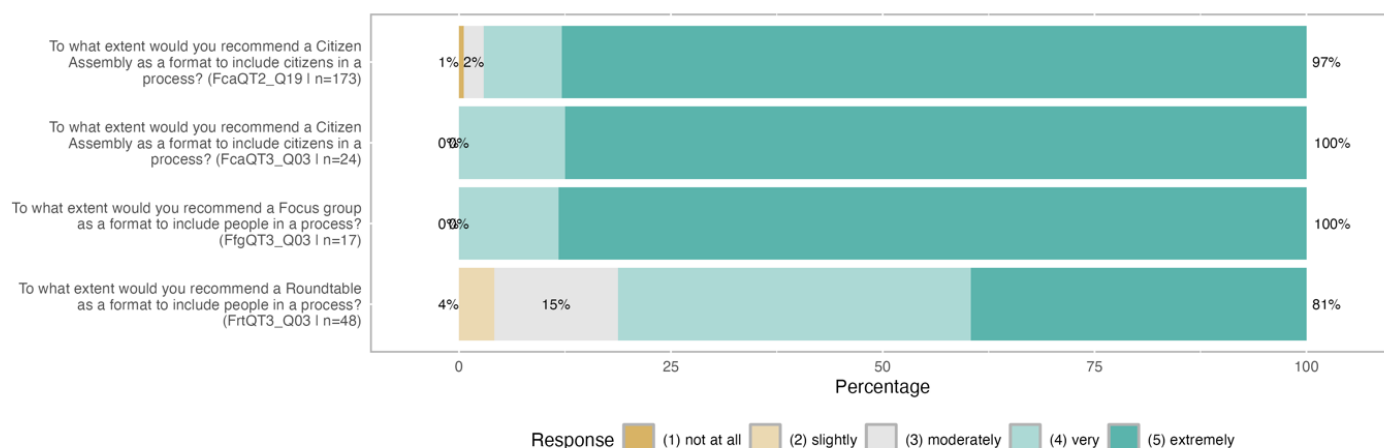


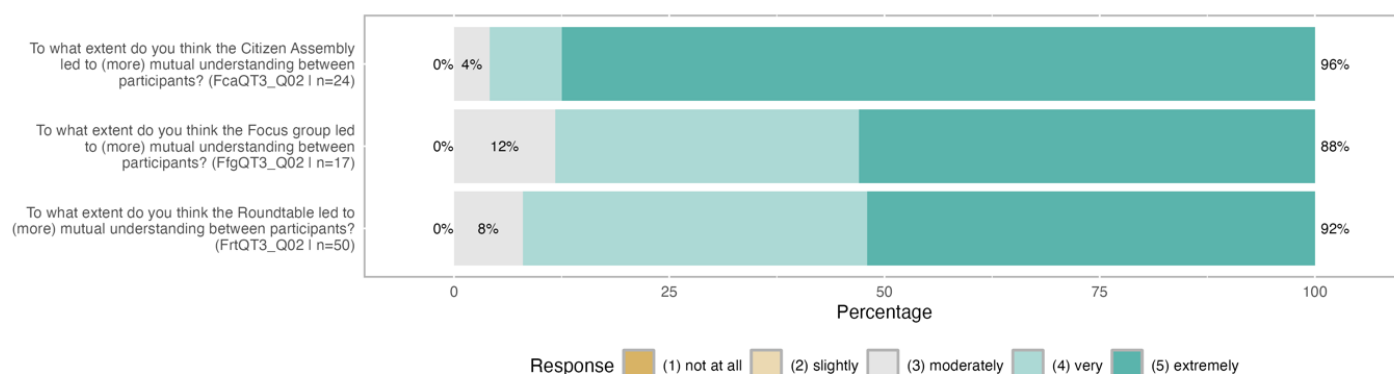
Figure 38 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding participants' overall satisfaction with the outcome of the event

Participants' likelihood of recommending the format of the events to include citizens or other stakeholders, or experts in a process is depicted in Figure 39. Nearly all participants of citizen assembly and focus group events (97-100%) indicated that they would recommend the format with a very high or extremely high likelihood. In contrast, roundtable participants expressed a slightly lower willingness to recommend the format for this purpose (81%), despite their high satisfaction with the process and outcome of the events depicted above.



*Figure 39 Likert plot of responses to questions regarding participants' likelihood to recommend the format of the event to include citizens in a process*

The event's perceived impact on fostering mutual understanding among participants is presented in Figure 40. This impression was strongest among citizen assembly participants, with 96% believing that their event led to more mutual understanding between participants to a very high or extremely high extent. While still at a high level, this perception was slightly less pronounced among roundtable (92%) and focus group participants (88%).



*Figure 40 Likert plot of responses to questions evaluating participants' perceptions of the event's impact on fostering mutual understanding between the participants of an event*

## 4.7.5 Conclusions

The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data from the various event formats yields several key insights:

1. Participants' self-assessed knowledge about the event topic before the event varied substantially across formats, with roundtable participants reporting the highest level of pre-existing knowledge and focus group participants the lowest. This does not go against expectations as roundtable participants are stakeholders who are involved with the topic of the roundtable in their work or voluntary work. Focus group participants, on the other hand, are not necessarily involved with the topic in their work or daily life. However, the feeling of being better informed about the topic after participation was consistently high across all formats, suggesting that the experiences during the events had a greater influence on participants' post-event knowledge than their pre-existing knowledge level.

2. The understanding of the event's purpose and process was highest among citizen assembly and roundtable participants, while participants of the European deliberative events reported the lowest level of understanding. Notably, for some of these participants, the perceived lack of understanding increased during or after the event.
3. The clarity of role expectations was highest for roundtable participants and lowest for participants of the European deliberative events. A significant proportion of them had only a moderate, slight, or no understanding of their role at the event.
4. Almost all participants of the citizen assemblies, focus groups, and roundtables felt that the knowledge shared during the event was very or extremely understandable. However, the comprehensibility of shared knowledge was perceived as lower by European Deliberative events participants, particularly in the working groups.
5. Participants across all formats generally felt that they were treated equally and fairly during the events. However, the feeling of having sufficient opportunities to share perspectives and arguments was less pronounced among European deliberative events participants compared to other formats.
6. The perception that all viewpoints shared in the event were valued equally was particularly strong among focus group participants. Citizen assembly participants reported this feeling to a slightly lesser extent.
7. Satisfaction with the process and outcome of the events was highest for participants of the citizen assemblies, focus groups, and roundtables. European deliberative event participants expressed the lowest level of satisfaction with the outcomes.
8. Almost all citizen assembly and focus group participants would recommend the format with a very high or extremely high likelihood to include citizens or other people in a process. Roundtable participants expressed a slightly lower willingness to recommend the format for this purpose.
9. The impression that the event led to more mutual understanding between participants was strongest among citizen assembly participants, followed by roundtable and focus group participants.

These findings provide valuable insights into the strengths and challenges of the different event formats from the participants' perspective. They highlight areas where certain formats excelled in terms of participant understanding, satisfaction, and perceived impact, as well as aspects that could be improved to enhance the overall experience and effectiveness of these participatory processes.

## 5 Data validation

### 5.1 Results of presentation at Summit

During the presentation at the REAL DEAL Summit, four different evaluation criteria were discussed. These four - equity, interests of non-human and/or future actors, empowerment, and effect on policy making - were chosen as they covered a wide range of initial findings and questions emerged around these evaluation criteria. The main recommendations that were given for each of these criteria are listed down below.

#### Equity

- Identify the needs and wishes of participants as early as possible before the event and consider these in the design of the project.
- Introduce non-verbal forms of communication, for example gamification, so that people who have difficulties with speaking up can also be included.
- Careful consider the venue where an event is hosted and how accessible and sensitive this is to everyone's needs.
- Ensure appropriate and sensitive facilitation.

#### Interests of non-human and/or future actors

- The topic of 'non-humans' or 'future actors' should be included in the topic and the narrative of the session.
- Consult indigenous people who are closest to nature, and organisations that advocate for nature.
- Use innovative methods to include the voice of nature, as nature itself cannot speak.
- Ensure there is a presentation on nature by experts.
- Mainstream thinking about the interests of non-humans and nature in daily life.
- Consider the space in which deliberations take place; this could also be in nature.

#### Empowerment

- Empowerment includes three things: 1) feeling heard, seen, and respected; 2) having rights and use them when being allowed to do that; and 3) have access to information, knowledge, and influence.
- Share knowledge in an accessible and understandable way.
- Value everyone's knowledge and contribution.
- Allow for people to use various methods of expressing their opinion.
- Discuss house rules, which help to create a safe space.
- Budget time for each person, whether they use it or not.

#### (Potential) effect on policy making

- Understand the policy context before drafting recommendations for that context.
- Connect to the policy agenda. This asks for careful timing and for a policy analysis.
- Simplify procedures of connecting to policy makers so it is understandable for participants.
- Write clear recommendations and communicate these in an effective and clear manner with policy makers.
- Find allies.

### 5.2 Delphi panel results

On July 11&12, the REAL DEAL project organised a Delphi panel to comment and validate the findings of the evaluation of the REAL DEAL sessions. The participants were 14 (mostly

European experts from the fields of deliberative democracy, democratic innovation, participatory approaches, environmental policy (in the European context).

The key findings are listed below.

- Experts agree that conflicting recommendations resulting from different formats that are used in one deliberative process do not need to be reconciled. Instead, disagreement should be acknowledged, and we should then leave it to the representative democracy to make the final decisions.
- If organized well, deliberative sessions lead to more confidence and trust in democratic principles among the participants of the Delphi panel. There is no evidence that deliberative sessions lead to more confidence and trust in democratic principles in society as a whole. There are so many variables that impact on trust that the effect of citizen assemblies on general trust in society is almost impossible to measure.
- To avoid biases, the sponsor (donor) or client (i.e. the one that gives the assignment to organize the participatory process) should not determine who should or should not be invited to deliberative sessions. The sponsor or client should have the opportunity to suggest to the organisers who should be invited or not be invited.
- Experts agree that the organisation of deliberative sessions should not become an exclusive business of highly trained professionals, because this would risk closing down options for lay people to organize and facilitate deliberative sessions. However, other experts voice that it is important that initiators and organisers avoid making the same mistakes over and over again and do more harm than good with their intentions to organize good deliberative sessions. There are professional standards that are well founded, and they should be respected and applied. Professional training for facilitators is therefore essential.
- Unbiased facilitation of deliberative sessions may be impossible in practice, but the organizers and facilitators of such processes are being entrusted to respect each party and to avoid manipulation. This is not possible if they have too many stakes in the issue of discussion, and this should be avoided.
- Context matters and it is important to realise that most participatory formats used in deliberative democracy are invented in Europe and/or in North America. Within the EU, legal and political traditions are appropriate to apply these participatory formats. But when people want to apply these formats in other countries and regions, the formats need to be tailored to the particular cultural setting in the respective country.
- To do justice to the inclusion of (previously) disadvantaged groups, it may be possible to use specific formats (such as focus groups). However, if organisations choose to use other formats such as stakeholder consultation or citizen assemblies, they need to ensure there is a critical mass (for instance by oversampling), to avoid a 'zoo effect'<sup>10</sup>. Secondly, these people need to be empowered (either before or during or both) to raise their voice and be heard.
- There is unanimity among the experts that the three most important criteria for evaluating the quality of deliberative sessions are: Inclusion, Empowerment and Transparency.

#### Specific findings related to Citizen Assemblies

- There was agreement that if a public authority has asked for a citizen assembly and has the power and mandate to decide on the recommendations of a citizen assembly, then they need to take the results seriously.
- There is wide consensus that actors from the private sector (i.e. private companies, not NGOs) should not be excluded from citizen assemblies, when they are randomly selected to participate.

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<sup>10</sup> A 'zoo effect' refers to situations where a minority group is looked at by another group. This is a metaphor to the situation of visitors at a zoo observing animals in a cage.



- Most experts agree that private companies may be invited to a citizen assembly as a witness, to give their view (i.e. this is not the same as an expert), when it is considered relevant by the selected citizens. Other experts point to a risk of co-opting (e.g. Nuclear industry, tobacco industry). Some industrial actors may also use such deliberative processes to their own advantage, this should be avoided.
- If organisers of a citizen assembly do not have the means or capacity to select citizens randomly, the following options are recommended as second best: Self-selection followed by random stratified selection, draw from pools of citizens that have previously been non-selected to invite, or use combination of self-selection and civil society network recruitment.
- When organising citizen assemblies designed to provide recommendations to policy makers, it is really important to clearly define the mandate, context, and type of closure beforehand. It is also really important to clearly describe what the results of the citizen assembly actually imply and for who. In any case, minority voice has to be given appropriate attention, must be heard, respected, and documented (as well as majority views of course). Participants should feel the freedom and space to disagree with each other. In terms of types of closure, there are arguments in favour of voting and arguments in favour of other types (i.e. consensus seeking). In any case, there should be an impetus to reconcile differences and not go to voting immediately.
- The experts noticed that citizens in citizen assemblies are often not forced to prioritize or discuss trade-offs. This relates to a bigger question, are the organisers of these sessions not too nice? Are they avoiding conflicts to reach an agreement even if it resembles only “motherhood and pie” (something everyone in general agrees upon as being good and just)?

## 6 Synthesis

### 6.1 Introduction

In this synthesis chapter the findings of the previous chapters are synthesised, meaning that the findings presented in this report are combined and connected to describe the bigger picture. This synthesis chapter is divided in several sections that each synthesise the findings on a particular theme. All these themes are specifically relevant for the work that has been done in REAL DEAL, and for its research questions. These themes are a reflection on the evaluation criteria (6.2), combination of formats (6.3), relevance of context (6.4), inclusion of the perspectives of structurally excluded groups (6.5), closure (6.6), as well as online and in-person sessions (6.7). This synthesis chapter will conclude with a section on lessons learnt.

The synthesis chapter leads to answering the key research questions in the subsequent conclusion chapter, and it provides input for the protocol that will be developed in task 4.2 of the REAL DEAL project.

### 6.2 Reflection on evaluation criteria

This chapter provides a description of the synthesis of the evaluation criteria that were analysed for each of the (combination of) formats in the previous chapter on key findings. In the section 6.2.1, these findings per criteria are combined. The synthesis is described in alphabetical order of criteria. A second section 6.2.2 entails a synthesis of criteria per format.

For every criterion, a score and a description are given of how well this criterion worked out in the various formats. This is based on the input provided by the participants and organisers of the participatory sessions. These inputs are interpreted by the authors of this report. Also, the relevance of the criterion for every format is denoted by a score and description. This is based on the literature as described in the introduction, earlier deliverables in the REAL DEAL project (especially D1.2), and discussions among the authors.

#### 6.2.1 *Synthesis of findings per criteria*

##### **(Potential to come to) common understanding**

This criterion reflects on whether participants have a shared understanding of a topic and the extent to which the topic is understood from various perspectives.

For the roundtables, the deliberative events, and the citizen assemblies, it seems that the sessions were set out to come to consensus - which is not the same as a common understanding of a topic. This implicit focus on the need to overcome differences influenced the depth and quality of the deliberations, as the participants were trying to come to a common consensus, thereby sometimes ignoring or downplaying the diversity of viewpoints. In the roundtables specifically, it was explicitly mentioned that there was not enough time to arrive at deeper insights (specifically in Lithuania).

For the European deliberative events there were mixed signals. Most of the findings show that the lack of adequate facilitation skills and methods in the smaller groups did not help the participants to come to a common understanding of the topics that were being discussed, as people merely shared their views and this led to a dynamic whereby some people dominated the conversations while others were silent. On the other hand, there are also testimonies of participants who were really inspired by the diversity of viewpoints that they were exposed to, and the open atmosphere during the discussions.

In quite some focus groups, there was a varying level of knowledge among participants, which made dialogue more difficult. In some instances, people dominated the conversations. By given presentations and structuring discussions, it was tried to create more common understanding among the participants.

Delphi panels are designed to come to a common understanding (among experts). Therefore, it is not surprising that the criterion 'potential to come to a common understanding' was evaluated very positively in the case of the Delphi panels. The experts and organisers were quite satisfied with the quality of the discussion and the open exchange of arguments. More than once the group came to an agreement after arguments were exchanged and clarified.

Aspects that emerged from the data which complicate the potential to come to a common understanding include:

- Lack of time to go in-depth.
- A great deal of diversity in terms of languages and cultural backgrounds (as it takes more time and effort to translate and really understand each other).
- High diversity in terms of perspectives (i.e. interdisciplinary settings in case of the Delphi panel, but also differences in core values in relation to the topic).
- Lack of proper facilitation skills and methods (in small groups in particular).

In the following Table 21 the researchers' interpretation of how well the respective criterion worked out in practice (column 2) and how relevant the respective criterion is for the format in question, is described. Similar tables will be presented for all criteria.

*Table 21 Synthesis criteria - common understanding*

	How well did it work out?*	Reasoning for score	Relevance of criterion**	Reasoning for score
Focus groups	2	Different levels of knowledge made it difficult to come to a common understanding.	1	Focus groups are designed for specific groups to express their views, but not to come to a common understanding
Citizen assembly	3	There was ample space to discuss.	3	Citizen assemblies are set out for citizens to deliberate on a topic, come to a common understanding and learn about different perspectives before coming up with recommendations
Roundtable	2	Participants mentioned they did not have enough time to come to a common understanding.	3	To create a platform for stakeholders to discuss and exchange perspectives is helpful.
Delphi panel	3	Facilitation is very important; people were really listening to each other, and open to hearing good arguments. In round 1 the participants clarified	4	The Delphi panel is designed to come to a common understanding (among experts)

		(mis)interpretation and language and jargon issues, so that in the next round of discussions the conversation could focus on content.		
European deliberative event	2	Lack of facilitation skills and methods in the smaller groups, and language were hindering the potential to come to common understanding.	n/a	Too diverse to rank

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

### (Potential) effect on policy making

This criterion refers to whether the session had an impact on policies or a policy making process, and indications on how this might have been achieved. It is quite difficult to ascertain, as it was outside the scope of this evaluation to assess what happened with the results of the test events.

The data from the focus groups indicated that policy could potentially be influenced with the recommendations that emerged out of the focus groups, but it is questioned to what extent this will really happen as it only reflects the outcome of a small group of people.

The citizen assemblies that were organised as part of this project were not commissioned by any government. However, politicians or policymakers were sometimes invited. In the Polish citizen assembly, the government was positive about the organisation of the assembly and intended to consider the results.

The roundtables were more directed to influencing policies. There was a direct connection between the roundtables and policy influence in Hungary.

Delphi panels were organised as input to other deliberative events. The intention was not to influence policy directly. Indirectly, the results of the Delphi panels may have had an influence on policy making. The input from the Delphi panels was much appreciated by participants of the follow-up events.

The European deliberative events were quite diverse in nature, but overall, were as much geared toward policy making as the citizen assemblies. However, the data shows that participants were confused about whether the European deliberative events were meant to have and were having any effect at all. This may have to do with the target audience of the recommendations of the European deliberative events which was not clearly defined beforehand.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve the potential effect on policy making include:

- Define beforehand the policy making target audience and ensure that this audience is indeed interested and committed to acknowledging the results.

- For events/trajectories that are meant to influence policy: invite politicians to listen in, this increases their involvement and commitment to do something with the results.
- Ensure that different recommendations are formulated for different audiences, including policy makers.
- Consider the timing of political events (e.g. elections, decision-moments).

Table 22 Synthesis criteria - (potential) effect on policy making

	How well did it work out?*	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	2	Only the aim of effecting policy making can be assessed, which differed for various focus groups.	1	The influence of a focus group is only indirect as it is often meant as an input to citizen assemblies or other deliberative events
Citizen assembly	2	Citizen assemblies that were tested in this project were not commissioned by governments, therefore their potential to influence actual policies was limited.	3	Citizen assemblies are typically aimed to influence policy making, although some the first step is usually to find a certain level of agreement.
Roundtable	3	The roundtables were meant to actually influence national policies, and in most cases they did.	4	Roundtables are typically aimed to influence policy making.
Delphi panel	4	The Delphi panels were considered of valuable input to the Citizen assemblies that were organised as a follow-up.	1	The influence of a Delphi panel is only indirect as it is often meant as an input to citizen assemblies or other deliberative events.
European deliberative events	2	The participants were sometimes confused, about what would happen with the results of the events.	4	As the events were organised by NGOs, influencing policy making was really relevant for them. But of course, this can differ when other organisations organise deliberative events.

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Efficiency

Efficiency is about whether the investment of time and resources is in the end worth it, according to organisers and participants. As such, this is quite an important criterion for all formats as well as for the combination of formats.

Citizen assemblies are time and resource intensive, both for organisers and participants. But if done well, they can be highly appreciated and empowering. For focus groups and Delphi panels it was observed that a good preparation (in terms of who to invite, issues of representation, and clarity of the objective of the sessions) improves the meaningfulness as experienced by the participants. So, in general the conclusion here might be “do it well or don't do it at all.”

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve efficiency include:

- A good preparation is crucial. This accounts for a good preparation by organisers, but also a good preparation of the participants.
- Reserve enough time for all participants to contribute.

Table 23 Synthesis criteria - efficiency

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	-	Limited information	3	Resources are limited so it is wise to invest them well.
Citizen assembly	-	Limited information	3	Resources are limited so it is wise to invest them well.
Roundtable	-	Limited information	3	Resources are limited so it is wise to invest them well.
Delphi panel	-	Limited information	3	Resources are limited so it is wise to invest them well.
European deliberative events	-	Limited information	3	Resources are limited so it is wise to invest them well.

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Empowerment

Empowerment refers to the extent to which people or groups have the capacity to make choices, and to transform these choices into desired actions. It is about strengthening or (re)gaining power to make decisions. Learning more about a topic can be empowering as it may increase the available options that a person has to make choices in their own life. It can also be empowering when someone's viewpoint is being heard, acknowledged, and respected (this last point is also covered under the criterion 'inclusion').

The participants of the focus groups generally experienced the discussions as open and inclusive, and a safe space where their points of views were valued. It seems that participants were sceptical and/or not sufficiently informed about the potential influence they could have by participating in these focus groups, most notably that the results were meant to feed into follow-up events with a more primary political purpose.

For the citizen assemblies, the general impression is that participants learned a lot during their participation. 85% of the participants felt that they were better informed about the topic after their participation.

Data from roundtables showed that participants of the roundtables learned about the topic, especially in Serbia. Not everyone were as clear on how much the roundtables could actually do in terms of impact. Besides this, there was insufficient to make any statements on the topic of empowerment for roundtables. As for the Delphi panels, there was limited mentioning of



empowerment. This may have to do with the fact that Delphi panels are not necessarily designed to be empowering.

Generally, the participants of the European deliberative events felt hindered to participate in a meaningful way because of the complexity of the topics that were selected, and because of language issues. The European deliberative events were held in English, while for many participants this was their second language, or they did not feel comfortable expressing themselves in English and needed a translator to actively participate. Furthermore, it was mentioned that in one case there was not really a safe space to discuss sensitive issues: 'saying that there is a safe space is not sufficient to actually create a safe space' (EU questionnaire 2, p.89). This could be related to an earlier comment about the lack of experience of the facilitators with moderating difficult conversations, and the lack of appropriate tools and methods to do so.

Being informed beforehand about the topic greatly enhanced the ability of participants to participate in a meaningful way in the discussions. This was true for the Citizen assembly and for the European deliberative events.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve empowerment include:

- Safe spaces make people feel valued.
- The topic that is being discussed should be understandable for the people involved.
- Especially in pan-European events, language issues can be an obstacle for people to get involved. Ensuring translators can support their active participation.

*Table 24 Synthesis criteria - empowerment*

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	3	Being valued for their viewpoints was appreciated, having a 'safe space' to discuss as well	4	Highly relevant as focus groups are targeted towards groups in society that are generally considered less empowered and focus groups are a means to incorporate and appreciate their perspectives and experiences.
Citizen assembly	3	Participants indicated that they learned a lot	3	As citizen assemblies involve everyday people who are not always used to participate in deliberative sessions, empowerment is important.
Roundtable	-	Not enough data.	2	A roundtable is not meant to be empowering per se, it is meant to have good quality exchange of arguments among stakeholders.
Delphi panel	3	Exchange of arguments was inspirational for many of the participants	2	Delphi panel is not meant to be empowering per se, it is meant to have good quality exchange of arguments among experts

European deliberative events	2	Language barriers and complexity of the selected topics limited empowerment	n/a	Too diverse to rank
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\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Equity

Equality refers to treating everybody the same. However, due to, amongst others, different privileges, characteristics, and living conditions, people have different needs, opportunities and encounter different barriers to participation. Equity recognises this unique position people have and acknowledges that people need differentiated structures to reach an equal outcome.

Equity is easily understood in different ways, mixed with equality or more about who was invited to the focus groups or who dominated the discussions during the sessions, which shows that there is a strong link between this criterion and the criterion of 'inclusion'.

### *Equity before the sessions*

The very fact that the focus groups are organised for specific groups gives those groups the opportunity to be heard and thus contributes to equity. However, it does not become clear from the data why certain groups were selected for a focus group, and other groups excluded and whether this is also the most logical or equitable thing to do (and who should decide this?). For the citizen assemblies, several measures were taken so that groups with specific needs could also participate. For instance, the sessions were organised at the weekend, and in some cases were organised online to facilitate participation. In other cases, they adapted the programme so that people who participate in Ramadan could join too.

For the European deliberative events, some of the facilitators received a training on feminist moderation techniques (it is not reported whether this had a positive effect and what the effect was).

### *Equity during the sessions*

During the sessions, equity played a role in the facilitation in most of the deliberative events that were organised. For instance, in some European deliberative events, a 'safety' person was appointed so in case people had an issue with social safety, they could go to this person. Also, facilitators encouraged participants to speak, and provided informal support in between sessions so that those who felt a threshold to participate were encouraged to speak as well.

Still, it was reported in the European deliberative events and focus groups that there was a dominance of a few people, which was difficult for the facilitators to overcome.

In some roundtables, extra efforts were undertaken to ensure that all participants could participate, like providing opportunities to share thoughts in a written form. Some participants had minor issues with the acoustics and limited time given to them.

For the Delphi panel, only minor issues were noted such as that the language of the end report may include jargon which makes it difficult for lay people to understand.

In the Citizen assembly it was reported that the discussions were verbal, and it would have helped to have visual or other forms of conversation tools so that people who are less skilled in debating are enabled to contribute to the discussions as well.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve equity include:

- Understand the needs of the (potential) participants and act upon these (where possible).
- Timing and location of events matters. Online sessions reduce the threshold to participate, but are a barrier for people without equipment or IT skills.
- Diversify facilitation tools (e.g., visual as well as verbal) to stimulate contributions from all participants.
- Ensure language barriers are removed or minimised.
- Moderators and facilitators should not shy away from intervening when one person dominates the discussion; having well trained moderators/facilitators is an advantage.

Table 25 Synthesis criteria - equity

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus group	2	In some focus groups, there was a dominance of certain people. There is not much data on this topic.	4	Highly relevant as Focus groups are organised to include voices of (previously) disadvantaged groups who are likely to have needs that prevented them from participating earlier.
Citizen assembly	3	Various actions were undertaken to adapt processes to the wishes and needs of participants.	4	It is known from experience and literature that engaging citizens with practical education and a low income in a citizen assembly is challenging and requires extra effort to enable these groups.
Roundtable	3	Participants were satisfied, with minor suggestions for improvement.	4	Stakeholders with limited resources require extra effort
Delphi panel	3	Participants were satisfied with how they could be involved.	1	For the Delphi panel this criterion is less relevant than other criteria and in comparison with other formats.
European deliberative event	3	Organisers were aware of the needs and did what they could to accommodate these.	n/a	Too diverse to rank

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Fairness

Fairness relates to the extent to which interests and values of all participants have been considered. This criterion reflects the opportunity that all affected parties had to obtain a legitimate role in decision-making processes and the extent to which there was a major effort to come up with fair and balanced solutions.

Fairness was mostly interpreted as the extent to which participants felt they had the opportunity to contribute equally to the conversation. In almost all formats and test events this was evaluated very positively by the participants, ranging from participants being very to extremely satisfied with the extent to which they got the opportunity to share their perspective.

In some cases, the organisers of the test events reflected afterwards that better moderation and facilitation would have increased the equal opportunity of all participants to contribute, for instance in the focus groups in Ireland and in some of the European deliberative events. For roundtables in Lithuania and Spain, the participants also reflected on this and valued the moderated conversations more.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve empowerment include:

- Facilitators of sub-sessions really put efforts in ensuring that everyone could contribute.
- Organisers requested the participants to come up with their own rules, and often the participants came up with a rule such as 'listen and respect each other'. The fact that participants made their own rules may have increased their awareness about the importance of respect, listening, etc.
- Allowing for enough time for people to express their views.
- Noting down on a flipchart the different perspectives (e.g., the pros and cons of a given statement).

Table 26 Synthesis criteria - fairness

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	3	Positive feedback and minor suggestions for improvement.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.
Citizen assembly	4	Extremely positive feedback from participants.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.
Roundtable	3	Positive feedback and minor suggestions for improvement.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.
Delphi panel	4	Extremely positive feedback from participants.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.
European deliberative event	3	Positive feedback and minor suggestions for improvement.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.

*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.*

*\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant*

## Inclusion

Inclusion refers to whether all participants have the opportunity and ability to equally contribute to the process in a meaningful way. It refers to the composition of the participants and the perspectives that are covered. An inclusive process accounts for power imbalances. This can be done in different ways and depends on the format (and its purpose).

In some of the citizen assemblies, the participants were involved in deciding which perspectives should be included into the citizen assembly process. In this way, potential biases by organisers were avoided. This is an innovative way of including diverse perspectives, particularly when the participants of a citizen assembly are selected randomly. This is in line with the experts from the Delphi panel. They concluded that, to avoid biases about who should be invited and what perspectives are relevant to include, the sponsor (donor) or client (i.e., the one that gives the assignment to organise the participatory sessions) should not determine who should or should not be invited to deliberative sessions. The sponsor or client should however have the opportunity to suggest to the organisers who should be invited or not be invited.

In the European deliberative events, it was a positive that different methods and tools were used to increase the likelihood that different people and perspectives could participate (e.g. four corners, open space, etc). In this sense, organising different sessions with each session having a different method, increases the likelihood that people feel at ease with at least one of the methods.

Differences in language and lack of proper translation service was mentioned in different formats as hindering inclusion.

Efforts to include different people and groups was mentioned in roundtables and focus groups but no details were given (note: this is repetition with other criteria).

As noted before, it is not clear how and why the specific groups were selected for the focus groups, so it is not possible to reflect on whether these are the most appropriate groups to include. In one focus group the selection of participants was random, which seems a somewhat peculiar approach as focus groups are mostly done to include previously disengaged or disadvantaged groups. It was not explained in the documents why participants were randomly chosen for the focus groups. In this regard, the Delphi panel that was organised to validate the findings of the evaluation concluded that who and how to invite participants depends on the issue and format, and that for citizen assemblies, random selection is the most appropriate selection procedure whilst for focus groups purposeful selection is more appropriate as one wants to enable groups that are normally not heard to express their views. Also, having random selection often results in having only one representative per group, which, in some cases may not be sufficient for the inclusion of specific perspectives.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve inclusion include:

- The sponsor or client of the participatory session should not determine who should and should not be invited to these sessions to avoid biases and increase inclusion.
- Using mixed methods and tools at an event increases inclusion.
- Random selection is the most appropriate selection tool for citizen assemblies, while purposeful selection is more appropriate for focus groups.
- In some instances, having only one representative per group is not sufficient.

Table 27 Synthesis criteria - inclusion

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	3	Positive feedback and minor suggestions for improvement	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.
Citizen assembly	4	Extremely positive feedback from participants	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.
Roundtable	4	Extremely positive feedback from participants	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.
Delphi panel	4	Extremely positive feedback from participants	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.
European deliberative event	3	Positive feedback and minor suggestions for improvement	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, it is crucial for participants to feel heard and respected.

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

### Interest of future actors

This criterion refers to the extent to which the value and perspective of future (human) generations have been considered.

In some ways the choice of topics ensured that the interest of future actors was considered, for instance by selecting the topic of intergenerational justice (in one of the focus groups and Citizen assembly in Greece on Intergenerational Justice and the European Green Deal). Other topics were less suitable for the inclusion of (interests) of future actors, such as food labelling for instance. Data on the roundtables was rather limited to make statements.

In the Delphi panels this criterion was not mentioned, also future actors were not included in the sampling of potential participants.

In the European deliberative events, even though the organisers were aware about the relevance of organising deliberative events from the perspective of future actors or generations, it was not clear for them how to practically organise this.

The data of the different test cases do not mention *how* future actors were included, nor *which* interests, or actors should be included. It seems to be assumed that all future actors have the same interests; the option that some groups of future actors may have other interests than other groups was not reflected in the data.



The expert Delphi panel came up with a number of recommendations of strategies for ensuring that future generations' interests are represented/given a voice during deliberative sessions:

- Using role-playing.
- Giving clarity about future dimensions of given choices.
- Taking time horizons into account: defining different time horizons and then develop strategies for each new period.
- Going to schools, engaging children, and youth there.
- Lowering the age level for participants in deliberative sessions.
- Working with art.

Table 28 Synthesis criteria - interests of future actors

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	2	Addressed explicitly in one focus group, in others implicitly or not addressed.	2	It seems less crucial to prioritise future generations as key group to include, as there are better ways to include the perspectives and interests of future generations than through a focus group.
Citizen assembly	2	Addressed explicitly in one Citizen assembly, in others implicitly.	3	Future generations could be considered a key stakeholder to be included.
Roundtable	1	The roundtables did not specifically address the interests of future actors.	4	Future generations could be considered a key stakeholder to be included.
Delphi panel	1	Not at all mentioned	2	It seems less crucial to prioritise future generations as key group to include in a Delphi panel, as there are better ways to include the perspectives and interests of future generations than a Delphi panel.
European deliberative event	2	Organisers were aware but not clear how to do this	-	Too diverse to rank.

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

### Interest of non-human actors

This criterion is about the extent to which the value of nature has been considered. This criterion was not explicitly addressed. In most cases, the organisers were aware about the importance of including the voice or interests of non-human actors, but they were doubtful how to actually organise this and which way would be appropriate.

Both the experts from the Delphi panel, as well as the discussion at the Summit provided recommendations for ensuring that non-human interests (i.e. nature, animals) are represented/given a voice during deliberative sessions:

- Proxy representatives.
- Go on holistic participatory elements (nature walks, visiting farmers etc.).
- Provide a 'chair' for nature in deliberative sessions (roleplay).
- Consult indigenous people who are closer to nature.
- Organise deliberative sessions in nature

Table 29 Synthesis criteria - interests of non-human actors

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	2	Only implicitly addressed.	2	It seems less crucial to prioritise non-humans as key group to include, as there are better ways to include the perspectives and interests of non-humans than through a focus group
Citizen assembly	1	Only implicitly addressed.	3	Depends very much on the topic, but generally it is important to ensure that the interests of non-humans are also heard and incorporated.
Roundtable	1	Only implicitly addressed.	4	Depends very much on the topic, but generally it is important to ensure that the interests of non-humans are also heard and incorporated as a stakeholder.
Delphi panel	1	Only implicitly addressed.	2	Depends very much on the topic.
European deliberative event	2	Organisers were aware of the importance and considered options. In one EU level event the proxy method was applied.	n/a	Too diverse to rank.

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Meaningfulness

Meaningfulness reflects on the extent to which participants feel their engagement in the participatory session has been meaningful to them.

It can be argued that for all formats, the relevance of meaningfulness is equally high. Probably, participants of all sessions would like their contribution to be meaningful. What is considered meaningful can vary from person to person, depending on the subject, context, format, etc.

For the deliberative events organised at European level, many participants used words as 'inspiring', 'exciting' and 'valuable' when they described their participation in the session. They appreciated creating new contacts and learning more about the topic of the event. Various participants of citizen assemblies indicated that for them, being able to (potentially) influence policy was relevant for how satisfied and worthwhile they thought the session was. This links to the criterion 'potential effect on policy making'. As at the time of analysis it was not clear for most events to which extent policy was influenced, this cannot be measured. In the Lithuanian roundtables, participants preferred to have more clarity on the outcomes. While this has not been expressed clearly by participants, this could have affected how meaningful the session was for them.

Some participants of the focus groups explicitly mentioned something in terms of meaningfulness, and the organisers reflected that the free discussions and safe spaces allowed participants to give a meaningful contribution. Furthermore, some participants desired follow-up meetings, indicating that they thought the session was meaningful.

For the Delphi panels, there is not enough data on the criterion of meaningfulness to synthesise.

One of the participants of a citizen assembly mentioned that the societal aspect of the session was most meaningful to them. This person was not in contact with many people in society, and this citizen assembly gave this person, as they said themselves, an opportunity to participate in social life. As this was the only person who mentioned something like this, this shows that meaningfulness can mean something completely different for different people.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve meaningfulness include:

- Realising a clear impact is crucial for many people.
- Social facts, like meeting new people and broadening network are relevant for people regarding this criterion.

*Table 30 Synthesis criteria - meaningfulness*

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	3	Participants reflected positively on the focus group.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, the feeling of meaningfulness for participants is relevant.
Citizen assembly	3	The social aspect of these events was highly valued. More clarity on the goals was wished for.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, the feeling of meaningfulness for participants is relevant.
Roundtable	2	More clarity on the purpose of the outcomes was wished.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, the feeling of meaningfulness for participants is relevant.
Delphi panel	-	Not enough data on this matter.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, the feeling of meaningfulness for participants is relevant.
European deliberative event	4	Many participants mentioned the sessions were	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, the

		inspiring and exciting.		feeling of meaningfulness for participants is relevant.
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\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Privacy

Privacy is about the extent to which the participants' information is anonymous and collected and handled in a careful and safe way.

This criterion hardly came back in the feedback forms. The privacy of participants was respected, and their personal data was not recorded.

In the focus groups it was noted that there may be a trade-off between transparency and privacy in some cases. When the organisation or background of a person cannot be shared, it is difficult to understand the context from which certain statements were made.

One Roundtable (Lithuania) took an unusual approach in this direction: the backgrounds of the participants were explicitly not disclosed. This was meant to provide for more free speech, and the feedback confirmed this as positive.

Table 31 Synthesis criteria - privacy

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	4	The privacy of participants was respected.	4	Very important to respect the privacy of people who partake in a focus group; the results should remain anonymous to avoid any negative effect on the participant.
Citizen assembly	4	The privacy of participants was respected.	4	Very important to respect the privacy of people who partake in a citizen assembly; the results should remain anonymous to avoid any negative effect on the participant.
Roundtable	4	The privacy of participants was respected.	3	Participation in a roundtable is related to the stakes of an organisation. This makes that it would be logical to relate the findings to these organisations.
Delphi panel	4	The privacy of participants was respected.	3	Participation in a Delphi is related to the expertise of a person. This makes that it would be logical to relate the findings to these organisations.
European deliberative event	4	The privacy of participants was respected.	-	In general, it is always important to respect the privacy of participants. But

				depending on the goal and form of the event, guaranteeing anonymousness is even more important.
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\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Representation

Representation reflects on the extent to which participants of a process are a representation of the population.

Representation can have different roles and functions and can therefore create different effects in the application of different formats. The idea of citizen assemblies is to discuss a topic with a group of people that is a fair representation of the total population. Therefore, stratified random selection was conducted for all citizen assemblies in Real Deal. While efforts were made to gather a diverse group of people that could be seen as representative of the total population, various organisers and participants noticed that people from certain societal groups were missing or were underrepresented, like Roma, people with only primary education, and young people.

In general, the participants of the Delphi panels were selected with the aim to achieve a diversity of expertise on the topic. However, in North-Macedonia there were more pro-environmental views represented, while conservative voices were missing. This influenced the results of the Delphi panel, and therefore might not represent the diversity of expert voices on the topic. Also, in roundtables there was in general a large diversity of stakeholders present. However, in Lithuania, the absence of specific stakeholder groups was noticed.

In focus groups, representation of a specific societal group is often desired, as this is seen as a way to integrate specific perspectives of structurally excluded groups. Particularly interesting here is that the participants of the focus groups said they felt they did not represent a specific societal group, while the participants of the other formats did say they felt they represented a specific group. This unexpected result could indicate that the focus groups organised did not attract people in specific societal groups.

In the European deliberative events, many participants were positive about the diversity in perceptions, and the backgrounds of the participants in terms of country of residence and profession. However, the method of recruitment led to the situation that a majority of the participants were affiliated with NGOs or CSOs and highly educated. It can be said that the participants of these events were not a fair representation of the population.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve representation include:

- Random selection is key for getting a representative group of participants.
- In specific formats, like focus groups, random selection is not wished for as specific groups are targeted.

Table 32 Synthesis criteria - representation

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	2	Participants themselves	4	To incorporate the thoughts and perspectives of structurally

		mentioned they did not represent a societal group.		excluded groups, it is highly relevant that they are well represented. Representation here refers to specific societal groups, not to a representation of the total population.
Citizen assembly	3	Overall, the citizen assemblies had a diverse group of participants, but participants from certain societal groups were missing.	4	The idea of citizen assemblies is to deliberate with a group of people that represent the 'wisdom of the crowd'. Representation is therefore a highly relevant issue for citizen assemblies.
Roundtable	3	In general, diverse voices were present. However, specific stakeholder groups were missing in some sessions.	4	In order to provide an advice based on the thoughts of stakeholders, it is important that the perspectives of a representative group of stakeholders are included.
Delphi panel	3	In general, diverse voices were present. However, specific expertise was missing in some sessions.	4	In order to provide an advice based on the thoughts of experts, it is important that the perspectives of a representative group of experts are included.
European deliberative event	2	Quite many people had affiliations with NGOs.	4	Nonetheless the goal of the session, representation is relevant.

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Responsiveness

Responsiveness reflects the degree to which local contexts and participant needs are incorporated into the planning and execution of activities.

The extent to which responsiveness was achieved varied considerably across contexts. Key factors that influenced responsiveness included the flexibility of format adjustments, the effectiveness of recruitment strategies, and the ability to create an inclusive and accommodating environment. The focus groups in Ukraine underscored the importance of context-sensitive adjustments in volatile settings, as air raid alarms posed unique challenges that disrupted participation. Because of the presence of local stakeholders like NGO representatives in roundtables (most notably the local level roundtables in Hungary), the local context was considered, thereby enlarging the responsiveness of these events.

In citizen assemblies, responsiveness varied significantly. Alignment with local priorities demonstrated high responsiveness in North Macedonia. In Serbia, however, it was noticed that participants wanted to discuss another topic, food safety, instead of what was organised, food labelling. The Polish citizen assembly was organised immediately after an election, allowing for a focus on topics that resonated with recent political debates. Despite these efforts, challenges such as low trust in institutions and scepticism about the influence of citizen voices were common, especially in non-EU contexts like Serbia and North Macedonia. Data



show that responsiveness was valued differently for the three Delphi panels. In Poland, some felt that the topic of the Delphi panel did not entirely align with the current Polish debate. In the other Delphi panels, this was experienced with more positivity. Also in the European events, not everybody was satisfied with the topics being discussed.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve responsiveness include:

- Aligning the topic with current debates.
- Adapting the format to local circumstances.
- Incorporating enough time to discuss topics.
- Being sensitive to local-political dynamics.

*Table 33 Synthesis criteria - responsiveness*

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	3	Participants' needs were incorporated in most focus groups.	4	When including marginalised groups, it is crucial to be adaptive to their needs.
Citizen assembly	3	Some improvements on the topic selection.	3	To ensure that everybody can contribute, their needs need to be included.
Roundtable	2	Some were not satisfied with the group of stakeholders present.	4	By including local stakeholders, the local context should be considered.
Delphi panel	3	Some improvements on the topic selection.	3	It is important, but there is not much space for adaptability of the format.
European deliberative event	3	Some improvements on the topic selection.	4	When organising pan-European events, responsiveness is important.

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

## Transparency

Transparency includes whether all information and communication on the purpose, process, expectations, and outcomes of the participatory session is clear and transparent for participants at all times during the session.

Data from the various focus groups showed that there was a strong effort invested in explaining the procedure and purpose of focus groups, but there was less clarity about the expected outcome and political impact of the results.

Participants of the citizen assemblies in general experienced that the communication about the purpose of the processes were clear. Some participants, however, experienced uncertainty about aimed outcomes of the assembly. After the sessions, there was more clarity on what would happen with the results, but not everyone was satisfied yet. For the events on European level, the same trend was witnessed, with many participants experiencing a lack of transparency about the goal of the event before the event started, as well as still after the event took place. Some even found the information to be misleading as some were overwhelmed by the level of detail, and others desired more in-depth information.

The Delphi panel participants experienced transparency on the session, but experienced a lack of transparency regarding the selection procedures of participants. As for the roundtables, the participants experienced a great level of transparency in general. Only in the Lithuanian roundtable, some experienced a lack of clear communication.

Aspects that emerged from the data to improve transparency:

- Effective communication of the roles of participants, the procedures, the intended use of the results and potential effect on policy making is critical to bolstering trust.
- During the sessions, clear communication strategies are expected as this will ensure that all voices are heard and respected.

*Table 34 Synthesis criteria - transparency*

	How well did it work out?	Reasoning	Relevance of criterion?**	Reasoning
Focus groups	3	Doubts with some participants about their potential impact.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, transparency is crucial.
Citizen assembly	3	Uncertainty about the goal of the session.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, transparency is crucial.
Roundtable	4	Overall, great level of transparency was experienced.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, transparency is crucial.
Delphi panel	3	Selection procedures could be clearer.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, transparency is crucial.
European deliberative event	2	Much uncertainty about the goal of the events.	4	In all participatory and deliberative exercises, transparency is crucial.

\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion did not work out at all, 2 – criterion is present but major room for improvement, 3 = criterion worked out quite well and minor room for improvement, and 4 = criterion worked out perfectly.

\*\* Ranking is from 1-4: 1 = criterion was not relevant at all, 2 = limited relevance, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = highly relevant

### 6.2.2 Synthesis of criteria per format

To summarise the findings above, and provide more over-arching conclusions, four questions will be answered in this paragraph: i) which criteria were most relevant for each format? ii) what criteria worked out best per format? iii) what criteria did not work out well? and iv) what criteria are not relevant for each format?

For the first and last question, the European deliberative events are not considered as they had diverse objectives. For example, the goal of one of these sessions was to organise an event that was experienced as a true safe space. In that event, inclusion and equity were highly relevant. For other events, however, the goal was to involve citizens in the European Semester, where transparency and (potential) effect on policy making were more relevant. This shows that these events differ too much to provide an answer to what criteria are and are not relevant.

#### Which criteria were most relevant for each format?

Based on literature and on findings from this evaluation, three different criteria have been chosen that are most relevant for each of the formats discussed. Each format has different

purposes and therefore, different criteria that are most relevant for this format, as made visible in Table 35.

*Table 35 Most relevant criteria per format (in alphabetic order)*

Format	Criteria		
<b>Focus group</b>	Empowerment	Equity	Inclusion
<b>Citizen assembly</b>	Inclusion	Representation	Transparency
<b>Roundtable</b>	Fairness	Representation	Responsiveness
<b>Delphi panel</b>	(potential to come to) Common understanding	Representation	Transparency

For a focus group, it is crucial that people who are structurally excluded from decision-making processes are given a place to express their opinions. In order for them to do this, it is necessary to organise inclusive sessions in which specific attention is paid to what these people need. Equity principles are therefore highly relevant. When these criteria are well-considered, participants can feel empowered, which is especially relevant when it concerns people from structurally excluded groups.

In their book on citizen assemblies, Vrydagh (2023, p.2) describes citizen assemblies as follows: “one of the most sophisticated institutions to involve citizens thanks to the provision of balanced information before and during the process, the structured process of deliberation which allows all participants to express themselves, and the specific attention to the inclusion of a group of lay citizens. As a result, citizen assemblies are expected in theory to draw a unique picture of what the whole citizenry thinks about a public issue were it to have time to deliberate on the matter”. This quote mentions the three criteria that are most relevant for citizen assemblies: transparency, representation, and inclusion. With citizen assemblies, transparency is crucial so that the participants are provided with all the information they need, whilst other citizens need to be given the opportunity to track what is being discussed in the citizen assembly. Representation aims to gather a representative group of participants for the citizen assembly and inclusion aims to ensure everyone can express themselves.

For roundtables, various stakeholders all come with their own biases on the topic. In order to get a fair idea on stakeholders’ perspectives, representation is relevant. When bringing together such a group, it is highly relevant that they all feel heard and that they get the opportunity to share their perspectives. Especially when it concerns polarised topics. Fairness is therefore highly relevant. Furthermore, as all stakeholders will have another background and some stakeholder might feel or be less powerful compared to others, it is crucial to be responsive to their needs.

Criteria most relevant for a Delphi panel are (potential to come to) common understanding, as it is crucial that members of the panel understand the same things as they discuss certain issues. As experts in Delphi panels often discuss quite complex topics and provide their perspectives on the matter based on rankings, transparency is crucial as well. Without a transparent process, it is not clear for both participants as well as others who receive the results on how various topics were ranked. Furthermore, just as with stakeholders, representation is crucial as well.

Depending on the specific goal or objective of a session, some criteria might become more relevant. When the goal is to influence decision-making, (potential) effect on policy making is high on the list of relevance as well. When formats are combined, other criteria may be more relevant.

### Which criteria worked out best in the events (per format and across formats)?

Criteria on inclusion, fairness, empowerment, and the potential to come to a common understanding were mentioned multiple times as those that worked out best in the test events. This implies that the organisers put a lot of explicit effort in ensuring that diversity of perspectives were included, that people felt free to share their views, and that groups with specific needs were enabled as much as possible to join the event and contribute. Also, it meant that during the events themselves, the tools and methods used, as well as the facilitation of the sessions, was such that participants felt heard and respected.

*Table 36 Criteria that worked out best per format (in alphabetic order)*

Format	Criteria		
<b>Focus groups</b>	Empowerment	Inclusion	Meaningfulness
<b>Citizen assembly</b>	Empowerment	Fairness	Inclusion
<b>Roundtable</b>	Fairness	Inclusion	Transparency
<b>Delphi panel</b>	(potential to come to) common understanding	(potential) effect on policy making	Fairness
<b>European deliberative event</b>	Equity	Fairness	Meaningfulness

### Which criteria did not work out well (per format, and across formats)?

The criteria of efficiency, (potential) effect on policy making, and including the interests of non-human actors and future generations, generally did not work out very well.

For (potential) effect on policy making, it is clear that this is a very relevant criterion. In this project it was difficult to assess the actual effect on policy making, as the project evaluation took place before this effect was about to take place. However, in general we can draw an important lesson about this criterion. For organisers of deliberative processes or events, it is key to think about the mandate and how to manage the findings of the deliberative process or event, because participants want to be sure that their time and effort in participating is contributing to something valuable.

For the criteria including the interests of non-human actors and the interests of future generations, it is key that appropriate methods and tools become available and known so that organisers of deliberative processes are not only aware about this but are also provided with practical tools of how to include these perspectives. In the sessions organised for the REAL DEAL project, these interests were not considered adequately and therefore it can be said that these criteria did not work out well.

### Which criteria are not relevant (per format and across formats)?

Some of the criteria are not specifically relevant for certain formats, like meaningfulness and efficiency. However, some of the criteria are more specifically relevant for certain formats, and not for others. One of these is the criteria of representation. As the goal of focus groups is to include a specific group of citizens that are structurally excluded, it is not the goal for it to be representative of the total population. Instead, one knows that a focus group will not be representative in terms of participants and perspectives that are covered. For the other formats, representation is more relevant.

For Delphi panels, equity might play a smaller role. Of course, it is still relevant that all participants of a Delphi panel can fully participate. As they are all experts, they may to a certain extent be more able to participate compared to lay citizens. So that might require fewer specific

adaptations. But in general, the design of a Delphi panel is set-in-stone and not adaptable. For the other formats that are tested in the project, the design of the sessions is more flexible.

## 6.3 Combination of formats

In the REAL DEAL project, an important feature was to test how a combination of the selected formats worked out in practice. The combinations that were made all had their specific purpose: roundtables and citizen assemblies aimed to combine the perspectives of both organised stakeholders as well as the non-organised public; Delphi panels and citizen assemblies aimed to provide citizens with information from various perspectives; focus groups aimed to include the perspectives of structurally excluded groups in citizen assemblies; and roundtables at the regional and national levels aimed to include the regional perspective in national decision making.

Relying on the data from the participatory sessions that have been organised in the REAL DEAL project, it can be said that the combination of Delphi panels and citizen assemblies was well received and served its intended purpose. In the case of the Serbian citizen assembly, for example, it was mentioned that it is difficult to provide a broad variety of information to the participants when the organisers themselves are not experts on the topic. This citizen assembly was not connected to a Delphi panel. However, this issue could be mitigated by providing results from a Delphi panel for the participants of citizen assemblies. In cases where this was done, the organisers of the citizen assemblies were satisfied and they felt that the participants were interested in these results. Furthermore, as an additional advantage, the organisers of the citizen assemblies were happy with the fact that they could use the spectrum of experts from the Delphi panel for their assembly, to invite some of these experts.

Compared to the combination of Delphi panels and citizen assemblies, there is less data on the combination of focus groups and of roundtables with citizen assemblies. This is because both combinations have only been made once in the REAL DEAL project. The data gathered on this combination are therefore less rich, and conclusions that can be drawn are more prone to subjectivity of the respondents. What can be said is that in North-Macedonia, the aim of involving the perspective of structurally excluded people in the citizen assembly was, at least partly, achieved as some topics brought in by a presentation of the focus groups were taken up in the citizen assembly.

The only example of combining a roundtable with a citizen assembly, in Serbia, did not turn out well. The main reason for this was that the topics of both events differed too much so the results of the roundtable were not relevant enough to be integrated into the citizen assembly. This points towards one of the biggest challenges of combining multiple events, which is aligning the organisation of the events. In all cases, the events that were combined were organised by different organisations. This made it more difficult to align the topics, concept, framing, design, and timeline of the events, particularly as it required more coordination from both organisations.

Even when the topics and timelines were aligned, there were still some challenges in sharing the results. The topics discussed at the Delphi panels are aimed to be quite specific, more specific than the discussions at a citizen assembly usually are. This, according to one of the organisers of the German Delphi panel, makes the sharing of information more challenging. Furthermore, when members of a Delphi panel, or of a roundtable or focus group, are asked to share results at a citizen assembly, it is difficult to ensure that what is shared reflects the results of the event they attended and does not merely include their personal perspectives.



## 6.4 Importance of context

Given the variety of national, political, and cultural traditions in Europe, it is highly unlikely that there is one dominant format of citizen participation that will work equally effectively, efficiently, and fair among and between different nations. In this part, considerations are given to the legal, political, social, and economic context of the countries in which the REAL DEAL sessions have been organised. Hereby, insights from literature are compared with reports made by the organisers of the participatory sessions, as well as other information from this evaluation.

**Legal context.** Formal participation procedures are prescribed by law. This usually does not grant the participants the right of co-determining decisions, although many countries provide these opportunities in referenda or other forms of direct democracy. The formats that are tested in this REAL DEAL project are informal participation procedures. These processes are often used to accompany and enrich political decision-making processes and politicians do not have a legal obligation to implement recommendations. Because of these lack of binding effects on governmental procedures, there is no legal obstacle for these processes to be organised in any country. However, the way these processes and their legitimising power is accepted by political parties, stakeholders, and citizens can differ considerably. This is heavily influenced by the political and socio-cultural context. As the timeline of this evaluation is rather short and the resources limited, it is not possible to say anything on how the sessions are accepted by political parties or by society in general.

**Political context.** Based on Radtke and Renn (in press), five prototypes can be distinguished that constitute different types of relationships between those who govern and those who are the subjects of governance: autocratic, adversarial, collaborative, reflective, and inclusive. Each of these governance prototypes are herewith briefly characterised in their relation to public participation and stakeholder involvement and in relation to the countries where the REAL DEAL sessions were conducted are allocated to these prototypes:

- *Autocratic Governance Prototype:* This style features a leading role for a political leader and a ruling party, affirmed by free and fair elections (Marsh 1991; Miller 2021) where opposition voices are limited, and media is controlled. Participation by civil society actors is symbolic, with autocratic leaders or experts claiming to know what is best for the population. Based on the reports made by the organisers, this autocratic policy style was visible in Hungary, and partially in Serbia and North-Macedonia. Input by stakeholders is welcomed if they do not criticise the legitimacy of the power elite. Citizen assemblies are not common within this culture compared to other European countries. Delphi panels, in general, are seen as specifically valid if the public authorities feel that the “right” experts had been chosen.
- *Adversarial Governance Prototype:* Characterised by competition between two dominant parties or political blocks (right versus left), adversarial systems depend on legal requirements and litigation to resolve conflicts (Busenberg 1993; Renn 2008). This governance style was faced in Italy, Poland, Lithuania and partially in Greece. In these countries, one might expect that experts and stakeholders would be polarized and only accept knowledge of others if they supported one’s own beliefs. However, data from the Delphi panel in Poland and the Greek and Lithuanian roundtable do not show this. This could also be because this is not specifically asked for. In Italy, the event was organised with citizens who tend to not be as polarized as stakeholders.
- *Collaborative Governance Prototype:* Collaborative governance seeks consensus among powerful players, including multiple parties, economic actors, and NGOs (Papadopoulos 2012; Mosley and Wong 2021). This style is inclusive of major stakeholders but lacks the inclusion of non-organised citizens, focusing on information and consultation rather than co-designing policies. For the countries included in the REAL DEAL project, this governance style was visible in Austria, Spain and partially



in Denmark. Although it needs to be said that focus groups, which were organised in Austria, are in general accepted in all governance styles. Public participation is welcomed by the political elite, but there is a strong movement towards reaching consensus, even if it means that ambitious green objectives are compromised.

- *Reflective Governance Prototype*: Reflective governance emphasises deliberative democracy, providing fair and open discourse opportunities for all parties (Baechtinger et al. 2014; Lafont 2019). It aims for solutions and broad acceptance by stakeholders and citizens. Citizen assemblies are highly welcomed but often not taken seriously when it comes to policymaking. Powerful stakeholders demand to be included and try to exert a major influence on social media and other channels of public communication. Reflective governance structures were experienced in Germany, Ireland and partially in Denmark. In these countries it was taken for granted by participants and organisers that randomly selected citizens could, and should, contribute to public policymaking and that organised as well as non-organised groups should be consulted.
- *Inclusive Governance Prototype*: Inclusive governance emphasises direct participation through referenda in combination with other forms of indirect participation such as citizen assemblies (Fisher 2012; Setälä 2017). While it allows for broad participation, this style can lead to unpredictable outcomes and stop-and-go chaos if desired actions require excessive effort. None of the REAL DEAL sessions has been organised in countries with such with a strong inclusive tradition such as Switzerland.

Despite major differences in policy styles and political culture, the sessions confirm the theoretical assumption that all formats that were tested in different countries are compatible with the political context. The exception may be Ukraine, where under the present circumstances valid inferences about compatibility are not possible. Especially in autocratic and adversarial policy contexts, there was some reservation against randomly selected citizen assemblies. In both the Polish as well as the North Macedonian Delphi panel, experts had expressed the opinion that citizens in general were not ready to contribute competently to public policymaking. However, there was no open opposition or outspoken criticism. Incorporating the perspectives of citizens has a strong appeal in all countries and even autocratic rulers are sensitive to public opinion.

Roundtables and Delphi panels were accepted in all political contexts, yet policymakers had different expectations about what to expect. Focus groups were the least contested instrument but for outsiders it was not clear that, in the REAL DEAL project, they were explicitly directed towards the inclusion of marginalised groups. However, since focus groups are not associated with sharing or even challenging power, no major criticism or reservations were experienced. Some contexts require extra efforts to enhance legitimacy and resonance by both policymakers and the public.

### **Social and economic context.**

While there is no doubt that social traditions and the economic conditions are a major contextual factor when designing and implementing policies towards the EGD, these conditions were less influential on the acceptance or perception of participatory formats. In North Macedonia, Serbia, Poland and also Ukraine the organisers witnessed some doubts and scepticism among the participants about the competence of citizens to co-create policies, and there was also a strong reliance on academic authorities. At the same time, however, participants were quite vocal and firm when the discussion focused on their living conditions and the possibilities to improve their lives.

The socio-economic context had, however, a major influence on the topics of deliberation. While in North Macedonia experts and citizens wanted the government to provide less polluting coal stoves to the rural areas, experts and citizens in Germany demanded from their governments more effective policies to phase out coal and to encourage renewable sources for home heating. Green financing was a topic that was high on the priority list in some

countries and low in others. 'Green agriculture and food' was a popular topic in nearly all countries but there were different focal points such as school cantinas, green agriculture or food labelling.

A reflection on the legal, political, and social and economic context shows that organisers of participatory sessions should be aware of the content and the concerns that dominate the debate in the respective region before designing the format and the topic to be discussed. In REAL DEAL, the topics for the sessions as well as their detailed framing for the different formats were chosen against the background of these contexts.

## 6.5 Including perspectives of structurally excluded groups

The analysis shows that many sessions represented and integrated the knowledge from participants with varied backgrounds, lived experiences, and identities, including people from groups who are systematically excluded. However, most participants, especially in the roundtables, Delphi panels and European deliberative events, were highly educated, and many were somehow already linked to or affiliated with the civil society or academic spaces. Therefore, many groups in society were underrepresented or not represented.

Some of the challenges that are reported to including participants of marginalised groups are:

- Difficulties in reaching certain groups, highlighting the need for better strategies and incentives for the outreach and promoting of participation
- Travel costs and care duties hinder a broader inclusion of participant. Travel costs had to be paid up front by the participants, and were reimbursed after their attendance of the session
- Many participants could be considered stakeholders (belonged to a CSO or academia) and not 'just' interested citizens. This was mostly due to the selection process, as in the sessions in which there was no targeted invitation done for structurally excluded people and random selection was not used due to lack of capacity.

These challenges show that when wanting to include people from structurally excluded groups, attention needs to be paid to barriers like travel costs and care duties, and a specific strategy would be needed to invite and include these people.

In some test cases, for instance the citizen assemblies and roundtables, there is not enough information on whether the input by marginalised groups was respected as legitimate and valuable input for the deliberation, due to lack of data.

The selection of the systematically excluded groups was logical (it made sense which people were actually invited) but challenging and varied in effectiveness due to contextual factors and recruitment barriers. Limited funding did not allow for random selection in all cases. This was possible in the case of national level citizen assemblies, but not possible for the European deliberative events). Ensuring that all voices are heard, especially from marginalised groups, is vital but remains a challenge. Specific methods are required in addition to random selection, or as alternative, like connecting with Focus Groups, for example.

The project aimed to test decision making methods and formats that provided genuine opportunities for meaningful participation from the full spectrum of social demographics affected by the issue being deliberated (e.g., marginalised, disadvantaged, and historically discriminated members of society). This is a necessary for a process to be considered inclusive and representative, as well as democratic, deliberative, and participatory (Chwalisz, 2021; Fishkin, 2018). As there is a noticeable underrepresentation from systematically

excluded groups among elected decision-makers (at all levels), it is essential to include all voices in participatory democracy in order to balance this out.

To achieve the inclusion of structurally excluded societal groups, the analysis of the test cases show that extra efforts should be put into the mobilisation and inclusion of structurally excluded, or under-represented social groups, which was a challenge in the test cases analysed, already from the selection phase. There are multiple measures that should be taken by organisers of citizen and stakeholder participation in the context of policy making, to ensure the inclusion of perspectives of marginalised groups, such as: aiming for active inclusion from the design stage of the process, devising strategies of outreach (go where the people are) and incentives; allocating adequate resources to the inclusion of systematically excluded social groups; keeping in mind all potential obstacles to participation (travel costs, care duties, interpretation/translation needs, accessibility needs, etc). This should go hand in hand with creating safe spaces and room for in-depth discussions.

## 6.6 Closure

Closure is about reaching the final product, like a statement, set of recommendations, or agreement. Furthermore, the management of disagreement and the opportunity to raise arguments during the process can also be seen as closure. Closure can be reached in different ways: by voting, creating consensus, or by agreeing to disagree.

For the focus groups, the evaluation showed that in some cases there was no formal closure at the end. This resulted in confusion among the participants, as it was not clear what were the conclusions and what would be done with them.

Most citizen assemblies ended with a voting session. The way voting was organised differed from country to country. Generally, participants got the opportunity to emphasise which statements or recommendations they supported, indicating an idea of the most popular recommendations. In general, this turned out positively, although it was noted that when participants knew beforehand that there will be voting in the end, they adjusted their strategy and only formulated widely accepted recommendations. This can take away the creativity as well as more controversial ideas. Moreover, this also reduces the likelihood of emerging out-of-the-box or more radical ideas to flourish.

In the roundtables closure was reached through consensus. At this moment, there is not sufficient evidence to make any statements about what worked well and what was challenging.

In the Delphi panels, the participants firstly ranked their answers to a given statement, then they discussed this. When the participants largely disagreed, the arguments in favour and against the statement were discussed and documented. This way of deliberating and coming to closure was highly appreciated by the participants (and organisers).

The organisers of the Delphi panels were disappointed that often the participants did not agree with each other. This implies that the organisers implicitly looked for agreements and may have implicitly steered away from dissent.

In the European deliberative events, closure mostly took the shape of consensus in the different subgroups, with recommendations being presented to all participants in the plenary. The data shows that with the method 'consensus through dialogue' (i.e. no voting but trying to find a common agreement among all participants) some participants felt that the whole scope and nuances of the discussion were not adequately represented in the plenary, and some opinions were left out. In one case, the organisers decided to organise a spontaneous voting

in plenary. This was not appreciated as participants felt uncomfortable and exposed showing their opinion. Some refrained from voting at all.

In the Delphi panel in Brussels, organised to reflect on the initial findings of the REAL DEAL evaluation, it was reiterated that it is important to define the method of closure beforehand, so that participants know what to expect. Not having closure, or changing the way of closure mid-way, is detrimental to the process.

There are good arguments for voting, as well as for other forms of closure (see Appendix 4 for the discussion on this during the Delphi panel). Which form of closure to choose depends on the political context, the sensitivity of the issue at hand, and the diversity of viewpoints in relation to the issue. Anonymous voting generally works much better as people do not have to share their views in plenary if they don't want to. Furthermore, it was stressed that deliberative sessions should always leave enough space for people to disagree with each other. This implies that consensus seeking should not overshadow the space to disagree, nor for the minority views to be expressed and respected.

## 6.7 Online and in-person events

The majority of the participatory sessions organised in the REAL DEAL project took place in person. However, a few sessions took place online, namely the Delphi panels in North Macedonia, Poland, and Germany, one focus group in Austria, and the European Semester deliberative event in Italy. The citizen assemblies in North Macedonia and Greece, as well as one focus group in Austria, and the joint Denmark-Italy event were organised as hybrid events.

The evaluation shows that an online event can allow for the participation of groups of people that are not able to physically leave their home. This might be people with care-taking duties, disabilities or other circumstances that do not allow them to attend the event in person. An online event may also increase the representation at a session as it takes away logistical obstacles for people to travel. This was the reason both the organisers of both the Italian deliberative event and the North-Macedonian citizen assembly chose to do this in an online or hybrid setting. However, online sessions did not only get positive feedback in our evaluation. Benefits of physical presence are also mentioned, like that this way facilitates better communication and enhances collaborative efforts. Online participation requires people to work with technical tools, which not everybody might be able to do. Furthermore, it is expressed that it is difficult for people to keep their attention online for several hours. Some participants mentioned that emotions come across differently in online meetings compared to physical meetings.

Based on these findings, we can argue that deciding whether one wants to organise an online or an offline meeting heavily depends on the context. While online participation may allow for a higher level of inclusion and representation, one also needs to consider the challenges related to online participation that can hinder fair and equal participation.

## 6.8 Dilemmas

This evaluation once again showed that theory and reality do not always perfectly fit together. Several issues that were planned for or thought about, worked out differently in reality. In some cases, unforeseen dilemmas or obstacles showed up that influenced the process and sometimes the outcome of a session. In this paragraph, these dilemmas that were faced by organisers, or in some times participants, that came up through the evaluation of the participatory sessions are elaborated upon.

#### Neutral recruitment of participants is timely and costly

One of the issues that is heavily discussed in theory is the attention organisers of participatory sessions should pay to a well-figured out recruitment phase. If the aim is to organise a session with a representative group of the population, a comprehensive recruitment strategy is needed, including determining which demographic criteria will be considered, how potential participants are addressed, which language is used etc. When a representative sample of the population is not desired or needed, a thorough recruitment strategy is necessary to reach a diversity of people within the group of people one wants to reach. Various techniques of recruitment have been used in the participatory sessions in this project: phone calls, conversations on the street, targeted invitations, online advertisement, emails, via-via, and sending out letters. Based on the evaluation, it is not possible to argue which mode of recruitment works best, but it became clear that a thorough recruitment is quite costly as it costs time, resources, and money, particularly when special attention is given to marginalised groups. When this is not considered for in the budget of the session, it is difficult to actually address this well. This will affect the level of inclusion and representation of the session.

The group of participants can also be influenced by the organisers of a session. The deliberative events at European level, and the events on the European Semester were all organised by NGO organisations. In these events, it was not budgeted to do a stratified random selection. Instead, the invitation for the sessions was sent out through the networks of the organising organisations, as well as via social media and other public channels. After people registered themselves for the event, the participants were random chosen. In both the Danish event on the European Semester, as well as in the first European deliberation event, a majority of the participants had an affiliation with an NGO. For the second European deliberation event, attempts were made to include mainly those who did not have a connection with an NGO. Even though this was a specific point of attention in the invitation of participants, still quite a large share of the participants came from the NGO sphere. The fact that these events were organised by NGO organisations that have big networks with other NGOs and CSOs, combined with the fact that there were no resources to work with a recruitment agency, made it difficult to attract 'interested citizens' that were not affiliated with NGOs.

#### Incorporating participants in the topic decision is wished for but difficult to accomplish

According to previous experiences with participatory sessions, it is crucial to be clear of the mandate and the goal of sessions before organising them. This way, participants, donors, and others involved will be clear on the purpose of the event. However, in this project, this sometimes turned out to be difficult. The project had other goals (i.e., testing of various formats in different contexts) than some organisers whose goal sometimes was to get useful output they could use again in their work, or to influence policy making.

One way to make sessions more transparent would be to involve participants in determining the scope of the session. While the evaluation showed that some of the organisers of the sessions agreed on the relevance of this, they also indicated that this was difficult to actually do. On the one hand because they wanted to already inform participants on the topic when they were approached in the recruitment phase. It might be an important factor for potential participants when they want to determine if they want to participate. For the Serbian citizen assembly, they informed potential participants on the overarching theme of the citizen assembly but did not share the specific topic yet. In this way, they hoped to not only attract people who were well-informed and interested on the topic, but also others. However, this did not allow for the participants to influence the scope of the discussions. Secondly, the organisers needed some time to prepare the specific topic of the session. When participants would be asked to identify relevant topics, it could be difficult to actually integrate these topics in the participatory sessions.

#### Timing is crucial for impact, but makes it difficult to plan a session



While this might not always have been the case for the sessions organised for the REAL DEAL project, as they were part of a research programme, often participatory sessions are organised with the aim to influence decision-making or policy making. The organisers of some of the REAL DEAL sessions also tried to influence policy making. However, there are various factors that influence the effect of recommendations or statements drafted during participatory sessions. Some of the sessions showed that timing is crucial here, as it is hard to hand over recommendations to policy makers when there is no acting government. Furthermore, some pointed towards the language used by participants of the participatory sessions, and the language used by policy makers. During the Summit it was expressed that it is important to consider the language that is used by politicians when something is shared with them, but that organisers should be critical that language barriers are not used as an excuse by politicians to ignore the input.

#### Difficulties with integrating various kinds of knowledge

In many of the sessions that are organised - with the exclusion of Delphi panels and roundtables - participants had very different levels of knowledge in relation to the topic that was being discussed. Some might have lived experiences or experiential knowledge), others have professional and or theoretical knowledge, and others might be relatively new to the topic. This, together with a diversity of personal characteristics and interests, can make it difficult to organise deliberative sessions in which every participant can participate to their fullest. For most sessions, informative materials on the topic were available. However, it was not possible to know to which extent people actually accessed and used this information.

This was also an issue when events are combined. When the information from one event is brought in another event, it is crucial to adapt this information to the target audience. Questions being discussed at a Delphi panel are often more detailed and specific compared to what citizens at a citizen assembly will discuss, one of the organisers of a citizen assembly noticed.

#### An inclusive and equitable event requires extra effort

The evaluation has shown that organising a truly inclusive and equitable event, asks for significant extra resources and work by the organisers. And to a great extent, the level of inclusiveness is also dependent on the possibilities a project provides. For example, for the European deliberative events, the organisers asked all participants if they had any care-taking duties. For people with care-taking duties, it might not be possible to join a deliberative event if they cannot find another solution for their care-taking duties. This is why the organisers asked participants upfront so they could think in how to assist in these matters. However, it turned out that it was not possible to financially compensate for childcare for example. This shows that the level of inclusiveness of an event not only depends on the efforts of the organisers, but also on the opportunities they are granted by the commissioners of the project.

To do justice to the leave no one behind principle, the REAL DEAL project also tried to integrate interests of non-human and future actors. This, however, often turned out to be difficult in reality, the evaluation showed. Most discussions centred around the interests of the human beings of today. For many, it deemed difficult to think beyond these lines of argumentation. During the Summit, it was expressed that this might need more flexibility and creativity in terms of methods used. Also, ideas were given that it might help participants to think about the interests of non-humans if the event could be organised outside for example.



## 7 Limitations

As with every study, there are several limitations to this evaluation. In this chapter these limitations are discussed. These limitations do not concern the potential limitations of the participatory sessions themselves, but specifically the limitations connected to the evaluation process and therewith the outcomes of this evaluation. These limitations are clustered in the following way: limitations of the evaluation strategy, the limit diversity of the participatory sessions, and complexity of the project.

### Limitations of the evaluation strategy

There were a few circumstances that complicated the execution of the evaluation strategy, or that influenced the quality of the data.

First, interviews were only done with the organisers of the events. In some interviews, the interviewer noticed that the organisers were not very reflective. When they were asked about specific aspects of the session, they mentioned that everything went well and there were no things that could be improved. While it of course could be that the session was organised very well, there probably would also be things to improve. Due to time restrictions, and not wanting to overburden the participants of the sessions, they were not interviewed but instead given questionnaires. While this allowed them to share their thoughts on the session on various matters via closed and open questions, it did not provide the evaluators the opportunity to ask follow-up questions nor allowed the participants to fully expound on issues they wanted to discuss.

Second, the questionnaires needed to be translated in the local language. The questionnaires were prepared in English, but almost all sessions took place in a local language, different than English. To increase the chance that people filled in the questionnaires and truly understood what was being asked, the questionnaires needed to be translated. Wherever the research team of REAL DEAL was familiar with the language, this was done by the team itself. But in most cases, the translation was done by the organising team in the country. In the end, the answers of the participants needed to be translated back to English, which was in most cases also done by the organisers and in some instances by the research team with the use of online translation tools. Translating the questions, and after that, the answers could have led to misinterpretations, miscommunications, or a loss of specific details.

Third, the initial idea was to hand out all questionnaires online via EU Survey. EU Survey is an online survey tool, developed by DG DIGIT. This tool was chosen as it is really strict in terms of protecting the privacy of participants engaged in the surveys and easy to use. However, providing online questionnaires was not convenient for every occasion. As most of the participatory sessions took place in person, the organisers of these sessions preferred to hand out questionnaires on paper. This could be done at the start of the sessions, as well as directly after the sessions were finished. This brought along certain advantages, as it was clearly noticeable that whenever questionnaires were handed out on paper, a higher percentage of participants partook in these questionnaires. On the other hand, in the online questionnaires the answers to the open questions were in general longer and more elaborative compared to the answers to the open questions in the questionnaires that were hand out on paper.

And fourth, it proved to be difficult to get answers to the 2 months after survey. This partly had to do with the fact that participants probably do not feel the urge to fill in questionnaires two months after they participated in a participatory session. Whenever these questionnaires were sent out, the response rate was relatively low. Also, from an organisational perspective it was difficult to keep up with sending out requests to spread these questionnaires. Especially for the sessions that were organised in the last months of the evaluation, it was not possible to

send out this questionnaire and get it back in time so it could be used in the evaluation. This all resulted in a low response rate for this specific questionnaire.

#### Limited diversity of the participatory sessions

The limited diversity of the sessions that were organised, made it difficult to formulate clear answers on the research questions proposed by the project. One of the specific and special things about this project, was that it tried to combine various formats to see what could be the added value of combining various strategies of citizen and stakeholder participation and deliberation. While there certainly are combinations made, also various combinations are lacking. As there is only one example in which a roundtable and a citizen assembly are combined, for example, it is hard to draw conclusions on this. In general, it can be questioned how strong the conclusions drawn can be as it only relies on a limited set of participatory sessions that are organised. The results of this synthesis, and this project, need to be understood in that light, based on a specific and limited set of sessions.

One of the evaluation criteria is '(potential) effect on policy making'. However, since the sessions were not commissioned by governmental or other decision-making institutions, it was hard to evaluate the (potential) effect the sessions had on policy making. Right now, only the intentions of policy influence and the thoughts of the participants on the relevance or importance of affecting policy making could be assessed. It would have been more straightforward to assess this criterion if the sessions would have been assessed by policy makers, or if the evaluation would take place over a longer period of time.

This connects to the next limitation, which is the timeline of the evaluation exercise as this determined to a large extent the way the evaluation could be executed. The long-term effects of the sessions could not be considered, as some of the sessions only took place three months before the due date of this report. The evaluation could therefore only be short-term focused.

The focus groups that were organised in light of the REAL DEAL project, were intended to focus on the inclusion of underrepresented communities. However, not for all the focus groups the invitation policy specifically focused on structurally excluded groups. Some focus groups invited people in general. This aspect of the project, how focus groups work to include structurally excluded groups, was therefore hard to evaluate.

#### Complexity of the project

As has been made clear by the previous chapters in this report, there was a large level of complexity amongst the various events that are organised. Various formats are tested, in different countries with different contexts, by various organisations etc. Besides that, this evaluation was not a one-person-job, but instead multiple people with different backgrounds worked on this task. One foreseen but undesirable consequence of this could be that different interpretations have been made about statements as expressed in the interviews and questionnaires.

This same issue arose with the evaluation criteria. After the 14 evaluation criteria were formulated, a list was made with definitions. These criteria were used when different documents were coded and when these codes were analysed. Various efforts have been undertaken to maximise the chance that people had the same understanding. After a list was made with definitions and with potential questions that one could ask themselves when working with that specific evaluation criteria, a session was organised in which everyone compared their coding strategy. When writing the document, specific attention was paid to alignment of the understanding of the criteria.

## 8 Conclusions

In this concluding chapter of the synthesis report, a reflection will be given on the research questions and on the evaluation criteria, and a bridge will be made to the protocol that is developed in further stages of the REAL DEAL project. The conclusions are based on the evaluation of the REAL DEAL project's participatory sessions in various European countries. This means that the evaluation is limited to the sub-set of four formats and the broad European deliberative events that are organised. This evaluation does not extend to other participatory sessions and therefore does not include a reflection on other formats. Furthermore, as the evaluation mainly focused on the formats, slightly on methods, and not on tools, the conclusions primarily focus on the level of formats as well.

In the REAL DEAL project, the four formats that are tested – focus groups, citizen assemblies, roundtables, and Delphi panels – have been selected earlier in the project as they focus on various aspects of citizen and stakeholder participation and deliberation and therefore address the main intention of the project, i.e. integrating expertise, stakeholder interests, public values, and the specific needs of disadvantaged groups in the context of deliberative democracies. This once again shows that **there is not one format that fits every situation and goal**. Every format has their own advantages and situations in which they are best to be used. This insight is crucial in reflecting on the first research question:

### Research question 1

*What are the most suitable formats, methods, and tools that can support us to overcome and resolve the potential conflict between preserving openness and democratic sovereignty in our governance institutions and processes, while at the same time ensuring that implemented actions respect planetary boundaries that have been accepted as credible by science and politically codified in the EGD?*

The question hints at a potential conflict between on the one hand valuing democratic principles, and on the other hand ensuring that planetary boundaries are respected. In the evaluation of the participatory sessions, **this tension is not experienced that clearly**. The evaluation shows that for most sessions the criteria of fairness and inclusion, which are both indicators of democratic principles, worked out well for most of the selected formats and events. Discussions and recommendations as formulated in the sessions were often in line with the EGD, showing that these respected planetary boundaries. There were no reports of an experienced tension by participants or organisers.

One potential explanation as to why this tension is not experienced could be that people with conflicting perspectives were not present at the participatory sessions. In the citizen assemblies where random selection is done, it can be assumed that also people with perspectives that are seen as more extreme are included. While self-selection can be an issue here, with people being less or more willing to participate depending on the topic, it is assumed that these sessions reflect the different perspectives present in society. In other formats where no random selection is done, however, extreme viewpoints may be excluded. This was seen in the German Delphi panel as people who deny climate change were excluded of participating in the event. **Excluding viewpoints that are seen as extreme violate the principle of inclusion**. This shows that using certain formats, and specifically using certain recruitment strategies that are usually used in specific formats, can reduce the chance of this conflict arising and also decreases the democratic aspect of the sessions. Carefully considering the recruitment style, and what characteristics are taken along in the recruitment, is crucial here.

One aspect that is highly relevant is that deliberative and participatory sessions should always leave enough space for people to disagree with each other. This also counts for the facilitators and organisers, who should not (implicitly) seek for consensus when this is not appropriate.

**Consensus seeking should never overshadow the space for disagreement, as the minority views need to be given space to be expressed and respected.**

One could argue that the very idea of deliberative sessions is to overcome this potential tension. Proper deliberation and properly informing participants about what planetary boundaries are and how they can be respected, can be a way to overcome differences between groups of people. In this project, Delphi panels have been combined with citizen assemblies with the goal of informing citizen assembly participants with various substantiated perspectives on planetary boundaries and other important background information about sustainability. One precondition for this to be evaluated as successful, would be that the Delphi panel would consist of people with various academic and disciplinary backgrounds, and various perspectives on the topic being discussed, and that the results of the Delphi would be brought to the citizen assembly in an understandable way. This evaluation has shown that indeed **citizens feel more prepared when results from a Delphi panel are shared with them.** To know how the input from Delphi panels is taken up by citizens when they deliberate during a citizen assembly, and how this affects the outcome of citizen assemblies with regards to respecting planetary boundaries, requires more research.

To remain open and also respect planetary boundaries, implies that **participatory events should be tailored to specific legal, political, and cultural contexts.** For instance, risk perception related to climate policies or nature protection may be very different for relatively wealthy citizens in Serbia, as compared to marginalised groups with limited social networks facing the effects of energy prices or floods in Ireland. **This means that people who are most affected by policies of the EGD need to have the opportunity to raise their concerns, share their experience and knowledge, and have a say in what to prioritise.** This may differ from context to context. This leads to a reflection on the following research question:

#### Research question 2

*How can we assure that representatives of marginalised or disadvantaged groups of society are an integral part of participatory processes and how can a fair and adequate integration of different and sometimes conflicting positions be accomplished?*

To do justice to the inclusion of disadvantaged groups/groups who are often structurally excluded, it may be possible to use **specific formats such as focus groups.** In the REAL DEAL project, focus groups were executed with the specific aim of including the perspectives of structurally excluded groups. However, it is difficult to say to which extent this really worked, as there is limited data on this matter. If organisations choose to use other formats such as roundtables to consult stakeholders or citizen assemblies to include a representative group of citizens, they need to ensure there is a **critical mass of structurally excluded people.** This can be done for instance by oversampling. This is to avoid that the representatives of this group are looked at by the others present and are constantly asked to represent a large societal group. Secondly, there is a need to make sure that the input from participants belonging to marginalised groups is **heard, documented, and respected before, during and after the process.** While this is important for all participants of participatory sessions, it is even more relevant for people from structurally excluded groups as they are probably less or not used to be given a position in which they can express their opinions. To make sure that people are heard and respected, the evaluation showed that most participants value the presence of moderators to guide the conversations. In groups that were self-moderated, less fairness of speaking time was experienced. It could also be that people needed more instructions to guide the conversations themselves.

It is the hypothesis of this project that combining focus groups with other formats, like citizen assemblies, would be a way to integrate the perspectives of disadvantaged groups of society into decision making. Citizen assemblies are intended to give a reflection of what the whole

citizenry believes, and because the sessions usually include more people compared to focus groups, they represent and reach a larger population. However, since there is not much data in this project on this combination (the combination has only been made once), this hypothesis cannot be validated.

Active and conscious efforts need to be made in terms of **allocation of resources, design, promotion, and organisation of events** (including moderation), and adequate follow-up on the adoption of the outcomes of the process, to counter the systemic exclusion of certain social groups from political and decision-making spaces. Organising an inclusive and equitable session that meets the needs of all participants requires extra effort of the organisers and including people from structurally excluded groups might mean that the organisers should take on even more effort to make sure these people can fairly participate.

#### Key lessons on the evaluation criteria

This analysis is based on the evaluation of 14 criteria which are grounded in literature. In general, it proved to be difficult to integrate these criteria in the implementation of the sessions. This points towards a critical point: **how to integrate theoretical criteria in practice?** Organising a participatory session requires a lot of effort, energy, and resources. Focussing on these 14 criteria might not be the first point of attention when many organisational, logistical, and planning activities also need to be covered. Furthermore, a step needs to be taken to ensure that these criteria can be applied in practices. Otherwise, chances are that the criteria will be instrumentalised to very practical considerations and become a 'check-box' activity instead of them being truly integrated in the design and process of the session. It requires good design and facilitation skills to consciously deal with criteria or principles that are relevant to a format or session.

During the analysis, the researchers noticed that **some criteria overlap** to a certain extent, like inclusion, equity, and fairness. Despite this overlap, the researchers believe that it is relevant to work with all these criteria, as each covers a slightly different and crucial aspect of meaningful citizen and stakeholder participation. When working with this list of criteria again, however, the distinction between the criteria should be clarified, or criteria could be grouped to make it easier to work with them. And it might be useful for further evaluations to pay more attention to identify relevant criteria that are mutually exclusive, but still cover all relevant areas.

Concerning the evaluation criteria, the Delphi panel that was organised to validate the synthesis findings came up with a, for the researchers of this report, surprising result. All experts organized in four independently working subgroups recommended to focus on three major criteria for evaluating participatory sessions and formats: **inclusion, transparency, and empowerment**. The other criteria are not seen as irrelevant, but they either directly correlate with the three major criteria or emphasize specific aspects that are important for maintaining civil rights standards, achieving sustainability goals, and respecting non-human life. The experts recommended to consider these three criteria for all formats but with a different emphasis depending on the format and purpose of the deliberative session. Depending on the political, social, and cultural context, criteria will work out differently in various countries and contexts. Therefore, it is crucial to be adaptive to this context when organising participatory sessions in various countries.

The evaluation showed that different criteria worked out best for each format. Based on the data from participants and organisers of the sessions, it was rated how well criteria worked out in the formats. Besides this, there are **different criteria that are most relevant for each format**. Table 37 shows what criteria worked out best and are most relevant for each format in this REAL DEAL project, according to the evaluation.



*Table 37 Criteria that are most relevant and that worked out best according to the evaluation (for each format in alphabetic order)*

Format	Most relevant criteria	Criteria that worked out best
Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>- Equity</li> <li>- Inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>- Inclusion</li> <li>- Meaningfulness</li> </ul>
Citizen assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion</li> <li>- Representation</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>- Fairness</li> <li>- Inclusion</li> </ul>
Roundtable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairness</li> <li>- Representation</li> <li>- Responsiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairness</li> <li>- Inclusion</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>
Delphi panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (potential to come to) common understanding</li> <li>- Representation</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (potential to come to) common understanding</li> <li>- (potential) effect on policy making</li> <li>- Fairness</li> </ul>
European deliberative event		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equity</li> <li>- Fairness</li> <li>- Meaningfulness</li> </ul>

For focus groups, empowerment and inclusion are important criteria, that also worked out well in the focus groups that were organised. For citizen assemblies, inclusion is one of the most important criteria, and this was one of the criteria that worked out best in the citizen assemblies. For stakeholder roundtables, fairness in the sense that all stakeholders get an equal and fair opportunity to participate in the discussion, is a primary criterion of relevance, and this also scored high. For the Delphi panels, (potential) to come to common understanding is crucial as this ensures that all participants understand the topics being discussed in the same way so as to be able to adequately share different insights related to these topics. This criterion was also evaluated very well. This shows that for the sessions organised in the REAL DEAL project, **the criteria that are seen as one of the most important worked out best**. Other criteria, like interests of non-humans and future actors, and (potential) effect on policy making that did not work out that well in most formats, were not the (main) focus point for most sessions. This could indicate that it is difficult for organisers to integrate other criteria that are not considered to be the most important (like integrating the interests of future actors) in their sessions. It could also indicate that **other formats or methods are needed to incorporate these neglected criteria** in the sessions. Recommendations from the Summit and Delphi panel that was organised to validate the results of the synthesis indeed show that specific and more creative methods are needed to integrate the interests of non-humans and future actors in participatory sessions. Furthermore, an integration of these aspects in the topic of the session is needed. To enlarge the possible effect the session could have on policy making, recommendations are made clarify for citizens what the initiated effect on policy making is and to connect the topic to a policy agenda.

For every format, the evaluation showed that **timing is crucial for making impact**. Whether this is impact on policy making, or another kind of impact, it is crucial to carefully consider the time and place in which a participatory session is organised.

#### Next step: Development of the protocol

The next step in the REAL DEAL project is the development of the REAL DEAL Protocol. This protocol will bring together the accumulated knowledge and empirical findings of the project as expressed in this Synthesis report – in addition to evolving theoretical insights and best practices within the field - to create guidelines on how to design and structure meaningful



citizens' deliberative and participatory processes on the EGD. Furthermore, a tested toolkit of specific formats and processes that can be applied by EU and national institutions will be added to the protocol. The protocol will specify which combinations of formats and procedures are most suited depending on the topic, timeframe, and socio-political context. It will also consider legal, ethical, socio-economic, gender, cultural, and governance criteria and places emphasis on inclusive, diverse, and fair processes for stakeholder and citizen deliberation.

## 9 References

When referring to data provided by the participants or organisers of the sessions, the following structure is used: (Session-Source-NumberQuote). This reference structure consists of three parts: 1) which session information comes from, 2) the source of the information, and 3) what the quote number of this quote is in the Atlas.ti files. The sessions and abbreviations are explained in Table 38 and the documents are described in Table 39 below.

*Table 38 Sessions of references explained*

Session	Type of event
AustriaFG	Focus group in Austria on food and agriculture
Denmark	Deliberative event on the European Semester in Denmark
EU1	First deliberative event on European level: European citizens deliberation forum on the green transition
EU2	Second deliberative event on European level: Feminist festival: a citizen deliberation on the green transition
EU3	Third deliberative event on European level: Wild talks: a citizen deliberation on nature and biodiversity
GermanyDP	Delphi panel in Germany on changes in economic practices and consumption patterns for a socio-ecological transformation
GermanyCA	Citizen assembly in Germany on sustainable consumption and climate-friendly economy
GreeceRT	Roundtable in Greece on funding the green transition in cities
GreeceFG	Focus group in Greece on intergenerational equity and environmental social justice
GreeceCA	Citizen assembly in Greece on intergenerational equity and the EGD
HungaryRT	Roundtables in Hungary on sustainable catering at schools
Italy	Deliberative event on the European Semester in Italy
Italy+Denmark	Deliberative event on the European Semester of Danish and Italian participants in Italy
LithuaniaRT1	Roundtable in Lithuania on well-begin economy
LithuaniaRT2	Roundtable in Lithuania on micromobility in the city
North MacedoniaDP	Delphi panel in North Macedonia on air pollution and related issues
North MacedoniaCA	Citizen assembly in North Macedonia on air pollution in Skopje
PolandDP	Delphi panel in Poland on practical and strategic aspects of the food chain in Poland
PolandCA	Citizen assembly in Poland on food policy in Poland
SerbiaRT	Roundtable in Serbia on food and health
SerbiaCA	Citizen assembly in Serbia on food labelling and possible alternatives in Serbia
SpainRT1	Roundtable in Spain on urban mobility
SpainRT2	Roundtable in Spain on rural mobility
UkraineFG	The focus groups in Ukraine with themes sorting household waste, deliberative democracy and the environment and climate change
UkraineRT	The roundtable in Ukraine on deliberative democracy and the environment: leaning and teaching.

Table 39 Sources of references explained

Source	Explanation of source
Template	Document that is filled in by the organisers of the participatory session before the session took place
Interview	Interview with the organisers after the participatory session took place
InterviewExtra	In case extra interviews have been done with the organisers, besides the one after the session.
DelphiAmbassadors	Interview with Delphi participants after they presented outcomes of the Delphi panel at citizen assemblies
Questionnaire1	Questionnaire that is filled in by the participants before the participatory session
Questionnaire2	Questionnaire that is filled in by the participants directly after the participatory session
Questionnaire3	Questionnaire that is filled in by the participants two months after the participatory session
Observations	Observations from consortium partners or members of the advisory commission

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## 10 Annexes

Table 40 to Table 45 describe the criteria based on which the evaluation criteria were formulated. These tables also show the reason why the criteria were in- or excluded in the evaluation, to which evaluation criteria they were connected, and which question(s) are connected to this criterion. For this last part, the questions, it is indicated in what way the question is asked (questionnaires, interviews, or in written form in a template), to whom (participants or organisers of the sessions) and when (before, after, or two months after the session) these questions are asked. When the criteria about meaningful citizen participation and deliberation in the EGD are not within the boundaries of this project, there is no link made to the evaluation criteria and to a question.

### Appendix 1: Criteria for meaningful citizen participation and deliberation

Table 40 Criteria for meaningful citizen participation and deliberation deliverable 1.1

Criteria D1.1	Reflection	Evaluation criteria	Questions by which this was covered
<b>Be aware of power imbalances</b>			
<p>Policy makers should not lose sight of examining who the policy benefits, give attention to historical power asymmetries, and empower the unempowered. Sustainable futures are only possible if social relations and the relations of production are changed. Environmental policies must include the working class, which can bring about new lay expert knowledge and build new design ecologies and green public goods.</p>	<p>The sessions evaluated in this study are not organised by policy makers, nor is it possible, given the timeline of the study, to consider how the sessions contribute to policymaking.</p> <p>The issue of power asymmetries is crucial when adapting an intersectional approach organising a participatory session. This is included in the evaluation.</p>	Inclusion	<p>What was being done to deal with implicit power dynamics during the session (e.g., between participants, or between participants and organisers)? (template, organisers, before)</p> <p>Attendees of each test case (template, organisers, before and after)</p> <p>How would you position your level of knowledge about the topic of the event? [Could you elaborate on what kind of knowledge you have on this topic (e.g., lived experiences, knowledge you derived by education, reading books, social media etc.)?] (questionnaire, participants, before)</p>
<p>Legislators and policy makers need to consider inequalities (based on characteristics such as racialised group, gender, and class) in the design of legal frameworks and the implementation of deliberative and participative tools. The regulatory and institutional frameworks in environmental policy need to address the deep uncertainties and the vested interests at stake in decision-making processes through the participation of all stakeholders. The values and culture of those who will be impacted must be fairly considered and represented.</p>	<p>The sessions applied evaluated in this study are not organised by policy makers or legislators, but it can still be assessed whether inequalities are considered in the design and implementation of participatory processes. The fairness of sessions, and the level to which participants feel their values are considered, is included in this study.</p> <p>It is not possible to pay attention to how the sessions contribute to policymaking or other legal frameworks.</p>	<p>Inclusion</p> <p>Fairness</p>	<p>To what extent did all participants have the opportunity and ability to equally contribute to the test case? (template, organisers, after)</p> <p>To what extent did the moderators value all viewpoints of participants in the same manner? (do participants feel safe to do so? how do you know?) (template, organisers, after)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that all viewpoints that were shared were valued the same? (questionnaire, participants, after)</p>
<p>Global North actors should be aware of how they work with those in the Global South and should strive to transform power dynamics in participation and deliberation. Civil society in the Global North must reflect on its relationship with civil society in the Global South and build movements based on solidarity. This activism should strive to challenge existing societal structures and narratives</p>	<p>It is not within the boundaries of this project to consider how actors in the Global North and actors in the Global South work together.</p> <p>The careful consideration of local contexts is included, as well as to what extent the information that was shared was understandable for all participants.</p>	<p>Responsiveness</p> <p>Equity</p>	<p>How was the local context taken into account during this test-case? (template, organisers, after)</p> <p>To what extent was the knowledge that was shared during the event understandable? (questionnaire participants, after)</p>

that maintain structures of oppression and environmental degradation. <b>Capacity building and knowledge sharing should be based on principles of empowerment and understood in local contexts.</b>			
Spaces for participation (e.g., local committees, decision-making bodies, councils) are not neutral and contain inherent power imbalances. Alternative spaces that address such power imbalances should be created to foster equal participation from structurally excluded groups.	In this evaluation, the spaces for participation are considered. This includes the physical space in which the sessions took place, as well as the social and cultural environment in which the session was organised.	Inclusion  Equity	<p>(How) are previously disengaged groups considered/reached? (which groups, and how?) (template, organisers, before)</p> <p>Spaces for participation are never neutral. How did the moderator ensure that all participants were able to participate actively in the test case? (template, organisers, after)</p> <p>To what extent are various forms of communication used in the test-case? (e.g., talking, drawing, modelling, creating something, etc.) (template, organisers, before)</p> <p>To what extent was the knowledge that was shared during the event understandable? (questionnaire, participants, after)</p>
<b>Promoting and ensuring inclusiveness</b>			
Public participation and dialogue are important for environmental policy, and <b>a wide plurality of viewpoints should be taken into account through open debate, discussion, and deliberation.</b> Policy often needs to be a compromise about what most citizens deem acceptable. However, policymakers should also be aware that sometimes finding a middle ground and incorporating everyone's perspective is not always expedient, possible, and may even be contradictory to environmental objectives.	<p>It is not within the boundaries of this project to assess policies and the actions of policymakers.</p> <p>Assessing whether a plurality of viewpoints is considered in our test cases is within the boundaries of this study.</p>	Fairness	<p>To what extent did the moderators value all viewpoints of participants in the same manner? (do participants feel safe to do so? how do you know?) (Template, organisers, after)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspectives or arguments? (questionnaire, participants, after)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that all people were treated equally during the test case? [Could you explain why you feel that people were or were not treated equally?] (questionnaire, participants, after)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that all viewpoints that were shared were valued the same? (questionnaire, participants, after)</p>
It is important to ensure that citizens are not left out of the discussion because they are unable to reason and debate as strongly as others. While group deliberation and discussions are an effective form of communication to voice opinions, they should not be the <i>only</i> form of participation because this platform is more advantageous to some, while disadvantageous to others.	In this study, one of the ways in which principles of equity are evaluated is by considering if various forms of participation are considered.	Equity  (Inclusion)	<p>To what extent are various forms of communication used in the test-case? (e.g., talking, drawing, modelling, creating something, etc.) (template, organisers, before)</p> <p>What is being done to remove (perceived) thresholds to participate to this test-case? (template, organisers, before)</p>
While being pragmatic and future-oriented about participation and deliberation on environmental policy is often effective, it is fundamental that the values of citizens are not lost along the way. It is important to ensure better inclusion of a wide diversity of values and beliefs in environmental deliberative procedures, rather than leaving certain groups alienated and voiceless. Political decision-makers should support inclusive participation and deliberation processes, ensuring to	In this study it is considered if a diverse group of people is included in the processes, and to which extent everybody gets a fair chance to participate in the process equally.	Representation  Fairness	<p>Do you think that the participants are a fair representation of the population? (Template, organisers, after)</p> <p>To what extent did the moderators value all viewpoints of participants in the same manner? (do participants feel safe to do so? how do you know?) (Template, organisers, after)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that all viewpoints that were shared were valued</p>

include the voice of marginal groups, and non-humans.			<p>the same? (questionnaire, participants, after)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspective or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that other participants got the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]</p>
The participation of local and indigenous groups - in particular women - should be promoted. Often these groups have valuable knowledge related to the environment, climate, and sustainability, yet their participation is hindered by structural barriers. Similarly, intersectional perspectives should be promoted in environmental policies, to understand multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Policymakers should remove structural barriers to participation and deliberation in environmental decision-making.	The first part of this criteria is considered; how diverse is the group of participants that participates in a session? This is asked to both the participants, as well as to the organisers. This does not only refer to the inclusion of local and indigenous people, but also what is done to ensure that they are able to actively participate. The second part of this criteria, if and how intersectional perspectives are promoted in policies and whether policy makers remove structural barriers for participating in decision-making, is not considered as this is outside of the scope of this study.	Representation Inclusion Equity	<p>To what extent would you feel that you represent a specific societal group or groups at the test case? [Could you elaborate which group(s) you represent?] (questionnaire, participants, before)</p> <p>(How) are previously disengaged groups considered/reached? (which groups, and how?) (template, organisers, before)</p> <p>What is being done to remove (perceived) thresholds to participate to this test-case? (template, organisers, before)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspective or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that other participants got the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]</p>

### Work with and Protect Nature

We should not view ourselves as being the only thing of moral considerability. The needs and importance of other species and the environment should be recognised within our dialogue on environmental policy. Citizens should ground their views on the premise that human beings are interconnected with nature and we should work with it, rather than against it.	It is considered to which extent participants of the various participatory processes consider the needs of non-human being like nature, the environment, and ecosystems. Besides that, it is also assessed whether the interest of future actors is considered.	Interests of non-human actors Interest of future actors	To what extent were the interests of non-humans and future generations considered during the test-case? How? (template, organisers, before)
Non-human organisms, species, and the environment cannot voice their concerns politically, so human citizens need to represent them within a policy that impacts their flourishing and survival. Citizens need to include these voices in deliberation and ensure that corporate, political, and economic interests do not override the intrinsic value of nature. When governments, international institutions, and private sector companies make decisions around the environment, nature and animals should not be exploited for their gain.	It is considered to which extent participants of the various participatory processes consider the needs of non-human being like nature, the environment, and ecosystems. Besides that, it is also assessed whether the interest of future actors is considered.	Interests of non-human actors Interest of future actors	<p>To what extent would you feel that you represent a specific societal group or groups at the test case? [Could you elaborate which group(s) you represent?] (questionnaire, participants, before)</p> <p>To what extent were the interests of non-humans and future generations considered during the test-case? How? (template, organisers, before)</p>

### Collaborating with Bottom-up Activism and Cultivating Environmental Citizenship

Policymakers should incorporate the views of environmentalists to bring about change in environmental policy. Demonstrations and bottom-up climate activism initiatives contribute to political dialogue and can be seen as triggers of change for transformative learning. These demonstrations are indications that some	It is not within the boundaries of this project to assess policies and the actions of policymakers. While demonstrations also are a form of participation, this is not the form of participation that is used in this study. This criterion for meaningful		
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citizens are unhappy with policy and protest is the only option available to them. Policymakers need to respond to these criticisms and identify how they can do more.	participation is therefore not included.		
International institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union should consult with grassroots groups and promote participation in decisions that affect their environment. When local groups are not consulted, it can hinder both gender equality and the environmental movement. Grassroots actions can be taken by citizens that want to initiate change and do not want to wait on the slow wheels of politics to initiate real change.	It is not within the boundaries of this project to assess the activities of organisations like the United Nations and the European Union. This criterion for meaningful participation is therefore not included.		
Citizen deliberations are a powerful instrument to promote environmental citizenship, as deliberation transforms individual preferences in the pursuit of the common good. Decision-makers need to create the conditions to foster environmental citizenship and to improve the environmental awareness of citizens. Citizens can demonstrate their views by electing parties that attest to ecocentric values, adopting green principles, and working within current democratic systems.	It is not within the boundaries of this project to assess whether decision-makers create conditions for environmental citizenship and improve environmental awareness, nor is it within the scope to assess how citizens act during votings. This criterion for meaningful participation is therefore not included.		
<b>Transitioning the Economic Model to a Green Economy</b>			
Transitions are not only driven by politics and governance, markets, and technology: on a larger scale, civic and cultural mobilization become the main advancing agents of change. Societal groups could create new institutional forms, or new lay-expert modes of, engagement to build new design ecologies. The debate on transitions should not be reduced to an opposition between industrial progress and environmental protection.	It is not within the boundaries of this project to assess what the drivers of a transition are, nor to evaluate the debate on transitions. This criterion for meaningful participation is therefore not included.		
The role of the individual citizen needs to be extended beyond that of a consumer of the environment and involve active participation in a process that is based on collective action. Decision-makers should not simply encourage Green Consumerism as a form of public participation, but also engage people in meaningful political action and be open to radical changes. For example, policymakers should ensure that procedural environmental and human rights are meaningful and executed (e.g., at the national level), because without meaningful procedural rights, there are no substantive environmental and human rights.	It is not within the boundaries of this project to assess how decision-makers consider the role of citizens and how they consider the execution of human rights. This criterion for meaningful participation is therefore not included.		
Governments should recognise and value the current unpaid care burden that is often borne by women, which hinders their participation in many aspects of decision making, as well as devalues their contribution to sustainable development. A conceptualisation of well-being that moves away from the current economic focus on growth and instead centres care	It is not within the boundaries of this project to assess how governments value the unpaid care burden, and how the conceptualisation of well-being is promoted. It is considered if support is given to citizens with care taking duties.	Inclusion	What opportunities are created for people to participate when they have care-taking duties? (e.g., childcare) (template, organisers, after)  What is being done to remove (perceived) thresholds to participate to this test-case? (template, organisers, after)

for people and the planet should be promoted.			
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Table 41 Inclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Reflection	Evaluation criteria	Question by which this was covered
A process is deliberative and inclusive if it involves representatives of all relevant actor groups (if appropriate) regardless of their formal power or mandate in the political arenas;	During the evaluation, reflections are made on who is part of the process, and whether this is a fair representation of the population that is affected by the matter at hand.	Inclusion	Number and type of stakeholders that were present during the test case (Template, organisers, after)  Do you think that the participants were a fair representation of the population? (Template, organisers, after)
A process is deliberative and inclusive if it empowers all actors structurally to participate actively and constructively in the discourse;	As the project and therewith the evaluation only takes place during a limited time, it is not possible to assess whether participants are structurally empowered. It can be evaluated whether participants felt empowered during the session.	Fairness  Empowerment	To what extent do you already have an idea about the perspective or arguments that you want to bring forward during the test case? (questionnaire, participants, before)  To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspective or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]  To what extent do you feel that other participants got the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]
A process is deliberative and inclusive if it allows co-design of the framing of the issue in a dialogue with these different groups;	As part of the evaluation, it is considered whether or not participants could have a say in determining the topic of the session.	Transparency  Inclusion	How was the topic selected? To what extent/how do participants have a say about the topic of this test-case? (Template, organisers, before)
A process is deliberative and inclusive if it generates a common understanding about the framing of the problem, potential solutions and their likely consequences (based on the expertise of all participants);	As part of the evaluation, it is considered whether or not participants felt that the session led to more mutual understanding, and whether the organisers felt that participants changed their opinion.	Common understanding	To what extent do you think the event led to (more) mutual understanding between participants? (questionnaire, participants, after)  To what extent did participants change their opinion during the test-case? Any idea how this came about? (Template, organisers, after)
A process is deliberative and inclusive if it provides a forum for deliberation that provides equal and fair opportunities for all parties to voice their opinion and to express their preferences	It is considered whether or not the participatory session let to equal and fair opportunities of all participants involved.	Fairness	To what extent did the moderators value all viewpoints of participants in the same manner? (do participants feel safe to do so? how do you know?) (template, organisers, after)  To what extent do you feel that all viewpoints that were shared were valued the same? (questionnaire, participants, after)  To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspective or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]  To what extent do you feel that other participants got the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]
A process is deliberative and inclusive if it establishes a connection between the participatory bodies of decision-making and the political implementation level.	Because of this being a research context, the participatory sessions that are organised were not all recognised by the government as bodies with decision-making power. The evaluation does assess what the relation is of the session to policy making.	Effect on policy making	What is the relation of the topic of the event to policy / policy influence in the country (or at European level)? (template, organisers, before)  What was done to affect / influence relevant policies or policy processes in this test-case? And on which level? (template, organisers, after)

Table 42 Closure criteria

Closure criteria	Reflection	Evaluation criteria	Questions by which this was covered
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Have all arguments been properly treated? Have all knowledge claims been fairly and accurately tested against commonly agreed standards of validation?	The evaluation considers whether all arguments have been valued the same, and whether the eventual outcome of the process is a fair representation of the arguments that have been expressed.	Fairness	To what extent did the moderators value all viewpoints of participants in the same manner? (do participants feel safe to do so? how do you know?) (Template, organisers, after)  To what extent do you feel that all viewpoints that were shared were valued the same? (questionnaire, participants, after)  To what extent do you feel that the decision or conclusion of the test event is a fair representation of the arguments that were raised? (questionnaire, participants, after)
Has all the relevant evidence, in accordance with the actual state-of-the-art knowledge, been collected and processed?	It is not possible to assess whether all the knowledge has been collected, but it can be considered whether participants feel that they could express themselves.	Fairness	To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspective or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]  To what extent do you feel that other participants got the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]
Was systematic, experiential, and practical knowledge and expertise adequately included and processed?	This was included in the evaluation strategy	Empowerment	How would you position your level of knowledge about the topic of the event? [Could you elaborate on what kind of knowledge you have on this topic (e.g., lived experiences, knowledge you derived by education, reading books, social media etc.)? (questionnaire, participants, before)  To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspectives or arguments? (questionnaire, participants, after)  To what extent do you feel that other participants got the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments? (questionnaire, participants, after)
Were all interests and values considered, and was there a major effort to come up with fair and balanced solutions?	This was included in the evaluation strategy	Fairness	How did moderators deal with disagreements? (Have all arguments been properly treated?) (template, organisers, after)  How was closure reached? (template, organisers, after)  To what extent do you feel that all viewpoints that were shared were valued the same? (questionnaire, participants, after)
Were all normative judgements made explicit and thoroughly explained? Were normative statements derived from accepted ethical principles or legally prescribed norms?	This was not included in the evaluation strategy		
Was every effort made to preserve plurality of lifestyles and individual freedom and to restrict the realm of collectively binding decisions to those areas in which binding rules and norms are essential and necessary to produce the wanted outcome?	This was not included in the evaluation strategy		

Table 43 Outcome criteria

Outcome criteria	Reflection	Evaluation Criteria	Question by which this was covered
<b>Effects on policy/government</b>			
Citizen engagement should help to legitimize governments	Due to the highly normative aspect of this criteria, this was not included in the evaluation.		



Citizen engagement should have effects on political or technical decision making	Due to the nature of the test cases and the project, this can only partly be considered; to what extent are efforts made to influence political or technical decision making?	Effect on policy making	What was done to affect / influence relevant policies or policy processes in this test-case? And on which level? (template, , organisers, after)
Citizen engagement should lead to more public support for policy/government	Due to the highly normative aspect of this criteria, this was not included in the evaluation.		
<b>Effects on participants</b>			
Citizen participation should lead to more agreement (or consensus) between citizens about policy decisions	Due to the highly normative aspect of this criteria, this was not included in the evaluation.		
Citizen engagement should lead to more mutual understanding between people who have different opinions or who belong to different interest groups	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Common understanding	To what extent did participants change their opinion during the test-case? Any idea how this came about? (template, organisers, after)  To what extent do you think the test case led to (more) mutual understanding between participants? (questionnaire, participants, two months after)
Citizen engagement should lead to informed and deliberative citizenry	This was included in the evaluation strategy, but only for the participants of the sessions, not for citizenry in general as there were no adequate resources available to organise this.	Empowerment	How would you position your level of knowledge about the topic of the event? (questionnaire, participants, before).  To what extent do you feel that your participation in the test case made you more informed about the topic? (questionnaire, participants, two months after)
Citizen engagement should empower citizens	Empowerment can mean many different things. For citizens, it can be empowering that they know more about a topic, that they are being listened to, or that they can be part of decision-making processes. Several meanings of empowerment are included in the evaluation.	Empowerment	To what extent do you feel that your participation in the event made you more informed about the topic? (questionnaire, participants, after)  Is capacity building of participants done (e.g., on gender equality issues and gender responsive communication)? If so, how? (template, organisers, before)
<b>Effects on environment</b>			
Citizen engagement should have effects on sustainability outcomes (and/or help participants to consider the interests of non-human agents)	Given the scope and duration of our test cases, it is not possible to consider this.		

Table 44 Process criteria

Process criteria	Reflection	Evaluation Criteria	Question by which this was covered
Any citizen participation process should respect normative principles (such as equality, equity, fairness, transparency), which are key to democracy	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Ethics	Did any of the participants violate ethical principles? If so, what was being done to correct this? (Template, organisers, after)
The selection of individuals that will engage in a participation process (the participants) should be representative of the population affected by the topic under consideration	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Representation	Do you think that the participants were a fair representation of the population? (Template, organisers, after)  To what extent would do you feel that you represent a specific societal group or groups at the test case? [Could you elaborate on which group(s) you represent?] (questionnaire, participants, before)
Citizen participation should be inclusive: everyone should have the opportunity and ability to equally contribute to the process.	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Equity  Inclusion	To what extent did all participants have the opportunity and ability to equally contribute to the test case? (Template, organisers, after)

			<p>To what extent are various forms of communication used in the test-case? (e.g., talking, drawing, modelling, creating something, etc.) (Template, organisers, after)</p> <p>What opportunities are created for people to participate when they have care-taking duties? (e.g., childcare) (template, organisers, before)</p> <p>To what extent do you already have an idea about the perspective or arguments that you want to bring forward during the test case? (questionnaire, participants, before)</p> <p>COMBINATION WITH</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspective or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that all people were treated equally during the test case? [Could you explain why you feel that people were or were not treated equally?] (questionnaire, participants, after)</p>
Citizen participation should contribute to realizing meaningful deliberation	Assessing what works best under which conditions in order to reach meaningful participatory or deliberative processes, is the eventual goal of the evaluation strategy. Therefore, this is not included in one specific question.		
Goal of the process should be clearly defined & decision process should be structured (and citizens should have a role in that)	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Transparency	<p>To what extent do you feel that you understand the information that has been shared regarding this test case? [In case something is not clear for you still, could you elaborate on that?] (questionnaire, participants, before)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel you have a clear understanding of your role during the test case? [Could you elaborate on what according to you your role during the test case is?] (questionnaire, participants, before)</p> <p>(How) is the aim/objective communicated to participants? (Template, organisers, before)</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that the information that has been shared regarding the test case was sufficient? [Q participants, after]</p>
Citizen participation should be coupled to policy from the beginning onward/should be integrated into policy	As the sessions were all part of a research project, and not organised by a governmental institution, the sessions are not integrated into policy. However, it is evaluated to which extent there is a relation to policy making.	Effect on policy making	<p>What is the relation of the topic of the event to policy / policy influence in the country (or at European level)? (Template, after, external partner)</p> <p>What was done to affect / influence relevant policies or policy processes in this test-case? And on which level? (Template, organisers, after)</p>
Citizen participation strategies should take context into account and accept that there may be contingency	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Responsiveness	How was the local context taken into account during this test-case? (template, organisers, after)
Citizen participation procedures should be cost-effective	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Efficiency	Was it worth the effort (time, money)? (template, organisers, after)

Table 45 Criteria based on objective participatory processes

Objectives participatory processes	Reflection	Evaluation criteria	Question by which this was covered
Identify what is most important to the affected or concerned public	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Inclusion  Fairness	How was the topic selected? To what extent/how do participants have a say about the topic of this test-case? (Template, organisers, before)  To what extent do you feel that the decision or conclusion of the test event is a fair representation of the arguments that were raised? (questionnaire, participants, after)
Address specific issues that are important to the public, e.g., migration, climate change	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Inclusion	How was the topic selected? To what extent/how do participants have a say about the topic of this test-case? (Template, organisers, before)
Create opportunities for fair and open discussion	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Inclusion  Equity	Spaces for participation are never neutral. How did the moderator ensure that all participants were able to participate actively in the test case? (template, organisers, before)  To what extent are various forms of communication used in the test-case? (e.g., talking, drawing, modeling, creating something, etc.) (template, organisers, before)
Allow <u>all interested individuals</u> to have their voices heard	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Fairness	To what extent do you feel that you were given the opportunity to share your perspective or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]  To what extent do you feel that other participants got the opportunity to share their perspectives or arguments? [questionnaire, participants, after]
Level the playing field of influence in society	This was beyond the scope of this study and therefore not included.		
Allow opposing parties to negotiate decisions	This was included in the evaluation strategy.		How did moderators deal with disagreements? (Have all arguments been properly treated?) (Template, organisers, after)
Balance power among social groups	For every participatory session, it was asked how power dynamics were considered, to get an idea of how power was balanced in these sessions.	Inclusion	What was being done to deal with implicit power dynamics during the session (e.g., between participants, or between participants and organisers)? (template, organisers, after)
Expose structures of power in society	This was beyond the scope of this study and therefore not included.		
Correct social injustices	This was beyond the scope of this study and therefore not included.		
Protect decision makers from liability	This was beyond the scope of this study and therefore not included.		
Avoid delays in implementing a decision	This was beyond the scope of this study and therefore not included.		
Decrease costs of implementing a decision	This was beyond the scope of this study and therefore not included.		
Give the public the power to make decisions	As the participatory sessions that were organised were not commissioned by governmental institutions, the public could not make decision on governmental level. However, they could made decisions on the outcome of the participatory sessions.		How was closure reached? (template, organisers, after)
Address the potential needs of future generations and voiceless non-human species	This was included in the evaluation strategy.	Interests of non-humans Interests of future generations	To what extent were the interests of non-humans and future generations considered during the test-case? How? (template, organisers, before)
Increase trust in institutions	This was beyond the scope of this study and therefore not included.		
Facilitate responsible innovation of novel technologies	Because of a lack of resources, there were no innovative technologies used in		

the participatory sessions organised.  
Therefore, this was beyond the scope of  
this study and not included.

## Appendix 2: Templates and interview guide

The following template is filled in by organisers of the participatory sessions before the session took place. The interview guide is used to interview the organisers after the session.

### Template

1. Basics				
Name of your organisation				
Country				
Type of event	Focus group	Citizen assembly	Roundtable	Other, namely:
Date of event (day/month/year)				
Duration (hours/days)				
Online or face to face				
Total Number of participants that you expect / aim for (excluding organisers, moderators, democracy experts, third parties, consortium partners):				
Number & type of participants/stakeholders that you expect/ aim for	Government/public:  CSO/NGO:  Private sector:  Research/knowledge institutes:  Citizens:  Other, namely:			
Main topic of test case and rationale for choosing this topic				
Administrative level	Sub-national	National	Beyond national/ European	Other, namely: ...
Information about the local context that is relevant for understanding this test case (e.g. media coverage, policy issues related to the issue)				

<b>2. Preparation / input</b>	
What is the aim/objective of the test-case? What is going to be tested? And what is the expected outcome?	
How was the topic selected? To what extent/how do participants have a say about the topic of this test-case?	
(How) is the aim/objective communicated to participants?	
How are participants recruited for this test case? (e.g. random selection or selected by type of stakeholder. If by stakeholder, based on which criteria? How was selection procedure? If random, what method?)	
Does the recruitment of participants relate to the aim/objective of the test case? If so, how? (also, but not only, local and indigenous groups, women)	
(How) are previously disengaged groups considered/reached? (which groups, and how?)	
What is being done to remove (perceived) thresholds to participate to this test-case?	
What opportunities are created for people to participate when they have care-taking duties? (e.g., childcare)	
Is capacity building of participants done (e.g., on gender equality issues and gender responsive communication)? If so, how?	
What is the relation of the topic of the event to policy / policy influence in the country (or at European level)?	
Reflections (e.g., challenges/obstacles encountered, in the organization of the test case language barriers; capacity building, use of the deliberation platform)	

## Interviewguide

### 3. Conduction / throughput

Course of the event and moderation	
Description of the test case; how was it organised, what methods were used, who moderated etc.?	
Number of participants (excl. moderators, organisers, third parties, consortium partners etc.)	
Number and type of stakeholders that were present during the test case	<p>Government/public:</p> <p>CSO/NGO:</p> <p>Private sector:</p> <p>Researchers/knowledge institute:</p> <p>Citizens:</p> <p>Other, namely:</p>
Do you think that the participants were a fair representation of the population?	
Who was in the moderation team? (name & organization)	
What are possible biases within the moderation team and what is being done to address this during the test-case?	
To what extent did the moderators value all viewpoints of participants in the same manner? (do participants feel safe to do so? how do you know?)	
To what extent did all participants have the opportunity and ability to equally contribute to the test case?	
Spaces for participation are never neutral. How did you/the moderator ensure that all participants could participate actively in the test case?	



What was being done to deal with implicit power dynamics during the session (e.g., between participants, or between participants and organisers)?	
Do you feel that the participants had a sufficient level of knowledge to be able to participate in the event? If not, what could have been improved?	
How was the local context considered during this test-case?	
To what extent are various forms of communication used in the test-case? (e.g., talking, drawing, modeling, creating something, etc.)	
To what extent were the interests of non-humans and future generations considered during the test-case? How?	
Did any of the participants violate ethical principles <sup>11</sup> ? If so, what was being done to correct this?	
In case the deliberation platform was used, how did it work?	
If connected to another event	
In what way was this event connected to another event?	
How was knowledge transfer from this event to another event organized?	
What do you think went well in this connection?	
What do you think could be improved in connecting events like these?	
Documentation	

<sup>11</sup> Transparency, respect, equality, equity, fairness

How is documentation of what is being said organised?	
<u>Reflections</u> (Challenges/obstacles encountered, e.g., in the understanding of the topic by citizens; language barriers; interaction between participants; local context, moderation style; knowledge input...)	
<b>4. Closure</b>	
What was the dominant viewpoint in the test case (in relation to the topic)?	
What were 'outliers' views?	
How did moderators deal with disagreements? (Have all arguments been properly treated?)	
How was closure reached?	Voting Consensus Not at all Other....
To what extent did participants change their opinion during the test-case? Any idea how this came about?	
<u>Reflections</u> (Challenges/obstacles encountered e.g., in the understanding of the topic; finding agreements; language barriers; use of the interactive modelling; interaction between participants, use of the deliberation platform)	
<b>5. Impact (for later) / output</b>	
What will be communicated to participants after the test-case? To what extent do they get the opportunity to give feedback?	
What was done to affect / influence relevant policies or policy processes in this test-case? And on which level?	
To what extent was the aim of the test-case achieved?	

What are lessons learned for you after the organisation and conduction of this test case?	
Was it worth the effort (time, money)?	
<u>Reflections &amp; lessons learned</u> (Challenges/obstacles encountered e.g., in the communication; raising awareness)	

## Appendix 3: Examples of questionnaires used

There are various questionnaires used to ask the participants of the participatory session about their thoughts on the sessions. For the various formats, the questionnaires somewhat differed. Furthermore, participants were provided a questionnaire before the session, directly after, and in some instances 2 months after. Below, an example of such a questionnaire is given. The questionnaire that is listed below is one that is provided to participants of citizen assemblies before the citizen assembly took place. Other questionnaires are also available upon request.

### Questionnaire for participants before the Citizen Assembly

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Citizen Assembly. We would very much appreciate if you take a moment to fill in this questionnaire. By providing you with several questionnaires, we want to evaluate the organisation of the Citizen Assembly and see whether the foreseen goals are reached. This contributes to our research in which we assess how events like these can best be organised. So, your input is as crucial part of our study!

This questionnaire is completely anonymous. The people analysing the questionnaire will not be informed about your names and we have made sure that the results of the questionnaire cannot be traced back to you. We therefore ask you not to fill in your name on this questionnaire but to use a nickname or pseudonym. We will ask you to use the same nickname the other questionnaires we will hand out after the fourth session to make the connection to this questionnaire. You can use a phrase like "Curious Squirrel" or a combination of numbers that are easy to remember, such as our mother's birthday.

There are no right or wrong answers in this questionnaire. We would like to hear your opinion and thoughts. In case you have any questions or remarks related to this questionnaire, you are always free to contact [else.giesbers@wur.nl](mailto:else.giesbers@wur.nl).

Most questions can simply be answered by selecting a rank from 1 (not at all) to 5 (fully/completely/extremely/totally), but for most questions we also appreciate if you could explain a bit further why you gave a certain rank.

Q1. To what extent do you feel that you understand the information that has been shared regarding the process and purpose of this Citizen Assembly?

☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5  
 Not at all      Fully  
 a. In case something is not clear for you still, could you elaborate on that?

Q2. To what extent do you feel you have a clear understanding of your role during the Citizen Assembly?

☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5

- Not at all Fully
- a. Could you elaborate on what according to you your role during the Citizen Assembly is?

Q3. To what extent would you feel that you represent a specific societal group or groups at the Citizen Assembly?

- 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Not at all Fully
- a. Could you elaborate on which group(s) you represent?

Q4. How would you position your level of knowledge on the topic of INSERT TOPIC? *(please know that for this citizen assembly it is not needed to have a certain level of knowledge on the topic of INSERT TOPIC. We, however, would like to know how knowledgeable people would say they are on this topic)*

- 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- No knowledge Extensive knowledge
- a. Could you elaborate on what kind of knowledge you have on this topic (e.g., lived experiences, knowledge you derived by education, reading books, social media, etc.)?

Q5. How prepared do you feel right now to actively participate in a discussion on 'Insert topic'? *(no prior knowledge is required to participate in this Citizen Assembly)*

- 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Not at all prepared Fully prepared

Q6. To what extent do you already have an idea about the perspective or arguments you want to bring forward during the Citizen Assembly?

- 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Not idea at all Strong ideas
- a. Could you elaborate on what perspectives or arguments you want to bring forward?
- b. Could you elaborate on if and how you intend to prepare yourself for the Citizen Assembly? What are the sources of information you use during this preparation (e.g., newspapers, social media, governmental websites, websites hosted by nongovernmental organisations etc.)?

Q7. How concerned would you say you are about the INSERT TOPIC?

- 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐
- Not at all Fully

- a. Could you please elaborate on this?
- b. Could you please elaborate on how you act upon this in your daily life?

Q8. What motivates you to participate in the citizen assembly?

## Appendix 4: Plenary discussion on voting versus consensus seeking during the Delphi panel

The text below reflects the visions that were shared on the topic of voting versus consensus seeking during the Delphi panel that was organised to validate the synthesis findings.

Those in favour of voting argue that consensus is not required because then you are forcing consensus, while one should always leave room to disagree. Example: The Irish citizen assembly. Those suggestions that were reached by consensus were more attractive to policy makers. Also, there is a risk that the results will be diluted because one tries to accommodate all results into one statement, which consequently will become very generic.

Other experts argue that voting is not always useful. When there are 40 recommendations, and you want to get the priorities, then voting is useful. Voting can be harmful when the recommendations are difficult to compare.

It can also be harmful if people are pressured to vote. There may be peer pressure, also if it is anonymous.

It is always possible to come to a consensus in the end. There are many examples of African communities where they only take decisions by consensus. However, it is a question of time and resources.

In one of the citizen assemblies, the organisers reflected that because the participants knew that there will be voting in the end, it influenced the arguments they brought into the discussion. One argument did not come up. If you vote, you give the impression that this is a representation of society, you provide the impression that this is what the entire population may think. That misunderstanding often happens. It is one of the arguments against voting.

Summary:

1. It is important what is the mandate and context (type of voting/consensus)
2. We have to respect minorities and that they are appropriately heard
3. Creative solutions are not overshadowed by voting
4. There should be an impetus to reconcile differences and not go to voting immediately.

Note: The answering of this question was highly influenced by the word 'require'. That mattered a lot. These options are not always a requirement. Sometimes they can be useful, in other cases not.

For some others it was the word recommendations. Because if a citizen assembly recommends something that can only happen if there was some form of consensus.

Maybe we can change the word required in aim. what is the aim of the process... come to consensus, or vote.

Consent may be better than consensus.

What is really required, is what the results should tell in the end. That is what is very weak often. Including ourselves...

I was reaction to the word closure. It can mean so many different things. The closure of a play, or a prison... that is the opposite of democracy. A point that is not captured in the question is the issue of trade-offs. Often a citizen assembly ends up with a wish list. We often don't force citizens to prioritize or discuss trade-offs. It is very rare that we ask citizens to do that. This probably relates to a bigger question, are we not too nice? Are we not patronizing them?