

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES

BASIC STANDARDS FOR ORGANISING

RANDOM SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

All members of a citizens' assembly are selected by lot. Ideally, every member of the population eligible to take part in a citizens' assembly should be able to potentially receive an invitation to participate.

DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

The composition of a citizens' assembly should broadly match the demographic profile of the community participating in the process. A set of criteria may be used to ensure demographic representativeness of the group, like age, gender, geographic area, or others. The aim is to create a community in a small scale that "feels like us". The size of the group should allow for inclusion of a wide diversity of views. A stipend should be provided to all participants to the amount that would at least cover the costs of attending the citizens' assembly.

INDEPENDENT COORDINATION

The citizens' assembly is run by an independent team of coordinators, which is responsible especially for preparing the process of random selection, developing the agenda, and inviting experts and facilitators. If the citizens' assembly is organized by local authorities or the parliament, it is important that all members of the coordination team are not part of the civil service. The coordinators should be impartial, e.g. not active politicians or direct stakeholders.

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY CAN INVITE EXPERTS

Despite the programme being prepared by the team of coordinators, the citizens' assembly can invite additional experts of their own choice. This may be in the form of a speech in person, a video streaming, a recording, a written note or other.

INCLUSION OF A WIDEST PRACTICAL RANGE OF PERSPECTIVES

If there are diverse solutions and perspectives on a subject, ideally all of them should be presented during the educational phase of the citizens' assembly (by expert speakers). A method of combining perspectives due to a limited time or other practical considerations may be applied. Presentations may have the form of a speech in person, a video streaming, a recording, a written note or other.

INVITING ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Any organization, informal group or an institution whose area of work and expertise is related to the topic of the citizens' assembly has the right to present its opinion to the citizens' assembly in person. The role of the team of coordinators is only to identify the stakeholders – they don't make a selection. Due to limited time and a large number of stakeholders, a method of choosing their representatives may be used. In this case, a diversity of perspectives should be taken into account.

DELIBERATION

Discussions which include listening to others mindfully and weighing options are the key elements of a citizens' assembly. The programme should involve discussions in small groups as well as in the plenary in order to maximize opportunities to speak and to be heard. The deliberation phase should be run by skilled facilitators.

OPENNESS

All members of society should be able to provide input to the citizens' assembly in the form of comments, proposals or suggestions.

SUFFICIENT TIME FOR REFLECTION

Providing a sufficient amount of time for reflection is necessary to achieve well-thought-out decisions. If the matter is not urgent, it is best not to rush. The citizens' assembly should be able to prolong its meetings - their length and number - if it chooses to do so (subject to budgetary limits).

IMPACT

The follow-up to the citizens' assembly's recommendations should be clear from the outset. Ideally, recommendations that receive the support of the citizens' assembly at an agreed threshold should be treated as binding (to such an extent that is legally permissible in the given situation).

TRANSPARENCY

All presentations during the educational, plenary phase should be transmitted live and recorded. All materials presented to the citizens' assembly should be made available online. Clear information about how recommendations of the citizens' assembly will be implemented should be provided online and updated as actions occur. A report presenting details of methodology used for organizing a citizens' assembly should be provided by the coordination team.

VISIBILITY

Each citizens' assembly is an important event in the life of a community and citizens should be informed that it is happening and information on how they can get involved and follow it should be provided. The citizens' assembly should be publicly announced before it is formed.

This set of standards was created by Marcin Gerwin with input from experts around the world.

