REAL DEAL

RESHAPING CITIZENS' DELIBERATION FOR THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

RESHAPING EUROPEAN ADVANCES TOWARDS GREEN LEADERSHIP THROUGH DELIBERATIVE APPROACHES AND LEARNING

D 4.3. The REAL DEAL Protocol, including a practical Toolkit for an innovative and validated perspective on citizen and stakeholder engagement for the EGD: Guidance and Toolkit

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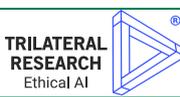Anke Stock, WECF
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Project Summary

REAL DEAL stimulates and enlightens a pan-European debate to reshape citizens'[1] 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, 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 has developed, tested, and validated innovative tools and formats to propel deliberative democracy to the next level. It has been engaged in testing such formats like citizens' assemblies for the transition, and their combinations, in 13 countries across Europe. The research team also scrutinised pan-European formats on the future of the European Green Deal, on nature and biodiversity and an EU Feminist Festival. The very most events were in-person processes, often combined with digital deliberation and support through our multilingual online deliberation platform https://my.realdeal.eu/. In the three years of the project (2022-25), REAL DEAL has helped to develop a new model of environmental citizenship across Europe.

Project Information

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[1] REAL DEAL's use of the term "citizen" does not mean to exclude members of the public who reside in a given place but are not legally citizens of that State.

Consortium partners

Logo	Partner	Abbreviation	Country
	RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY	RIFS	Germany
	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
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Executive summary

The European Green Deal (EGD) promises to transform the EU into the first climate-neutral region of the world by 2050 and to set it in motion towards global leadership in sustainability. The **REAL DEAL** ('**Reshaping European Advances towards green Leadership Through Deliberative Approaches and Learning**') project strives to enhance direct citizen participation and deliberation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the EGD. Dissemination initiatives play a crucial role in achieving the overarching objective of maintaining the sustainability of the REAL DEAL project's results. By offering guidance to decision-makers, civil society, and the general public, the project seeks to establish a durable legacy of democratic engagement and inclusive policy development throughout Europe.

One of the capstone outputs of the REAL DEAL project, therefore, is a set of practical guidance and tools for designing, organising and conducting effective deliberative and participatory processes and events, making use of a range of formats and methods. This **REAL DEAL Protocol: Guidance and Toolkit** incorporates a validated toolkit comprising various deliberative formats and methodologies, some of which can be employed in combination, that can be utilised by a range of actors involved in policy development related to the EGD. The combinations of formats and methodologies are based on specific topics, timelines, and socio-political conditions and contexts. The Guidance and Toolkit also takes into account legal, ethical, socio-economic, gender, cultural, and governance considerations, prioritising inclusive, diverse, and equitable processes for public, stakeholder and citizen engagement.

Integrating various perspectives and leveraging shared expertise into policymaking not only deepens public comprehension of the results but also encourages the adoption of policies and bolsters confidence in governmental institutions. Besides, it is a good practice that leads to better-quality and more sound policies, as well as a requisite for a healthy democracy. **How to design, organise, plan, conduct, facilitate, manage and evaluate such processes is what this Guidance and Toolkit is all about.** The Guidance and Toolkit therefore covers the organisation, facilitation, evaluation and participation in these various forms and methods, and is aimed at those who take part in various roles relating to them, including organisers, practitioners, facilitators, civil servants, civil society organisations, experts, and ordinary citizens.

While most readers of the Guidance and Toolkit will be experienced in deliberative processes, it's nevertheless a good starting point to review the practical, policy and legal basis for deliberative processes in relation to the EGD. Building upon the activities and research conducted under the REAL DEAL Project, we identify the **12 types of deliberative democratic processes** and analyse them to extract a set of principles that serve as the background for the guidance and the specific tools that follow. We have divided deliberative processes, keeping in mind that they can be standalone events or **complex combinations** of different formats and methods, into three main phases: **the design phase, the engagement phase, and the outcomes phase.** For each phase, we identify certain key elements and take the reader through certain considerations and thought processes using decision trees.

For example, in the design phase, we cover issues including the purpose, scope, selection of formats and methods, and application of principles. In the engagement phase, issues including the quality of the process, how to steadily progress through its

stages, and anticipating the outcome are discussed. And in the outcomes phase, our guidance is focused on ensuring that the process results in maximum impact, employing tools such as transparency, commitment, clarity, reporting, continuity and engagement with receiving bodies. Finally, deliberative processes are currently diverse, complex, rich and innovative, meaning that there is much to be learned from specific instances of deliberation. For this reason, we conclude with a section on **monitoring and evaluating deliberative processes** and their results and learning lessons that may be applied in the future **to build a community of practice and make deliberative processes more impactful.**

List of tables

List of acronyms/abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
ACCC	Aarhus Convention Committee Compliance
CA	Citizen Assemblies
CEPA	UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CoFoE	Conference on the Future of Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPO/OPD	Disabled People's Organisation/ Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
EECCA	Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
EIR	Environmental Implementation Review
EGA	Environmental Governance Assessment
EGD	European Green Deal
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
IEMEI	Internal Environmental Measure with Extraterritorial Implications
MLG	Multi-Level Governance
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
MSG	Multi-Stakeholder Governance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategies
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRTR	Pollutant Release and Transfer Register
REAL DEAL	The project, 'Reshaping European Advances towards green Leadership Through Deliberative Approaches and Learning'
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TOR	Terms Of Reference

UN	United Nations
UN CSD	Commission for Sustainable Development
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
VNR	Voluntary National Review

Table 1 List of acronyms/abbreviations

Glossary of terms

Term	Explanation
Accessibility	People's ability throughout the process to access physical and virtual spaces and to be able to engage in the spaces on an equal basis with others.
Citizen engagement	Co-creation and information exchange between the public and authorities. In the context of sustainable development, a key element in the all-of-society transition.
Common understanding	The extent to which participants have a shared understanding of a topic and the extent to which the topic is understood from different perspectives.
Consultation	Processes managed by public authorities to gather information and public views as inputs to policymaking or decision-making processes
Deliberation	For a process to be called deliberative, it must rely on a mutual exchange of arguments, justifications 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.
Deliberative democracy	Measures including informed and justified citizen recommendations on policy questions; citizen opinion on policy questions; informed citizen evaluation of ballot measures; and permanent representative deliberative models.
Effect on policymaking	The extent to which the participatory session has a genuine impact on policies or the policymaking process.
Efficiency	The extent to which a process is cost-, time- and resource-effective.
Environmental governance	An inclusive system of actors, institutions and norms that establishes responsibility and accountability, and builds trust and capacity to cooperate in policymaking, decision-making, implementation and enforcement, in the field of environment.
Equity	The recognition and account of the needs, opportunities and barriers faced by people due to, amongst other factors, their characteristics, living conditions, social status, and privileges.
Fairness	Fairness relates to the extent to which interests and values of all participants have been equitably taken into account in the process, respecting that all affected parties deserve standing in decision-making and consultative processes.

Governance	The totality of interactions in which government, other public bodies, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders share power and responsibility, aimed at solving public challenges or creating public opportunities
Inclusion	Inclusion refers to whether all participants have the opportunity and the ability to contribute on an equal basis to the process in a meaningful way, taking into account power imbalances. It refers to the composition of the participants (who is actually invited and included in the process), and about the perspectives that are covered (Renn & Schweizer, 2009). The structures in which a participatory process takes place must be inclusive for participants to feel heard and valued.
Interests of non-human actors	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 anthropocentric perspective, but a more holistic perspective is considered.
Meaningfulness	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.
Participation	The term participation refers to different mechanisms and processes for members of the public to present 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 document, the term 'participatory session' or 'session' is used to refer to a distinct participative and/or deliberative event that was organised in frame of the REAL DEAL project.
Privacy	The extent to which the participants' information is collected and handled ethically in a careful and safe way and in line with legal regulations. 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 has taken place.
Representation	In a representative process, the participants in the process represent an approximate balance of the characteristics of the population that is affected by the issue that is being discussed.
Responsiveness	The extent to which the local context and participant needs are taken into consideration and incorporated into the planning and execution of participatory sessions by those conducting the process.
Transparency	Transparency refers to whether all information and communication on the purpose, process, expectations, and outcomes of the participatory session is always clear to participants.

Table 2 Glossary of terms

1 Background and Introduction

The European Green Deal is aimed at reaching a sustainable Europe. With ambitious environmental and climate objectives at its core, the European Green Deal (EGD) promises to transform the EU into a cleaner, healthier and more socially just place by 2050, with a large focus on greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a comprehensive international framework established by the UN General Assembly in 2015, encompassing a set of ambitious goals, targets, and actions. Central to this agenda are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate change, both of which play pivotal roles in its implementation. The EGD was adopted as the "number one" political priority of the European Commission in 2019, and it is mainly focused on fulfilling the objectives set out by the 2030 Agenda, including the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and other international agreements to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Recent developments include the Clean Industrial Deal and the shift of focus towards net-zero industries in the current mandate (2024-2029) as a follow-up to the EGD.

Deliberative democracy plays an essential role in the EGD, and it has been associated with environmental initiatives and the concept of environmental citizenship. Integrating various perspectives and leveraging shared expertise into policymaking not only deepens public comprehension of the results but also encourages the adoption of policies and bolsters confidence in governmental institutions. Besides, it is a good practice that leads to better-quality and more sound policies, as well as a requisite for a healthy democracy.

One of the advantages of deliberative democracy is its capacity to foster citizen participation and promote a long-term vision in policymaking, which is often overshadowed by the short-term concerns of vote-driven governance models[1]. Nevertheless, it is imperative that deliberative processes are meticulously designed, empirically evaluated, and integrated within a constitutional framework that allows them to meet their theoretical promise. How to organise, plan, conduct, facilitate, manage and evaluate such processes is what this guidance and toolkit is all about.

In deliberative processes, principled approaches related to gender and traditionally underrepresented groups and societal actors are structuring forces. Specific attention needs to be paid to the "leave no one behind" principle, fostering the engagement of marginalised groups which, despite being disproportionally burdened by environmental damage and climate change, are chronically excluded from deliberative and decision-making processes. The needs of groups that are at the forefront of the just transition must be recognized and accommodated in deliberative spaces.

1.1 What is this Guidance and Toolkit for?

This guidance and toolkit is specifically intended for individuals tasked with initiating, planning, organising, directing, or facilitating a deliberative or participatory environmental governance process or event. It includes validated recommendations on how to design deliberative democratic processes and how they can be applied by European institutions, Member States, local governments, and civil society alike. It will also be beneficial for those engaged in such processes in other ways, including commissioning, funding, or overseeing such processes. We anticipate that this guide will assist dedicated NGOs, public authorities, and researchers in enhancing their effectiveness in pursuing sustainability as well as a just transition. Each of these actors will approach a deliberative and participatory process with distinct interests, expectations, responsibilities, terminologies, communication methods, and limitations. Our

aim is to ensure that this guidance and toolkit addresses the diverse needs of all involved parties.

The Guidance and Toolkit covers various formats of deliberation (such as mini-publics and citizen assemblies), each designed to serve distinct purposes, and the ways in which these formats can work in combination. It aids future organisers of deliberative processes (e.g. practitioners, facilitators, CSOs, local governments, national governments, international organisations, etc.) to select the best combination of formats to adapt to evolving circumstances of environmental governance in different contexts and achieve the best outcomes. Lastly, this guidance and toolkit broaden the existing knowledge on citizen participation, drawing upon cutting-edge insights from multiple fields that have not previously been integrated, resulting in a more comprehensive, cohesive and enriched approach.

This Guidance and Toolkit can help you if you are:

> ➢ Organising a local process to deliberate with members of your community on whether and how to introduce new measures to make your community climate-neutral by 2050

> ➢ A civil servant or contracted organisation in charge of organising a deliberative process on climate, energy, social or environmental topics

> ➢ A facilitator in charge of moderating a process that aims to bring people together to promote environmental protection or other sustainability policies

> ➢ Part of an academic community in charge of evaluating a deliberative process that has brought together EU-wide partnerships to create better environmental and social standards

> ➢ A policymaker or someone from a political think tank who wants to better grasp the topic and get inspiration

> ➢ An NGO trying to promote participation of structurally excluded groups in decision-making around the green transition?

<u>Some questions the guide will help you to answer</u>

Facilitation: What skills are required for constructive facilitation?

Formats and Methods: What are the most suitable combination of formats and methods that have been tested as effective and fair by science and politically codified in the EGD? In what circumstances are they most useful?

Tools: What tools are accessible to assist deliberative or participatory processes in reaching their objectives?

The guide has been structured to allow you to explore various sections as needed, enabling you to locate the information you require without the necessity of reading it from beginning to end. Chapter 2 outlines the significance of environmental governance and introduces essential concepts related to citizen engagement. By the conclusion of the second chapter, you will have a solid understanding of the frameworks for citizen engagement in the context of the EGD and its follow-up, as well as the twelve distinct types of deliberative processes. Chapter 2 outlines the key principles of meaningful participation and deliberation. Chapter 3 is divided in four parts, corresponding to different phases in the organisation of deliberative processes.

These phases are design, engagement and outcomes, followed by an evaluation. The Chapter presents specific examples, such as strategies for ensuring inclusion and equity, including feminist moderation techniques, to illustrate the significance of the essential principles and details the circumstances in which various formats, methods, and tools yield the best results, along with recommendations for their effective use. It also provides practical advice on organising a deliberative and participatory process, emphasising the importance of empowering people to shape environmental, climate and social policy and contribute to the objectives of the EGD. Additionally, it presents strategies for including individuals and groups that are often overlooked and marginalized in political discussions and decisions. Our deliberative framework offers organisers assistance with choosing the most effective tools, processes, and formats for citizen engagement, as well as principles for ensuring professional moderation. Finally, we conclude with an evaluation framework that can be applied to specific deliberative processes and events.

1.2 REAL DEAL

The REAL DEAL project, www.realdeal.eu, is a three-year, multi-country and EU level project, the results of which have been reviewed and validated by stakeholders and citizens. Based upon experience developed through the project, we have co-created this comprehensive Guidance and Toolkit for meaningful citizens' participation and deliberation to work towards the objectives of the EGD. In developing this Guidance and Toolkit, we drew from the country and EU level pilot activities and other project outputs and engaged a broad range of experts and end users in reviewing preliminary drafts, including the Advisory Board of the REAL DEAL Project and the Joint Advisory Board of the REAL DEAL and PHOENIX projects.

2 Guidance Principles for meaningful participation and deliberation

Deliberative and participatory processes serve to enhance democratic policymaking. This objective underlies all deliberative activities, as the exercise of power is deemed democratically legitimate when it arises from structured and fair discourse, devoid of strategic manipulation and deception. This chapter outlines the legal framework and the core principles of meaningful participation and deliberation, offering practical insights into their real-world application along with specific examples.

2.1 Legal framework for deliberative democracy and sustainability

In 1992, the international community gathered in Rio de Janeiro to lay the foundation for a just transition towards sustainability by adopting several instruments, including the Rio Declaration, a set of principles that defined the concept of sustainable development. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration (1992) states:

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available ...

Rio Principle 10 seeks to ensure that everyone has access to information, participates in decision-making and has access to justice in environmental matters, to guarantee the right to a healthy and sustainable environment for present and future generations. The "access rights" have emerged to be particularly important in promoting transparent, inclusive and accountable environmental governance and they are considered necessary elements to achieve environmental democracy.

In the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Aarhus Convention was adopted in 1998 as a regional instrument for implementing Principle 10. The European Union and its member states are all Parties to the Convention. Internally within the EU, the Convention is elaborated through the Aarhus Regulation (Regulation (EC) N° 1367/2006 as amended by Regulation (EC) 2021/1767) with respect to community institutions, and various EU legislative instruments, including regulations and directives on access to environmental information, environmental impact assessment, and strategic environmental assessment, establish the law applicable in the member states. These instruments guarantee various rights related to public participation.

When it comes to policymaking, planning, programming, and development of legislation at various levels – also referred to as strategic-level decision-making – deliberative processes and consultative mechanisms are especially relevant. They are also relevant in cooperative enforcement (including complaint handling), and other means of increasing effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of measures related to public policy. Directive 2001/42/EC, the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, is one example of a legal framework for consultative mechanisms in the EU. In these processes engagement with the public is regulated and mandated by specific rules. Besides such specific rules-based participatory practices which are backed up by legal enforcement and judicial mechanisms, general deliberative and consultative processes can employ more flexible forms and methods while still maintaining their basis in law.

2.2 Twelve types of deliberative democratic processes

The escalating complexity of global challenges, particularly the climate crisis, has led to a notable increase in instances of citizen deliberation at both the EU and national, regional and local levels. The REAL DEAL project has conducted a comprehensive review of the literature concerning these diverse deliberative or consultative mechanisms. This subchapter outlines twelve distinct types of deliberative democratic processes that have been identified in the REAL DEAL project (see Table 3, next page).

Table 3 Twelve types of deliberative democratic processes identified in the REAL DEAL project

Format	Target groups	Description	Size
Analytic deliberative process (combination of two formats)	*Citizens, with stakeholder involvement*	The aim is to involve public, experts and stakeholders in decision-making on complex issues with conflicting values and knowledge systems. Relying on both elements of analysis and deliberation, such process aims to enhance the competence in the decision-making process and to assign a fair share of the responsibility of managing risks to those who are affected by the potential consequences. All participants (experts, stakeholders, citizens) have a specific role and bring their own expertise and, through dialogue and exchange of arguments and information, can resolve the issue at stake. Stakeholders are here to bring opinions on their specific interests, experts to bring the technical expertise and information, and citizens to evaluate the decision options. The main difference between an analytical deliberative process and a deliberative process is that the first involves experts and other knowledgeable people that try to characterize and classify the evidence necessary to understand the problem and the impacts of potential solutions.	Generally large (around 20 stakeholders; over 100 citizens)
Citizens Assembly	*Citizens*	A Citizens' Assembly is a format that brings together randomly selected citizens to deliberate on a given issue and provide a set of recommendations for policy makers. Similar to citizens' juries or planning cells, the selected citizens are given the opportunity to learn about a topic by obtaining various information and opinions from invited experts. Based on the input, citizens deliberate in moderated small groups and develop a set of recommendations, which are documented in a report for decision-makers.	Variable (from approx. 30 up to over 200 participants)
Group Delphi method	*Experts*	Referring to the oracle of Delphi from Greek mythology, this forecasting process aims to look at long-term developments of a specific issue relying on a panel of experts with different backgrounds. Its aim is to assess and evaluate these long-term developments and to build assertions about futures that are helpful in dealing with decisions. In a Group Delphi process, all participants convene in person and conduct assessments within randomly assigned small groups consisting of three to four individuals. The groups that exhibit average scores significantly differing from the median of the other groups are invited to justify their evaluations during a plenary session. Then, the small groups are reorganised, and the same task is undertaken once more.	16 participants
Experts Panel	*Experts*	In this format, experts and public officials with different backgrounds and opinions are invited to deliberate upon the future of a given topic. This format is commonly used in foresight in order to gather and elicit expert knowledge on a specific issue. The panel sessions function as a mechanism for uncovering new perspectives that specialists might not have contemplated without engaging in a structured dialogue.	Small group (up to 20 participants)
Focus Group	*Citizens*	Semi-structured discussion, taking the form of a workshop, with the goal of getting feedback from a small group of participants on a specific topic of interest. Focus groups provide more than just data about people's positions and concerns - they also measure the strength and social resonance of each argument *vis-a-vis* counterarguments.	Small group (up to 15 participants)

Participatory modelling	*Citizens, community groups*	Co-creation process engaging stakeholders in bringing in their knowledge into policymaking using digital or analogue modelling practices. This method is often applied in environmental and resource management to analyse socio-environmental systems. Besides assisting collective decision-making, participatory modelling contributes to reducing conflict, improving the legitimacy of a model, informing collective action, enhancing learning, and gaining a common understanding of a complex system.	Variable
Planning cells	*Citizens*	Groups of randomly selected citizens are asked to co-develop a set of policy recommendations on a specific issue. The objective is to provide citizens with the opportunity for learning about the technical and political facets of the topic, and for enabling them to deliberate and finally evaluate these options and their likely consequences according to their own experiences, values and preferences. The recommendations developed by the citizens are expected to help decision-makers to take a decision. Through random selection, this participatory instrument enables a great diversity of citizens to be included in the process. planning cells are similar to citizen juries or citizen assemblies.	Small groups (up to 20 participants)
Public-expert hearing	*Stakeholders, citizens*	Experts with different opinions and positions are asked to testify before the representatives of an organising institution. In such a process, the organisers develop questions which are asked to experts. Experts have the opportunity to give their opinion/argue on the issue at stake. The final judgment is left to the organising committee.	Variable
Public participation network	*Community Groups*	Through the creation of this network local authorities can profit from community and voluntary expertise from all over the country in a specific area, and civil society members can have their voice heard and provide input into decision-making processes.	Variable
Roundtable	*Stakeholders*	Small group discussions between interest groups and administrations to discuss a central issue on an equal footing and try to find a common solution. In such a process, everybody has an equal right to participate. The participation of a skilled moderator is crucial for the effective organisation of a successful roundtable.	Medium sized groups (20-30 participants)
Stakeholder Salons	*Expert group/ Stakeholders*	It builds on the salons in the 19th century, where the Salons represented a private space for discussion on socially relevant topics. This method regroups experts with different backgrounds, experiences and viewpoints in an exclusive location to enter creative exchanges and debates about a specific socially relevant topic in a relaxed atmosphere. The goal of this format is therefore to create the optimal conditions for in depth discussions in order to develop shared visions concerning the future of the topic.	Small groups (up to 15 participants)
21st Century Town Hall meeting	*Citizens*	Public forum where citizens meet at different locations to deliberate simultaneously about a pre-defined issue in small groups. Through the use of ICT technologies, citizens can eventually vote anonymously in plenary on the results of the process to increase the number of citizens taking part in the deliberation without affecting the quality of the deliberation itself.	100 to 5,000 people

This list is not exhaustive; there are more formats and combinations of formats that could be applied. Out of these 12 types of deliberative democratic processes, the REAL DEAL project has tested four: Citizen Assembly, Group Delphi, Focus Group and Roundtable format. These four represent the most generic formats designed for experts (Delphi), stakeholders (Roundtable), citizens (Assemblies) and for addressing representatives of disadvantaged individuals (focus groups). The next chapters provide insight as to how these formats can be used to enable members of the public to present their needs and interests and articulate their views, and how the combination of these formats can contribute to the principles of meaningful citizen participation and deliberation.

2.3 Definition of principles

A systematic review of the literature was carried out as part of the REAL DEAL research project. Following multiple rounds of discussions and revisions, which included a workshop with co-authors, an analysis resulted in the identification of 14 principles which are relevant for deliberation related to the EGD (see description in Table 4, below).

The principles are centered around 5 thematic sections: 1. power imbalances, 2. ensuring inclusiveness, 3. working with nature and long-term perspectives, 4. bottom-up activism and cultivating environmental citizenship, and 5. transitioning the economic model to a green economy.

1. In terms of power imbalances, policymakers need to recognize historical power imbalances and promote transformative actions. They should also consider inequalities (such as racialised groups, gender, and class) in the design of legal frameworks and the implementation of deliberative and participatory tools. Global North stakeholders need to recognise their interactions with counterparts in the Global South and should aim to reshape the power dynamics involved in participation and deliberation. Participation spaces, such as local committees, decision-making bodies, and councils, are not impartial and often reflect existing power disparities. It is essential to restructure existing or establish alternative processes and platforms that specifically tackle these imbalances to promote equitable involvement from groups that have been systematically marginalized.

2. In order to ensure inclusiveness, it is essential to take into account a diverse range of perspectives through open dialogue, discussion, and thoughtful consideration. It is important to ensure that citizens are not excluded because they are unable to reason and debate as strongly as others, therefore group deliberation and discussions should not be the *only* form of participation. It is essential to promote the inclusion of a broad spectrum of values and beliefs while adopting an intersectional approach in environmental deliberative processes. This ensures that no groups are marginalized or silenced. Policymakers need to eliminate structural obstacles that hinder participation and discussion in environmental decision-making processes. It is essential to encourage the involvement of local communities and Indigenous peoples, with a particular emphasis on empowering women and youth.

3. In order to reflect the needs and importance of future generations, other species and the environment, the significance and requirements of various species and ecosystems must be acknowledged in our discussions surrounding environmental policy. Future generations, non-human organisms, species, and the environment lack the ability to express their concerns in the political arena; therefore, it is essential for people to advocate for the representation of these interests in deliberative processes. It is important to ensure that corporate, political, and economic motives do not

overshadow the inherent value of the natural world. See also the Declaration on Future Generations in the UN Pact for the Future.

4. Demonstrations and grassroots climate activism play a significant role in shaping political discourse and can act as a catalyst for transformative learning and social mobilization. It is essential for policymakers to respond to the concerns raised. International organisations like the United Nations and the European Union ought to engage with grassroots organisations and encourage their involvement in decisions impacting the environment. Decision-makers must establish an environment that encourages environmental citizenship and democratic debate, preserving and widening the civic space, and that enhances the public's awareness of environmental issues and related impacts on economy, society, and the rights of present and future generations.

5. The shift towards a green economy is influenced not only by political and governance factors, market dynamics, and technological advances, but also by the engagement and mobilisation of civic and cultural communities. Decision makers ought to go beyond merely promoting the purchase of green products as a means of public involvement; they should also inspire individuals to participate in significant political actions, co-create solutions, and remain receptive to transformative changes. Promoting a framework for well-being that shifts the emphasis away from the prevailing economic priority of gross domestic product and growth and instead focuses on nurturing individuals, societies and the environment, is essential. Kate Raworth's theoretical framework of "doughnut economics" can provide food for thought in this field.

Table 4 The 14 evaluation principles

Evaluation principles	Definition
(Potential to come to) common understanding	This relates to the extent to which participants have a shared understanding of a topic and the extent to which the topic is understood from different perspectives. It raises questions about whether all information on the topic and on the session, itself is well-understood by participants (Schroeter et al., 2016).
(Potential) Effect on policy making	This refers to whether the participatory session has a genuine impact on policies or the policy making process (Rowe & Frewer, 2004, p. 88). Due to the short-term nature of the project, this evaluation principle focuses on potential impact, as the true long-lasting effects cannot be assessed.
Efficiency	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).
Empowerment[1]	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.
Equity	Unlike equality, which treats everyone the same, equity acknowledges that people have different needs, opportunities, and barriers due to factors such as privilege, characteristics, and living conditions (Ryan et al., 2022).
Fairness	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 able 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.

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[1] This is a contested term, and it is included here as it was a result identified during the research phase. Whilst some participants of the test cases expressed that they felt empowered after participating in the deliberative processes, it is important to note that we do not use it without context. Often statements about "empowering" groups can come from a privileged standpoint. Our use of empowerment here reflects our ongoing work on this as part of the REAL DEAL project, while some partners wish to emphasise that the feeling of empowerment is meaningless if it is not met with concrete action to dismantle structures of oppression.

Inclusion	**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 invited and included in the process), as well as 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.**
Interests of non-human actors	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 anthropocentric perspective, but a more holistic perspective is considered.
Interests of future actors	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.
Meaningfulness	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.
Privacy	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 to approved parties and the privacy of participants should be respected until after the session has ended.
Representation	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).
Responsiveness	The extent to which the local context and participant needs are taken into consideration and incorporated into the planning and execution of participatory sessions.
Transparency	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).

Since these 14 principles in five thematic sections are theoretical in nature, an additional step was required to facilitate their practical application. As a final step, experts working in four subgroups independently suggested three key principles for assessing participatory sessions and formats. Based on their evaluation the REAL DEAL research project found that the most relevant principles are inclusion, transparency, and empowerment (see Table 4).

*Table 5 Three most relevant principles for each of the four formats evaluated in REAL DEAL*

Format	Principles		
Focus group	Empowerment	Equity	Inclusion
Citizen assembly	Inclusion	Representation	Transparency
Roundtable	Fairness	Representation	Responsiveness
Group Delphi	(potential to come to) Common understanding	Representation	Transparency

3 Setting Up Deliberative Processes: The REAL DEAL Toolkit

This chapter outlines the practical guidance on how to set up a deliberative and participatory process depending on purpose, topic, location, and timing. It offers direction to all those individuals and organisations that are mandated, entrusted or self-motivated to organise, conduct or facilitate participation processes aimed at empowering stakeholders and ordinary citizens to influence environmental policy making and to contribute to the objectives of the EGD. In addition, these formats should include procedures for integrating individuals and groups that are frequently overlooked and marginalised in the political arena, despite being significantly impacted by environmental degradation and the climate crisis.

The following sections provide a sequential structure starting with designing the process, via conducting the process to evaluating the process. This three-stage structuring relates to preparations before the process starts, managing the process and its components and processing the results and evaluating the output and the process itself. To make this complex task easily comprehensible we have chosen the format of a decision chain simulating a planning process for all three stages.

3.1   Design phase
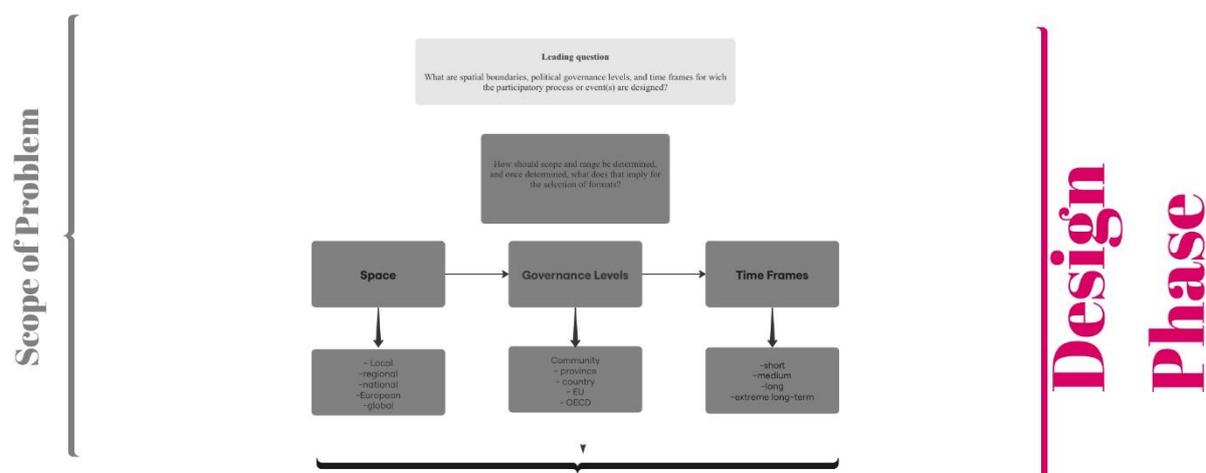
3.1.1 Purpose of participation:

Leading Question: What is the desired or anticipated goal of the participatory process(s) and what types of outcomes are being aspired to?

Principal choices

  a. providing an overview of opinions and positions among diverse publics (scoping);
  b. developing recommendations for policymakers on possible policy options and their prioritisation;
  c. co-creating novel solutions for dealing with a problem including self-commitments.

Decision Tree: Which of the three purposes are most suited or demanded for the planned participation process?

  - *Category a:* is well suited if there are only very limited policy options and a clear preference of policymakers and/or an emerging social consensus for one option. **Category a** provides a test whether all positions have been included and how much the preferred option resonates with different audiences. If **Category a** is chosen, formats such as expert and stakeholder hearings (inquiries) and focus groups are most suitable.

  - *Category b:* is well suited if there are controversies about the means to reach predesigned goals (such as being climate neutral in 2050) and different strategies and options are available that have positive and negative side effects. The main goal here is to acknowledge and resolve trade-offs. If **Category b** is chosen, formats such as stakeholder Round Tables and Citizen Assemblies are most suitable (see section 3.1.3.). If highly complex and sophisticated issues are involved, expert Delphis may also be used in addition to Round Tables and Citizen Assemblies. Furthermore, to include the special concerns and values of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, focus groups may be organised, again in addition to Round Tables and Citizen Assemblies. Most of the test cases that were organised during the course of REAL-DEAL belong to **Category b**.

- *Category c*: is best suited if there is room for new and innovative ideas of how to deal with an unsatisfactory situation or a problem. The goal is to create a common understanding of the situation and explore the space for potential solutions. Often the output of such processes consists of a set of new insights, visions and motivations. Ideally the process also produces self-commitments of those who participate. Formats that are best suited for this purpose include participatory scenario or planning workshops, future workshops, foresight activities, and participatory modeling. Round Tables, Citizen Assemblies, and Focus Groups can also be used for co-creation, but they would use specific methods and tools to promote creativity and mutual learning.

Comment: Given that the major goals of the EGD have been determined and approved by all EU governments and supported by public opinion, **Category b** represents the best model for deliberating about strategies and options of how to reach the goals and how to avoid negative side effects in terms of social injustice, unfair distribution of burdens, disregard for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups and undue costs to economy and society. However, elements of variant a (for example for measures where alternatives are not realistic or clearly inferior) or of C**ategory c** (where there is room for innovative and unconventional solutions) and when foresight is needed can be included in the participatory portfolio if needed. Based on the major relevance of **Category b** the following steps of the decision tree are focused on **Category b** (enriched in particular with tools of co-creation as exercised in **Category c.**

3.1.2 Scope of participation:

Leading Question: What are the geographic areas, political governance levels and time frames for which the participatory process or event(s) are designed?

Scope and range:

- *space*: local, regional, national, Europe or global.
- *political governance*: community or city, province, state, country, EU, OECD, UN
- *time frame:* short term, middle term, long term, extreme long term (such as nuclear waste disposal)

Decision Tree: How should scope and range be determined and, if determined, what does that imply for the selection of formats?

- *Space:* Most problems related to environmental topics are global in nature (climate, biodiversity, pollution), but they may manifest themselves very differently in the various regions and they may demand very different solutions depending on local climate, settlements, natural conditions, etc. It is therefore necessary to choose formats that can be multiplied in different areas and still coordinated for larger space integration. Citizen Assemblies as well as Round Tables are suited for this purpose since they allow representatives of different regional processes to meet representatives of other regions for deliberation about common challenges and regional impacts of one region on another. This requires major organisational effort and sufficient resources. If these resources are not available, it might be better to focus on a problem that can be addressed within a limited space.

- *Governance level:* The same problem occurs on the governance levels that are often similar to geographic boundaries, but not identical. In addition, each governance level includes a new set of responsibilities and rights (also duties) that include obligations for the next lower governance level. Designing participatory processes for several vertical governance levels is hence bound to address the nested responsibilities of each governance level. The organisers are well advised to design their participation program in correspondence with the legal rights, duties and obligations of the specific governance level that they want to address. Again, Citizen Assemblies and Round Tables are in principle suited for different governance levels (as are, in more limited terms, Group Delphis for expert input and Focus Groups for including disadvantaged individuals) but the level of representativeness and immediacy varies with the governance level: the higher the level the more individuals need to be recruited to be roughly representative to the population (Citizen Assembly) and the more stakeholders need to be included in multiple Round Tables to represent all relevant interests and positions. In addition, the higher the governance level, the more the issues that fall within the remit of the respective level are distant from the lifeworld of the citizens, making it difficult for participants to relate to the issue and to use their personal experience for judging policies and options. Unless an ambitious and well-advanced planning team is available and enough resources are at hand, such multi-level nested participation processes are likely to fail and to become overcomplex. Within the REAL-DEAL project only one level was addressed at a time with each participatory process, yet recommendations for higher or lower levels were also articulated but not harmonized with participatory processes on other governance levels.

- *Time frame:* It is crucial to determine what time frame should be considered when starting a participatory process. Such frame can be co-determined by the participants, but it is essential to link recommendations to timetables (what should be done when) and develop a time horizon in which the recommendations can be assigned (strategies for 2030, 2040 and 2050). Forecasting and backcasting are good tools to link the present with future outcomes. All formats that are included in this report can effectively deal with time frames, but they need to be explicitly addressed. For very long-time frames spanning future generations, methods such as role playing (person born in the future), simulations and appointing advocates for future generations have proven to be effective for ensuring that long term impacts are at least considered.

Box 1: Practical Tips for Framing and Agenda-Setting

Practical Tips for Framing & Agenda-Setting

Setting the overarching remit (i.e. framing) question of a (combined) format and the subsequent agenda item is a crucial step of every participatory and deliberative process. These decisions not only set the contours for the contributions and deliberations of citizens, stakeholders and experts, but they also shape the recommendations and outcomes. In short, a well-crafted remit ensures that (combined) processes tackle pressing and actionable issues, align with local EGD contexts, and maximizes its potential for meaningful impact.

Key Considerations in Framing and Agenda-Setting

1. Purpose and Objectives:

Decision Question: What is the overarching goal?

- *Clearly define the purpose of the (combined) format*: Long-term climate strategy development, addressing current policy gaps, or public engagement and building legitimacy?
- *Early Dialogue and Co-ordination*: Deliberative sponsors, organisers, and advisors – not to mention participants – often hold different expectations. Ensure all voices are heard and a common, realistic and co-ordinated purpose is agreed upon.
- One practical way to do this would be to ask participants beforehand what their expectations are.

2. Broad vs. Tight Remits

Decision Question: What are the objectives?

Broad Remits

- Better for big-picture or "blue-sky" thinking. Give participants the space to explore new and creative solutions
- More appropriate for high-level policy and systemic issues
- Potential Limitations: Lack of focus and/or direction; less actionable outcomes; time-consuming

Tight Remits

- More appropriate for specific for policy issues (e.g., public transport)
- More actionable and easier to align to agenda of decision-makers.
- Potential Limitations: Lack of citizen control (i.e., top-down); failure to explore creative or "radical" alternatives; may prioritise organisers/sponsors needs over the concerns of citizens' concerns.

Tip: One size does not fit all! A hybrid approach can help garner the benefits of both approaches (e.g., broad framing by stakeholders within roundtables, combined with prioritisation by participation within citizens assemblies)

3. Engaging Relevant and Existing Stakeholders:

- Rarely should a framing or agenda-setting process need to start from scratch.
- Relevant stakeholders (e.g., CSO actors), experts, and practitioners - in addition to potential recipients of recommendations – should first be consulted.
- Public consultation processes can also involve the broader public and enhance the credibility, feasibility and legitimacy of the remit

4. Alignment from Process to Outcomes

- Where possible, the terms of reference from the commissioning body and/or organisers should contain clear guidance on the follow-up response (see "Outcomes Phase") and receiving institutions.
- The remit question and agenda must be aligned accordingly (e.g., regional level participatory and deliberative formats should try providing recommendations implementable at the regional level).

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5. **Creating Meaningfulness for Participants**

- Participants should have power, within reason, to shape a given agenda both directly and indirectly (e.g., speaker selection).
- This helps fosters ownership and fresh perspectives, thus strengthening recommendations and legitimacy.

Comment: Pursuing the major goals of the EGD requires attention to long time frames, wide, even global extension, and multiple governance levels. All these can be considered within a regional, community-centred process if global aspects are regarded as contextual conditions for all recommended actions that need to be done on the community level. It is very frustrating for participants if they produce valuable advice, but these recommendations are directed towards policymakers, for example community parliaments, that have neither the responsibility nor the agency to implement them. Therefore, it is crucial to be very specific about the mandate for participants so that the outcome can be directed towards those who have the power of implementation. Sometimes, participatory processes are not designed to produce recommendations but to inform the public debate or to put pressure on powerful elites. But even then, it is necessary to specify what outcome is directed towards what level of government and for which region and for which time frame the final product has been designed.

3.1.3 Selecting Formats and Methods:

Before starting a deliberative event or a series of events, it is crucial that organisers take steps to ensure that the participatory principles – outlined in chapter 2 – are considered. Additionally, organisers must select an appropriate format or combination of formats. The REAL DEAL project has outlined twelve deliberative and participatory formats as noted within section 2.2 (see Table 2). Moreover, the REAL DEAL project has uniquely identified and tested four combinations of formats tailored to specific problems and goals aligned to the EGD. Importantly, each of these combined formats has been empirically tested within the REAL DEAL project (see Table 20, REAL DEAL Synthesis report, p. 102). The chosen combinations each had a different rationale which can be summarised as follows:

Roundtables and citizen assemblies: Roundtables and citizen assemblies focus on two different public constituencies: on organised 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.

Group Delphi and citizen assemblies: in group Delphis, 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 is to give citizens the possibility to be informed from various perspectives and be well informed about the evidence pertaining to the problem and the impacts of the potential solutions.

Focus groups and citizen assemblies: focus groups provide safe spaces for structurally excluded groups. The goal of combining focus groups with citizen assemblies is to share the perspective of structurally excluded groups with consideration in their deliberations.

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

Box 2: Outline of Combined Participatory and Deliberative Formats

Outline of Combined Participatory and Deliberative Formats Utilised within REAL DEAL

1. Roundtable + Citizen Assembly

Recommended Use:

This combination is ideal for integrating both stakeholder and public perspectives on complex EGD issues. Roundtables provide a platform for organized stakeholders (e.g., NGOs, industry representatives) to discuss specialized knowledge or concerns, while Citizen Assemblies (CAs) involve randomly selected citizens to deliberate on these issues from a public interest standpoint. Importantly, the inclusion of a roundtable process also avoids the potential "crowding out" (Courant 2021) of existing stakeholders during a given CA process. Additionally, relevant stakeholders may also be invited to address a CA as speakers and/or expert advisors where applicable. Most common is the invitation of stakeholders as witnesses that can be questioned by the participating citizens about their positions, interests and concerns.

Best Practices:

- **Clear Role Definitions:** Ensure that stakeholders in the Roundtable and citizens in the Assembly understand their respective roles to enhance clarity and focus in discussions.
- **Coordination and Flow of Information:** Findings from Roundtables should be summarized for Citizen Assembly participants, allowing citizens to review stakeholder insights before forming their recommendations.

Potential Pitfalls:

- **Overrepresentation of Stakeholders:** Ensure that Roundtable discussions do not overshadow the Citizen Assembly deliberations.

- **Simplification Needs:** Avoid oversimplifying stakeholder discussions when presenting them to citizens, as this could lead to misunderstandings of complex issues.

Decision Tree:

- Is this specific EGD-related issue contentious or multifaceted with respect to organized interests in society?

  ο **Yes:** Begin with Roundtable to gather structured stakeholder insights.
  ο **No:** Proceed with Citizen Assembly alone.

- **Does it suffice to invite stakeholders as witnesses to the Assembly (for making their positions known) or are the issues so complex and contested that a stakeholder Round Table is necessary to sort out interests and positions and provide systematic argumentation for each position?**

  ο **No:** Present summarized Roundtable outcomes to Citizen Assembly for informed deliberation.
  ο **Yes:** Citizen Assembly can proceed independently.

Outcome Focus	Format Combinations	Benefits	Potential Pitfalls	Example for EGD
Balancing stakeholder and public perspectives	Roundtable + Citizen Assembly	Ensures representation of both stakeholder insights and public values	Overrepresentation of specific interests, oversimplification of stakeholder discussions	Use Roundtable to discuss sustainable agricultural practices, followed by Citizen Assembly for broader public recommendations

2. Group Delphi + Citizen Assembly

Recommended Use: Expert knowledge and state-of-the-art evidence are critical for addressing the "wicked problems" associated with the EGD. This combination supports informed policy recommendations by leveraging expert insights followed by public deliberation. In short, a Group Delphi gathers and categorizes claims of evidence on technical or forward-looking topics, then a Citizen Assembly uses this input to form citizen-driven recommendations. This ensures decisions reflect expert knowledge and public values, while helping to overcome the existing knowledge-action gap between climate science and climate policy within our traditional political system.

Best Practices:

- **Simplification of Expert Input:** Make sure the outcomes of the Group Delphi are translated into accessible formats for non-experts, maintaining essential details for informed decision-making.

- **Time Management:** Coordinate the timing between Delphi and Citizen Assembly to prevent findings from becoming outdated.

Potential Pitfalls:

- **Technical Jargon:** Simplify expert input for Citizen Assembly without losing nuance.
- **Disjointed Timing:** Avoid delays between Delphi and Citizen Assembly to keep discussions relevant.

Decision Tree:

- **Is the evidence contested or highly complex?**
    - o **Yes:** Begin with Group Delphi.
    - o **No:** Start directly with Citizen Assembly.

Outcome Focus	Format Combinations	Benefits	Potential Pitfalls	Example for EGD
Creating well-informed, balanced policies	Group Delphi + Citizen Assembly	Merges expert and citizen perspectives for robust recommendations	Complexity of expert input, timing misalignment	Use Group Delphi for insights on renewable energy, followed by Citizen Assembly for policy recommendations

3. Focus Groups + Citizen Assembly

Recommended Use:

Demographic sampling within Citizen Assemblies is not an exact science and despite the best efforts of organisers, marginalised groups presence (i.e, participation) and voice (i.e, opinions being heard) may be omitted or minimised within a given Citizen Assembly. Consequently, Citizen Assemblies alone – which have inclusion as a core value – may serve to amplify existing external inequalities due to self-selection and socio-economic class biases. This combination can enhance the active inclusion of marginalized or structurally excluded perspectives in broader public deliberations. In short, Focus Groups offer safe spaces for underrepresented voices, whose insights can then inform Citizen Assembly discussions.

Best Practices:

- **Sensitive Facilitation:** Ensure facilitators are trained in creating inclusive, supportive environments for Focus Group participants.
- **Careful Integration of Insights:** Summarize Focus Group insights thoughtfully for Citizen Assembly to maintain confidentiality and accuracy. Have members of the focus groups represented at the Citizen Assembly to provide authentic input to the deliberation process.

Potential Pitfalls:

- **Confidentiality Risks:** Handle Focus Group feedback with care to avoid breaches of confidentiality.

- **Overgeneralisation of Insights:** Avoid presenting Focus Group insights as representative of entire communities.

Decision Tree:

- **Is there a need to include perspectives from marginalised groups?**
    - ο **Yes:** Begin with Focus Groups for targeted insights.
    - ο **No:** Proceed with Citizen Assembly.
- **Do marginalised perspectives need amplification?**
    - ο **Yes:** Present Focus Group findings in Citizen Assembly for broader consideration. If possible, ask members of the focus groups to represent their concerns in front of the Citizen Assembly.
    - ο **No:** Use Citizen Assembly alone.

Outcome Focus	Format Combinations	Benefits	Potential Pitfalls	Example for EGD
Amplifying marginalized voices in policy formation	Focus Group + Citizen Assembly	Ensures inclusion of structurally excluded perspectives	Risks to confidentiality, risk of overgeneralisation	Use Focus Groups with economically disadvantaged communities, then bring insights to Citizen Assembly on green jobs policies

4. Roundtables at Regional/Local Level and National Level

Recommended Use:

Multi-level (vertical) governance is crucial for ensuring effective buy-in and implementation of EGD policies across various levels of governance. In short, this approach allows for both regional and national perspectives to be included in policy deliberations. For instance, Regional Roundtables can explore local concerns, which are then integrated into national-level discussions to provide a comprehensive, multi-level perspective on EGD issues. Likewise, National-level roundtables may set the strategic parameters for regional & local level engagement between relevant stakeholders.

Good Practices:

- **Sequential Flow of Discussions:** Hold Regional Roundtables first, then National Roundtables to incorporate localized insights into national debates.
- **Consistent Moderation:** Use a common framework across regions to maintain consistency in outputs.

Potential Pitfalls:

- **Fragmentation of Perspectives:** Ensure regional insights are not lost when scaling to the national level.

- **Inconsistent Outcomes:** Develop standard guidelines for discussions to avoid variation in regional outputs.

Decision Tree:

- **Are there significant regional variations in the issue?**
    - ο **Yes:** Begin with Regional Roundtables.
    - ο **No:** Use National Roundtable alone.

- **Is there a need for integrating regional and national insights?**
    - ο **Yes:** Present Regional Roundtable outcomes in National Roundtable.
    - ο **No:** Proceed with National Roundtable only.

Outcome Focus	Format Combinations	Benefits	Potential Pitfalls	Example for EGD
Integrating regional concerns into national policy	Regional Roundtable + National Roundtable	Ensures local and national perspectives inform policy	Potential fragmentation of perspectives, outcome inconsistencies	Hold Regional Roundtables on local energy needs, followed by National Roundtable for integrated EGD policy planning

In sum, these proposed combinations provide diverse, well-rounded approaches to address complex EGD challenges. By carefully selecting and structuring these formats (with reference to the above guidelines – see REAL DEAL Synthesis report for further detail), policy deliberations can reflect a range of insights—from expert analyses to stakeholder priorities to (marginalised) public perspectives—thus supporting more resilient and inclusive outcomes.

Overall, regardless of the chosen (combination of) formats, the organisers need to specify the individuals who are or will be selected to participate in the respective formats (inclusion), to determine the scope, timeframe and geographic boundaries of the deliberation (context), to determine the nature of the final product(s) of the deliberation (closure) and the anticipated integration of these products into the policy- or decision-making arenas (transfer). For a systematic approach to develop a coherent and effective participation strategy, it is helpful to follow the structure of a decision tree described in the next paragraphs.

3.1.4 Inclusion:

Leading Question: Who should be invited to take part in participatory processes?

Principal options:

- Organised stakeholders, including representatives of corporations, associations and civil society organisations such as NGOs;
- Non-organised citizens either by random selection (all have the same chance to be drawn into the sample) or by asking for volunteers;
- Experts for the topic to be discussed;
- Vulnerable or disadvantaged groups with special concerns and needs.

Decision Tree: What are convincing reasons for including or excluding potential participants and which formats are most suitable for what types of participants?

- *Inclusiveness:* Regardless of what format is chosen there will be always a selection of who is included and who is excluded (unless the population is so small that everyone can participate). There is a need for a selection rule that can be justified based on the evaluative principles mentioned in Chapter 3. According to these principles, a fair, transparent and empowering process is crucial. This would imply that at least stakeholders and representatives of the citizenry should be included. However, if the issue to be addressed is very complex and requires special knowledge an additional step to include the best available expertise is required. Similarly, if the issue may have impacts for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, special formats to include them are necessary in order to give these groups a voice in the policy process. If that is unlikely to be the case, it may be sufficient to make sure that a critical mass of these disadvantaged individuals is represented in the formats that have been chosen (Citizen Assemblies or Round Tables).

- *Format selection:* The format Citizen Assembly seems to be best suited to meet the evaluative principle of inclusion as everyone has the same chance to be part of the participatory process and powerful interest groups are only allowed to present their positions as witnesses to the process. One should, however, acknowledge that Citizen Assemblies are not representative of the respective population in the statistical sense (even if participants are selected according to statistical distribution criteria). Yet, they guarantee the highest heterogeneity compared to any other participatory format. The alternative, citizen panels that are recruited by voluntary commitment tend to attract activists from all sides of the issue, who are often unwilling to submit themselves to a genuine learning experience but rather stick to their preformed position. Based on the literature, the experience with the REAL DEAL project and the results of the Expert Delphi on participatory formats, citizen assemblies are recommended to be the default option for an effective and fair participatory process. However, they are not the panacea for all problems within the EGD portfolio. Many issues demand special services, behavioural adaptations or even sacrifices by specific stakeholders. It would not be fair if randomly selected citizens are asked to *represent the stakeholders' positions* even if they have listened to their concerns. That is why in the REAL DEAL project, Stakeholder Round Tables were conducted to deliberate about the implications of different policies for each stakeholder and to discuss which policy modifications are possible to reduce burdens and facilitate a more equitable distribution of benefits and costs. It seems that within the policy framework of the EGD almost all topics that are addressed in the EU framework are associated with special implications for stakeholders so that a combination of Stakeholder Roundtable and Citizen Assemblies are recommended unless the stakeholder impact is clearly insignificant.

- *Inclusion of expertise:* Many issues and problems related to the EGD require expertise and familiarity with complex and dynamic phenomena. Furthermore, scientific knowledge on these issues is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty and ambiguity. Even among experts many insights are contested and have led to major controversies in the respective epistemic communities. For dealing with these issues in a competent way, it is insufficient to provide stakeholders and citizens with some basic background information. Within the REAL DEAL project, the research team decided to use the format of Group Delphi to identify the legitimate range of interpretations of scientific findings and to distinguish between almost certain, highly probably, possible and absurd knowledge claims. This is particularly important for issues where fake news and pseudo-scientific reasoning dominates the discourse in the social media. The results of the Delphi are then input to the Citizen Assemblies or Stakeholder Round Tables and the participants of the Delphi can be called on as resource persons or witnesses for explaining complex phenomena. This proved to be highly effective, and this combination is highly recommended if the topic is complex, uncertain and ambiguous. At the same time, issues such as green food or green transport for private mobility may not need such a combination as personal experience and some basic knowledge input might be sufficient for an informed debate.

- *Respecting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and entities, including future generations:* A major concern of the REAL DEAL consortium was the inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups as well as entities from nature (animals, plants, landscapes) and future generations. Two propositions were articulated in the beginning of the project: (1) These groups and entities should become integral part of Citizen Assemblies or Stakeholder Round Tables or (2) they should be included in specialized formats. With respect to entities of nature there is no format that includes entities that cannot speak for themselves. They always need guardians or advocates that can represent their views and interests. Such guardians can be integrated into any format, but it may require special sessions in which these interests are discussed or experienced (for example by means of a nature walk). In contrast to natural entities, vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals can (and should) speak for themselves but they need a discursive environment in which they feel comfortable and empowered to speak up. The experiences with REAL DEAL show that specialized Focus Groups composed of representatives of these groups proved to be effective for eliciting their concerns, views and visions. It is important to recruit a critical mass of each group to create an atmosphere of common experience and mutual respect. The results of these focus groups can be delivered directly to policy makers or used as valuable inputs to the deliberations in Stakeholder Round Tables or Citizen Assemblies.

Comment: The REAL DEAL consortium tested only a limited set of participatory formats. They do, however, represent the different categories of inclusion: experts, stakeholders, citizens and disadvantaged groups. If an organiser of a participatory process can only use one format, the default option would be the model of Citizen Assemblies. However, if the topic is highly relevant for stakeholders but not for ordinary citizens (for example, greening the steel industry), a Round Table is the better option for participation. Generally, a combination of formats is more suitable to deal with EGD topics. If stakeholders are significantly affected, a combination of Citizen Assemblies and Stakeholder Round Tables are most suitable. If in addition expertise is contested and the issue is laden with uncertainties and ambiguities, a Group Delphi (or similar expert workshop) is an excellent method to inform citizens and

stakeholder alike for making robust and evidence-informed recommendations. Any time that vulnerable groups or disadvantaged groups may experience impacts different from the general population, they should be given a clear space in focus groups. A major effort is, however, necessary to recruit representatives of these groups. The experience of the REAL DEAL project has shown that members of disadvantaged groups need to be addressed individually. They are more inclined to accept such an invitation if they know that they are not going to be lone voices in a larger forum. Specialised recruitment agencies are already on the market that are able and competent to lead a successful recruitment process.

In an ideal process, all four formats could and should be combined since they represent different but all legitimate concerns and vision of how the goals of the EGD program should be translated into concrete policy actions.

Box 3: Recruitment within EGD-related Participatory & Deliberative Processes

Recruitment within EGD-related Participatory & Deliberative Processes

Why Recruitment Matters?

To accurately represent society, a proper recruitment process is needed. It enables a diverse and representative group of individuals to deliberate and make decisions on various issues, unencumbered by external pressures. A strategy to address the limitations and biases inherent in conventional recruitment techniques involves the implementation of randomization at various phases of the participant recruitment and selection process.

Another way to overcome biases in recruitment techniques is to use disaggregated targeted recruitment combined with random methods. For example, one can first target community groups that are often underrepresented or excluded in participatory policy processes. Once you have a group of respondents, you can develop further selection principles. The aim was to capture some key characteristics about the people applying and then use this information to ensure you have people from underrepresented and structurally excluded groups. E.g., if you have groups disaggregated by gender, income, racialised group, you can decide on quotas for each group and purposefully select those who are typically structurally excluded. Some points to consider:

1. Save some spaces for random selection to ensure that those who opted not to fill in identifying questions are not excluded.

2. The names of participants should be removed from the identifying features or handled by separate groups entirely (if labour allows) to ensure privacy.

3. Include a security question on the registration form. E.g. "What are you expecting of the event?" or "what would you like to discuss at the event?".

Key Considerations in Recruitment

People's Needs / Accessibility

Ask people beforehand what accessibility needs they have for the space and ensure you provide them

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Equality of opportunity

Use random selection to enhance fairness by guaranteeing that every individual has an equal opportunity to be chosen.

Representativeness

Ensure that proportional numbers of subpopulations (according to gender, age, location, and so forth) can be selected for the public engagement process.

Timing

The timing of recruitment should be appropriate, and participants should be given clear guidance on the content and format of the process.

Transparency

It is essential to guarantee that every stage of the process is completely transparent and well-founded. This fosters trust among the broader community regarding the selection of individuals and promotes the perception that the assembled group is impartial.

Recommendations for Actionable Recruitment

Define stages of randomization: 1. design, deliver, and manage the invitation message to the original recipients of the invitation; 2. define the demographic factors or other participant requirements; 3. form a final group of representatives of the population who fulfil the aggregated or collective principles.

Use incentives and provide support

Provide money and other incentives, like childcare and other forms of support for those who would otherwise not be able to attend.

Work with external recruiting agencies to keep track of the record and to provide incentives for participants.

3.1.5 Commitment

Leading Question: How will participant recommendations be integrated into policymaking?

Principal options:

- No commitment
- Promise to take the recommendations seriously
- Promise to provide (written) justification for reformations that are not implemented
- Promise to implement all recommendations unless there are legal obstacles

Decision Tree: Is there a formal commitment from policymakers to consider recommendations seriously?

- *Vague promise to consider recommendations*: This is the minimum required to make participatory processes meaningful. Nothing is more frustrating for participants than to discover that their elaborate work is neglected or ignored. Any organiser should press for a stronger commitment.
- *Promise to provide (written) justification for recommendations that are not fully accepted:* This is the preferred option if, for valid reasons, adoption of all

recommendations is not legally possible. Experience has shown that participants accept deviations from their recommendations if these are clearly justified and explained to them.

- *Promise to implement all recommendations unless there are legal obstacles:* Most constitutions do not allow imperative mandate by informal participatory bodies. However, decision-makers can promise to bring all recommendations to vote by parliaments or other decision-making institutions.

Comment: One of the significant challenges in participatory processes is ensuring that citizen and stakeholder recommendations are actually *considered* by policymakers. Where possible, formal commitments should be established before the process begins, specifying how and to what extent recommendations will be integrated (for consideration) into policy and decision-making processes. It is crucial to communicate this commitment to participants, experts and stakeholders in advance, outlining the potential policy pathways and decision bodies involved. If participants are aware from the beginning that their recommendations will be acknowledged, they will be more committed to producing valuable outcomes and it will likely increase participants' confidence in the process. In addition to the promise of the decision-making bodies to consider the products of the participation seriously, it is advisable to define the timelines and responsibilities for follow-up actions and make them transparent to all parties.

3.2 Engagement phase
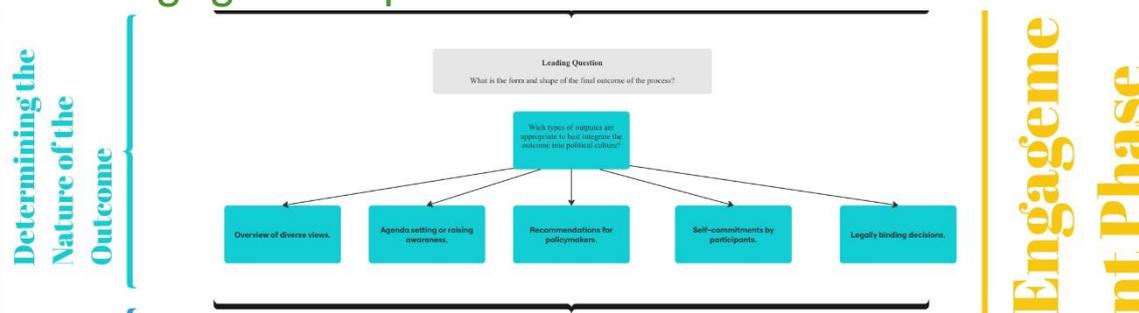
During the process organisers need to be focused on fairness, competent moderation and facilitation, unbiased knowledge input and efficient organisation. Online tools, which have become more prominent in recent years, may also be utilised throughout the engagement phase as discussed in Box 3. In addition, it is necessary to determine the nature of the envisioned outcome of the participation. In the context of the EGD, participatory processes are most often designed to produce recommendations for different decision- and policymakers. But they can also be used for agenda setting, informing the public discourse, putting pressure on decision-makers, or producing self-commitments. It is crucial to think in advance what kind of output is envisioned and what should be done with the results once they have been delivered. Closely related to this issue is the type of closure that organisers envision at the end of the process. There are variations of voting mechanisms (majority, two thirds, three quarters), majority and minority positions; consensus; tolerated consensus (absentee votes allowed) or consensus on dissenting positions. The following parts of the decision tree specify these choices and explain the various options including their pros and cons.

Box 4: Using Online Tools for participatory and deliberative processes

Using Online Tools for participatory and deliberative processes

In recent years the landscape of participation has been transformed by the integration of online tools into participatory and deliberative processes. Online participation has become even more important following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated remote collaboration. Nowadays, online tools have become particularly crucial in the context of deliberative processes, offering new avenues for information sharing, discussion, and collective decision-making. They offer the potential to overcome traditional barriers to participation, such as geographical constraints, time limitations, and accessibility issues for some target groups. A lot of online tools are available for supporting participatory processes. However, the choice of the right digital tools and their effective implementation require careful consideration of technological, social, and ethical factors, and to consider existing "digital divides" that can exclude target groups from participation. The OECD Guideline for Citizen Participation Processes (2022: 51-52) provides for instance some recommendations on how to select the right online tools for a participatory process.

Online participation can take various forms and mobilise a wide array of online tools for facilitating participatory processes, depending on what you intend to achieve. Online tools available to support participatory processes can be divided into different categories, such as video conferencing tools, engagement tools, presentation tools, visualisation tools, just to name a few.

More exhaustive lists of tools available for online participation can be found online[1]. To understand which sort of online tools you might want to use, you first need to know how you want to set up your online participation process, either through one of the following modalities or in combination:

- In a synchronous way: online tools are then employed to replicate or support participatory processes in real-time and effectively enhance in-person events. When carrying out online participatory processes that enhance or even replace face-to-face processes, several key factors should be considered to ensure a productive process and mitigate potential drawbacks. Firstly, it is important to select tools which are user friendly and accessible to all participants (to ensure the inclusivity of the process). While it is recommended to rely on several tools (for instance, video conferencing and an online white board), it is also advisable to not use too many tools. Secondly, process facilitators need to carefully consider the use of online tools in the process design and adapt it accordingly.

- In an asynchronous way: online tools, generally through participation platforms, are used alongside or between face-to-face meetings, offering a possibility for ongoing engagement and allowing participants to contribute at their convenience. Such platforms offer structured environments for online participation, featuring tools for proposal submission, commenting, and voting. The use of such a participatory platform can contribute to reinforcing the interactions between stakeholders and citizens through a sequential approach, to foster debates among citizens across European countries through the multilingual add-on, to include citizens who would not participate in deliberations otherwise, and to support transparent communication and documentation of processes and results. Such

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[1] E.g. https://www.involve.org.uk/news-opinion/opinion/digital-tools-participation-where-start or https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/online-tools-for-workshops/

platforms can be used in different ways by the facilitators, for instance, just as an information platform, providing content and organisational information on their event, to activate participants though various online tools, or by creating real online debates among participants. The content generated on such platforms can be used, for instance, to prepare or conduct face-to-face deliberative events. To provide a concrete example, the platform can be used in the preparation stage of an event, by letting the participants prioritize the topics to be addressed during the event through a vote/support function. Following the event, a platform can be used to post the results of the deliberation and leave participants, as well as citizens who did not attend the event, to continue discussing the topics addressed during the event. More details on how to run an online participatory process through a platform can be found for instance [2][OBJ]. As asynchronous online participation generally relies on written language, a careful online moderation is necessary to control the quality of the debates online, including the length of the comments and the simplicity of the language used on the platform. Moreover, getting continuous engagement on such platforms remains challenging. For that, it is important to carry out important promotion works on the online process, for instance during face-to-face events, or to integrate multimedia elements, interactive components or even gamification features in order to make the participation experience more attractive for users.

Key learnings: To summarize, the successful implementation of online tools in participatory processes requires taking the following recommendations into account. Firstly, the use of online tools should be taken into consideration directly during the design stage. Facilitators of processes should ask themselves when, with whom and why they want to use which online tools during a participatory process, and what is the added value of using those tools. Second, combining online and offline methods often yields the best results, leveraging the strengths of both approaches to ensure inclusivity and depth of engagement. To get the best results though, facilitators should carefully coordinate the online and the offline activities. Thirdly, effective online participation requires skilled digital moderation to manage discussions, ensure constructive dialogue, and synthesize inputs. It also requires social and creative ability to compensate at best as possible for the lack of a full empathetic participation that may be hindered by online tools.

3.2.1 Determining the nature of the outcome

Leading Question: What is the form and shape of the final output that is going to be produced at the end of the process?

Principal options:

- Overview of diverse views, positions and visions
- Contribution to agenda setting, raising awareness or exerting social pressure on decision-making bodies
- Recommendations for legal decision- and policymakers
- List of self-commitments
- Legally binding decisions

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[2] https://www.peoplepowered.org/digital-guide-menu/selecting-a-digital-participation-platform

Decision Tree: Which of these options are appropriate for the topic at hand and how can the selected option be integrated into the political culture and context?

- *Overview of diverse views, positions and visions:* This outcome is suited for participatory processes designed to demonstrate the diversity of opinions and positions in a heterogeneous population. It does not lead to any political action other than raising awareness of the plurality of values and preferences associated with the issue. Since the EGD mandates clear political action and adjustments, such an output may be helpful, but it is certainly not sufficient.

- *Contribution to agenda setting, raising awareness or exerting social pressure on decision-making bodies:* Many participatory processes are initiated bottom-up or by civil society organisations to influence the public discourse. Different from providing just an overview of existing opinions, this product includes strong arguments for actions and requests for policy changes. The outcomes can also be used for starting social movements and putting pressure on political actors. The formats introduced in this chapter are not the most suitable instruments for this kind of output. Campaigns, festivals, exhibitions, demonstrations and other forms of widely published processes are probably the best means for shaping the public discourse on EGD topics. Within the REAL DEAL project many processes including festivals and Pan-European meetings were conducted and tested.

- *Recommendations for legal decision- and policymakers:* This is the main and most popular output from the formats that are discussed in this chapter. Citizen Assemblies and Round Tables are designed for drafting recommendations to legal decision- and policymakers. As stated above these recommendations have no binding power but need to be recognized and treated seriously by the decision-making bodies.

- *List of self-commitments:* This is a particularly valuable output for Stakeholder Round Tables. Many objectives of the EGD can only be accomplished when major stakeholders commit themselves to these objectives and implement the respective measures. Self-commitment can be combined with policy recommendations.

- *Legally binding decisions:* In most countries constitutional law does not allow to delegate legal decision making to an ad hoc committee or participatory body. However, legal decision makers particularly on the local level can voluntarily agree that the results of a deliberative process will be submitted to a parliamentary discussion and vote without any interference or modification by executive power or administration.

Comment: The choice of output is closely related to purpose, inclusion and transfer. In the context of the EGD, a combination of providing recommendations, including stakeholder and citizens (if necessary, amended by Group Delphi and focus groups) and an assurance that these recommendations are taken seriously by the addressed decision- and policymakers appears to be the most suited approach to an effective, fair and legitimate participatory process.

Box 5: Facilitation in participatory and deliberative processes

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Facilitation within EGD-related Participatory & Deliberative Processes

Why Facilitation Matters?
The manner in which a meeting is conducted significantly influences each individual's capacity to engage and participate effectively. Facilitators implement various strategies to address power dynamics, utilizing exercises designed to promote equal participation, while also emphasizing the established time frame for the meeting. They facilitate the progression of ideas from individuals to smaller groups and ultimately to the entire assembly.

Key Facilitation Skills

Active listening is needed to fully comprehend the messages conveyed by others.

Questioning aids in clarifying participants` statements and encourages individuals to examine their needs while generating new options.

Summarising serves to highlight the main points of the conversation and ensures that we share a common understanding.

Synthesising is the ability to integrate various perspectives and ideas into a cohesive proposal that accommodates the interests of all parties involved.

Recommendations for Actionable Facilitation

Use specific techniques for more equitable discussions to address suppression, polarisation, and conflict de-escalation, and to integrate feminist values effectively.

Manage the discussion flow by calling on participants in a suitable sequence, typically as they signal their desire to contribute. Encourage full participation: engage quieter individuals, limit excessive talking, and prevent any single person from monopolizing the conversation.

Utilize methods like breaking into smaller groups to promote equal participation and foster a safe environment for sharing opinions and emotions.

Assess the group's overall sentiment during the meeting, including energy levels, interest in the topic, and time management.

Maintain a positive atmosphere: express gratitude for each person's contributions and highlight areas of agreement and shared perspectives.

Feminist Moderation Techniques

Feminist moderation techniques go a step further in dismantling power dynamics that may arise during deliberative processes. Feminist facilitators not only create safe accessible spaces by identifying people's diverse needs and meeting them, they also can create brave spaces where people are comfortable making mistakes and learning from each other in the process. Structures such as heteropatriarchy, ableism, and racism can manifest themselves in group interactions, but to people not affected by these structures such dynamics are often made invisible. Feminist moderation therefore requires reflexivity on your own position as a moderator as well as the ways in which power dynamics may

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occur throughout deliberative processes. Tackling them requires various de-escalation and empathy techniques based on feminist principles of community justice.

For comprehensive training on feminist facilitation techniques, please check out our feminist moderation course

3.2.2 *Assuring high quality of the participation process*

Leading Question: How should the participatory process be designed to assure competent, fair and evidence-informed outputs?

Principal requirements:

- *Transparency* from the point of view of third parties, in documenting how participants were selected, and how their views were taken into account, as well as from the point of view from the participants with respect to their full understanding of all process steps, communicative procedures, methods of reaching agreements and the future use of the produced outputs.
- *Clear mandate* of what is being expected from the participatory exercise from the beginning including timetable, scope and range of options, clear understanding about the nature and the future use of the outcomes of the deliberations.
- *Competence* in terms of ensuring that the state of the art in knowledge and the diversity of knowledge claims about the topic at hand are considered during the deliberations and that all participants are made literate about the issue itself and how a discourse based on deliberative reasoning and argumentation is being conducted. For highly complex scientific topics, it may be necessary to organise in advance an epistemic discourse for characterising the state of knowledge including its complexities, uncertainties and ambiguities as an important input to deliberative formats of participation. This could be done by a Group Delphi as explained above. The criteria for selecting experts or evidence needs to be made transparent to all participants.

Box 6: Practical Tips for the Inclusion of Knowledge and Expertise

Practical Tips for the Inclusion of Knowledge and Expertise

The inclusion of relevant knowledge and expertise within (combined) deliberative and participatory formats is the is the backbone of informed deliberation, especially those complex topics related to the EGD. Such processes are also critical in combating the rise of misinformation and disinformation in our society.

Effective selection, communication, and oversight of (relevant) evidence – whether derived from experts, stakeholders or practitioners – is crucial to ensuring the credibility, legitimacy, and implementation of outcomes aligned to EGD objectives.

Key Challenges to Knowledge Inclusion

1. The Scope of Evidence Selection

- Topics related to the EGD, such as climate change, involve complex, cross-cutting and multi-level issues. Consequently, what constitutes "relevant evidence" is difficult to determine.

- The rise of misinformation and disinformation may further complicate this task.

2. Expert Knowledge Vs Participant Agency

- Although participants require guidance on complex and technical subject matter, expert dominated (aside from Group Delphis) processes risks undermining participants' agency and authentic involvement.
- This may lead to "blind deference" to expert authority and expert-driven recommendations which are presented as "citizens'" proposals.
- Expert framing may lead to a narrow focus on "technical" solutions which neglect other diverse values and alternatives (example?)

3. Diversity of Perspectives and Accessibility of Material

- Failure to account for diverse perspectives (epistemological, experiential, political etc.) risks incomplete, unbalanced and/or biased evidence
- Technical information must also be accessible to all participants (with diverse backgrounds). Simple communication (e.g. no jargon) and presentation is necessary.

Key Recommendations

1. Transparency in Selection

- A knowledge committee(s), composed of a balanced group of independent and leading experts, can assist with agenda-setting, speaker selection and also peer review of the material presented.
- Standards for including evidence or experts – including expert (process) designers – should be well documented and communicated to participants and broader public (where applicable).

2. Diverse Expertise and Evidence

- Speakers and experts from a diverse array of gender, ethnicity, political ideologies, and values should be ideally involved.
- The inclusion of practitioner and local knowledge may help regular citizens to better understand expert evidence. Such "lay" contributors may also play an invaluable role in challenging the more abstract or theoretical knowledge of traditional experts.

3. Involving Participants

- Organisers should enable the assembly members to suggest topics or other experts, especially on matters that relate directly to their remit and (potential) recommendations.
- Pre-meeting materials should be provided in preparation for knowledgeable input into knowledge curation by participants.
- Organisers should also allow opportunities for participants to deliberate on evidence in small groups with facilitation.

4. Balanced Presentation Formats

- Interactions in Q&A formats, group discussions, and workshops give participants an opportunity to critique and question evidence.
- Storytelling, visualisation, and narrative presentation formats complement more technical presentations and make the information both more accessible and engaging.

5. **Minimising Expert Domination**

- Ask experts to serve as "honest brokers" in describing policy alternatives without recommending "pet" proposals.
- Or alternatively, ensure neutrality by selecting counterevidence for contested or controversial issues. Importantly, do not exclude "radical", "alternative" or "controversial" voices of dissent, unless they explicitly endorse disinformation (e.g. climate change denial)

By embedding these practices into combined formats, EGD-related participatory and deliberative processes can be assured that evidence will inform deliberations while still allowing the voices of participants to be heard. Overall, this balance of expert guidance with citizen agency – as perhaps best encapsulated by the "Group Delphi + Citizens' Assembly" combined format – can ensure more robust, inclusive and legitimate outcomes.

- *Diversity* in terms of multiple perspectives, viewpoints and disciplines: Citizen Assemblies and Stakeholder Round Tables are suitable formats for representing diversity among organised interests as well as general population. However, it may be necessary to add focus groups for socially disadvantaged groups, minorities or vulnerable individuals.
- *Professionalism* in terms of structuring, moderating and facilitating the process and summarising and disseminating the results. Professional skills are not necessarily connected to professional agencies or consultancies but could also be delivered by volunteers and highly respected individuals. Yet a basic training in facilitation and moderation should be the minimum requirement for conducting deliberative discourses. Moderators and facilitators should also be informed and inspired by new methods of conducting deliberative discourses, as recently developed by feminist or ecological moderation techniques.
- *Impartiality of moderating and conducting the participatory process:* The organisers and facilitators should avoid any bias towards any of the options and arguments presented during the deliberation. They act as catalysts to bring people together and reach agreement, but they should abstain from direct or indirect interventions in favour of any position (except if positions are voiced that clearly violate ethical values or basic civil rights, or that are manifestly lacking an evidence based and clearly built on incorrect, incoherent, vague and false data). Organisers should also be sensitive to the fact that facilitators or moderators may appear biased because they belong to groups with a clear position. Impartiality is a major requirement for participatory processes to be judged as legitimate.
- *Fairness* in terms of an adequate representation of the constituencies in the participatory process and in terms of equal speaking and deliberating opportunities among the participants. Of special importance is the equal treatment of minorities or disadvantaged groups. If they are particularly affected by the issue that has been chosen for a participatory process it is advisable to create a separate forum for them in which they can voice their concerns and preferences.

- *Empowerment* is an important objective that requires respect for all viewpoints and personal values. It is also an indirect product of participation if participants experience that they have agency in the political arenas.
- *Efficiency* in terms of a balanced proportion between resources invested into the participatory activities and the envisioned outcome as well as the cost-effective use of deliberative techniques and methods.

Comment: The quality assurance principles (i.e. principles that enhance the quality of the participatory processes) above are the most important principles that were identified by the REAL DEAL project. More detailed research results and practical applications can be found in the synergy papers and the toolboxes for moderation, in particular feminist moderation. Quality assurance can best be accomplished by a formative evaluation process. Formative evaluation involves an independent team of evaluators, who observe the process, use analytic and discursive methods of empirical social research to inform the organisers about the quality and the actual performance during the course of action (not afterwards). This permanent supervision of the process can assist organisers to correct problems before they compromise the entire process, and to make changes to improve an unsatisfactory situation.

Box 7: Practical Advice on Good Governance

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Practical Advice on Good Governance

Good governance is essential to ensure the legitimacy, credibility and transparency of (combined) deliberative and participatory formats. In short, this involves structuring the governance of a given (combined) format(s) to ensure that diverse interests (both internal and external) perceive the process as fair and credible.

Clear structures, procedures and rules should thus aim to ensure inclusivity, independence and genuine engagement with relevant stakeholders to design and deliver processes that produce meaningful outcomes. This section outlined key approaches and recommendations for effective governance arrangements aligned to EGD objectives.

Three Governance Approaches

1. **Governance Led by Independent Organisations (i.e., "practitioners").**

- Participatory and deliberative specialists may be tasked by process "sponsors" to design and/or organise and/or evaluate (combined) formats
- Expert and knowledge committees may also be engaged to advise on design, engagement and outcomes stages.

Strengths:
- Specialists likely to follow best-practice approaches = better outcomes
- May ensure a higher degree of trust and independence = more legitimacy

Potential Pitfalls:
- Specialists and expert advisors may be "co-opted" and view a process purely from an instrumental perspective.
- Need to ensure goals of sponsors and external organisers are aligned
- Oversight of external practitioners is advisable (e.g., "outsourcing" elements such as recruitment, facilitation may lead to quality issues if not effectively monitored).

Governance by Seconded Civil Servants

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- A dedicated "secretariat" composed of civil servants, typically accompanied by expert advisory committees.

Strengths:

- Allows for greater alignment of recommendations into existing public policy processes.
- Enables utilisation of the institutional knowledge and networks of the commissioning authority.

Potential Pitfalls:

- There is a risk of perceptions of bias or reduced independence.
- Agenda-setting, expert-selection and outcomes may conform to institutional priorities at the expense of citizen-input.

3. Multi-Stakeholder Governance (MSG) Committees
- MSG committees or "steering groups" often consist of stakeholders, technical experts, and sometimes members.
- These committees help govern the operations of an assembly.

Strengths:
- Involvement of multiple stakeholders can enhance representativeness, expertise and thus legitimacy.
- Provides greater agency for participants to shape given processes.

Potential Pitfalls:
- Increases the potential for conflict and misalignment of goals.
- Participants may not be fully representative of their respective groups.

Three Key Recommendations:

- Ensure that clearly defined terms of reference and remit (see Box 1) align with stated governance goals. The scope of a TOR and remit, usually set by sponsors and organisers (e.g. national parliament), may also involve consultations with citizens, stakeholders and relevant experts (e.g. public consultation process).
- Adopt early governance oversight, advisory and arbitration mechanisms (e.g., academic or expert advisory committees). This may include co-ordinating and co-deciding on safe space rules.
- Ensure independent (e.g., avoiding dominance by the commissioning authority), transparent (e.g. minutes of meetings) and balanced governance (e.g. inclusion of diverse perspectives – experts, stakeholders and citizens).

3.2.3 Determining the type of closure

Leading Question: What is the procedure to get approval by the participants for the final output of the participatory process?

Principal options:

- Consensus or tolerated consensus
- Minority, majority positions, each with supporting arguments
- Voting (majority, two thirds, three quarters)
- No agreement at the end

Decision Tree: Which of these options are appropriate for which format or combinations of formats?

- *Consensus or tolerated consensus:* This output requires that all participants agree with the final recommendations or at least tolerate them. Reaching consensus is a powerful instrument in political discourse since it increases the legitimisation power of the recommendations. At the same time, pressing for consensus could limit the diversity that is part of the debate and may even lead to trivial results representing the only common denominator. However, it depends on the format what kind of closure is most appropriate. In Group Delphis consensus is identified where possible but not required. On the contrary, dissent is highlighted and documented. Focus Groups can lead to dissent but, in practice, Focus Groups including persons with similar backgrounds or social status tend to agree on major issues and like to articulate common messages to the outside world. Stakeholder Round Tables produce both consensual statements and dissenting statements. More controversial is the question of consensus versus dissent in the literature on citizen assemblies. For practical reasons some voting mechanism seems to be superior to pressing for consensus, yet statistically and politically it is unclear what a majority or a 75% approval rate means in terms of the population that the Assembly purports to represent.
- *Minority, majority positions, each with supporting arguments:* This is the most suitable type of closure for Groups Delphis and Stakeholder Round Tables. It is important that each position is explained by the supporting arguments so that policymakers are able to understand the reasoning for each position.
- Voting (majority, two thirds, three quarters): This type of closure is often used in Citizen Assemblies. If the Assemblies include only a limited number of individuals (for example 30 to 50), reaching consensus or ending up with a majority/minority dissent may still be feasible outcomes and would enhance the quality (arguments for each position rather than only for the majority position) and legitimacy of the results. However, if the Assembly includes a large number of participants (more than 100), consensus may be elusive or would not produce any legitimate representation of diverse viewpoints. In this case, some voting process is almost inevitable. A vote of 66 or 75% may demonstrate that a certain recommendation is supported by a vast majority of participants. Although cumbersome to implement, collecting the arguments for dissenting votes is certainly valuable as they could also enlighten the political discourse and provide valuable insights for decision-makers.
- *No agreement at the end:* This type of closure is only recommended if the purpose of the participatory process is to demonstrate diversity and plurality of viewpoints. For most participatory processes linked to the EGD this is not sufficient as argued in the previous section.

Comment: The choice for closure represents a dilemma between feasibility and legitimacy. The more the output can be communicated as being a result of consensual or at least well-

argued deliberation where all participants agree on one statement or on the reasons for an existing dissent, the more it will carry weight in the political discourse. Vice versa, a majority vote by a Citizen Assembly may easily be criticized because of a biased selection process (on average: 9 out often 10 randomly elected citizens refuse to participate) or a biased information input and/or moderation style. Yet, consensual closure strategies are not feasible when Assemblies include more than 100 individuals. A possible but expensive alternative is to divide large Assemblies into many small units and have them deliberate separately. This would also lead to another advantage: if many independently operating Assemblies reach the same output, it is fairly obvious that this consensus is clearly a product of deliberation and not of selection or moderation.

3.3 Outcomes phase

The outcomes phase of any (combined) participatory process(es) is critical to ensuring that recommendations or proposals translate into impactful, transparent, and discernible outcomes (whether directly or indirectly influencing policymaking or the broader public debate). The following section firstly provides a summary of pitfalls (building on those already noted in chapter 3.1) and subsequently outlines a structured approach using decision trees and questions to guide the effective follow-up of (combined) participatory formats.

Summary of Outcomes Phase Pitfalls to Avoid

1. *Insufficient Reporting*: When there is inadequate reporting on the outcomes or progress of a public participation process, it can lead to frustration and confusion among participants. Without detailed, timely, and accessible updates, the public may question whether their feedback has been taken seriously or if any real change has occurred as a result of their contributions. This lack of transparency can undermine the process's credibility, as participants feel they are left in the dark about how their input is being handled. To maintain trust and ensure continued engagement, organisers should prioritize clear and regular reporting on key decisions, actions taken, and any remaining open issues.

2. Poor Public Communication: The lack of clear communication regarding final reports or outcomes of a public participation process can severely diminish public trust and erode the legitimacy of the process. If final reports, recommendations, or decisions are not disseminated widely or made accessible to a broader audience, it risks alienating not only participants but also the general public who may have a vested interest in the issue. Poor communication can create a perception that the process was not truly open or that important information is being withheld, which can damage the legitimacy of the initiative and hinder the broader acceptance and implementation of any resulting policies or recommendations.

3. *Lack of Transparency:* When the rationale behind decision-making processes is not fully explained or when the public is not made aware of how recommendations are considered or acted upon, it undermines the integrity of the entire participatory effort. A failure to disclose how input from various stakeholders was evaluated and incorporated (or rejected) can breed distrust and skepticism. For participants, understanding why their suggestions were accepted or rejected is critical to maintaining transparency and accountability. If decision-makers are not open about their reasoning or the factors influencing their choices, the legitimacy of the process is often called into question by both participants and the broader public.

3.3.1 Clarity on Follow-Up and Commitments

Hence, a clear plan with defined roles and methods is required at the outset (i.e. design phase) of a given format. The below leading questions and decision-trees are thus intended as a (non-exhaustive) guide to assist with the organizational decisions pertaining to the outcomes phase.

- **Question 1**: Can follow-up mechanisms be formally embedded in the decision-making process?
  - **Yes** → Define timelines and responsibilities for follow-up actions that are realistic and transparent.
  - **No** → Commit to at least periodic reporting mechanisms to keep participants updated and informed.

3.3.2 *Transparent Reporting of Recommendations and Outcomes*
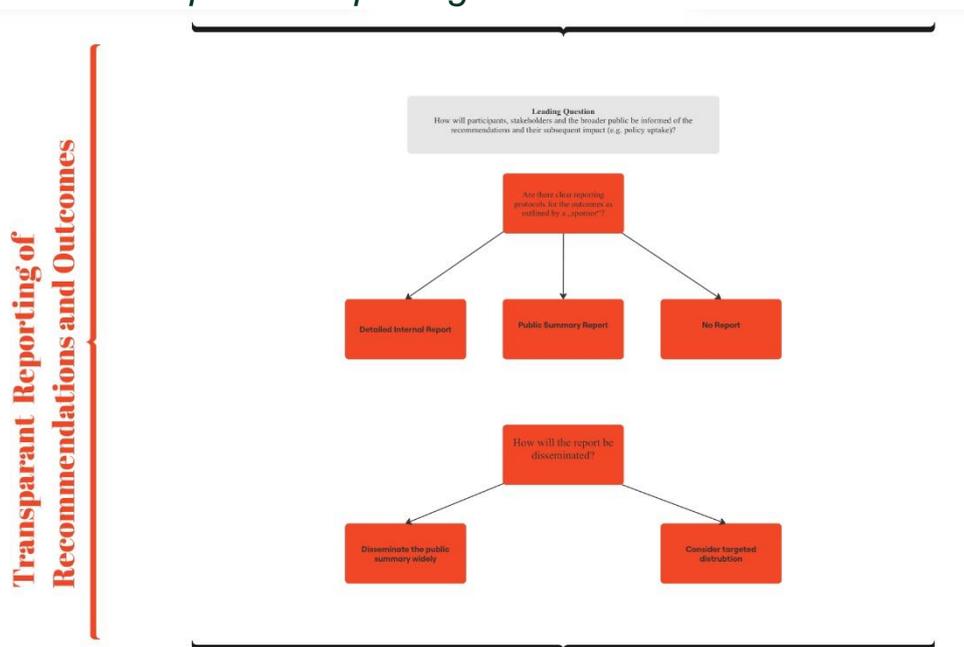
After each (combined) participatory process, a report should be produced and shared with participants, responding bodies (e.g., national parliament) and others (e.g. relevant stakeholders). If possible, broader dissemination of key findings should also be considered to enhance the *legitimacy* and potential impact of a given deliberative process.

Leading Question: How will participants, stakeholders and the broader public be informed of the recommendations and their subsequent impact (e.g. policy uptake)?

Decision Tree:

- **Question 1:** Are there clear reporting protocols for outcomes as outlined by a "sponsor" (e.g., if a participatory process is initiated by a national-level government to provide recommendations for policy action)?

- **Options:**
  - *Detailed Internal Report:* For policymakers and participants, including all recommendations, minority opinions, and responses to each. Reports should also include a detailed summary of the methodology undertaken (e.g. recruitment processes, selection of experts, facilitation etc.), an outline of the deliberation process (e.g. number of sessions, key themes and summary of

deliberations) and participants perspectives (e.g. surveys; feedback forms). The Scottish Climate Assembly is one notable example to follow[3].
- o *Public Summary Report***:** Summarize key findings, responses, and decisions in accessible language and formats. Include translations if necessary.
- o *No report: (usually in the case of "bottom-up" processes)***:** Develop a basic reporting framework that ensures clear communication of recommendations and outcomes. The report and recommendations maybe then shared with relevant stakeholders, policymakers and the broader public to influence policy dialogues.

- **Question 2: How will the report be disseminated?**
    - Disseminate the public summary widely (media, online platforms, community bulletins) to enhance visibility and legitimacy.
    - Consider targeted distribution to directly impacted affected communities, stakeholders and relevant decision-makers.

3.3.3 Ownership, Continuous Engagement, and Structured Feedback Loops

Follow-up mechanisms should also emphasize *ownership*, ensuring participants feel that their contributions are actively considered as part of the policy outcomes. Providing periodic updates on the progress of policies developed through participatory processes fosters a sense of continued involvement.

Leading Question: How will participants stay engaged and informed about the policy's progress?

Decision Tree:
- **Question 1:** Can participants be engaged in ongoing advisory roles?
    - o **Yes** → Establish advisory councils or committees, enabling participants, organisers (e.g. Chairpersons) and stakeholders (e.g. relevant experts, CSOs and affected communities) to continue contributing to policy oversight and implementation.
    - o **No** → Offer periodic updates (e.g., quarterly or bi-annual) via email newsletters, community meetings, or public updates on a dedicated website.

- **Question 2:** Are structured feedback loops planned?
    - o **Yes** → Consider periodic check-ins where participants and relevant stakeholders may review policy progress, share feedback, and receive responses from policymakers.
    - o **No** → Implement at least one feedback opportunity after the initial report, such as a survey or follow-up meeting, to close the loop and strengthen accountability.

- **Question 3:** Will participants have opportunities to address the receiving body (e.g., national parliament)?

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[3] Scotland's Climate Assembly - process, impact and assembly member experience: research report - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

- o **Yes** → Invite key representatives to present findings and discuss recommendations with decision-making bodies, reinforcing trust and transparency.
- o **No** → Consider creating additional pathways (beyond a report) for participants to provide reflections or testimonials to decision-making forums (e.g. media statements, written reflections etc).

3.3.4 Clear Reporting and Communication by Receiving Bodies

Regarding (combined) participatory formats, *transparency* in decision-making is paramount. After process(es) are considered by receiving bodies (e.g. national parliament), the findings, decisions and resulting recommendations must be clearly communicated to participants, relevant stakeholders and the broader (unorganised) public where relevant.

Leading Question: How will receiving bodies communicate their actions based on participant recommendations?

Decision Tree:

- **Question 1:** Will a formal report be issued by the receiving body (e.g., parliamentary committee)?
  - o **Yes** → Include a section detailing how each recommendation was addressed, accepted, or declined, with explanations. Transparently document how dissenting views or minority opinions were considered.

  - o **No** → Provide an alternative update method, such as public meeting minutes, that clearly notes decisions and the rationale behind them.

- **Question 2:** Is there a communication plan for informing the public?
  - o **Yes** → Develop and implement a communication strategy that includes updates through various platforms (websites, social media, press releases) to reach a broad audience.
  - o **No** → At a minimum, share updates with participants, relevant stakeholders and affected communities directly to ensure they remain informed.

Comment: The REAL DEAL project had funds and resources only for conducting combinations of two separate formats that were integrated into one participatory process. Ideally combinations could include more than two formats. If the factual base for the topic to be discussed is scientifically contested, uncertain and ambiguous, a Group Delphi format should be included in the portfolio. Likewise, if disadvantaged or vulnerable groups are likely to be affected, Focus Groups with representatives of these groups are crucial components of a participatory process for getting their voices heard. All the four formats that were covered in this chapter can additionally be accompanied and enhanced by campaigns, festivals, art exhibitions, and other cultural events.

3.4 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

This evaluation framework serves as a critical foundation for assessing the effectiveness and value of participatory processes linked to the EGD. By conducting thorough evaluations at the respective design, engagement, and outcomes phases, the REAL DEAL evaluation framework aims to identify strengths and areas for improvement in how these (combined) formats operate, engage diverse participants, and deliver meaningful outcomes. Hereby it is crucial to think about the goal and way of doing evaluations right from the start of designing the participatory process. A structured monitoring, evaluation, and learning approach allows organisers to draw lessons from each phase and identify areas to improve the quality and impact of future initiatives. In these approaches, reflective learning exercises can be organised that allow participants to share their perspectives and thereby build awareness of their role in policy impact. They can learn from experiences of others and deepen their understanding of deliberative processes. For organisers, facilitators and others involved in the process in similar ways, evaluations are a way to get insight into the quality of implementation of these participatory formats to ensure that EGD efforts are inclusive, transparent, and effective and apply the principles of good citizen engagement.

A comprehensive evaluation of (combined) formats goes beyond tracking logistics or simply surveying participant satisfaction. Instead, it should aim to systematically examine how well the processes support key principles (see Table 2, Chapter 2). Consequently, an evaluation should not be an after-thought but a central focus from the beginning and throughout any deliberative process (e.g. with the collection of evaluation data, see Section "Potential Evaluation Tool"). Through carefully consideration of learning questions – examples of which have been offered in this section (see "Overarching Learning Questions") – evaluations can provide insights into whether these participatory approaches are genuinely empowering participants, fostering productive dialogue, and producing outcomes that align with and inform EGD priorities.

Overall, as noted by the OECD (2021, 10), independent evaluations done by externals provide the most rigorous and robust assessment of participatory and deliberative processes. Evaluation can be useful for participatory and deliberative processes by engaging organisers and facilitators in monitoring, evaluation and learning so that they can adaptively manage these processes towards the desired impact. Self-reporting by participants and organisers is another valuable process that can still yield valuable insights, which may be especially useful for smaller or shorter initiatives (with limited resources). Regardless of who organises the evaluation phase, attention should be paid to identification of the information needed, and then select appropriate methods and tools to collect and analyse these data during the initiation and implementation of participatory and deliberative processes. This is discussed in the subsequent section.

3.4.1 Overarching Learning Questions for Evaluation of Combined Formats

Overarching learning questions can help you to focus on what you want to know most and guide you in finding out if the event you are evaluating brings and creates what it was intended to. This will inform future decisions, practices, and knowledge. Learning questions are not just about what has been achieved, but also about why there is success or failure, who has been impacted, and what has been learned to improve future actions.

The following five overarching learning questions are listed below as an example:

- To what extent have the selected principles[4] that underpin the event worked out well? Why or why not?
- To what extent was the event organised adequately? (pre-event, event, post-event) Why or why not?
- To what extent have the objectives of the event been met? Why or why not?
- How did the facilitation contribute to achieving the objectives of the event?
- To what extent did the combination of formats achieve their intended outcomes? Why or why not?

3.4.2 Additional Learning Questions for Combined Formats

The following section provides a guiding framework for learning questions related to each of the four combined formats outlined within the REAL DEAL protocol. For each of the phases (design in Table 6, engagement in Table 7, and outcome in Table 8) principles and relevance of these principles are described. Also, it is indicated for what formats this principle is relevant and what the key learning question(s) is/are around this principle. The last column provides ideas to keep in mind when applying this principle in processes related to environmental governance. The learning questions are examples that can be used for evaluating deliberative processes related to environmental governance. For example, during the design phase, it can be useful to ask learning questions around representation so that selection of participants is representative and has been well thought through. In this way, learning questions can be embedded in each phase of a deliberative process to enhance the process and its outcomes.

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[4] For example, the OECD (2021) note 5 principles to guide a high-quality evaluation: Independent; Transparent; Evidence-based; Accessible; and Constructive.

Table 6 Guiding framework for learning questions in the design phase

Principle	Relevance	Relevant for what formats	Learning question	Application in processes related to environmental governance
Representation	Participant selection	Citizen assemblies and focus groups	To what extent does the participant selection reflect affected communities, including marginalised groups?	Emphasise inclusion of urban, rural, and socio-economically diverse citizens and other stakeholders relevant to environmental governance topics.
	Expert selection	Group Delphi	To what extent are experts selected to cover diverse areas of relevance (e.g., climate, equity, governance)?	Prioritize expertise across key environmental governance topics such as just transitions, biodiversity, and sustainability.
	Stakeholder selection	Roundtable	To what extent are stakeholders selected that cover diverse areas of relevance (e.g., climate, equity, governance) and diverse angles (e.g., NGOs, governmental institutions, businesses)?	Emphasise inclusion of stakeholders from different realms of society and stakeholders that represent future and non-human actors.
	Cross-regional representation	Combination regional and national roundtables	To what extent do roundtables ensure participation from diverse regions and communities affected by EGD-related policies?	Include voices from diverse geographic and socio-economic contexts, addressing varying regional impacts.
Accessibility	Content simplification	Combination citizen assembly and group Delphi	To what extent is technical information adapted for non-expert citizen understanding?	Ensure evidence is presented in a way accessible to all participants, addressing complex issues related to environmental governance.

Transparency	Clear objectives and framing	All formats	To what extent are objectives and the connection to environmental governance clearly communicated to participants before the event?	Relate goals of the deliberative process to specific environmental governance themes like biodiversity and climate neutrality.

Table 7 Guiding framework for learning questions in the engagement phase

Principle	Relevance	Relevant for what formats	Learning question	Application in processes related to environmental governance
Fairness	Integration of participants' insights	Combination roundtable and citizen assembly and combination group Delphi and citizen assembly	How are insights from the roundtable or Group Delphi integrated into the citizen assembly? To what extent do all groups have equal opportunities to contribute ideas in the deliberation process?	Ensure all stakeholders and expert voices are given equal space to influence environmental governance discussions.
	Fair facilitation	All formats	To what extent are facilitators ensuring all voices (e.g., minority, controversial) are openly aired?	Use facilitators trained in EGD topics and social equity issues.
Transparency	Facilitation quality	All formats	To what extent are facilitators ensuring balanced dialogue and bridging knowledge gaps between participants?	Focus on fostering balanced, inclusive dialogues addressing challenges specific to environmental governance (e.g., equity, climate).
Empowerment	Knowledge integration	Combination roundtable and citizen assembly and combination group Delphi and citizen assembly	To what extent do citizens engage with and critically evaluate insights shared by the group Delphi or by roundtable participants?	Ensure participants comprehend expert and stakeholder insights and can reflect on their relevance to environmental governance priorities.
Responsiveness	Integration of input	Combination of focus group and citizen assembly	To what extent are the ideas and insights from marginalised groups integrated into discussions at the citizen assemblies in ways that value their unique contribution?	Prioritize discussions that link local concerns with broader environmental governance themes such as housing or clean energy.

	Integration of input	Combination of regional and national roundtables	To what extent are regional insights integrated into national discussions in ways that value their unique contributions?	Highlight regional needs, balancing them with national objectives related to environmental governance.
	Integration of multi-level input	Combination of regional and national roundtables	To what extent do facilitators ensure that both regional and national perspectives are equally valued in discussions?	Foster dialogue addressing local-to-national alignment on emissions and just transitions.
Meaningfulness	Engagement support	Combination of focus group and citizen assembly	To what extent are focus group insights presented in ways that actively encourage citizen assembly members to engage and build on them?	Facilitate discussions linking local socio-economic challenges to objectives of environmental governance.
Quality of evidence	Robust and relevant input	Citizen assemblies	To what extent is evidence provided scientifically robust and relevant to the discussion?	Provide up-to-date evidence on environmental governance related topics.

Table 8 Guiding framework for learning questions in the outcome phase

Principle	Relevance	Relevant for what formats	Learning question	Application in processes related to environmental governance
(Potential) effect on policy making	Practicality of outputs	All formats	To what extent are the outputs from this format or combination of formats realistic, actionable, and aligned with the goals of the EGD?	Assess the feasibility and alignment of outputs with both local implementation and EU-level strategies.
Transparency	Integration of insights	Combination group Delphi and citizen assembly	To what extent do citizen recommendations integrate group Delphi insights, and are they actionable for policies related to environmental governance?	Tailor outputs to prioritise actionable strategies, focusing on climate and equity goals.
	Long-term impact tracking	Combination of focus groups and citizen assemblies	To what extent are mechanisms in place to monitor how focus group insights influenced final recommendations of the citizen assembly? And to what extent are mechanisms in place to monitor the influence of the final recommendations on policies related to environmental governance?	Establish tracking mechanisms to ensure that local insights are incorporated into environmental governance strategies.
	Follow-up process	All formats	To what extent is there a clear follow-up process for decision-makers?	Include mechanisms for tracking the adoption of assembly recommendations in environmental laws.
Responsiveness	Integration of regional perspectives	Combination regional and national roundtables	To what extent are national-level outputs responsive to regional needs while meeting overarching environmental priorities?	Tailor recommendations to reflect regional interests within environmental governance frameworks.

Meaningfulness	Participant feedback	All formats	To what extent do participants feel their contributions influenced the outputs?	Collect and evaluate participant feedback on their perceived influence on environmental policies.

3.4.3 Potential Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Methods and Tools for (Combined) Participatory & Deliberative Formats

To comprehensively evaluate the design, engagement and outcomes phases, several methods may be employed. Examples of such potential methods are outlined in Box 8. This broadly follows the possible approaches and methods to measure the evaluation principles outlined by the OECD (2021, 22; Table 2.2).

In thinking about the design of evaluation processes, it is crucial to consider what the specific goal of the evaluation is and what methods fits best. This influences amongst others what information is needed, what the level of detail is and what principles for evaluation are used. This also has effects on in what way anonymousness in the evaluation is understood. In individual evaluations, participants are often ensured that the evaluation process is fully anonymous. This allows participants to be express themselves without having to worry that their expressions will influence the way their involvement in the process. However, in group-based evaluation methods, anonymity is not possible. An advantage of group-based methods is that participants can learn directly from each other. Choosing the method that fits best for the goal and context of the evaluation is case-specific.

Box 8: Overview of potential methods for assessing evaluation principles

1. Design Phase: Document review, demographic analysis, participant and/or stakeholder interviews
2. Engagement Phase: Observation, participant surveys, facilitator feedback, thematic analysis of deliberations
3. Outcome Phase: Follow-up surveys, outcome tracking, participant feedback, (longitudinal) analysis of policy impacts

The intended purpose of some of the main evaluation methods is outlined below. This is a selection of some of the methods that are most relevant in deliberative processes.
- *Participant Surveys*: Assess shifts in knowledge, understanding, and perceived inclusivity. Surveys before and after the event measure changes in opinion and learning.
- *Interviews and Focus Groups:* Capture qualitative insights from diverse participants, assessing their experience, perceived impact, and areas for improvement.
- *Document Analysis*: Evaluate official documents like project proposal and invitation letters, recommendations, and meeting records for references to participant contributions.
- *Media Analysis*: Track media mentions and social media engagement to gauge public awareness and transparency of outcomes.
- *Observation:* Evaluate facilitation effectiveness, participant engagement, and the inclusivity of deliberations.
- *Follow-Up Surveys and Longitudinal Studies*: Assess the lasting impact on participants and stakeholders and track any behavioural or attitudinal shifts over time.

Overall, these methods can provide comprehensive insights across the phases (pre-event, event, post-event), facilitating both quantitative and qualitative evaluations that can reveal for example, shifts in perspectives, evaluate accessibility of information, and assess overall impact.

In short, in drawing upon the above evaluation frameworks in pre-event, event, and post-event phases, organisers can support evidence-based improvements to ensure these participatory

processes remain consistent and of good quality, relevant, and responsive to evolving European Green Deal priorities. In sum, such evaluations are crucial to ensuring the ongoing improvement, transparency and legitimacy of participatory and deliberative processes and importantly, the potential implementation of EGD policy recommendations.

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