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# ORGANISING A DEMOCRATIC LOTTERY

FIDE - POLICY RESEARCH

**-FIDE**  
FEDERATION FOR INNOVATION  
IN DEMOCRACY - EUROPE

FIDE is an international non-profit organization dedicated to the participation of every day citizens in policy-making.

This paper draws on FIDE's expertise designing deliberative processes across Europe.

# CONTENTS

<b>01</b>	<b>What is deliberative democracy, and what are citizens' assemblies?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>02</b>	<b>What is a Democratic Lottery?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>03</b>	<b>How does it work?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>04</b>	<b>The two-stage selection process in detail</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>05</b>	<b>Next steps</b>	<b>26</b>

## TERMINOLOGY

### STRATIFICATION CRITERIA

The categories for the selection of participants such as gender, age or other demographic and socio-economic factors. Typically matched to census data.

### TO DRAW

Referring to the selection of citizens in a random way from a larger pool of candidates.

### RANDOMLY SELECTED

A participant who has been selected by lottery from a pool in which all persons involved have a fair chance of being chosen.

### HARD TO REACH

Used to describe individuals or groups that an organization finds difficult to contact or engage for a particular purpose. Typically, these are demographics that are underrepresented in engagement processes or their response rates to invitations are lower.

### ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

Used in this document for readability as shorthand for "the persons participating in the deliberative process". The methods below are valid for selecting participants for all different types of processes, whether these are called "assembly", "jury", "council", "panel" or other.

*This paper draws on several sources amongst which [OECD Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions : Catching the Deliberative Wave \(2020\)](#), [MASS LBP- How to run a Civic Lottery \(2017\)](#)<sup>ii</sup> and the [UN Democracy Fund & newDemocracy Foundation - Handbook on Democracy Beyond Elections \(2012\)](#)<sup>iii</sup>. It aims to synthesise, add, adapt and tailor those documents to a European audience. It is a living document, continually edited and updated according to the new information available.*

# 01

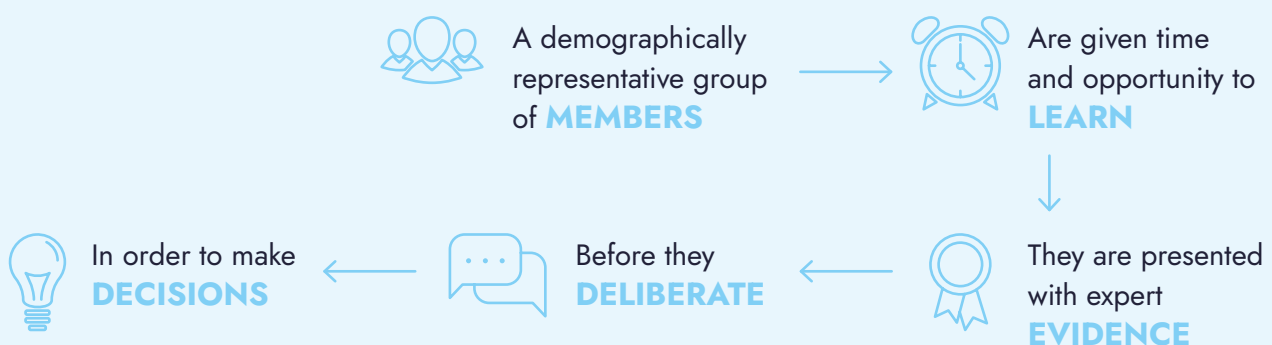


# WHAT IS DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

## and what are citizens' assemblies?

**Deliberative democracy** is based on the core principle that political decisions should be the product of fair and reasonable deliberation and debate among citizens, based on the premise that all voices matter and all of us are equally able to participate.

In practice, deliberative democracy often takes the form of representative deliberative processes, sometimes also called deliberative mini-publics. While there are different specific types of these processes<sup>iv</sup>, a common term, which will be used throughout this paper is a **citizens' assembly**. A citizens' assembly is a broadly representative group of randomly chosen people who are tasked by public authorities to develop collective, informed recommendations on policy issues. They spend a significant amount of time (typically at least 40 hours) learning, hearing from experts and stakeholders, deliberating and listening to one another, with an aim of finding common ground on recommendations.



## 02



A Democratic Lottery or sortition is the random selection of participants from a pool of candidates with the aim of equal representation of various socioeconomic backgrounds, such as age, education, gender, and location for public decision-making.

# WHAT IS A DEMOCRATIC LOTTERY?

Because deliberative processes can only be done with a limited number of people, the selection of this group becomes very important. Sortition has become the key method to randomly select members that will constitute such a group of citizens<sup>1</sup> (or residents). The commonly used term 'Democratic Lottery' refers to the contemporary practice of sortition and stratification based on modern random sampling techniques, to constitute a group that is broadly representative of a population.

## What are the core principles of sortition?

The process, when following a robust methodology, helps to make deliberation democratic and therefore entails a number of essential principles:



### INCLUSIVENESS AND FAIRNESS

It gives a fair chance to any citizen of being chosen as an assembly member.



### HETEROGENEITY AND REPRESENTATIVENESS

The selected members are a microcosm of the wider population and reflect its diversity.



### INDEPENDENCE AND TRANSPARENCY

All steps of the process are fully transparent and justified. This ensures that the wider population trusts the way people were chosen and perceives the group convened as being non-partisan<sup>Y</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The word citizen is used throughout this paper in a civic sense, including those legally recognized as members of a state with associated rights and obligations as well as residents and inhabitants.



## What are the advantages of using sortition?

In comparison to other participatory methods, the Democratic Lottery is **inherently more egalitarian**. All citizens have a fair chance of being selected, therefore voices traditionally under-represented are now more included in the decision-making process. Moreover, a Democratic Lottery also increases the legitimacy perceptions of non-participants in the assembly.

Participants randomly selected to be broadly representative are also **more likely to win citizens' trust**. In addition, people are more likely to trust a process where they see ordinary people reflecting all parts of society engaging in the complex trade-offs required for public decision making.

**Diverse groups result in better outcomes.** Having greater cognitive diversity leads to better decisions than those made by more homogeneous groups, since the latter tend to have access to similar types of information and are more likely to reinforce one another's views than to introduce completely new ideas.

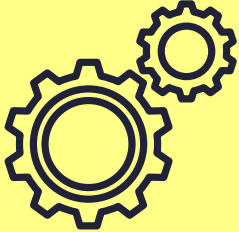
Deliberative processes that have used a Democratic Lottery can **empower elected representatives and civil servants to put forward solutions to complex public problems**. It complements their role in representative democratic institutions to improve the democratic process.



In a deliberative process, a robust methodology gives legitimacy to the Democratic Lottery and helps ensure the democratic nature of the citizens' assembly. The methodology needs to be embodied in a document containing the rules of the procedure and all aspects of the operation.

**Sortition requires careful preparation.**

## 03



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

A Democratic Lottery can be conducted in various ways, this paper's focus is on the "two-stage selection process", the most commonly used and rigorous method<sup>vii</sup>.

This involves:

- 1 **Randomly selecting a large number of people, addresses or phone numbers** from the most up-to-date available database and inviting people to register their interest as participants.
  
- 2 **Performing a second lottery from those who registered their interest**, while matching to stratification criteria to ensure the final assembly is a microcosm of the community. The first step is the most encompassing. Once there is a sufficiently large group of interested persons, drawing the final assembly members is a technical matter that is done by applying a specialised software.



**RANDOM  
SELECTION**



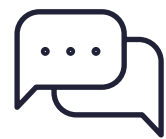
**SEND  
INVITATIONS**



**PARTICIPANTS  
REGISTRATION**



**STRATIFICATION**



**CITIZENS'  
ASSEMBLY**



# 04



## THE TWO-STAGE SELECTION PROCESS IN DETAIL

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The following parts of this paper specify in detail all elements involved in the two-stage selection process starting by the definition of criteria and continuing through the steps needed within each of the two stages.

# STAGE ONE

## Define your criteria

Before recruiting assembly members, it is necessary to decide what the eventual demographic makeup of the group will be. Most deliberative processes are recruited in a way that reflects the wider public in terms of gender, age, socio-economic status, and place of residence. Sometimes other criteria, such as ethnicity, are used depending on the context. Furthermore, the size of the assembly and the issue that will be deliberated on might shape the chosen criteria. However, the first decision to be taken is to define who can take part in the process.



### WHO CAN TAKE PART?

Typically, all citizens as of a certain age can be considered potential members, except for those that are in paid political employment<sup>2</sup>. However, by only considering citizens many people and communities might be excluded from participating in the process. Formally, a citizen is a person who is legally recognized as a member of a state, with associated rights and obligations whereas a resident is someone who lives in a place but might not be a citizen of the country. Deciding whether to include citizens or residents in the process is important – this is a question of political legitimacy and inclusion. Most processes consider the community that will be impacted by the decision to determine the eligible population, sometimes even including people younger than the voting age.



**+16**

**50%** ♀ ♂ **50%**



<sup>2</sup> In some instances, senior civil servants, judges and other categories have been listed as not eligible to be an assembly member.



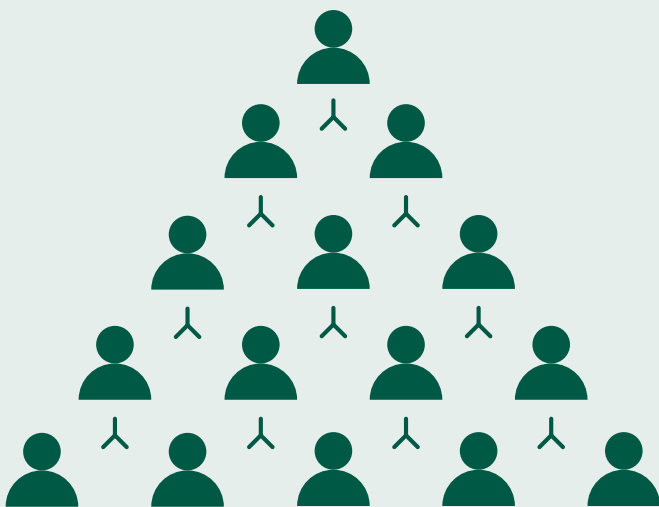


## WHAT SHOULD BE THE SIZE OF THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY?

The ideal size of a citizens' assembly continues to be a subject of debate amongst practitioners and therefore the number of members needed for a deliberative process is somewhat elastic so long as good quality deliberation can occur. This decision involves a series of considerations, and it is best to consult someone with expertise in deliberative methods to make an informed decision:

### THE REPRESENTATIVENESS FACTOR

The size of the group aims to reflect the demographics of the society at large. Recruiting a larger number of people (70-100), can facilitate ensuring this demographic representation which contributes to a bigger diversity among participants. In addition, the size of the community the group will be representing (whether it is a city or a country) is key to define the number of members within an assembly. About 25<sup>3</sup> participants are a minimal number to be able to represent the general population if it is a small community



Sustaining a high-quality deliberation and finding common ground might take a longer time and more resources with a larger number of members (over 150 people). On the opposite side, a very small number of selected participants might not reflect the **demographic** and **attitudinal** criteria deemed necessary for the group to be representative. There is no one-size-fits-all solution and a balance must be found between deliberative quality, available resources and sufficient representation.

The optimal amount of people to achieve a descriptive match to the population is between 35-50<sup>viii</sup>.

3. The deliberative model chosen might lower this threshold. E.g. Citizens Council or Citizens Initiative Reviews have generally a smaller size than Citizens' Assemblies. See [OECD Database of Representative Deliberative Processes and Institutions \(2021\)](#) for a comparison.

## THE 'SYMBOLIC NATURE' FACTOR

Even though a small group might be sufficient in technical terms to convey a deliberative process, expanding the group stresses its legitimacy to the general population because of our traditional notions of representation. When deliberation happens at the national level, for example, the wider public might perceive an assembly of 30 citizens spurious, even if technically it might be sufficient.

## THE PROCESS RESOURCES: BUDGET AND TIME

The resources of the process in terms of budget and time are the third factor to take into consideration when deciding on the size of an assembly.

- **The budgetary considerations** are directly linked to the incentives that are given to members and the facilitation team needed during the assembly. Usually, a deliberative process offers an allowance to its members to compensate for their time and to cover expenses and travel arrangements. Next to that, a deliberative process will need facilitators present throughout the deliberations. As such, a larger number of selected participants will result in a bigger budget to cover the citizens' allowance as well as the number of facilitators needed.<sup>4</sup>

- **The time designated for the assembly and the complexity of the issue** at stake also intervene in the decision of its size. A deliberative process that convenes over several weekends will need a bigger budget. With limited financial resources, this can be an important factor in deciding on the assembly size.

*4. The facilitation and incentives for participants are usually two of the biggest budget costs of an assembly process.*

There is a trade-off between breadth and depth. The right balance will always depend on the circumstances. It is best to consult someone with expertise in deliberative methods to make an informed decision.

### THE OSTBELGIEN CASE

The institutionalised citizens' assembly in the Ostbelgien Region of Belgium is an explicit example of how different circumstances play a role in the size of an assembly.

The Ostbelgien assemblies can legally be composed of 25 to 50 members. The choice on the size of a specific assembly will depend on the topic, needed criteria and budget and is taken by a fixed Citizen Council of 24 citizens that have previously been part of a citizens' assembly<sup>x</sup>.





## HOW TO DEFINE THE CRITERIA?

The legitimacy of a deliberative process is substantially based on its capability to represent, with a small number of people, the society affected by the issue that will be deliberated. The definition of fair criteria to stratify the population is therefore a key decision to perform a Democratic Lottery. There are two types of criteria to consider: general sociodemographic criteria and attitudinal criteria (those related to opinions that citizens have).

### DEMOGRAPHIC CRITERIA

A deliberative process is a versatile and accommodating democratic exercise that can take place at all governmental levels in a variety of contexts and for different purposes. There is therefore no single fixed set of demographic criteria to select participants. Nonetheless, there are variables that are considered standardized as part of reliable criteria to obtain a basic representative group.



**Gender** and **age** are usually available in demographic data.



**Geographic locality** serves to find a balance between urban and rural members or to have representation from different provinces, regions, neighbourhoods, villages or countries.



**Socio-economic status**, on the other hand, might require a combination of other measures to define it, such as the level of education or the type of employment.

**If those measures are not available, the general solution is to ask those who have received an invitation to self-report<sup>5</sup>.**

Depending on the characteristics that are deemed important to achieve the desired representativeness, other variables can be added. The rationale behind adding a particular criterion is to include different groups present in the wider population to grant increased legitimacy to the process. Those variables can range from the selection of participants that belong to different religious groups, ethnical backgrounds, national origins, or identity communities such as the LGBTQ+ community. Adding criteria should be done sparsely and only if deemed necessary as more criteria categories hardens the recruitment process (especially if the size of the assembly is small).



**The citizens' assembly in Northern Ireland** in 2018 decided to include a representation criterion that served as a proxy for religious affiliation.

**The Mostar assembly** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) considered indispensable to have proportional representation of the different ethnic communities in the city (Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs and non-affiliated).

**The Conference on the Future of Europe**, the first transnational, multilingual and interinstitutional exercise of deliberative democracy of its kind, introduced nationality as one of its critical criteria. The participants from each member state of the European Union were selected considering the degressive proportionality applied to the composition of the European Parliament.

## ATTITUDINAL CRITERIA

The use of attitudinal criteria for a citizens’ assembly is currently part of an open debate by practitioners and academics<sup>x</sup>. Regarding the policy issue to be discussed, some scholars argue that it is not only required to stratify the population demographically but also in relation to attitudes, which would provide a more adequate diversity of viewpoints – called discursive representation<sup>xi</sup>.

An assembly that has a controversial topic, such as abortion, might need to emphasize that all perspectives are present, not doing so could result in a distrust of the process by the wider public. If the decision is taken to add such a criterion, it needs to be measured among the participants. The attitudinal

or opinion-based criteria are usually measured with a question in the invitation letter

Using attitudinal criteria to select the members of an assembly involves trade-offs such as possible perceptions of manipulation by the wider public to achieve a pre-ordained result. As such, the procedure for this needs to be well considered as the number of members per ‘category’ need to be assigned in relation to comparable population data. Overall, including information on attitudes as a criteria to ensure the diversity and representativeness of a deliberative process will depend on the context and the purpose in which it is convened.

Scotland's Climate Assembly  
Seanadh Gnàth-shìde na h-Alba

We especially welcome and will support people with less digital experience.

You are invited to register your interest in  
**Scotland's Climate Assembly**

How should Scotland change to tackle the climate emergency in an effective and fair way?

to be held online over six weekends  
between November 2020 and March 2021

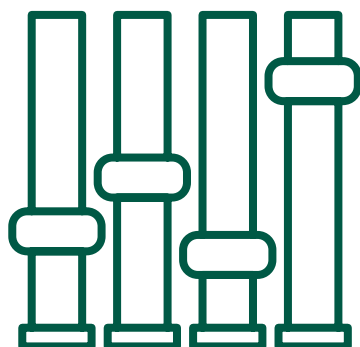
Deadline for registering your interest in this event is **Monday 28 September**

Register at [www.sortitionfoundation.org/rsvp](http://www.sortitionfoundation.org/rsvp)  
or by phone on Freephone **0800 009 6486** (9am-5.30pm, Monday-Saturday)

TAKE PART AND RECEIVE £1200



**The Scottish Assembly** on climate change in 2020 added a question on personal attitude to climate change as a selection criterion. The allocation of seats on this criterion was proportional to the response of a Scotland-wide scientific study in 2019 that asked an identical question. This criterion was added to avoid critics claiming that the panel was biased towards citizens who were very active on climate issues.



**The process is adaptable to the needs of the theme as long as the criteria choices are justified.**

# HOW TO CONDUCT THE LOTTERY

## FIRST STAGE

Once the specific criteria for the Democratic Lottery have been defined, the lottery can be held. In the first stage, a large randomly drawn group receives an invitation to register as a “potential member” of an assembly.<sup>xii</sup> Up to several thousand invitations are sent out. Only a number of these invitations will receive a positive response. As a high number of invitations are sent out, the number of replies normally exceeds the number of final members needed.

The question then becomes how many letters (or ‘contacts’ when using another method) are needed for this first step?

To carry out the first step it is necessary to estimate the surplus number of invitations needed to be sent out for a certain number of members in the assembly. The number will probably depend on the anticipated response rate which varies according to: level of government, issue salience, level of commitment required from participants and other contextual factors. The larger the overall population and the lower the anticipated response rate, the larger the initial invitation pool should be. Consulting with experts that can give some estimation based on the method that will be used and other factors is advisable.

For example, an assembly seeking 40 members will require a pool of 400 potential members. If the response rate estimation was 5%, around 8,000 invitations would need to be sent out.

The surplus invitations sent, are more than hundred in the most optimistic cases (and most often several thousand) which can create a problem in small local communities with only a few thousand inhabitants. The exceptional nature of the invitation disappears if everyone is “drawn by lot”. In such a case “under sampling” and sending out a limited number of invitations complementing it with new batches until enough positive responses have been obtained might be more effective.



Custom drawn Poznan assembly poster  
by Ewelina Rivillo



**CASE-STUDY**



**TOTAL POPULATION**



**ASSEMBLY SIZE**



**NUMBER OF INVITATIONS SENT**

**Citizen Assembly of Scotland**

5.45 M

120

20.000

**Citizen Assembly in Poznan**

540.365

80

19.962

**Citizen assembly in Ireland on biodiversity loss**

4.995 M

100

20.000

**Ostbelgien permanent Citizen Assembly**

80.000

Citizens' council: 24  
Citizens' assembly: 25-50

1.000



In the first stage the invitations are completely randomised out of the total pool of potential members. However, depending on the context it might be efficient to target certain demographics during this random sampling phase to increase their response rate. This is possible if the socio-economic make-up of certain areas is well known.



Groups with low socio-economic status are, usually, less likely to respond to participate. Sending a greater number of letters to areas where there are large groups of these type of persons can contribute to improve the response rates within these collectives.



A deliberative process that takes place at regional level, might over-sample rural areas by sending a bigger number of invitations, as the participation rates of these areas are lower.



## WHAT WAYS EXIST TO SELECT INVITATION RECIPIENTS?

Selecting the individuals that will receive an invitation to participate requires having a good dataset. The access to existing databases might facilitate the task of randomly selecting participants, however frequently those databases do not provide all the necessary information or cover specific groups within society (e.g. homeless persons, non-registered inhabitants). This means new data will be collected through the process (especially by asking questions to the contacted persons). In the European Union, the GDPR compliance is the first step to take into consideration while handling data by the organisation in charge of the selection.

### **GDPR**

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the European law to protect an individual's data, being directly applicable in all EU states. It emphasises transparency, security and accountability by data controllers while at the same time strengthening the rights of citizens to data privacy. Any sortition process with a robust methodology should include a GDPR compliance section where the treatment of the data and the management and processing of information are stated.

The GDPR of any sortition process must be based on the following 7 principles:

- 01 Lawfulness, fairness and transparency:** personal data must be collected in a lawful, fair and transparent manner
- 02 Purpose limitation:** It should only be obtained for specific and lawful purposes
- 03 Data minimisation:** It should be used only in ways compatible with these purposes
- 04 Accuracy:** Data must be accurate, relevant, complete and up to date
- 05 Storage limitation:** It should be retained for no longer than it is necessary
- 06 Integrity and Confidentiality:** It must be processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data
- 07 Accountability:** Obtain and process information fairly

When handling personal data, and to avoid a data breach, it is important to ensure that such data is only used for the purpose for which it was sought or submitted, it will be kept appropriately confidential and will be secured when not in use.

Make a statement of the GDPR compliance through the rules and procedures document that includes the methodology of your process.<sup>xiii</sup>



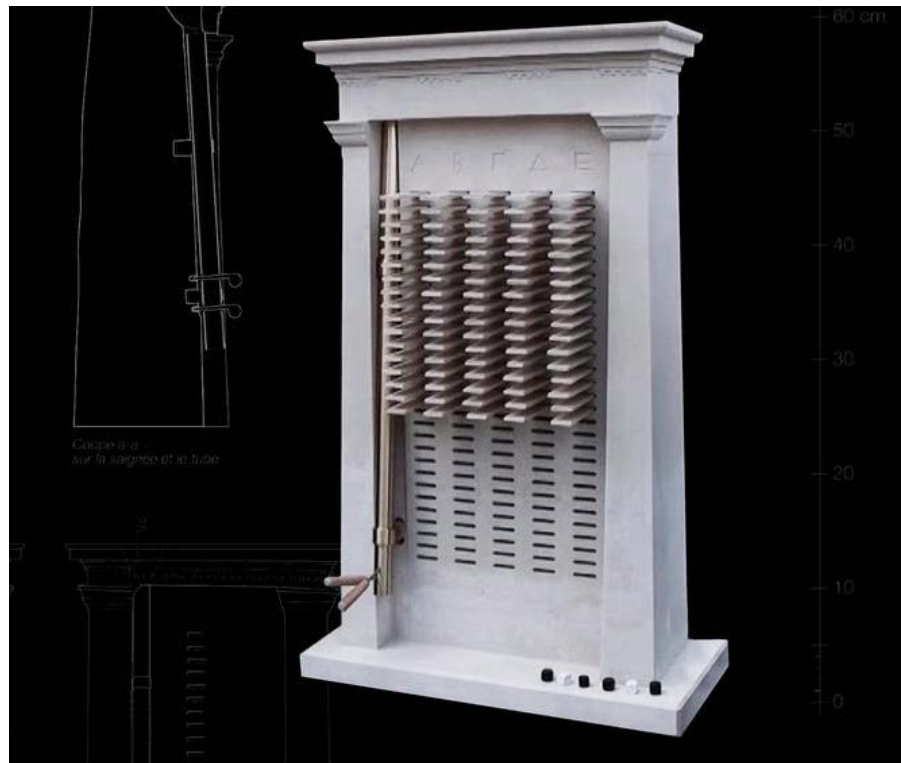


## WHO DOES IT?

The lottery process needs to be conducted by an organisation that has the expertise to perform it conforming to the standards described in this paper. This could be the same public authorities that have requested the deliberative process assisted by external expertise or an independent organisation that has experience in democratic lotteries’.

Usually, public authorities have access to administrative databases such as a population register that include several of the defined stratification criteria (gender, age, geographic locality) which allows to reach the needed population for the sortition. On the other hand, specialist organisations in sortition often have strategies to increase participation of specific demographics.

Any actor performing the sortition must guarantee a level of knowledge in sortition methods as well as respect the principles of transparency and independence of the process.<sup>xiv</sup>



*A kleroterion, the device that served to select citizens randomly for public duty in the ancient Athens*



## ACCESS TO POPULATION DATA

Various databases can be used to carry out the first stage of the Democratic Lottery depending on the country and the available access. Examples include: the voters registry; the census (national population registry); the civil registration number register; or the national post address register. Other tactics include random digit dialling, or door-to-door recruitment. Depending on the database used, there are risks of excluding residents who are not citizens, people without a permanent address, or people who are not registered to vote. The residents register of most European countries, either at national or local level, will include gender and age information. Indicators for educational attainment or socio-economic status are often more laborious to obtain. Other criteria such as religious affiliation or ethnicity are not standardized in Europe and its obtention needs to follow strict GDPR compliance.

The two prime challenges for selecting participants are: the need for fairly accurate demographic data and how to measure those criteria not included in the available public data.

The choice of the database used will need to consider in all cases how complete it is compared to the group that was identified as potential members. If the available dataset does not cover all persons

that could legitimately be a member of the assembly, alternative strategies to cover for the missing groups should be considered (e.g. young people, undocumented inhabitants,...).

To perform the second step in the Democratic Lottery, all criteria information will be needed for every person. Therefore, when a needed criterion is not available in the selected dataset, it needs to be asked directly to the person in the invitation.

## HOW TO INCLUDE GROUPS OF INHABITANTS NOT LISTED IN PUBLIC DATABASES?

### *Other strategies for selecting participants*

#### ADDRESS LIST

In most European countries the existing public registries are not sufficient to be able to select all citizens by name for a deliberative process, not only those with voting rights. A database that uses addresses/households becomes a possible alternative to this. Datasets with all addresses can be obtained from postal services, and sometimes private providers offer them.

When a selected dataset to perform sortition is not complete or available there are a variety of strategies that can be used to select participants.

Take into account that: Sending an invitation to an address and not to an individual might decrease the response rate.



In the citizens' assembly of Scotland, the invitations were sent to addresses specifying that people who lived in the house but had no legal residence could apply to be part of the selection process. The response rate was of 4,4%.

#### DOOR TO DOOR AND/OR ON STREET RECRUITMENT

The door to door strategy and street recruitment are particularly relevant to recruit participants that live in vulnerable boroughs. The citizens of those areas might need extra information and a contact point that builds a trusting environment for them to participate in the process. When recruiting 'hard-to-reach' groups with this technique, it is advisable to consult with an organisation representing them, on the best practices to connect with these audiences.

Take into account that: This technique requires volunteers or paid workers that are trained and have knowledge of the local area. The recruiters should be motivated and methodologically skilled. They should not opt for the most likely person to participate, but follow an expert drafted protocol to make sure assembly members were truly selected randomly



Ireland has used the door-to-door method in different deliberative processes. However, some polling company recruiters were not going to all doors and recruited people that were easily accessible, rather than following the correct procedures – this prompted the Irish conveners to switch to a different method. The address list is now the preferred technique in the country. Letters are guaranteed to go where they are posted and citizens' assemblies have high salience in the country resulting in invitations receiving a comparatively high response rates (>14%).



## DIALING

Random Digit Dialing (RDD) is a technique in which a computer syntax composes phone numbers according to several pre-sets (so they actually become meaningful for the region/country at hand). A polling company then dials those numbers and the person responding is introduced to the deliberative process and invited to take part given the conditions (remuneration, transport and lodging, topic,...).

Take into account that: RDD requires sufficient staff to perform the calls, a good software that composes the numbers and a good archiving of every step in the process so it is completely transparent (numbers chosen, responses). With RDD a signed agreement by the citizen accepting to participate under the conditions stated is also needed. The drawback in this case could be the lack of criteria when generating numbers which requires calling to many numbers to reach out to all needed profiles.

Using this strategy can have **several disadvantages**.

**This process can be quite costly**, the budget in 2019 for dialling participants for the **French Climate Assembly** was around 280.000€.

Unless being handled by a polling company that does random dialling, **phone numbers are rarely available** and this could go against GDPR compliance if datasets are needed.

**Phoning requires a lot of effort**. Depending on the chosen size of the assembly between 1200 to 3600 calls will have to be made at the right calling times.



The polling company that was in charge of recruitment for the French climate citizen assembly generated telephone numbers automatically – 85% mobile and 15% landlines – and about 255,000 people were contacted between the end of August and the end of September 2019.

## **HARD TO REACH**

Structural inequalities embedded in society will result in the systematic exclusion of some groups, even after drawing participants from public databases or by other methods. There are a variety of explanations for this: their geographical location, their social position and/or because they are in a vulnerable situation due to some form of discrimination, which makes them less likely to participate. A Democratic Lottery can be combined with more targeted selection to offer greater levels of political equality and include groups in situation of vulnerability.

Some of the possible strategies to recruit participants from those groups are:



### **REACHING OUT TO ORGANISATIONS THAT REPRESENT SUCH GROUPS**

It is essential that these organisations are not advocates or activist, instead they directly work and serve these audiences. This way, they can inform these collectives about the participatory process taking place and why it is important for them to be there.



### **COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS OR LEADERS WITHIN A SPECIFIC COLLECTIVE CAN ALSO FACILITATE THE RECRUITMENT OF THESE GROUPS**

Usually, they are people trusted by the community and can act as amplifiers in transmitting the significance of the process. They should not be in charge of selecting participants from the groups, but they can stimulate members from the group to take part.



### **IN MANY CASES, THESE GROUPS ALSO HAVE DIFFICULTIES AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DELIBERATIVE PROCESS**

For them to feel fully included in the process, it is necessary to provide incentives that facilitate their needs. A specific allowance for their participation, childcare, disabled facilities, BSL interpretation or translation to different languages and introductory sessions can contribute to reduce their burdens and help them embark on the process.

**If an effort is made to include people who are far removed from participation in the Assembly or jury, it is key to provide everything necessary to make them feel like full members of the Assembly.**

A completely random draw (or by quota) will be conducted once the database is finalized to then send the invitations.



## THE INVITATIONS

The content of the actual invitations is an important element to this process. Its aim is twofold: **to inform potential participants about their selection and to convince them to become actual participants.** The invitation, how it is drafted and how it comes across are therefore of the utmost importance. It should feel like an invitation to a special occasion: both formal and friendly, elegant, and very inviting.

If a great effort is done for other elements of the process, but the invitation is unappealing or unclear, the response rate might be much lower. Typically, the invitation comes in the form of a mailed package, however, it can be also done by phone, SMS or email. Below we describe the procedure for mailed invitations.<sup>6</sup>

### HOW TO WRITE THEM

The normal 'gold standard' is to use a formal letter as an invitation in the first instance signed by the authority convening the assembly. The conveners send an invitation to each selected person. A mailed invitation package generally contains an introductory letter, an information sheet with a list of frequently asked questions, a response form, and a return envelope, packaged in an addressed and branded outer envelope. Based on their experience, having conducted over 30 civic lotteries, MASS LBP (2017) has identified seven important pieces of information that the invitation should contain:

#### 01

An introduction to the convening public institution.

#### 02

An introduction to the problems or issues.

#### 03

An introduction to the selection and engagement process.

#### 04

An outline of the rules and exclusions of the selection process.

#### 05

An introduction to the specific issue to be addressed.

#### 06

The request to volunteer, which includes: volunteer dates; deadlines; methods of registration; and other information pertaining to the process.

#### 07

An outline of the responsibilities of volunteers if selected by the lottery.<sup>xv</sup>

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS AND ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

The central incentive to participate in a deliberative process should be to be heard and to have a meaningful opportunity to influence public policy. This should be clearly stated in the invitation. However, as all of us should have the means to participate and deliberate, it is possible to develop additional measures to support or motivate participants. Adding incentives to participate will boost the response rate as well as contribute to including a diverse population. The incentives should be clearly stated in the letter.

These incentives can take the following shape:



### FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

#### Allowance

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**Many deliberative processes include a fixed sum or honorarium to stimulate the participation.**

Offering this stipend helps to bridge the gap between those collectives that may not attend due to different burdens. Usually the stipend ranges from 50€ to 100€ per day, however, some processes offer much more, depending on the importance and resourcing for the process.

Paying a fixed sum or honorarium to participants can intervene in their capacity to receive other social benefits. It is important to guarantee the legal basis of the allowance to not provoke a bigger burden on the material conditions of participants by making them ineligible for other social services as they now have an 'income'.

In the **Brussels parliament**, for example, the members are paid on a volunteer basis which does not cause any interference with other public financial aid. In Germany, a process called "**planning cells**" used a procedure in which the individual compensation matches the loss of earnings, but this involves calculating the specific allowance from person to person.

#### Reimbursements

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If the deliberative process takes place on a national scale, it might be necessary to **consider the reimbursement of travel and accommodation for some of the participants**. Furthermore, transport reimbursements must also be considered within local processes.



### NON-FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

#### Logistical assistance

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**Providing non-financial assistance has proven to contribute to a higher response rate among participants**, especially for those 'hard to reach'. Furthermore, this assistance helps to overcome the burden of some participants improving the equality of conditions among them. This assistance can include:

Meals and refreshments throughout the deliberative process

Childcare and facilities for disabled persons

Documents accessible for visually impaired participants

Interpretation into sign language

Translation for those participants that might need it

Certificate of participation for employers to justify their absence

#### Time

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In some cases there is a legal provision available that can allow selected members to have an official leave for the time they spend on the assembly. In Germany for example an educational leave exists that can be used for this. A special law in the country grants every working citizen up to five days each year for education or training – **Bildungsurlaub** – and this expense has to be covered by the employer. **A "civic leave" would be an interesting step to take for most European countries to stimulate citizen participation in policy.**



## ASKING FOR EXTRA INFORMATION

When the database or any other strategy used to recruit individuals does not include all the criteria needed to select participants, it is necessary to ask for extra information from the participants in the invitation letter. Those questions should be written in a simple and clear language. The extra information needed should be specific and justified so the person understands why it is important to respond. Emphasizing that these questions are asked because the organisers want a “fair representation of all the different groups in the community” contributes to its response.

In some cases, asking for extra information might be contentious. For example, if the deliberative process would require having participants from the LGBTQ+ community, asking to provide this personal information might cause hesitancy and reduce the response rates. Similar dynamics might apply to people with low educational attainment or those from a specific ethnic background when asked about these characteristics. A good framing of the specific question to be asked highly contributes to dissipating doubts.



## THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE INVITATION<sup>xvi</sup>

The process to positively respond to the invitation should not take longer than 10 minutes and be as easy as possible. Usually, the follow-up to the invitation is done through a website that includes a registration form that recognises a unique code included in the invitation. This form must include the basic data from the person (name, surname, phone number and email); test that the data introduced is consistent with the database used (the address matches one of the selected addresses in the first stage, the name is included in the public dataset...); and ask all the necessary information for the second stage where the final selection takes place.

For all those participants who experience the digital divide other methods can be put in place. For example, the mailed packaged could include a return letter; they can send an SMS with their willingness to take part in the process and then the convener reach out to them with a follow-up call and/or use a freephone number facilitating the registration of these collectives.





# STAGE TWO

In the second stage, the final assembly members are randomly drawn from the group of individuals who have accepted the initial invitation. In this last phase the defined stratification criteria (gender, age, geography, socioeconomic factors and attitudes if necessary) take a central role within the selection process as the main goal is to obtain a sample of participants that are representative of the population.



## The final group broadly mirrors the composition of society.

From the total number of people that have accepted the invitation, a set is drawn by lot that extracts the required number of correspondents according to the criteria. Normally, several substitute citizens (with the same criteria) are also selected. The participants of a deliberative process cannot be replaced once it has started, however, substitutes could be called before the process starts when a place in the assembly becomes vacant. Therefore, it is advisable to over-recruit at least 10% more of the exact size of the deliberative process. For example, an assembly of 100 participants will need to draw a total of at least 110, including replacements.

Putting together a group that matches all your criteria from the responses while maintaining the highest level of random selection is a technical job. Therefore, the stratified draw is usually implemented through software. There are several available, some of which are free to use<sup>7</sup>. The algorithms in the software make sure that the quotas<sup>8</sup> are satisfied and that all individuals have a fair chance of being chosen for the panel. This means that once the first stage is done and one has a clean database with all the people that said they want to be part of the assembly, the second stage is done in a short amount of time.

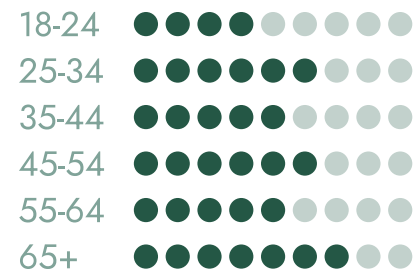
**The transparency and independency are at the core of the stratified draw. The broadcasting of the lottery can contribute to the legitimacy of the process. Next to this, a document describing the full procedure step-by-step should be made available on the website of the commissioning authority (or even preferably on a website dedicated to the assembly).**

7. See for example <https://panelot.org/> or <https://selection.newdemocracy.com.au/>

8. The term 'quota' refers to the fact that each of the population 'strata' will receive a certain quota or number. if citizens with a university degree make up 20% of the population, in an assembly of 50, 10 citizens would be in that category



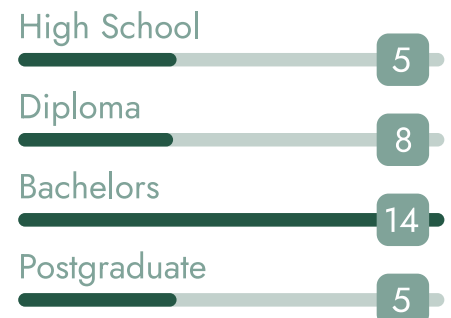
### Age



### Geographic locality



### Education



Once the final group is selected, the members need to be informed of the next steps. Several steps to prepare them for the participation in the assembly are advised before it starts. These are not at the core of the Democratic Lottery process and will not be treated here.



# 05



## NEXT STEPS

As this document testifies, running a Democratic Lottery requires specific technical skills, know-how and resources. For people wanting to be a member of an assembly, several thresholds are also still in place. Governments could take several steps to facilitate the use of democratic lotteries and increase the participation of citizens. We list four recommendations below:

### 1.

***Provide a central national or regional service to assist local and regional authorities using official databases for a civic lottery***

A national statistical office can provide services such as access to registries and technical assistance in drawing the sample in the first and second steps. A trusted service assisting with the draws can seriously lower the burden for smaller administrations wanting to run a Democratic Lottery. In Belgium, for example, a department from the Ministry of Interior provides this service to regional authorities and does the draws for the citizen assemblies of the Brussels Regional Parliament.

## 2.

### *Provide a legal basis for a 'civic leave' status recognising participation in an assembly as a form of civic duty*

Most assemblies are run on weekends and citizens are asked to give up their free time for a task that can be intensive. Especially at the national, regional, or European level, travel time included in the membership of the assembly can become an additional burden on personal free time. A form of official 'civic leave' that would excuse the absence from work or education to attend the assembly would allow to organize meetings on weekdays. Forms of 'civic leave' already exist in many countries for other types of civic duty, such as membership in trial juries thus, this could be extended to citizen' assembly membership.

## 3.

### *Regulate the remuneration received by assembly members to not interfere with other social provisions*

In almost all assemblies, citizens are being compensated for the time they spend working for their community. This can paradoxically make it difficult for some 'hard-to-reach' publics to participate in assemblies if the remuneration is considered as an "income" interfering with the social provisions they receive. In many countries, there is an income threshold above which one is not entitled to social provisions. This has led to the creative use of 'volunteer status' or other ways to reimburse citizens that are outside the 'income' scope. A legal framework addressing this would avoid this problem for citizens in vulnerable situations.

## 4.

### *Create a national/regional program or fund to support local authorities running democratic lotteries and assemblies*

For authorities that have limited resources (such as smaller local authorities), running an assembly, including aspects of the Democratic Lottery, might be challenging. This form of democratic engagement should not be dependent on the number of existing resources in a given community. Higher-level authorities can ease these burdens in the form of financial, technical or logistical support. From statistical help (see the first proposal) to providing translation services for assembly documents or sign-language facilitation. A central pool of skilled facilitators that can be drawn upon can also strongly reduce the cost of running an assembly. Furthermore, the help could come in the form of financial support for the organization of an assembly under certain conditions (for example by abiding to a number of quality set standards).

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