

Press Release

Brussels launches world's first permanent Citizens' Assembly on Climate

In 2023, the Brussels-Capital Region will launch a permanent Citizens' Assembly on Climate. In this institution, 100 citizens will have the power to put issues on the agenda and propose solutions for them. Citizens will also monitor what happens to these proposals. Thanks to the rapid rotation of mandates, more and more citizens of Brussels will take part in Brussels' climate governance every year. The Brussels Region is thus the first government in the world to involve citizens on a structural basis in drawing up climate policy. The establishment of the permanent Citizens' Assembly, which was designed by G1000, is receiving a lot of national and international acclaim. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, candidate chairman of the IPCC and professor of Environmental Sciences at UCLouvain stated, "With this permanent Citizens' Assembly, Brussels sets an example for governments all over the world."

How does it work? The Brussels Citizens' Assembly on Climate consists of a succession of multiple citizen panels. Each panel is made up of one hundred randomly selected citizens, who will deliberate and make recommendations on a sub-theme related to Brussels' climate policy. The sortition is based on gender, age, place of residence and socioeconomic background to obtain a good representative sample of the population of Brussels.

Citizens do not just give recommendations; they also actively follow up on what happens to them. The model provides for a commission that does exactly that: follow up what the politicians do with the recommendations. The Brussels government, for its part, has committed to examine all citizens' recommendations thoroughly and to report transparently on what it does with them. Three months after receiving the recommendations, the government must give a first update. After a year, there will be a final evaluation. If the government then decides not to implement a recommendation, it will explain that choice in detail.

Citizens at the centre

The themes of the citizen panels are chosen each time by a group of 25 citizens, drawn at random from the previous citizen panel. In doing so, the citizens of the first panel pass the baton to the participants of the second panel. This ensures the continuity of the process. To launch the mechanism, the theme of the first citizen panel will exceptionally be decided by the government. After that, it will be up to the citizens.

All participating citizens will receive sufficient, clear, and objective information from independent academic experts. Participants can also rely on reports from stakeholders (such as civil society organizations and interest groups).

Unlike previous one-off climate assemblies in France and Wallonia, the Brussels Citizens' Assembly on Climate will work closely together with the government and administration. This will increase the impact of the recommendations on the regional climate policy.

The first citizen panel will start in early 2023. The first group of randomly selected citizens can expect a letter of invitation in their mailbox as of November 22, 2022.

G1000 at the drawing board

The model for the Brussels Citizens' Assembly on Climate was developed by [G1000](#), the Belgian platform for democratic innovation. **Ben Eersels**, coordinator of G1000, is very pleased with the result. "When designing this project, we organized a multi-day design meeting with the members of the Brussels administration and national and international democracy experts (from Canada, Denmark and the United Kingdom). Together, we created a process that meets the highest international standards, set by the [OECD](#). During the design process, there was constant consultation with the government of Brussels."

Alain Maron, the Brussels Minister of Climate Transition and Participatory Democracy, explained his ambitions: 'Our society will change drastically in the coming decades. In order to involve as many residents of Brussels as possible in this change and to strengthen social cohesion, I commissioned the experts of G1000 and our administration to design a new democratic instrument. This permanent Citizens' Assembly on climate is the result.'

International acclaim

The establishment of the Citizens' Assembly is garnering acclaim from national and international authorities. **Jean-Pascal van Ypersele**, candidate chairman of the IPCC and professor of Environmental Sciences at UCLouvain, says: "A just climate transition is only possible if citizens are also involved in climate policy. With this permanent Citizens' Assembly, Brussels sets an example for governments all around the world."

Transition expert **Jan Rotmans**, professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam, adds: "There is a big gap between what citizens think is necessary and what politicians actually do. Citizens' assemblies are a very good instrument to narrow that gap. Previous experiments of citizens' assemblies on climate were only one-off projects. Therefore, the impact remained limited. However, the climate transition requires a real democratic transition. By structurally embedding citizens' assemblies in climate policy, Brussels is showing the way."

Belgium pioneers again: 'historic'

With the established of the permanent citizens' assembly in Brussels, Belgium is once again pioneering in democratic innovation. In 2019, the parliament of the

German-speaking community already launched the world's first permanent citizen dialogue, the 'Ostbelgien Model'. Whereas the Ostbelgien Model can deliberate on various topics, the Brussels Citizens' Assembly is the first permanent Citizens' Assembly in the world that will focus specifically on climate policy.

"The historic establishment of the Brussels Permanent Citizens' Assembly on climate demonstrates that sortition and deliberation are not merely supplementary or optional features of a functioning democracy," said **Claudia Chwalisz**, Founder and CEO of [DemocracyNext](#) and former Innovative Citizen Participation Lead at the OECD. "To the contrary, citizens' assemblies can and should operate as permanent governing bodies with the same broad powers of existing electoral systems. Brussels is a city of over 1.2 million people, 180 nationalities, and 100 spoken languages. If this can be done in Brussels, it can be done anywhere—particularly on an issue like climate which affects everyone. At DemocracyNext, we look forward to following the assembly's progress and call on cities the world over to learn from and follow Brussels' example."

With the realization of this project, Belgium is increasingly becoming a global forerunner in democratic renewal. **David Van Reybrouck**, author of "Against Elections" and managing director of G1000: "Belgium is well on its way to becoming the European pioneer of democratic renewal. Just as Estonia is known as a pioneer in the field of digital governance, as Finland scores high marks with its education, and Denmark excels internationally with its sustainability, Belgium is inspiring more and more countries to develop ambitious forms of new democracy. The permanent Citizens' Assembly in the Brussels region and the German-speaking Community, together with the mixed panels in the Brussels parliament, are being carefully studied by other countries. G1000 is proud to be able to help an increasing number of governments with professional advice on new democracy."

Website:

[Citizens'assembly for the Climate](#)

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